CHAPTER III

WILLIAM BLAKE,

The Mystic Genius
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1. Blake and Swedenborg

In this chapter, William Blake is again introduced as the mystic genius; in fact, the title of this chapter is derived from Adrian Van Sinderen’s book, *The Mystic Genius*. This chapter is actually divided into different parts which explain various aspects of William Blake’s mysticism. The first section tries to interpret the title genius as applied to Blake. The second part summarizes his tenets which are derived from Swedenborg and explains the most important ones as applied to Blake’s poetry in general. The third part introduces some of the most mystical and religious poems concerning Blake’s mysticism. The last part brings out enlightenment and mystical interpretation of his poetry. According to Sinderen, “To read about Blake, however, is like reading about the Bible or Shakespeare; the only way to grasp the philosophy expressed in great books is to read the books themselves.”

It requires a great genius to write such immortal book as Songs of Innocence. “This is one of his highest poetic achievements which was followed by a companion volume Songs of Innocence and Experience, which bears the subtitle Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. The tenderness of these poems set them apart from all of Blake’s subsequent writings. In them, his best known verse, Blake expresses not the author’s but a child’s happiness. It is a child who speaks through the lines.” It is very difficult for adults to understand the child’s world unless they can have fourfold vision like William Blake. “His imaginings are windows which have let in upon this earth a new light.
from eternity."^3 "Blake is a mystic who has found truth through a God-inspired imagination, an imagination which created beauty and which visioned horizons beyond the sight of those who see only with their eyes."^4 The reader of Blake should be conscious that Blake makes his speakers in The Songs of Innocence describe minute events with angelic tune. His Songs of Innocence is a child's strayings in earthly or divine Edens, and speaks with more deliberately hidden or doubled meanings.

"Blake is the only poet who sees all temporal things under the form of eternity. To him reality is merely a symbol, and he catches at its terms, hastily and faultily, as he catches at the lines of the drawing-master, to represent, as in a faint image, the clear and shining outlines of what he sees with the imagination; through the eye, not with it, as he says. Where other poets use reality as a spring-board into space, he uses it as a foothold on his return from flight. Even Wordsworth seemed to him a kind of atheist, who mistook the changing signs of 'vegetable nature' for the unchanging realities of the imagination. So his poetry is the most abstract of all poetry, although in a sense the most concrete. It is everywhere an affirmation, the register of vision; never observation. To him observation was one of the daughters of memory, and he had no use for her among his Muses, which were all eternal, and the children of imagination. In being so far conscious, he is only recognizing the symbol, not admitting the reality. In his earlier work, the symbol still interests him, he accepts it without dispute; with, indeed, a kind of transfiguring love. Thus, he writes of the lamb and the tiger, of the joy and sorrow of infants, of the fly and the lily, as no poet of mere observation has ever written of them, going deeper into their essence.
than Wordsworth ever went into the heart of daffodils, or Shelley into the nerves of the sensitive plant. He takes only the simplest flowers or weeds, and the most innocent or most destroying of animals, and he uses them as illustrations of the divine attributes.”

Blake, however, was influenced by Boehme, Paracelsus, and Emmanuel Swedenborg. Blake’s father was an avid follower of Swedenborg who was a Swedish scientist and religious teacher. Swedenborg abandoned his studies in 1747 after claiming that he understood the inner nature of human beings, what he called the divine Word, after experiencing a vision in 1745. These visions reoccurred throughout his life as well as his supposed communications with angels. He published exegetical texts on Scripture in which he claimed he had received his interpretations from God himself. Swedenborg was a non-sectarian, however, and did not hold his teachings to be the property of any one’s faith. Swedenborg prophesied the emergence of a New Jerusalem on earth, which would signify the Second Coming. In essence, the kingdom of heaven would be on earth. Blake would maintain these beliefs throughout much of his life and would inspire his early verses such as There Is No Natural Religion and All Religion Are One. Blake believed that whatever was divine in God must be divine in man.

At the same time, Blake was learning of these doctrines as a boy, he began to experience visions and have communications with the angel Gabriel, the Virgin Mary, and various other figures from history and religious life. This sort of eccentric behaviour would be indicative to his lifestyle and career. Blake was a
controversial figure from the moment he ended his apprenticeship in engraving. He not only claimed to be a prophet and mystic, but he was a political radical as well. He had friendships with Thomas Paine, the famous pamphleteer of Common Sense and William Goodwin, a British anarchist who would go on to inspire Coleridge, Wordsworth, and motivated Shelley. Blake’s poetry was often politically motivated (such as his prophetic works on France and America) and mythic in proportions (The Book of Urizen and the Song of Los). His engravings were considered eccentric, untraditional, and thoroughly odd. These engravings accompanied most of his works as well as other poets of the day. Blake also provided engravings for classic texts such as Dante’s Divine Comedy. Blake was an iconoclast to say the least.\(^6\)

Since Blake had most mental affinity with Swedenborg from the three mentioned writers, it is time to focus on this affinity. Blake, however, considered Swedenborg as a man whom he was much indebted and from whom he had derived many ideas which bore fruit in his own works, but with whom he could never be in entire agreement. Swedenborg wrote few religious books such as The Doctrine of Life for the New Jerusalem, A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church, The Intercourse of the Soul and the Body, Heaven and Hell, and True Christian Religion. It is through Flaxman that we have the primary link between Blake and the Swedenborgians, for Stothard introduced Flaxman to Blake in 1780 and the two became the closest friends.
the Swedenborgians, for Stothard introduced Flaxman to Blake in 1780 and the two became the closest friends.

The researcher is going to outline several of Swedenborg’s central doctrines in brief. In fact there are ten essential principles according to Swedenborg.

1- His doctrine of God
2- His doctrine of the Incarnation and Redemption
3-His doctrine of Providence
4-His doctrine of Influx
5-His doctrine of Correspondences
6-His doctrine of Degrees
7-His doctrine of Uses
8-His doctrine of the Proprium
9-States
10-Ethics

Concerning the first doctrine it should be noted that to Swedenborg, with his scientific background, the idea of God as some vague and indefinite being was unacceptable. He believes that if we are going to think about God at all, we must use symbols derived from our own human experience. The similarity between his teaching and many of Blake’s beliefs is immediately apparent. Blake shared with Swedenborg the desire to be definite and precise in his conception of spiritual being. Swedenborg insisted on the idea of unity of a divine
God. The second doctrine is the idea that Blake was in full agreement with. This doctrine follows from Swedenborg doctrine of the Trinity that the Incarnation was affected by Jehovah Himself taking flesh in the womb. According to Swedenborg, the passion is distinct from the act of redemption, though the latter is completed by the former. The third doctrine concerns Swedenborg’s idea that God’s guidance or providence was active in the world. The operation of the Divine Providence to save man begins at his birth, and continues even to the end of his life, and afterwards to Eternity. So the purpose of divine providence is to reform man, and therefore bring him to salvation. However predestination is detestable. Blake was as much opposed as Swedenborg to any form of predestination, but he considered that, however much he denied it, Swedenborg did in fact teach it. The fourth doctrine received little attention from Blake. It explains that the natural world, and in particular man, exists from the divine and receives its life from God. The means by which this life is mediated to man and to nature is by influx. The fifth doctrine influenced Blake much, namely Swedenborg’s doctrine of correspondences. He believes that the whole natural order corresponds to the spiritual world, not only the natural world in general, but also in particular. Whatever, therefore, in the natural world exists from the
spiritual, is said to be its correspondent. That is to say that there is a positive relation between the world of causes and the world of effects. To Blake this doctrine of correspondence, or ‘Divine Analogy’ as he sometimes called it, was a method by which he could discover meaning, even amidst the chaos and disunity of the material world. Blake did not use the physical correspondences to any great degree, although he incorporates into his symbolism certain parts of the body, such as head, heart, and loins, to represent three possible channels of human intercourse with eternity. But following Swedenborg, he interpreted the Bible mystically and allegorically. The sixth doctrine indeed concerns degrees. According to Swedenborg a knowledge of degrees is like a key for uncovering and penetrating into the causes of things. Degrees are divided into two groups, namely, continuous and discrete. Continuous degrees is a term applied to the gradual lessening or diminishing from grosser to finer, from denser to rarer. These represent the more or less of anything, for example, degrees of temperature ranging from freezing-point to boiling-point. Discrete degrees on the other hand are altogether different; they are like things prior, subsequent, and final; or like end, cause and effect. The doctrine of degrees plays no part in Blake’s system.
The seventh doctrine in Swedenborg deals with uses. According to him everything exists for a purpose. Love is the end, wisdom is the principal cause, and use is the effect. Blake was attracted by this conception, and devoted one of his minor prophetic books to a lyrical expatiation on this theme. Thel, which he wrote in 1789, develops Swedenborg’s principle that “to live for others is to perform uses; uses are the bonds of society and their number is infinite.” In fact Thel, a pre-existent soul, comes down to earth to learn something of the conditions of mortal life; her destiny, she believes, is just to fade away. She can not find any uses for her life.

The next doctrine is of the proprium. It is one of the central teachings of the Christian faith that self-love is the root of all sin; Swedenborg reproduced this doctrine in his idea of the proprium. The proprium is the selfhood. Self-love is indeed original sin. Blake accepted the truth of this doctrine without reservation. The whole of existence is an example and warning of the errors of the selfhood.

The ninth doctrine which is states had prominent position in Blake’s system, some reference to it is required, since it seems likely that he derived the germ of his conception from Swedenborg. Every man may progress through three states. Man’s first state is a state of damnation, the second is of reformation, and the third,
that of regeneration. Again the term ‘state’ is further applied to man’s natural or external condition, and to his spiritual and internal condition. Blake believed that this idea had Biblical authority, and incorporated it into his ethics. According to Blake man passes through these states like a traveller, and need not remain in any unless he so wills. Blake had thus taken Swedenborg’s teaching and developed it along with very different lines. What to Swedenborg was a condition from which a man may be delivered by a knowledge of sin, to Blake was a condition which excuses the sinner for his misdoings; and what to Blake was a passing phase of little importance, to Swedenborg was a situation which is frequently unchangeable.

The last doctrine is ethics. Finally there remains two aspects of Swedenborg’s ethics to be passed under view, namely, his acceptance of the decalogue as the norm of conduct, and his teaching on sex. Blake had little sympathy with Swedenborg’s doctrine of decalogue. Blake believed that Jesus had freed mankind from subservience to the law, or decalogue. Blake on the other hand did not accept Swedenborg’s idea about sex. Although Swedenborg’s attitude to sex was a highly exalted one. In contrast to the grossly animal conception of sex accepted by eighteenth-century society, he taught with open sincerity the purity of the sex act within the
sanctity of the marriage bond. Sex is a means of union or conjunction. It is true that Blake occasionally made statements which seem to advocate ‘free love’, but he did not employ the term in its modern sense as mere carnal connexion, which can degrade love into lust, rather with the meaning that in the ideal society marriage will be unnecessary; it is probably on this account that Blake found fault with Swedenborg, because the latter conceived of the nuptial state continuing in heaven, whereas the former affirmed that “In Eternity they neither marry nor are given in marriage.”

Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and latter’s typical arrangement. We find then that Blake repudiated Swedenborg because of his attitude to reason and nature; because of his supposed predestinarianism; because of his approval of the law; because of his pride and so-called plagiarism.9

Blake himself, perhaps, best summed up his relationship with Swedenborg, when he wrote in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, “Opposition is true Friendship.”10

After this brief introduction by Adrian Van Sinderen whose main purpose was to explain Blake’s borrowed principles from Swedenborg; it is time to have Norman D.Livergood’s comments on Blake’s genius. He believes that Blake was a poet, painter, engraver and mystic in the tradition of Plato, Jesus, Rumi, and St. Francis. He was an omnivorous reader of the classics and was for a time a close friend of Thomas Taylor, the first translator into English of Plato and Plotinus. Taylor also
published many translations of and commentaries on the major works of the Neo-Platonic and Bacchic Mysteries.

In fact Blake’s deep mystical intuition and his skill and genius as an artist and poet went almost unrecognized during his lifetime. He was able to sell very little of his own artistic output, and his letters which are primarily letters of thanks to his patrons.\(^\text{11}\)

Caroline F.E. Spurgeon in her excellent book entitled *Mysticism in English Literature* has a very amazing paragraph concerning Blake’s mysticism.

William Blake is one of the great mystics of the world; and he is by far the greatest and most profound who has spoken in English. Like Henry More and Wordsworth, he lived in a world of glory, of spirit and of vision, which, for him, was the only real world. At the age of four he saw God looking in at the window, and from that time until he welcomed the approach of death by singing songs of joy which made the rafters ring, he lived in an atmosphere of divine illumination.\(^\text{12}\)

In his mid-40s Blake lived for three years in a small cottage at Felpham on the Sussex coast where he saw angels descending on a ladder from heaven to his cottage. It was also at this time that he often saw fairies and once experienced what he understood to be a fairy’s funeral.\(^\text{13}\)
2. Blake’s Works

According to Blake, most of his work as a writer and artist was done under the direct inspiration of spiritual guides. In the introduction to his book on Milton, he explains:

I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty lines at a time, without pre­meditation and even against my will. The time it has taken in writing was thus rendered non-existent, and an immense poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long life, all produced without labour or study.¹⁴

Everything Blake created, his poems, his engravings, his illuminated books were for the purpose of revealing to people the Higher Reality.

“I rest not from my great task!
To open the Eternal Worlds,
To open the Immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God.
The Human Imagination”¹⁵
Blake was many things. He was Platonist and Neoplatonist, Alchemist and Paracelsian. He knew the Hermetic literature and had read Swedenborg. He was so many things that it is better simply to say that he was their synthesis in an artist. All his life he made runes so rare in form and invitation that one’s love affair with William Blake may begin in childhood and last to the end of life, with ever growing appreciation of his work.16

At this point, it is better to quote a part of what excited Miss Raine as she completed the research for her book whose aim was to discover Perennialist roots of Blake’s work:

I can only report, from my own explorations, that this Lost Atlantis is a land of treasures and marvels. Blake’s ‘golden string’17 leads not only through his own labyrinth, but is the clue leading to so much more. Neoplatonism, with its mythology and symbolism, is indeed the local European idioms of a universal and unanimous tradition. Those sources from which Blake drew his knowledge, and in our own century, Yung, Yeats, and increasing numbers of their followers are learning of the imagination itself. The excluded knowledge of the last two or three centuries seems likely to become the sacred scriptures of a New Age for which spirit, not matter, is again the primary reality.18

William Blake was a modern alchemical mystic. Through his art, and writing he was able to distill sentience (mercury) within physical
existence to a point where consciousness re-identifies with the golden light (Sun) of the soul.

As a poet, artist, and writer, Blake took on the divinely appointed task of helping others uncover within themselves what they have hidden from themselves, their Higher Self. Through many modes of his art, we are able to cleanse our doors of perception and awaken to unity with the Eternal!^{19}

In this section, the researcher is going to present the mystical and religious notions in Blake’s poetry. These poems contain very brilliant and amazing points about Blake’s theology.

The reader of Blake’s poetry should be conscious that he has created in his poetry what he called a ‘system’; using unique method of engraving images and text together on copper plates. In the modern era, the illuminated manuscripts of William Blake stand out as the creative orchestration of text and imagery. He wanted to open our eyes to the world of spirit as it mingled with the mundane world.^{20}

“If the doors of perception are cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.”^{21}

Blake published and coloured by hands Songs of Innocence from which The Lamb is taken. He followed with a sequel called Songs of Experience in 1784. Neither book received much notice in Blake’s lifetime. But both were, and still are, quite revolutionary in their imaginative verse and art. The fact that verse and art complimented each
other, creating his own ‘system’, and their translation of an idea into a pictorial element of sensuous language that was both deeply religious and unorthodoxically mystical. His simple, direct language and the clarity of his pictures had not been known in English poetry since Shakespeare.22

The researcher is going to introduce William Blake as a mystic genius and study some of his religious poems with mystical implications in this chapter. Therefore chapter three will be a detailed study of Blake’s mysticism as far as his selected poems are concerned.

It should be admitted that any effort to select Blake’s religious poems is a very difficult task because he is like a huge iceberg that should be viewed completely; no single layer of ice itself gives the impression of the original iceberg. But since the thesis should be limited to some selected religious poems, the researcher has to choose from the bulky output of William Blake’s poetry. The reason for the selection of each particular poem will be explained along with the mystical interpretation of them.

The researcher is going to follow a chronological order for the poems because the development of Blake’s consciousness for his own original systems with the particular poetic techniques used in them, will be better comprehended by the reader. So the following poems or prose are going to be studied. It should be kept in mind that in this
section the researcher is going to present a brief religious and mystical interpretation of each poem or prose. They are as follows:

A. POETICAL SKETCHES
B. SONGS OF INNOCENCE
C. THE BOOK OF THEL
D. SONGS OF EXPERIENCE
E. THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL
F. AUGURIES OF INNOCENCE
G. MILTON
H. JERUSALEM
I. A VISION OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT

3. POETICAL SKETCHES

Blake’s early poems, as collected in Poetical Sketches, are the culminating works of the literary period that can be said to begin with the death of Pope in 1744 and conveniently to end with the first major poems of Blake and Wordsworth in 1789. Poetical Sketches can be viewed as a workshop of Blake’s developing imaginative ambitions, as he both follows the poets of sensibility in their imitations of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, and goes beyond them in venturing more strenuously on the Hebraic sublime. Sensibility is a heightened mode of
consciousness, and Blake follows his age in seeking a new inwardness in these early poems, which shadow forth the most original aspect of his later mythology, the psychological doctrine of coexistent states-of-being, each with its distinctive imagery, and each productive of distinct imaginative forms. Perhaps the unique freshness of Poetical Sketches can be epitomized by noting Blake's first achievements in the greatest of his projects: to give definite form to the strong workings of imagination that produced the cloudy sublime images of the earlier poets of sensibility. In the best poems of Blake's youth the sublime feelings of poets like Gray and Collins find a radiant adequacy of visionary outline, the clarity of the rising prophet increasingly certain of his vocation.

The Poems to the Seasons: In this fourfold invocation to the human seasons, the young Blake transvalues the customary mode of personification, and anticipates the humanizing addresses to natural phenomena of Wordsworth and his followers, as abstract personifications merge into the figure of a new myth.

TO SPRING

O thou, with dewy locks, who lookest down
Thro' the clear windows of the morning; turn
Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!

The hills tell each other, and the list'ning
Vallies hear; all our longing eyes are turned
Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth,
And let thy holy feet visit our clime.

Come o’er the eastern hills, and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumed garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls
Upon our love-sick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languish’d head,
Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee!²⁴

This is, in a sense, Blake’s first song of Innocence, and hails as bridegroom for the “love-sick land”²⁵ of England as a figure who will appear finally as Tharmas, the shepherd of the pleasant pastoral state of human childhood. There is a generic echo of the imagery of returning Spring in the Song of Songs, and perhaps of Thomson’s Seasons.²⁶

Blake’s seasonal poems anticipate his later work in richness of Biblical and Miltonic allusions.²⁷

Another song which is going to be considered is the following Song:

**SONG**

How sweet I roam’d from field to field,
And tasted all the summer’s pride,
*Till I the prince of love beheld,*
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He shew’d me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his garden fair,
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fir’d my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty. ²⁸

The tradition is that Blake was not yet fourteen when he wrote this song. It is a clear anticipation of the symbolism of a later poem, The Golden Net, can be called his first Song of Experience. The prince of love is identified with or assumes the role of the sun god, and his entrapping deceptions are made one with the natural world.²⁹

Since the researcher is going to concentrate on the contrariety of The Songs of Innocence and The Songs of Experience in chapter five, the reader should be familiar with the originality of each song in Innocence and Experience. In the mentioned Song which is Blake’s first
*Song of Experience*, the gloomy and dark atmosphere of *The Songs of Experience* is beginning to form.

F.W. Bateson believes that in Poetical Sketches Blake uses the conventional attributes of the seasons as a point of departure for the dramatic presentation of his quasi-divine figures, Spring the angel-bridegroom, Summer the heroic embodiment of physical energy, Autumn the jovial Pan-like creature, Winter the alarming destructive giant. In these miniature dramas, as in mad Song and the two Songs following it, Blake’s mature symbolic technique is already in process of formation. In general, indeed, from this point, the interest of the imitations and borrowed phrases shifts from the boy’s powers of assimilation to the new uses to which he now puts old images.

The twenty-six poems in the Poetical Sketches range over most of the important genres and subjects of the late eighteenth-century, Age of sensibility, but they are boldly experimental in metrics and imagery. Among them are represented the verse drama, the ballad, the Elizabethan song, the Ossianic prose-poem, and the poem on the cardinal seasons and the times of day, as well as the invocation to the classical Muses. The Poetical Sketches were composed between Blake’s twelfth and twentieth years (1769-77), a period roughly corresponding to his apprenticeship as an engraver.

It should be considered that Blake viewed his first book, The Poetical Sketches as an immature poetry. In this book, Blake’s system seems to have not been formed yet.
4. THE SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Blake’s best-loved work, subtitled *Shewing the Two Contrary States of the human Soul*, is the only one of his books that during his lifetime attracted the admiration of his fellow writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lamb. The *Innocence* series was the first to be etched, in 1789 when Blake was thirty-two, though three of these songs appeared first in 1784 in the boisterous manuscript satire *an Island in the Moon*.

The relationship of *Innocence* and *Experience*, as contrary states of the soul and as cycles of songs, is not of direct, static contrast but of shifting tensions. Blake’s *Innocence*, with its central figures of child, lamb, flower, shepherd, and piper, should be considered the primary state, the norm by which *Experience* is evaluated, a clear vision of the way life ought to be and indeed can be for many children and for good-hearted adults like the Nurse and the Shepherd. Within the state of Innocence, however, there is the possibility of change and even of corruption: children must go indoors at nightfall because dangers may lurk about, shepherds are needed because there are wolves, and spring and summer die into winter. The state of Innocence is not a pastoral idyll in which the inhabitants are perfectly immune from menace. As Blake shows it, Innocence is a condition of mind and spirit, a freshness of perspective; yet to be innocent is not always to be ignorant of the facts that children get lost or punished, or have to live in orphanages, or are sold as slaves or chimney sweepers. In Innocence, even though
children may be victimized by circumstances, they retain a spiritual 
resilience; with joy and contentment, they love their enemies and dream 
of a better world.

Blake, the creator of these invincible innocents, was himself 
neither complacent nor naïve nor did he expect his readers to be. The 
reader, he addresses will neither deny the appearance and reality of 
happiness in Innocence nor attempt to explain away the evidences of 
woe that are also contained in the Songs. The child who inspires the first 
song of innocence in the Introduction to Innocence, is an exemplary 
listener; he laughs on first hearing, then weeps, then weeps with joy. 
Similarly, the adult reader detects the signs of external wretchedness 
which threaten the inner peace of characters in Innocence. Blake kept all 
these viewpoints before him. In 1793, he advertized the Experience 
volume for sale and published separate copies occasionally. The 
combined volume, Songs of Innocence and of Experience, is dated 1794 
and was issued repeatedly over the years through 1826. He constantly 
considered the interplay both between the two states of the soul and 
among the songs that convey these states.32

To begin with the bulk of religious and mystical interpretation on 
Blake’s Songs of Innocence, Northrop Frye’s Fearful Symmetry is a 
good starting point. Although the interpretation for each contrary poem 
will be presented separately, but some critics on Blake like Frye provide 
overlapping interpretation.

Frye believes that “The fallen world is the world of the Songs of 
Experience: the unfallen world is the world of the Songs of Innocence. 
Naturally those who live most easily in the latter are apt to be, from the
SONGS
OF
INNOCENCE

The Author & Printer: W. Blake
point of view of those who absorbed wholly in the former, somewhat naïve and childlike. In fact most of them are actually children. Children live in a protected world which has something, in epitome, of the intelligibility of the state of innocence, and they have an imaginative recklessness which drives from that.”

The researcher is going to introduce the contrary poems which will be studied in this section. First the poems in The Songs of Innocence are going to be interpreted concerning their religious and mystical points. The second painting (B) depicts Blake’s emblematic design of the Songs of Innocence. The particular poems of Innocence are as follows:

THE SONGS OF INNOCENCE

1-INTRODUCTION
2-THE LAMB
3-A CRADLE SONG
4-THE DIVINE IMAGE
5-INFANT JOY
6- NURSE’ S SONG
7- THE BLOSSOM
8- THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER
The researcher is going to attract the reader’s attention to the fact that the poems listed above are all among the contrary poems; it means that they have their contrary counterpart in the *Songs of Experience*. The reason for their selection is that they contain the contrary states of the soul. Their contrariety will be explained further in chapter fifth under Blake’s dialectical vision.

At this point, it is better to compare Poetical Sketches with the Songs of Innocence in order to understand them better. “In *Poetical Sketches*, Blake’s vision of life is direct and naïve: he delights in the physical attributes of nature, its breadth and its wonders of light and motion, of form and melody. But, in *Songs of Innocence*, his interest is primarily ethical.”

According to Blake, God and Jesus are but visions of the love that animates all forms of being. For a starting-point, *The Piper* or *Introduction to the Songs of Innocence* can be interpreted with regard to mystical notions. It is in fact one of the happiest songs in the Innocence designed for the delight of children in which Blake, himself was in a spiritual sense, a happy child on a cloud, singing and desiring such songs as few but he could write. But he was also setting down what a child had thought, setting it down as an expression of human nature as

Piper, pipe that song again.
he saw and had observed it, an innocent experience recorded, not as an offering to innocence; and the Introduction, to that extent, explains the very root of that experience, the immediate ecstasy of joy without shadow or reflection. Blake’s next painting of the Piper (C) accompanies the text of the poem.

**INTRODUCTION**

Piping down the valleys wild
Piping songs of pleasant glee
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.
“Piper pipe that song again-”’
So I piped, he wept to hear.
“Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe,
Sing thy songs of happy cheer.
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.
“Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read-”’
So he vanish’d from my sight.
And I pluck’d a hollow reed,
And I made a rural pen,
And I stain’d the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.  

In this poem, Blake appears as a piper who tells how he came to set down his songs. In this poem, Christ is not mentioned by name; but Lamb or God’s Lamb. The happy, peaceful, loving, and caring atmosphere dominates the Innocence and it is evident from the very first poem of the Innocence.

Blake’s state of innocence, set forth in symbols of pastoral life akin to those of the Twenty-third Psalm, seems at first sight to have something in common with what Vaughan, Traherne, and Wordsworth say in their different ways about the vision of childhood which is lost in later life, and it is tempting to think that this is what concerns Blake. But he is concerned with the loss not so much of actual childhood as of something wider and less definite. For him childhood is both itself and a symbol of a state of soul which may exist in maturity. His subject is the child-like vision of existence. For him all human beings are in some sense and at some times the children of a divine father, but experience destroys their innocence and makes them follow spectres and illusions. Blake does not write at a distance of time from memories of what childhood once was, but from an insistent, present anguish at the ugly contrasts between the childlike and the experienced conceptions of reality.

The reader may ask about the nature of the child in the cloud which is very mysterious to the adult. It should be noted that the world of the Songs in Innocence is a dream world whereas the world of the Songs of
Experience is the real world. So the reader should expect to understand the dreamy atmosphere of the Songs of Innocence even from the very first poem, that is the Introduction or the Piper.

Who is the child in the cloud? In so far as Songs of Innocence is a collection of moral songs for children, the child must be, in some sense, the infant Jesus. Blake’s capital in the word Lamb seems to confirm this interpretation. Moreover, although the clouds are usually an oppression symbol in Blake, the Bible authorizes their use as the chariot of divinity. But the poem is also full of the conventional properties of pastoral poetry, a piper who is also a singer, wild nature, reeds, running water, etc., as well as the device of formal dialogue, and all these add up to suggest nothing much more supernatural than the Spirit of poetry. The presence of three separate distinguishable strata in Songs of Innocence would tend no doubt to discourage Blake from defining too closely their common source of inspiration.

In the poem, there is the strange phrase: “he wept to hear”[^38], it is one of the Proverbs of Hell, that “excess of sorrow laughs, Excess of joy weeps.”[^39] Another phrase which needs explanation in the poem is “I stained the water clear”[^40], it either refers to make his ink or to prepare the water-colours for tinting the engravings. The last phrase is “In a book, that all may read”[^41], this phrase also specifies the medium Blake was employing to write his song.^[42]

The researcher is willing to attract the reader’s attention to the contrary states of the Songs of Innocence and Experience. Even the task of the poet must differ in writing songs for the two states, and Blake defines the poet’s function differently in the first poem of each book. In
the Songs of Innocence he appears as a piper who tells how he came to set down his songs. The piper in the introductory song in Innocence has no duty. He makes music, sings, and writes because he feels inclined to, he enjoys the music for its own sake and he takes an additional pleasure in the delight it gives the child. As the child is described by the piper, it is a very vivid and positive presence, and yet a very insubstantial one. It appears on a cloud, and it vanishes abruptly, leaving the piper to his more solitary task.

The piper does not have to contend with a clumsy, grasping self, has no impulse to pull the child from its cloud and put it on earth where it should be, and has so much enjoyment in the child because he takes it exactly as it comes. When the child leaves, the piper turns his attention without regret to writing down how much he liked being with it.

Blake etched two plates showing the piper, and placed them immediately before the title-pages of Innocence and Experience. In the first engraving the piper holds his pipe at his side and gazes upward at the child who has interrupted his “songs of pleasant glee”. Young trees grow on either side of the piper, and in the background a flock of sheep is grazing. The child half reclines on a cloud and half floats in the air, its arms outspread as it addresses the piper. The significance of this picture, and so of the imagery of the poem, is brought out by a comparison with the companion plate in the Songs of Experience. Both these illustrations in the Songs of Innocence and Experience contain the same elements: childhood and rustic simplicity together in a valley wild, entertaining one another. In the Innocence illustration, however, the piper and the child are shown as simultaneously meeting and parting. Each has been
arrested momentarily by the attraction of the other, and their movements in their separate spheres, valley and the cloud, are half checked, and half being carried forward, they gaze full into each other's face, although the gaze is a passing one.

In the course of the game played by the piper and the child, the former is gleefully ordered about, being told, first, to pipe his song, then to sing it, and lastly to write it down. With the last injunction, the child disappears. It has played the game out now, and abandons it. We are left at the end of the poem with the piper writing his happy songs, "Every child may joy to hear", and on the way to assuming this task he has stepped across the gap between music and speech as though it did not exist. As we first encounter the piper, he is quite alone and he is making music, making sounds that are wordless but certainly not mindless. Whatever beauty the sounds may have is the result of organization and a sense of harmony within the piper. He uses his pipe, we can say, for self-expression, but by that we do no mean that he explains himself or makes precise statements of what goes on within. By the end of the poem the piper is using words instead, but the tenor of the Introduction is to place these verbal songs on the same footing as the wordless ones. They are the same songs because, although their medium is a different one, they express the same piper, and they do not express only the sense that the piper has put consciously into them. They have a richer content than mere statement, and so not to tell us only about the lamb.

The piper, however, is uttered by his songs, he does not stand back from himself, and he does not have to be consciously aware of a movement within himself for that movement to have its expression.
Thus his songs, when he writes them down, though we may expect them to make statements, please us because the statements reveal the life of the being who makes them. The piper we leave at the end of the poem using his rural pen, made from a reed, is doing basically the same thing as he was when he played his pipe. Innocent poetry uses words, the *Introduction* implies, in such a way as to carry meaning into the poem from the whole being of the singer, not merely to make deliberate reference.

Blake, too, sees that a piper who writes his songs from the fullness of his heart, not from the mind alone, is not a limited person. On the contrary, the piper displays intelligence in a most important sense of the word.

It is a remarkable feat on Blake’s part, in writing the innocent *Introduction*, to comprehend, by an intellectual stretch, the spontaneous depths of poetry. It is a stretch for Blake because, although he insists in all his writing on the importance of inspiration, no poet shows a more careful control of his utterances. He is a poet of the intellect, but for an intellect so good that he can put the intellect in perspective and come forward as an advocate of the unpremeditated. *The Songs of Innocence* present beings who do not precisely define or fully verbalize what they are aware of, but though this is true of the piper, Blake himself has clear and definite ideas.

The piper’s songs are simply a form of self-expression, but this manner of composition is possible only for the innocent.45

*The Introduction of the Songs of Innocence* in a sense portrays Blake himself
as the piper and the little child on the cloud can be explained as Blake’s divine vision which makes Blake write a song about a Lamb.

The researcher concentrates on the Lamb because it recalls the joy and sorrow associated with Jesus, Lamb of God. The reader should consider that piping is a conventional activity of pastoral poems and perhaps it is related to the inappropriate piping in Luke.\textsuperscript{46}

It is clear from the Introduction that Blake intends to attract the attention of his reader to two worlds. Blake, from his very childhood, knew two worlds, city and country: the innocence of green fields, and the experience of industrial revolution; a pastoral heaven, and a hell of “dark satanic mills”.\textsuperscript{47} It is a characteristic of his whole philosophy that he took both into account.\textsuperscript{48}

The very last consideration of the Introduction signifies Blake’s three states, that is innocence, experience, and organized innocence. It can be clarified with three reactions which are shown in the poem by the mysterious child. First, he laughs in the very beginning of the poem when he hears the piper piping. Again when the piper piped that song again, the child wept to hear. It signifies the experience state. But no one can remain in innocence or experience state, because everyone develops and so he enters the last state, that is organized innocence. In this state the child wept with joy to hear the piper piping. These states will be fully explained in the fifth chapter under the title, Blake’s dialectical vision.

The researcher is trying to establish the innocent atmosphere of the Songs of Innocence in each poem by explaining the religious notions
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

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

[PLATE 9]
of them. Since the first poem in each book is of great significance for understanding the whole book, the researcher tries to give a detailed explanation of them.

Blake’s painting of The Lamb (D) accompanies the text for further illustration of the idea in the poem.

THE LAMB

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life and bid thee feed.
By the stream and o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb Who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!
He is created by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek and he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.49

*The Lamb* is the climax of *the Songs of Innocence* like *Tyger* which is exactly its counterpart in *the Songs of experience*. The reader feels a strong affinity for *the Lamb*. *The Lamb* is here clearly Jesus Christ.

As F.W.Bateson rightly suggests Blake is fond of the construction ‘of’ plus abstract noun, e.g. “clothing of delight”50 “virtues of delight”51, in such phrases the abstract noun should not be regarded as a personification; the meaning intended is equivalent to an adjective, e.g. clothing productive of delight to the wearer, delightful clothing.

The last part of the poem unfolds the identity of the Lamb because a Christian child is called by the name of Christ.52

The ideas of God in *The Lamb* are about someone whom the speaker knows intimately as if He were a constant companion. The speaker in *The Lamb* is quite sure of his understanding about God, that is why he repeats his understanding with assurance: “Little Lamb, I’ll tell thee.”53

In *The Lamb*, the child is very proud of his knowledge and is delighted to instruct, in play, the lamb which knows less than himself, which does not know, even, how to speak or understand what it is told. But the child can understand the account he has been given, and sees what is, for him, the sensible and obvious truth that a gentle creature created the world. When he tells the lamb about the “meek and mild”54 Lamb of God, the child is very sure that he knows the truth, and it is the reason for his repetitions.55
Sweet babe in thy face,
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me,

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee;

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,
Who become an infant small,
Infant smiles are his own smiles,
Heaven & earth to peace beguiles.
In *The Lamb* Blake combines simplicity with sound effects to get the intended result. The repetition of the sound ‘l’ is very pleasing. If the reader listens carefully, and read the painting along with the poem, he can even hear the bleating sound of a sheep between the lines. The sheep with its innocent and simple sound tries to worship its creator. It speaks about the simplicity and innocence of the Lamb of God. Blake’s painting of a *Cradle Song* (E) gives even more meaning to the text.

**A CRADLE SONG**

Sweet dreams for a shade,
O’er my lovely infants head.
By happy silent moony beams.
Sweet sleep with soft down,
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep angel mild,
Hover o’er my happy child.
Sweet smiles in the night,
Hover over my delight.
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.
Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.
Sleep sleep happy child.
All creation slept and smil’d.
Sleep sleep, happy sleep,
While o’er thee thy mother weep.
Sweet babe in thy face,
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me
Wept for me for thee for all,
When he was an infant small.
Thou his image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee.
Smiles on thee on me on all,
Who became an infant small,
Infant smiles are his own smiles,
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.\(^{56}\)

No doubt this song suggested by the attractive *A Cradle Hymn*,
which is in a similar metre, at the end of Isaac Watts’s *Divine and Moral Songs*, a book that Blake knew very well indeed.\(^{57}\)

This appealing lullaby would seem to show the relationship between a loving and wise mother and her innocent baby, as she sings him to sleep.

It is written in a suitably simple form of four line stanzas with rhyming couplets. The structure of the poem is interesting; the first four stanzas each begins with the word ‘sweet’ which is repeated in the third line, but it moves from ‘Sweet dreams’ to ‘Sweet sleep’ to ‘Sweet smiles’ to ‘Sweet moans’, perhaps suggesting a progression from the world of
innocence to experience, although the mother is wishing the world of experience away from her infant.

The mother weeps over the baby because she knows that sooner or later he must leave the world of innocence and enter that of experience. The mother then refers to the ‘holy image’ of the Christ child that she can see in her baby’s face,

   Sweet babe once like thee
   Thy maker lay and wept for me.\textsuperscript{58}

The poem continues with overtly religious references, such as ‘Infant smiles are his own smiles’, showing Blake’s equation of innocence with Jesus, the lamb.

From the world of experience expressed in ‘sweet moans’, the poem moves back to the world of innocence, but now raised to a spiritual level. In this way the poem could be read as the ideal journey to the infant’s soul expressed in the lullaby sung by the wise and loving mother. The second illustration, which shows the child’s pillow like a halo, would seem to support this idea.\textsuperscript{59}

*The Divine Image* is the next *Songs of Innocence* which is simply a religious poem; unfolding divine characteristics of both God and man. Blake’s painting (F) shows even more than the text itself.
The Divine Image.

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

For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love,
Is God our Father dear?
And Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love
Is Man his child and care.

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

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

And all must love the human form,
in heathen, Turk or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.
THE DIVINE IMAGE

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.
For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love
Is Man his child and care.
For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.
Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.
And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.60

The essence of all being, as set forth in the piece called The Divine Image, is the spirit of “Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love”61, and as, later, he
uses the terms ‘poetic genius’ and ‘imagination’ to express his conception of this fundamental principle, so, here, the ‘Divine Image’ is his vision of that spirit which is at once universal and particular, God and Man. Under the inspiration of this belief, the world of experience fades away: there is nothing of death, pain, or cruelty, except in the opening couplet of *The Chimney Sweeper*, and even then, the idea of suffering is almost lost in the clear sense of a sustaining presence of love in the rest of the poem. Every other instance shows sorrow and difficulty to be but occasions for the immediate manifestation of sympathy. God, as the tender Father, the angels, the nurse, or even the humbler forms of insect and flower, as in *The Blossom*, or *A Dream*, all are expressions of the same universal ethic of love. But, perhaps, the most remarkable illustration of this belief, particularly when contrasted with Blake’s later criticism of public charity, is *Holy Thursday*. Clearly, in the world of these Songs there is not any suspicion of motives, nor envy or jealousy. To use a later phrase by Blake, it is a “lower Paradise”\(^\text{62}\), very near to the perfect time wherein the lion shall lie down with the lamb: as in the poem *Night*, the angels of love are always by to restrain violence or to bring solace to its victims.\(^\text{63}\)

Blake is most careful to make a separation between Innocence and Experience. Innocence, it is true, provides Experience with its ideals of justice, love, charity, and so on, but Innocence itself knows no ideals, needs no constraints of that sort. Experience, with some sense of the loves and sympathies it once knew and may know again, sets up its substitute: an orderly structure of aims, and it does well to make these consistent, and soundly based on ‘nature’ and the understanding, as
Hobbes does. In our better moments, however, we transcend such structures.64

Since Blake has created his own system in his poetry successfully, the text should be interpreted according to the marginal engravings. Thus ‘The Divine Image’ separates deity into its four component virtues, those four daughters of the voice of God: Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love. It asserts that the God who embodies these virtues becomes man and that the man who embodies them becomes God. The organizing formal element in the design is a flame-plant that rises from lower right to upper left, forming borders as it rises. Embraced by a delicate flowering convolvulus that may presage the coming Fall, the plant is an organic version of Jacob’s ladder that unites heaven and earth. From heaven descends a robed lady, clearly a goddess, attended by a flying joy, a tiny personified aurora that precedes the dawn. As God becomes man, or woman, really in the upper left, man becomes God in lower right, for Christ raises a figure from the ground, who with his companion will leave the cave of distress to climb the plant upward. Two tiny figures near the top represent the men of every clime who pray in their distress. In the poem mankind is called simply man and the divinity simply God. But in the elaborating design mankind is presented as a man and a woman, while God is presented at the bottom as Christ and at the top in female form. The presence of both sexes reminds us that one of the four divine attributes is Love, that Blake’s Innocence is a world of natural sexuality, and that this particular poem recommends ‘virtues of delight’.65
F.W. Bateson in his book, entitled *Selected Poems of William Blake* has a brilliant comment on this song which relates it to Swedenborg's principles. The essential identity of God and man, one of Blake's central beliefs, was one that he had found in Swedenborg. There is a tradition that this poem was composed in the New Jerusalem Church in Hatton Garden (London), but in 1789, the only Swedenborgian chapel in England was the original meeting-place of the Society in Great Eastcheap. If unfounded the tradition may at least reflect a genuine interest by Swedenborgians in a thoroughly Swedenborgian poem.66

Blake's conviction of the divinity of Man that he shares with God in the person of Jesus is very much the focus of this poem. The title reflects the Christian belief that mankind was made in the image of God. He selects the virtues of 'Mercy, pity, Peace, and Love' as those which human beings value most and which are attributes of God, but also of people. These are the virtues to which humans appeal in their distress or need, much as a television documentary about starving or needy children hopes to appeal to the same feelings in their viewers. Blake's hatred of injustice and suffering lead him to remind the reader that these are attributes both of 'God our father dear' and of 'Man his child and care'. Those who profess to believe in god must also believe in their fellow beings.

It is a song of innocence because it presents a vision of the possibility of paradise on earth, if all people realized the humanity and the divinity within themselves and each other. It is revolutionary because the view of Christians at the time would certainly not see 'heathens', 'turks' (Muslims) or 'jews' as being in the image of God, which was only

Sweet joy befall thee.
acquired through Christian baptism. This was why so many missionaries ventured across the globe, either in the wake of colonialism or in the vanguard. They wanted to bring God to the native peoples through baptising them and teaching them Christian doctrine and there was no question of seeing them as having divinity through virtue of their humanity.

The repetition of the qualities ‘Mercy, Pity, peace and Love’ is reinforced by a rhythmic beat that is, once again, reminiscent of nursery songs and rhymes and therefore reminds the reader that this is a vision of innocence that makes a perfect world seem possible. Blake’s colorful painting (G) even tries to express more than the text.

**INFANT JOY**

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!
Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile.
I sing the while
Sweet joy befall thee. 
This poem shows the infant who is wanted and loved; by implication the parents here are wise and tender, shown in their reaction to the baby. The repetition of the word ‘joy’ suggests the romantic view of childhood and infancy, where children are seen as innocents to be protected and played with. The poem begins with a dialogue apparently between the newborn infant and its parent about the choice of a name. Babies were not generally given names until they were baptized and then it was often the name of a godparent, hence the term ‘Christian name’. The given name perhaps signified the power of the established churches to ‘own’ an individual through the rites of baptism or christening and may explain why Blake uses the dialogue between the parent and child to ‘call’ the infant and to use a name that signifies the feelings between its parents on conception and the feelings of the mother for her baby. The baby in stanza one appears to be giving its name to the parent. Naming the child enables it to become a separate being with its own identity.

The infant’s voice is not heard in stanza two, as the parent has agreed to the name, ‘Sweet joy I call thee’, and is rewarded by the baby’s smile. The bond between the parent and child is expressed in the song that wishes ‘Sweet joy befall thee’, with its hint that there are different possibilities. The song is reminiscent of a lullaby, but also, critics have suggested, of the hymns taught by rote to children to sing in church. The two stanzas mirror each other in form and pattern and the poem is highly repetitive, as songs of young children often are. The next song which is Nurse’s Song is accompanied by Blake’s painting (H).
Nurse's Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And every thing else is still

"Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise;
Come come leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies."

"No no let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides in the sky, the little birds fly
And the hills are all covered with sheep."

"Well well go & play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed."
The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd
And all the hills echoed.
NURSE’S SONG

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard in the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still
Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Come home leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies
No no let us play, for it is yet day
And we can not go to sleep
Besides in the sky, the little birds fly
And the hills are all covered with sheep
Well well go and play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed
The little ones leaped and shouted and laugh’d
And all the hill echoed. 71

An early version of this song was sung by Mrs. Nannicantipot in An Island in the Moon. The possessive in the title may be misleading. This song, unlike its Experience opposite, is not by a nurse but about a nurse. Blake’s spelling of the past participles makes it clear that ‘leaped’ is to be a disyllable and laughed which he spells ‘laugh’d’ a monosyllable.
No doubt he picked up this kind of verbal slovenliness from earlier children’s books or the rhymed versions of the *Psalms*, where archaisms are often used to eke out metre and rhyme. The thrisyllabic echoed is another example of the same habit.72

The nurse is presented as a kind and loving carer who has true empathy with the children in her charge. She is the main narrator in the poem and tells us that when she can hear the children’s voices raised in happiness and laughter, ‘My heart is at rest within my breast’, showing that this causes her contentment. However, she is also aware of her role as protector, since she urges them to ‘come home’ because it is beginning to go dark, ‘And the dews of night arise’, when it is not safe to be outside. The children, however, who are the narrators in stanza three, beg to stay out longer, using the argument of children in all ages:

No, no, let us play, for it is yet day
And we can not go to sleep…73

The nurse understands their feelings. She empathies with the children and expresses the Romantic view of childhood, where it is seen as ideal for children to roam free among natural surroundings for as long as possible, thus prolonging the days of their innocence. This is expressed by nurse’s agreement:

Well, well, go and paly till the light fades away
And then go home to bed74

Although the night will be replaced by another daytime, there is a sense in which the coming darkness also represents the world of experience creeping up on the children, and the wise nurse wishes to keep it at bay as long as she can. This judgement is supported by the
The Blossom.
Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom.
final lines, where the hills, Nature itself, echo the children’s laughter and emphasizes their harmony with the natural world of hills, sheep, and birds.

The theme of guardianship and protection is shown here in the person of the nurse and the emphasis is on the world of childhood innocence, beloved of Rousseau and the Romantics. The simple language and the ‘jogging’ style of the rhythm which is reminiscent of nursery rhymes like ‘Ride a cock horse’ combine with the limerick-style rhyme scheme to create an atmosphere of carefree joy in a world where danger seems far away, although hinted at in the coming on of night. The following poem is also accompanied by Blake’s painting (l) in order to give more meaning to the text.

THE BLOSSOM
Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossm
Sees you swift as narrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.
Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom. 76

F.W. Bateson believes that this poem is ambiguous. The Blossom has puzzled some commentators. The robin’s sobbings need have no allegorical significance. Their principal function in the poem is simply to balance and complement the sparrow’s happiness. In the nursery sparrows are traditionally merry, just as robins are tragic. Blake’s point is presumably the unity of vegetable, animal and human nature in Innocence. 77

This poem has given rise to different interpretations from critics, some of whom see it as a specifically sexual poem and others who disagree strongly, arguing that its inclusion in Songs of Innocence rules out such an overt theme. The former see the references to ‘arrow’ as the penis and to ‘cradle narrow’ as the vagina with the obvious implication of the speaker’s ‘bosom’ implying a free embrace of sexual relations. They also argue that the sparrow is ‘merry’ at the prospect of love, while robin’s ‘sobbing’ implies orgasm. The image in the engraving is said to depict the penis both erect and flaccid, while the small winged creatures are representative of the semen which generates new life. A blossom traditionally symbolizes youth opening into maturity and the poem is said to celebrate the joy of free and mutual sexual love. The sparrow here is seen in its role as symbol of the goddess Venus, in classical mythology, while Blake would appear to be giving a similar role to the notoriously territorial robin.
Other critics, however, see the poem either as a celebration of the family with the birds and the blossom being reminiscent of paintings of the Holy Family, or else as a plea for the compassion and understanding that the speaker brings to the birds, both in joy and sorrow. The sparrow is seen as a humble and ordinary bird, while the robin symbolizes household harmony and contentment. The sparrow is carefree ‘merry’ while the robin is sad ‘sobbing’ and the blossom creates a harmony between the two sides of life.

As with Infant Joy, the two stanzas mirror each other and the use of repetition reminds the reader of childhood songs, perhaps the one where cock-robin is killed by the sparrow, with his bow and arrow.

It is perfectly possible to reconcile these two views since Blake believed in free love and not in what he saw as the ‘tyranny’ of monogamous marriage. Love, both physical and emotional, should be freely given and enjoyed in his ideal world and should not cause pain to anyone. In an age where marriage was an arranged contract and girls often had little say in who they married, it can be seen why Blake thought some marriages as little more than legalised prostitution, with girls being wed to the highest bidder. Blake himself was very happily married and did not indulge in his ideas of free love, since they would have caused great distress to his wife, Catherine. His views on the ideal world of innocence can encompass sexual feelings, as long as these are free and happy. They are somewhat similar ideas to those of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, who were innocent and happy in their nakedness until they acquired ‘knowledge of good and evil’, when they became ashamed. This knowledge belongs to the world of experience
into which children ‘blossom’ and then society and the teachings of the church make them ashamed of their natural feelings, as Blake would see it.  

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue,
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep.
So your chimneys I sweep and in soot I sleep.
Theres little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl’d like a lambs back, was shav’d, so I said.
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head’s bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.
And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,
That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe Ned and Jack
Were all of them lock’d up in coffins of black
And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open’d the coffins and set them all free.
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.
Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom if he’d be a good boy,  
He’d have God for his father and never want joy.  
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 and warm,  
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.⁷⁹

This poem is written in the same rhythm and ballad form as *the Little Black Boy*, and for the same reason. The simple and direct narrative comes from a child, in this instance a little chimney sweeper. Perhaps even more than children who were set to work in factories or mines or the many other forms of labour that children had to endure, the chimney sweeps had a particularly miserable existence. There were a lot of them, for one thing, since every house had a chimney. They were generally very young, since many of the chimneys had awkward bends that required tiny bodies. It was a horrible job, meaning that they had skin engrained with soot, permanently inflamed eyes, burns from the hot bricks and often unhealed sores where their skin had rubbed off against the chimney sides. The daily distortion of still-growing bones meant that many of them were crippled and their lungs were filled with the choking soot. If they were reluctant to engage in the terrible task, they were beaten, or fires were lit underneath them to force them up the chimney. They were kept by a master and they slept in dormitories on the floor, with few facilities for washing, and given little other than a space to sleep and some food. Blake deplored the society that could treat small children in such a way and exploit them for money; even more the
parents who would sell their children to a master in such a trade, although poverty often dictated this course.

In this poem the researcher can see Blake using satire to express his anger. This poem appears to be a simple story told by the child and it is his viewpoint that the reader sees. The child reports how his mother died while he was still little and his father sold him before he could even speak properly. Blake deliberately shows his first words as ‘weep weep weep weep’ as he has little cause to do anything else. Literally, the words suggest the lisping child plying his trade, ‘sweep, sweep’, but, with the repetition, also sound like a small bird, thus emphasizing the vulnerability of the child as well as his unhappiness. The following line points an accusing finger at the reader with the use of the pronoun, ‘Your chimneys I sweep’, which shows the complicity of all adults in this cruel exploitation. The continuation of the line, ‘in soot I sleep’ shows the impossibility of any escape from the filthy conditions imposed on the children.

The conclusion of the poem appears to be clichéd, but it is put in childlike terms. Thus, Blake is showing the way in which children trust and believe what adults tell them. It is ironic in the sense that when the angel tell Tom, “if he’d be a good boy/ He’d have God for his father and never want joy”80, the interpretation of being ‘a good boy’ would mean different things to Blake and to some of his readers. For those who exploited children, or supported the status quo, it would mean that he should obey his master and not complain about his miserable life and then he would get his reward in heaven; for Blake, however, it would mean that he would be true to his imagination which Blake saw as the
divine part of human beings. In the same way, the final line, “So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm”\textsuperscript{81}, is ambiguous: it could mean the duty to be good and cheerful worker, or it could mean the duty owed by the individual to preserve his innocence through dreams and the use of poetic imagination.\textsuperscript{82}

The next songs in this section are The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found. Blake intended them to be related to each other. Because of his own reason, they are presented respectively.

**THE LITTLE BOY LOST**

Father, father, where are you going
O do not walk so fast.
Speak father, speak to your little boy
Or else I shall be lost,
The night was dark no father was there
The child was wet with dew.
The mire was deep, and the child did sweep
And away the vapour flew.\textsuperscript{83}

An early version of this song is in *An Island in the Moon*, its singer being Quid, who is usually identified with Blake himself.\textsuperscript{84}

In *The Little Boy Lost* which is the first song which tells the story of the boy being lost and in the companion song, *The Little Boy Found* in which the boy will be eventually found, there are some significant religious characteristics.
The first stanza is narrated by the child, begging his father not to walk so fast and to speak to him, ‘Or else I shall be lost’. This could be seen in conventional religious terms as the soul begging God the Father for guidance through the sinful world. It could also be read as the uncaring father leading his child into the forest of experience and there abandoning him.

The second stanza brings no response from the father-figure and the child then is left, lost and alone in the dark and the wet. This is a very deep and primitive fear for children and the reader may empathize with the little boy left in the deep mire, so the fear of sinking might be added to his misery. We are not surprised ‘the child did weep’, but the final line suggests some hope as his weeping seems to make ‘the vapour’ fly away.

If the vapour is a mist, which seems likely, it will represent concealment or obscurity, so for this to depart, means that clear sight or revelation must be at hand. The reader will see what the next poem is called and will know that there is a happy outcome to the child’s panic. This idea is reinforced by the jogging rhythm of the lines, but Blake’s use of wild nature, forest and marsh or mire, suggests the dangerous world of experience, even while, in the engraving, it shows angels surrounding the text and the small boy following a light, perhaps the vapour flying away, perhaps the light of poetic imagination.85
THE LITTLE BOY FOUND

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand’ring light,
Began to cry, but God ever nigh,
Appeared like his father in white.
He kissed the child and by the hand led
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro’ the lonely dale
Her little boy weeping sought. 86

In the companion poem, the child is said to be ‘led by the wandering light’ which could be the ‘vapour’ of the previous poem or could represent a guardian or angelic spirit. He begins to cry but God appears, in white, the symbol of goodness and purity. We may see this as Jesus, the divine man, or as the representation of the divinity in Man. He is described as ‘ever nigh’ (ever near) and as ‘like his father’ and is thus associated and contrasted with the father who lost him in the previous poem, suggesting that the true father responds to his child and stays close to him in the dangerous world of experience. That the child is not yet ready for this journey is shown by God restoring the little boy to his mother, who has been searching for him. However, she has been searching in the ‘lonely dale’, the world of innocence and she, too, is contrasted with the father in the previous poem, both because she has been looking for the child, instead of losing him, and because she believes him to be in the world of innocence and not that of experience. The fact that she is ‘weeping and pale’ shows the grief and worry of the
Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green;
Grey headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.

O what a multitude they seemed, 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.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among.
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.
caring and protective parent. The importance of the childhood world of innocence and the need for wise guidance into the world of experience is a Blakean theme that is shown in these two simple yet profound poems, with their nursery-rhyme metres and their emotional symbols. The researcher includes Blake’s painting (J) to accompany the text for more illumination.

**HOLY THURSDAY**

Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two and two in red and blue and green
Grey headed beadles walked before with wands as white as snow
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow
O what a multitude they seemd 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 and girls raising their innocent hands
Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among
Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

Once more, Blake uses a simple nursery style rhythm to create a picture which at first seems to be one of innocent happiness and natural gratitude. Thousands of children, ‘their innocent faces clean’ are walking into Saint Paul’s cathedral in London for a special service on
‘Holy Thursday’. The children’s numbers are described by Blake as ‘multitudes’ and their procession into the cathedral is compared to ‘like Thames waters flow’. The children are like ‘flowers’, ‘lambs’ and angels in their innocence. They sit in ‘companies’ (or schools) and they have ‘radiance all their own’ as if their natural goodness was visible. Their singing of the hymns is like ‘a mighty wind’ or ‘harmonious thunderings’ which reaches the ‘seats of heaven’ because God will hear the voices of the pure in heart.

However, there are hints of a very different picture underneath this pleasing sight. The children are ‘walking two and two in red and blue and green’. This suggestion of regimenting (increased by the repetition of the ampersand) brings with it the idea of coercion, which is reinforced by the ‘Grey headed beadles’ who carry ‘wands as white as snow’. These are symbols of their office, but may also serve as a reminder that beatings were fairly frequent within the charity schools. The uniforms, the children wear are smart but also a constant reminder that they must obey the rules of their institution or risk being turned out to the streets to starve. Surely it is no coincidence that the final two lines put together the ‘wise guardians of the poor’ with the admonition ‘Then cherish pity; lest you drive an angel from your door’.

Charity schools were established by wealthy benefactors with the aim of educating the children of the poor to become useful and God-fearing citizens. They were totally reliant on gifts and donations from charitably minded people and therefore had to prove their usefulness and high moral standards. While there is no doubt that they saved many children from a life of starvation, begging, thievery and prostitution,
they did not encourage any ‘unsuitable’ ideas in their pupils about freedom, individuality or rising above their station. The basis for their education was the Bible and religious instruction was the most important lesson, which also helped to instill in them a proper sense of gratitude to their benefactors and teachers. They might be taught basic reading, writing and mathematics and also vocational studies.

This poem should be read alongside the poem of the same title in Songs of Experience to appreciate the satire used by Blake here.\footnote{89}

F.W.Bateson also provides detailed explanations about Holy Thursday at the time of Blake that may be a good and strong motivation for writing such a poem.

Annual services were held in London each Ascension day, from 1704 to 1877, for the children attending the various London Charity Schools. In 1782 the Charity Schools’ Anniversary, as it was called, was transferred to St.Paul’s Cathedral because of the increase in the number of children at the School. As there is a version of the song in An Island in the Moon, which dates from December 1784, Blake must have witnessed one of the earliest Anniversaries held in St. Paul’s. It may be of interest to the reader that the average attendance was four to five thousand children.

\section*{A DREAM}

Once a dream did weave a shade,

O’er my Angel-guarded bed,
That an Emmet lost it’s way
Where on grass methought I lay.
Troubled, wilder, and forlorn;
Dark, benighted, travel-worn,
Over many a tangled spray
All heart-broke I heard her say.
“O my children! Do they cry
Do they hear their father sigh?
Now they look abroad to see,
Now return and weep for me.”
Pitying I drop’d a tear:
But I saw a glow-worm near:
Who replied. “What wailing wight”
Calls the watchman of the night?
“I am set to light the ground,
While the beetle goes his round:
Follow now the beetles hum,
Little wanderer, hie thee home.”

This poem has themes of being lost and found and also of empathy and guardianship. The narrator dreams that he is lying on grass at night, and watching an emmet (ant) wandering about lost. The narrator gives a full description of her which personifies the insect as a weary traveller, thus gaining sympathy from the reader for her plight. The narrator within his dream then hears the ant talking. The picture drawn by the poet is one of the lost mother’s family sighing and alternately running to
look out for her ‘Now they look abroad to see’ and going back to weep because she is not there ‘Now return and weep for me’. Although this is an ant, the condition is made real for the reader, even more so when the narrator himself feels such sympathy that ‘Pitying I drop’d a tear’.

To the narrator’s relief, a glow-worm hears the ant and asks ‘What wailing wight (person) Calls the watchman of the night?’. The glow-worm then tells the ant that he is the light by which the beetle ‘goes his round’ and if she follows the beetle’s hum and his light she will get home safely. Again this is almost a whimsical story, such as one might tell a young child, who would accept readily that ant can talk and glow-worm can guide them home, written in Blake’s usual simple nursery rhythm in four line stanzas and rhyming couplets.

The themes of being lost and found are similar to those in The Little Boy Lost and The Little Boy Found, except that the roles are reversed. Where the boy’s mother goes searching until he is restored to her by God, the ant-mother has to find her way back to her children with the help from the glow-worm, ‘nature’s own lantern’.92

5. THE BOOK OF THEL

*The Songs of Innocence* contain about twelve poems which are called contrary poems because they have their opposites in *The Songs of Experience*. The subtitle of these songs is *Shewing the Two Contrary States of Human Soul*. The researcher in this section tries to give a brief religious interpretation of *The Book of Thel*. The reason for the inclusion of *The Book of Thel* in this part is clear. *The Book of Thel*
Why fade these children of the spring?
enjoys the very atmosphere of innocence therefore, it should be
explained in continuation to The Songs of Innocence. Apart from that,
this book was published after The Songs of Innocence, so the next work
which is going to be interpreted is The Book of Thel. Blake’s painting
of Thel (K) accompanies the text for a better understanding of the text.

The text of *The Book of Thel* is taken from a copy at the British
Museum. Chronologically this book comes between Songs of Innocence
and Songs of Experience. It describes the soul on the threshold of
Experience. The illustrations to the book have all the delicate grace and
beauty which characterize the verse.

The theological reference in Songs of Innocence is clear. God and
Jesus are but visions of the love that animates all forms of being. Hence,
at this period, Blake’s position is distinct from that of mystical poets like
Henry Vaughan, in whom a more dogmatic faith tends to overshadow
the appeal of the natural universe. So, too, Blake’s poetry has more of
the instinct of human joy. Mercy, pity, peace and love, the elements of
the Divine Image, are virtues of delight, and nothing is clearer in these
songs than his quick intuition and unerring expression of the light and
gladness in common things. In this, he returns to poems in Poetical
Sketches like ‘I Love the Jocund Dance’, rather than to the more formal
pieces of nature-poetry. His delight in the sun, the hills, the streams, the
flowers and buds, in the innocence of child and of the lamb, comes not
from sustained contemplation but as an immediate impulse. There is not
yet any sign of his later attitude towards the physical world as a shadow
of the world of eternity. His pleasure in the consciousness of this
unifying spirit in the universe was still too fresh to give pause for
theorizing; and, perhaps for this reason, such pieces as Laughing Song, Spring, The Echoing Green, The Blossom and Night, sung in pure joy of heart, convey more perfectly than all his later attempts at exposition the nature of his visionary faith. In Blake’s later writings, there is a wide gulf between the symbol and the reality it conveys; so, the reader must first grapple with a stubborn mass of symbolism. But, in Songs of Innocence, this faculty of spiritual sensation transfigures rather than transforms. Thus, in The Lamb, pleasure in the natural image persists, but is carried further and exalted by the implication of a higher significance. It is the manifest spontaneity of this mystical insight that carries Blake safely over dangerous places. A little faltering in the vision or staining after effect would have sunk him, by reason of the simplicity of theme, diction and metre, now the sources of peculiar pleasure, into unthinkable depths of feebleness. Contrast with the strength of these seemingly fragile lines the more consciously didactic pieces like The Chimney Sweeper and The Little Black Boy. These, indeed, have the pleasant qualities of an unpretentious and sincere spirit; but their burden of instruction brings them too near to the well-meant but somewhat pedagogic verse that writers like Nathaniel Cotton and Issac Watts thought most suitable for the young. Blake regarded children more humanly as the charming Introduction to these Songs bears witness, or the poem Infant Joy, a perfect expression of the appeal of infancy. And, in The Cradle Song, almost certainly suggested by Watts’s lines beginning “Hush! My dear, lie still and slumber”94, Blake’s deeper humanity lifts him far above the common-place moralisings of his model.
Some critics believe that *Songs of Innocence* and *Thel* are the beginning of Blake’s mysticism. It should be noted that the Book of *Thel* was engraved in 1789, though its final section is almost certainly later in date. The regularity of its unrimed fourteeners, the idyllic gentleness of its imagery and the not unpleasant blending of simplicity and formalism in the diction, proclaim the mood of *Songs of Innocence*. It treats the same all-prevading spirit of mutual love and self-sacrifice. In response to the gentle lamentations of the virgin Thel, to whom life seems vain, and death utter annihilation, the lily of the valley, the cloud, the worm and the cloud, rise up to testify to the interdependence of all forms of being under the law of the Divine Image, and to show that death is not final extinction, but the supreme manifestation of this impulse to willing sacrifice of self. Blake’s original conclusion to this argument is lost, for the last section has not any perceptible connection in its context. In it, the whole conception of life is changed. This world is a dark prison, and the physical senses are narrow windows darkening the infinite soul of man by excluding ‘the wisdom and joy of eternity’, the condition of which is freedom. The source of this degradation is the tyranny of abstract moral law, the “mind-forged manacles” upon natural and, therefore, innocent desires; its symbols are the silver rod of authority and the golden bowl of a restrictive ethic that would mete out the immeasurable spirit of love. Here, Blake is clearly enough in the grip of the formal antinomianism that produced the later prophecies.

Blake’s pictures and poetry are evocative, and have meaning on many levels. Ultimately you will need to decide for yourself what you will get from *The Book of Thel*. Blake was not just the author. He also
illustrated, engraved the entire text and the pictures by hand on copper plate, printed it, and hand-coloured every copy so that no two were alike. He had even developed the process by which his books were produced, and had prepared his own paints.

Most visitors already know something of Blake’s arcane symbolism in *The Tyger*. Somewhere in the distant deeps and skies, the stars throw down their spears and weep, while the Creator uses blacksmith’s equipment to craft the first tiger.

*The Book of Thel* goes beyond *The Tyger*. Blake takes us into the spiritual world of beauty and terror. Some readers found Thel’s tale compelling.

The theme of usefulness is clearly shown in *The Book of Thel*. In the beginning of this chapter, the researcher gives a list of the principles which are originally Swedenborgian but Blake applied some of them in his works. One of them which is used in The Book of Thel is Swedenborg’s doctrine of uses. Thel can not find any uses for her life, that is why she is upset and escapes to the world from which she first came.

The researcher attracts the attention of the reader to the fact that the text should be read along with the accompanying design. Otherwise the reader can not comprehend the intended result.

The story of *The Book of Thel* is very convincing. Thel is a shepherdess living in an idyllic world. The creatures of this world address her as their sovereign. But she is seeking answers. Her life in insubstantial and seems purposeless.
Thel asks why the flowers must wither and die. She compares her life to transient, formless things, including a rainbow, a parting cloud, reflections in a mirror or in water, the dreams and smiles of babies, the cooing of doves, daytime, and music. Thel hopes that when she dies, she will die comfortably and hears God’s voice.

A lily of the valley speaks to Thel. In Blake’s illustration, the flower has a human form and is bowing to Thel. The flower says God is good even to a little flower. It is protected in the spring, and in the summer when it dies, it will have a happier life in heaven. The lily offers this as an answer to Thel’s questions.

Thel blesses the flower for its gifts to other simple things. The meek lamb is comforted by the fragrance and can be nourished and cleansed by the flower. Its pollen helps purify honey. Its perfume scattered on the grass revives the cow after milking and calms wild horses. But Thel says her own life seems as evanescent as the glow of a cloud at sunrise, and that she has not yet found a purpose.

The flower directs Thel to a cloud and goes to attend to its responsibilities. Thel asks the cloud why it is not troubled by its mortality. The cloud answers that life is about renewal. After it has vanished, it will bring life to flowers and humans and exist in a far richer form.

Thel answers that she does not feel useful, and for this reason she has no joy in her life. She asks whether her life is purposeless, and whether at her death she will merely feed worms.

The cloud replies that feeding worms is a wonderful purpose for life, because all lives are bound together. The cloud summons a worm
onto a leaf and flies away to find its partner. In the illustration, the cloud and the worm also have human form, as the lily did. The worm cannot speak, but it can weep, and Thel pities it, imagining that it is a little motherless child.

A piece of clay hears Thel. The clay moistens and nourishes the worm. It tells Thel that God loves even the clay and made it the nurturer and mother of all things, which is beyond the clay’s comprehension. In a third illustration, the clay and worm appear as a woman and child at the feet of the seated Thel.

Thel marvels at this. She knows that God loves worms and will punish anyone who willfully destroys even the littlest life for no reason. But she did not know that God takes care to nurture worms. She says that she has found a consolation and answer for her mortality.

Now the clay asks Thel:

Wilt thou O Queen enter my house. 'tis given to thee to enter,
And to return; fear nothing. enter with thy virgin feet.97

If Thel accepts, she will achieve being and purpose.

Thel enters a new world, that is the world of graves. It is a terrible place, without the joys of Thel’s world. Then, Thel comes to her own grave, and sits down beside it. She hears a voice perhaps her own voice, enumerating the organs of sense and sexuality, and how each of these must bring suffering. At last, Thel runs back screaming to the Vales of Har, that is her own world.
The lily, the cloud, and the clay all serve others, and teach that life is indeed worth living. The lily assures Thel of a happy afterlife. The cloud teaches Thel that all life is wonderfully interconnected. The clay promises that Thel will be nurtured, and offers her the opportunity to have experience. Thel realizes that this is the answer she was seeking, even though she does not yet act upon it.

Some critics believe that The Book of Thel was written after the Blakes lost an unborn child.

O life of this our spring! Why fades the lotus of the water? Why fade these children of the spring? Born but to smile and fall. Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud, Like a reflection in a glass. Like shadows in the water. Like dreams of infants. Like a smile upon an infants face, Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air; Ah! Gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head. And gentle sllep the sleep of death. And gentle hear the voice Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time.⁹⁸

The Blakes could take comfort in believing that their unborn child, like Thel, could still live forever without suffering.

Some writers emphasize Thel’s refusal as a rejection of sexuality. But Blake thought this is something that people, especially young people, should not be denied or deny themselves. Perhaps accepting sexuality and accepting incarnation are all bound up together. Some
people may find Thel to be selfish and wonder whether the other beings addressing her as queen is sarcasm.

The end of *The Book of Thel* connects Blake to Dante. It is clear that Blake loved Dante, who wrote about his own long poem as having allegorical meanings on four different levels. Just as Dante describes both the afterlife and this world in the same images, so *The Book of Thel* seems to describe both a spirit’s pre-existence and a human’s own coming to terms with life and what it must bring.

The moral of *The Book of Thel* may be the assurance that was given to Thel, in spite of the fact that Thel herself does not take it seriously. Perhaps the other beings in *The Book of Thel* advise her not to run away. Perhaps they are telling her that whatever happens to her will ultimately empower her to live for others.

The theme of *The Book of Thel* can be summarized in Thel’s motto which is written at the beginning of The Book:


```plaintext
Thel’s Motto
Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?
Or Love in a golden bowl?^9^9
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Thel’s motto is cryptic. It seems to ask whether wisdom and love (which Thel seeks) are to be achieved by remaining in the remote spiritual realms (the eagle) or by becoming incarnate (the mole, the rod and bowl). The eagle has keen sight but is remote; the mole is blind
dwells in the earth. The golden bowl is familiar from Ecclesiastes, where it is paired with a silver cord. Both must be emblems of incarnation, because they are destroyed at physical death. Thel’s question is subtle. For some reason, embodiment is essential to full experience, but it is also limiting.}

6. THE SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

1- INTRODUCTION
2- EARTH’S ANSWER
3- A CRADLE SONG
4- INFANT SORROW
5- NURSE’S SONG
6- THE SICK ROSE
7- THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER
8- A LITTLE BOY LOST
9- HOLY THURSDAY
10- THE ANGEL
11- THE HUMAN ABSTRACT
12- THE TYGER
Unlike the *Songs of Innocence*, Experience reminds Blake’s readers of death and decay. Blake’s most obvious sign of man’s perverted state appears in the borders, in the vegetation with which he surrounds text and design. In Innocence it was fresh, attractive, abundant; in Experience it recalls the earlier ripeness but is in fact dead or dying. The tree of Innocence is healthy, its branches entwined in a natural embrace; but it anticipates the Fall in the serpentine creeper that often winds about its trunk. The tree of Experience is dry and dying, its withering branches form round arches or flat, inhibiting horizontals over the pages as its spiky twigs invade the text; but its shape and the few sprays that still shoot recall its primal vigour. Experience is related to Innocence as a fossil is to a living creature, as petrified wood to a thriving branch. According to Blake, Experience is the work of church, state, and man in society. The researcher attracts the reader’s attention to Blake’s painting (L) at the beginning of *The Songs of Experience*.

The Poet-Christ of Innocence manifests himself in different ways but nowhere more fundamentally than in the equation of the Poetic and Prophetic character, of divine love and human imagination. The Poet of the frontispiece, who lowers his pipe at the vision, is entirely human; the child on a cloud just above his head is both natural and divine, as are the Lamb of the fields and the Infant born in a flower. All those who rescue the lost and the wayfaring are manifestations of the divine shepherd who seeks and finds the straying sheep.

Experience, on the other hand, starts with the voice of the Bard. It is suggested that Blake seems to have passed through a spiritual crisis.
when he composed *the Songs of Experience*; but Blake’s genius was not discouraged by trouble and anxiety.\textsuperscript{103}

The gloomy atmosphere of the Experience is in fact in vivid contrast with that of the Innocence. The climax of this contrast can be observed in the Lamb and the Tyger which is the subject of the fifth chapter entitled Fearful Symmetry. Here the contrast is very obvious, "Little Lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee?"\textsuperscript{104} The answer is God, who became incarnate as Jesus the Lamb. The Tyger asks, "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"\textsuperscript{105} and the answer is, yes, God made the Tyger too. To understand *The Tyger* fully, you need to know Blake’s symbols.

One of the central themes in his major works is that of the Creator as a blacksmith. This is both God the Creator personified in Blake’s myth as Los and Blake himself again with Los as his alter-ego. Blake identified God’s creative process with the work of an artist. And it is art that brings creation to its fulfillment, by showing the world as it is, by sharpening perception, by giving form to ideas. Blake’s story of creation differs from the Genesis account. The familiar world was created only after a cosmic catastrophe. When the life of the spirit was reduced to a sea of atoms, the Creator set a limit below which it could not deteriorate farther, and began creating the world of nature. The longer books that Blake wrote describe Los’s creation of animals and people within the world of nature. One particularly powerful passage in *Milton* describes Los’s family weaving the bodies of each unborn child.\textsuperscript{106}

*The Tyger* starts with a question and it ends with the very same question; causing the reader to wonder and surprise. The experienced
speaker of *the Tyger* wants the reader to contemplate. The question is not asked to be answered; it is an essential function of the poem to make his reader contemplate the Creator.

Blake’s poetry is dense and multi-layered and expresses the wide range of emotions and thoughts that passed through his brain. Some of the most revealing verses are the symmetrical poems in *the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience*.

His *Songs of Innocence* convey messages of caring love and special attributes of God as in *the Divine Image*. The image of angel and other religious symbols figure powerfully in Blake’s poetry not only because of their mystical and religious significance as cultural symbols but also because many of Blake’s visions were religious in nature. In the Songs of Innocence, Blake’s poem, *the Divine Image* reflects upon the idealistic tones of his mysticism and what they mean for the future of humanity. In this poem, Blake attributes four characteristics to both God and man: mercy, pity, peace, and love. These divine attributes of God are reflections of what God finds in man, whom He has created, rather than vice versa. In a line with Swedenborg’s conception, the potential for realizing the divine is in man and does not require supernatural intercession. It only requires that man be in tuned with the mystical powers he harbors within his own soul; those powers untouched by harsh experience and still connected to that which is Godly. It is no surprise, in the light of Blake’s own visionary experiences, that he would value this conception of the divine. Blake is simply a free spirit capable of realizing his mystical power. Blake’s philosophy, as expressed in this poem, is one of innocence, forgiveness, and love. But
SONGS OF EXPERIENCE†

1794

The Author & Printer W Blake

† See color plate 6 for frontispiece, plate 28.
it is more than an expression of Christian charity; it is a call for each individual to recognize the potential of their own creativity and imagination.\textsuperscript{107}

The researcher is going to present twelve poems from \textit{The Songs of Experience}. They are called opposite poems. Some of these poems have their contrary companions in \textit{The Songs of Innocence}, even with the same title, such as \textit{Introduction, Nurse’s Song, Holy Thursday}, and \textit{The Chimney Sweeper}. Blake’s painting (M) accompanies \textit{The Songs of Experience} in order to show the gloomy atmosphere of these songs.

\textit{Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience}:

Four years separated the issue of these two books and it seems unlikely that Blake had any thought of the second book when he began writing the first. When, however, he had completed the Songs of Experience, in 1973, he printed the two books together under the additional composite title. Concerning the date of the Songs of Experience (1974), it is noteworthy that his catalogue of books dated October 1973 includes \textit{the Songs of Experience}, and there can be little doubt that most of its poems were written before \textit{The Marriage of Heaven and Hell}. It is unthinkable that Blake should have gone back to the portrayal of contraries as fundamentally enigmatic, after he had joyously accepted them as essential to existence.\textsuperscript{108}

Some critics believe that Blake is aware of the sketches for \textit{Paradise Lost}. As he looked up from the first verse of \textit{Earth’s Answer}, the contorted figure of Satan shrieking his defiance of God, the Father would have met his eyes. And even when there could be no specific influence the drawings would at least tend to confirm and reinforce the
Hear the voice of the Bard!
background of Genesis myth in the poems. The symbolism of Experience draws heavily on the Fall of Man, the Fall of the Angels, the forbidden fruit, the serpent-temper, and similar themes. The fact that Blake had recently been illustrating Genesis episodes and that the illustrations were often before his eyes as he worked out what were often their poetic equivalents is one that needs to be remembered in reading them. The researcher provides the reader with Blake’s painting (N) of Introduction to The Songs of Experience.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, and Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk’d among the ancient trees.
Calling the lapsed Soul
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew!
O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.
Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv’n thee till the break of day.\textsuperscript{110}

Introduction is a difficult poem that needs to be read with its sequel \textit{Earth’s Answer}, if it is not to be misunderstood. Although the order of the other songs varies from copy to copy, \textit{Earth’s Answer} follows Introduction in every extant copy of \textit{Songs of Experience}.\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{EARTH’S ANSWER}
Earth rais’d up her head,
From the darkness dread and drear.
Her light fled:
Stony dread!
And her locks cover’d with grey despair.
Prison’d on watry shore
Starry jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar
Weeping o’er
I hear the Father of the ancient men
Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chain’d in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.
Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower?
Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?
Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain,
Eternal bane!
That free love with bondage bound.\textsuperscript{112}

The Introduction to \textit{Songs of Experience} sees the poet/piper become the poet/bard, with the first line of the poem commanding the reader to ‘hear the voice of the Bard!’ The bard here seems omniscient, he sees the past, present and future and thus acts more as a prophet rather than the piper of \textit{the Songs of Innocence}. The reference to ‘The Holy Word’ may be to the Old Testament, and to Jehovah who forced Adam and Eve from Paradise or to Jesus, the ‘word made flesh’ and Blake believed, the only true way to God. The connotation of the ‘ancient trees’ may be the trees of life (associated with the cross and thus with redemption) although inevitably there are echoes of the tree of knowledge, which created the need for redemption by causing Adam and Eve to lose Paradise. The bard has heard this word that calls ‘the lapsed Soul’ to repentance as represented in the ‘fallen light’ that needs renewing.
‘Fallen Man’ can refer to the biblical fall of Adam and Eve, but also to imprisoned Man in his “mind-forged manacles” unable to break away from the confines of materialism and realize his true spiritual and imaginative potential. ‘The starry pole’ may act as a guiding light, a glimpse of eternity, but stars in Blake often have associations with jealousy, with Science and with Reason and this stanza may be read as the narrator wishing for the ‘Holy Word’ to control the pole star and to renew the fallen light of poetic creativity.

The next stanza may be interpreted as the words of the bard himself, the call to Earth which is at the centre of the poem is to ‘arise from out the dewy grass’ which is associated with the darkness of Night and ignorance and to greet the morning, the daylight of spiritual awakening. The image of daybreak rising from ‘the slumberous mass’ of those sleeping masses of people who do not realize their own creative capacity, is a call from the Bard, the poet to awaken from the sleep of materialism.

The final stanza gives the voice of the bard, the poet or the Holy Word asking Earth, or humanity, to ‘Turn away no more’; it shows how the ‘starry floor’ and the ‘watry shore’ is given for a brief time until ‘the break of day’. This could suggest that the time of jealousy and reason (symbolized by the starry floor) and that of materialism (symbolized by the watry shore) are nearly finished and the time for Man to free his creativity and true spirituality is close, in the ‘break of day’.

*Earth’s Song* is the second song which should be explained in this section. This song follows the introduction and is, as the title suggests, a reply to it. Blake keeps the same form and rhyme scheme to emphasise
this link between the two poems. Earth, personified as a woman, raises her head from the darkness of reason. The description is of someone imprisoned who has aged in experience without attaining wisdom, for the light of imagination and joy is absent. ‘Stony’ reminds us of the mineral world which represents materialism. Earth says that she is imprisoned by reason and the waters of materialism, the coldness is a reminder that Winter is associated with age and the opposite to the Spring of childhood. The stars representing Earth’s exile from heaven are depicted as jealous of human spiritual and creative capacity. The stanza finishes with the ‘Father of the ancient men’, the jealous god of the church, depicted by Blake as Urizen.

Earth refers to this god as the tyrant who keeps her imprisoned by oppressing the force of freedom, joy and creativity. He is the ‘Cruel selfish fear’ that is opposed to ‘the virgins of youth and morning’. This is a clear reference to the church that governs by prohibitions, especially sexual ones, as is made clear in the next stanza, which is all in a question form. Nature rejoices in fertility and sexuality, rather than hiding it furtively away, and therefore this natural way is how ‘Man-in-Nature’ should realise his freedom.

The final stanza is a plea for revolution, to break the ‘heavy chain’ of ‘thou shalt not’ and break free from the tyranny that prevents earth from realising her true creative and poetic imagination.114

F.W.Bateson is another critic whose interpretation of these songs follows. Blake’s problem was to summarize dramatically in dialogue, the essential themes of the Songs of Experience in the way in which the Piper had so successfully introduced the reader to what he would find in
Songs of Innocence. But the essential message of *Songs of experience* was the inadequacy of Innocence in eighteenth-century England, the poem had also to be as different as possible from its predecessor. Instead of the merry Piper, an all-wise Bard; instead of prelapsarian content, the agonies of conflict and oppression after the Fall; instead of a benevolent Christ-Muse, a divine tyrant (Jehovah) and a tyrannized Earth; instead of day, night; instead of poetic lucidity, prophetic obscurity; instead of one poem, two connected poems that would exemplify in their oppositions, the Doctrine of Contraries which provided the metaphysical justification of the two Contrary state.

However, *Earth’s Answer* put the feminine point of view. Women are bound in the same bondage of conventional sexual morality as men, and they too would welcome a return to the sincerity and frankness without which love cannot fulfil its great creative function. The images of man as the farmer and woman as the potentially fertile soil are complementary symbols. But in ‘Hear the voice of the Bard’, Earth is not a woman but ‘the lapsed soul’, that is Adam or perhaps Adam and Eve, and ‘the break of day’ is not a sexual millennium but a political or religious one. And so appeal ‘O Earth, Earth, return!’, which is clearly addressed to mankind in general, really requires a different answer from the one it gets. A general issue is reduced to a particular one.

There are also some lesser difficulties, mainly due to the ambiguity of Blake’s pronouns. It is the Holy Word, Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament who calls ‘the lapsed soul’ and weeps, not the Bard. The ‘Calling’ and ‘weeping’ are what the Bard’s ‘ears have heard’. Earth can be equated with ‘the lapsed soul’, ‘the dewy grass’ referring back to
‘the evening dew’, and ‘fallen, fallen light’ is probably Lucifer. The poem is essentially Paradise Lost retold to suit eighteenth-century realities.

A possible paraphrase might be: Attend carefully, O reader, to the poems of this prophet-seer, who heard Jehovah calling Adam in the Garden of Eden after the Fall. If he wished to, Jehovah could restore Satan to Heaven, but instead He appeals pathetically to mankind to return to His worship, assuring us that the dawn of a new era is about to break and that we will not have to put up with oppression and materialism much longer.

The Genesis interpretation indeed provides the key to the understanding of these poems which follows:

‘And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden’ (Genesis).

A cancelled reading in Earth’s Answer makes it certain that it is the Holy Word that weeps and not the lapsed soul.

Bateson suggests that ‘the Father of the Ancient Men’ is the Holy Word of the Introduction. However, the ‘Father’ who forbids love is killed by the enraged lover, a logical conclusion to the agonized bitterness of Earth’s Answer. But in the less personal and more detached context of the Introduction, it is essential for the reader to accord a measure of awe and sympathy to Jehovah. The essence of the Doctrine of Contraries was that neither pole was ultimately more ‘right’ than the other. Unfortunately, the balance of opposites that is successfully communicated by the Introduction is contradicted by every
line of Earth’s Answer, in which nothing whatever is conceded to Jehovah.115

A CRADLE SONG

Sleep Sleep beauty bright
Dreaming oer the joys of night
Sleep Sleep: in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep
Sweet Babe in thy face
Soft desires I can trace
Secret Joys and secret smiles
Little pretty infant wiles
As thy softest limbs I feel
Smiles as of the morning steal
Oer thy cheek and oer thy breast
Where thy little heart does rest
O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break
From thy cheek and from thy eye
Oer the youthful harvests nigh
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.116
Although, clearly written as a contrary to the Innocence, *Cradle Song*, Blake did not engrave this poem. It was his first full-scale attempt to parody or complement realistically a Song of Innocence, and he may not have been satisfied with it. The title, which has been squeezed in at the top of the page in small letters in the Rossetti MS., seems to have been an afterthought. No doubt the project of a second series of songs that would include disillusioned versions of most of the Songs of Innocence, a project that required the use as far as possible of the same titles, took some time to formulate itself in Blake’s mind. The Motto to the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which is the earliest conclusive evidence of its complete formulation, comes towards the end of the Experience group of poems in the Rossetti MS.\textsuperscript{117}

**INFANT SORROW**

My mother groand! My father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud;
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.
Struggling in my fathers hands:
Striving against my swadling bands:
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mothers breast.\textsuperscript{118}

In contrast with the joyful infant in Songs of Innocence, this infant has had to ‘leap’ into a ‘dangerous world’ amid the groaning and weeping of its parents. Rather than the constructive dialogue between
parent and baby that leads to the ‘calling’ of the baby, there is struggle and conflict, ending in a ‘bound and weary’ infant sulking ‘upon my mother’s breast’. As in many of the poems, childhood is a very different experience which depends on the views and wisdom (or lack of it) of parents and other adults. We might guess, as readers, that the infant called Joy will have the kind of childhood depicted in The Echoing Green, while the un-named infant will be more like the chimney sweepers. There are also echoes of the jealousy that Blake saw in adults for the world of innocence and the view of their child as ‘a fiend hid in a cloud’. This poem has useful connections with A Little Boy Lost and other poems where parents abuse or sell their children.\(^\text{119}\)

Another interpretation of Infant Sorrow emphasizes the contrast between this song and Infant Joy in Songs of Innocence. In the Rosssetti MS., these are the first two verses of a poem that runs to nine verses together which has only used the contrast with Infant Joy as a point of departure for a symbolic denunciation of the corrupting influence of the conventional Christian attitude to marriage. Clearly, Blake had not yet reached the formula of contrary states, which would not have permitted the formlessness that resulted from the use of a Song of Innocence simply as an irrelevant stimulus. The salvaging of the two brilliant opening verses is a nice example of the acute technical self-criticism that Blake possessed at this time.

There is a strange phrase in this song which needs explanation: ‘Like a fiend in a cloud’ Blake had already used this line in the early Mad Song of Poetical Sketches. A similar image occurs in the reference to his brother John. Clouds generally symbolize corruption or
Nurse's Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisprings are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

"Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring & your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise."
oppression in Blake. The principal intention here is perhaps simply to deflate as emphatically as possible the simplicity of Infant Joy. Blake’s painting again accompanies the text in this section.

**NURSE’S SONG**

When the voices of children, are heard on the green
And whispers are in the dale:
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.
Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise
Your spring and your day, are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

This poem acts as a counterpart to the Nurse’s Song in Songs of Innocence. Instead of the wise guardian who allows the children’s play to go as long as possible, this nurse tells them ‘Your spring and your day, are wasted in play’, suggesting that she is trying to lead them as quickly as possible into the sleep of experience. Instead of the laughing on the hill that was heard in Innocence, we read ‘And whisperings are in the dale’, implying secrecy and deception, ideas appropriate to experience. Rather than having a contented heart at the sound of the children’s play, for this nurse speaks with the voice of envy. The jealousy of the adult for the innocence of youth is clear, as is the sexual envy for the pleasures that the young have in store, symbolized in the
O Rose, thou art sick.
picture by the vine with grapes around the doorway. The trusting and honest daylight world of childhood innocence is set against the ‘winter’ of experience and the ‘night’ of disguise and falsehood, darkness after all conceals many things and, in Blake’s Songs, is the time when parents and children become separated and lose each other. The poems are connected by the idea of the guardian calling the children home to protect them from ‘the dews of night’, but their attitude towards the children and their play are very different.

This poem is only half the length of the poem in Innocence although the form and rhythm are the same. The only voice heard here is that of the nurse, the children themselves are silent, unlike the previous poem where they are given a voice and their request is heard. Blake also makes use of two different associations of ‘green’, the grass where the children play and which also shows their youth and immaturity, and the ‘green and pale’, face of the nurse, where it symbolizes jealousy which is focused on the children; thus Blake connects the two sets of connotations. Blake’s painting (P) accompanies the text for more meaning.

THE SICK ROSE

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.\textsuperscript{123}

This poem makes use of a narrator who is addressing the rose, the symbol of love, with the words, ‘thou art sick.’ This image of a blighted rose, which has had its beauty spoiled by an invisible maggot is continued in the following lines. The worm, which has connotations of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, is associated with sex, both by its resemblance to penis and because, in the Bible story, it was the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve to gain knowledge, including sexual knowledge, which led to their downfall. There are also references to the catterpiller which is used by Blake to symbolize a destroyer. ‘The invisible worm’ is a secret agent and it flies ‘in the night’, under the cover of darkness and in ‘the howling storm’, a symbol of confusion and of passions, but also of materialism. Nevertheless it has ‘found out thy bed / of crimson joy’. The bed can mean both the rose bed and the lover’s bed and the crimson joy represents both the colour of the rose (the colour of passion) and the female genitals. In this case the passion is deadly for, ‘his dark secret love/ Does thy life destroy.’ This can have a physical meaning in the shape of sexually transmitted disease, but it can also mean the relationships that have to be furtive and shameful are destroyed by this need of secrecy. Some people have seen the sickness as psychological, a result of unacted desires. Blake wanted love to be free and open and people to enjoy each other without the church telling them it was forbidden and sinful. This can be associated with other
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.

"Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

"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."
poems, such as The Garden of Love and London, where the priests and harlot both have negative connotations.\textsuperscript{124}

In \textit{Songs of Experience}, roses are normally corrupt as well as beautiful, as their thorns and blushes demonstrate. It is significant that The Sick Rose is preceded and followed in Rossetti MS. by two fragments expressing Blake’s savagest social criticism. The invisible worm that seduces and destroys the rose is a servant of Nobodaddy (conventional religion), who is addressed earlier in the MS. In that song, the serpent, as often in \textit{the Songs of Experience}, symbolizes the clergy, who are able to legitimize love by the marriage ceremony. The worm of \textit{The Sick Rose} amounts to much the same thing, that is the corrupting elements responsible for the rose’s vulnerability is primarily the immorality that permits and encourages loveless marriages. The worm-serpent was also one of Boehme’s favourite images, but Blake generally adds a sexual sense to the symbol, and it sometimes stands for the embryo.\textsuperscript{125} The researcher includes Blake’s painting (Q) of The Chimney Sweeper for a better understanding of the poem.

\textbf{THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER}

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in note of woe!
Where are thy father and mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.
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.
And because I am happy, and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.  

A much more sombre poem than that with the same title in *Songs of Innocence*, where the little sweeps could escape through the power of imagination, this poem shows the parents of the little sweep as jealous of his innocent freedom and happiness.

The poem opens with an onlooker describing the little sweep. The contrast between the black sooty figure of the child and the white snow brings to mind both conventional dead metaphors about good and evil and Blake's subversion of these in poems such as *The Little Black Boy*. Clearly Blake does not intend the child himself to be seen as evil, but rather what has happened to him, the conspiracy in the adult world to force him into this dreadful occupation. This is shown in his cries of ‘weep, weep’, which recalls the professional cry of the sweep asking for hire, but also shows the misery of his situation as they are ‘notes of woe!’ When the onlooker asks, ‘Where are thy father and mother? say?’, the little sweep becomes the narrator for the rest of the poem, as he gives an answer that reveals Blake’s anger at his treatment and compassion for his condition. He tells the reader that his parents have ‘both gone up to church to pray’. This shows the hypocrisy of the parents in this outward religious observance, while they sell their child into slavery as an apprentice sweep.
The second stanza clearly reveals one of Blake's themes in the songs of experience, that of the jealous adults who cannot bear to see the innocent world of imagination that they no longer inhibit, without trying to destroy it. This is made obvious by the first word of the second stanza:

'Because I was happy upon the heath'. It is the child's innocent happiness as he plays and sings that have caused the jealous parents to cut short his childhood and, in this occupation, his life, as the phrase 'clothes of death' emphasises. Unlike in the poem of the same name from Songs of Innocence, there is no angel with a key to set him free into the world of imagination. There is a hint that some of this world remains with the child when he says: 'And because I am happy, and dance and sing/ They think they have done me no injury'. But everyone knows that children can still play and seem happy even in the most dreadful situations; the parents cannot be unaware of the kind of life their son must be leading. The suggestion is that the parents are colluding with the Church and the State.

The final line is reminiscent of the Clod and Pebble, where jealous love "builds a hell in heaven' despite". Blake here accuses the people who should be protecting children, the parents, the King whose duty is to protect all his subjects, and the priests who owe a Christian duty of care towards all, especially children, of creating a hell on earth for them instead.

The simple, direct language that Blake uses reveals the hypocrisy of the adults through the words of a child.
A LITTLE BOY LOST

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so.
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know:
And Father, how can I love you,
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.
The Priest sat by and heard the child.
In trembling zeal he siez’d his hair:
He led him by his little coat:
And all admir’d the Priestly care.
And standing on the altar high,
Lo what a fiend is here! said he:
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.
The weeping child could not be heard.
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They strip’d him to his little shirt.
And bound him in an iron chain.
And burn’d him in a holy place,
Where many had been burn’d before:
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albions shore.
The poem is rather different in tone from *The Little Boy Lost* and *The Little Boy Found* in *Songs of Innocence*. The opening lines appear to be a reference to the words of Jesus when he summarized the commandments:

When asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Gospel of Matthew)

The first stanza would seem, on one level, to be a statement of self-love as the primal feeling alongside the impossibility of the human mind to understand anything beyond its own level of thought. However, if it is read in context with the second stanza, it is possible to see a different level of interpretation.

The second stanza seems to suggest that the child loves all of nature equally, from himself and his family to the birds pecking in the street. The words ‘Father’ and ‘brothers’ can also have a religious meaning, priests are referred to as ‘Father’ in a spiritual sense, while all people can be seen as ‘brothers in Christ’. These meanings are associated with the references to the commandments at the beginning of the poem. However, the priest sees the child’s words as heresy, an alternative, and wrong version of the faith and his reaction, ‘In trembling zeal he siez’d his hair’, is hardly an illustration of ‘loving your neighbour’. This is an extreme version of the Church’s repression of independent thought. The word ‘zeal’, which has connotations of fanaticism, is juxtaposed with the image of the child’s hair being seized and the impression of violence.
is continued in the next three stanzas. It is notable that in the world of experience, the priest’s action is admired and his parents seem powerless to prevent them. The fourth stanza presents the priest denouncing the child from the high altar of his church: ‘Lo what a fiend is here!’. Readers who have encountered Blake’s ideas concerning ‘reason’ and ‘mystery’ before will have little difficulty in recognizing the contrasting nature of the accusations with the innocent and honest views of the child. Reason is the rule of Urizen, the jealous and repressive God of the Old Testament, while mystery is the way in which the ruling elite keeps power since it means no sharing of knowledge, but on the contrary, keeping people in the dark.

There is no appeal and ‘The weeping child could not be heard’. The voice of innocence is silenced by martyrdom as the little boy is bound with chains (symbolic of oppression) and is burned at the stake, as many have been before him.

Blake uses contrast in the poem deliberately, not only to show the hypocrisy of an institution that preaches love but does not practise it, but to show the gap in power between the priest who has the establishment and most of the people behind him and the child and his parents who can only weep. He does this by the repetition of ‘weeping’ and of ‘his little coat’ and ‘his little shirt’ emphasizing the child’s size and helplessness. Blake is showing the destruction of free and innocent thought by the forces of experience. He finishes the poem with a line that is detached in meaning from what has gone and asks the reader a direct question, ‘Are such things done on Albion’s shore.’ The lack of a question mark might well imply the answer. Albion was the most
ancient name given to England from ‘white’ and ‘mountain’ referring to the white cliffs of the South coast.\textsuperscript{130}

However, F.W.Bateson believes that the logical point the little boy is making was a favourite one with Blake. It is used with considerable acuteness in the early tractates on Natural Religion, and it also turns up in a marginal comment on Swedenborg’s Wisdom of Angels concerning Divine Love,\textsuperscript{131} : “Man can have no idea of anything greater than Man, as a cup cannot contain more than its capaciousness.”\textsuperscript{132}

W.B.Yeats also comments on this poem, thinking that “\textit{A Little Boy Lost} is suggestive in its title. The poem is to a certain extent a substitute for that called \textit{The Little Boy Lost}, and is in many ways its counterpart.”\textsuperscript{133}

\textbf{HOLY THURSDAY}

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurious hand?
Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!
And their sun does never shine.
And their fields are bleak and bare.
And their ways are fill’d with thorns.
It is eternal winter there.
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.¹³⁴

This is a very different treatment of the service of thanksgiving by the charity school children from that in Songs of Innocence. The first two stanzas ask questions, with implicit answers. The apparently cheerful streams of children marching into the cathedral have been replaced with the question, ‘Is this a holy thing to see’. The clear implication is that a country which has wealth chooses to ignore the real needs of its children and, even when charity is provided, it is grudging and given without love or care. The word ‘usurous’ from ‘usury’ which is the practice of lending money at unreasonable rates of interest. The indication is that those who give this charity expect excessive returns from the children, probably in terms of gratitude and obedience. The use of rhyming ‘land’ with ‘hand’ representing not merely the guardians, but the whole city (maybe nation) shows a general social responsibility. That this is not ‘holy’ is not merely that it goes against Christ’s command to love one another as he has loved us, and his dictum that whatever you do to these, the least of his brothers, you do it to Jesus, but also because usury was strictly forbidden by the church. Blake’s readers would have been aware of all these connotations and able to draw the intended conclusions.

The narrator in the poem asks a very significant question concerning the children’s cry. No longer are the children joyfully raising
their voices to heaven; instead the reader is asked, 'Is that trembling cry a song?' Again, the answer is implied within the question. How can children be joyful and sing songs of praise, when they live in poverty. The stark conclusion is 'It is a land of poverty!' While this would seem to contradict Blake’s assertion in stanza one that it is ‘...a rich and fruitful land’, the poverty he refers to here is spiritual poverty, brought about by the lack of imagination. While many people in England enjoyed an increasingly wealthy lifestyle, for those who were poor it was a desperate situation, and the children suffered most. Blake describes this in terms of their mental landscape: ‘It is eternal winter there.’

This figuratively describes the situation to which the helpless children have been reduced by those whose duty it should have been to care for them and ensure them a childhood of carefree innocence. The relentlessness of their misery is suggested by the drumming repetition at the start of each line, while the thorns suggest that they are sacrificial victims, like Jesus at the crucifixion. It also suggests the shortsightedness of those who fail to provide properly for the nation’s future citizens, who represents its wealth. This is made clear in the final stanza, where imagination shows the opposite. In the last stanza there is a reference to sun and rain which needs explanation. Sun and rain produce the conditions necessary to life and they are also associated with spiritual life in the symbol of light, heat of God’s love and rain as the water of life. Children will never go hungry or live in poverty in a land which cares about them.
The two Holy Thursday poems together show Blake as a social reformer, demanding justice for those who cannot fight for themselves. He shows the self righteous attitude of those who demand gratitude and conformity as the price for giving charity, which in practice is merely their duty to the next generation. By implication he is also showing the enormous gulf between the poor and the rich in his society.\textsuperscript{135}

\textbf{THE ANGEL}

I Dreamt a Dream! What can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen:
Guarded by an Angel mild;
Witless woe, was ne’er beguil’d!
And I wept both night and day
And he wip’d my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my hearts delight
So he took his wings and fled:
Then the morn blush’d rosy red:
I dried my tears and armed my fears,
With ten thousand shields and spears.
Soon my Angel came again:
I was arm’d, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head.\textsuperscript{136}
The poem begins with the narrator relating a dream and asking about the meaning of it. This poetic device was often used by medieval poets when they wanted to tell a story which had moral or religious significance. The writer here dreams that he was ‘a maiden Queen’ guarded by an angel, as children in Blake’s poems often are. The angel stays by her day and night, while she weeps, wiping away her tears. However, she refuses to share with him her ‘heart’s delight’, in other words, her love for him, so the angel ‘took his wings and fled’. leaving her to grieve over her loss.

However she grows hard in the world of experience and she ‘arm’d her fears /With ten thousand shields and spears’, determined never to be made vulnerable by love.

When her angel returns it is too late, for she has grown old and bitter in the war she has waged on her passions, ‘And grey hairs were on my head.’ It is a warning to those who are selfish and refuse to give love and to give themselves freely in love.

This poem fits in well with Blake’s ideas about free love and generosity, especially when opposed to selfishness and jealousy. Those who slavishly follow the church’s rules about sex and the suppression of passionate feelings will deprive themselves of the warmth and pleasure of real love and will become frozen in the sleep of experience, imprisoned by their own envious fears.\(^7\)

In the Rossetti MS. angels symbolize the natural instincts. The cherub who is perched on the shepherd’s head in the frontispiece to Songs of Experience is clearly symbolic. The little creature’s wings are extended, but the shepherd is holding both its arms in his hands, the
appropriate treatment for angels or fairies in Experience. The maiden queen of the dream tried to evade the natural obligations of love in a sentimental affectation of Innocence. It was only when middle-aged that she learnt to accept the necessity of the ‘shields and spears’ of sex, but by that time it was too late.

The poem is not necessarily the contrary of A Dream, though both introduce the words ‘a dream’ into their first lines.

When Blake uses ‘the morn blushed rosy red’ indeed in Blake’s symbolic system blushes are always a symptom of sexual corruption.

Blake in this poem uses contrary nouns such as day, by which he provides a contrary to night, which has much the same symbolism.\textsuperscript{138}

However, W.B.Yeats interprets this song in a very revealing manner. \textit{The Angel} is not stranger to literature. He is innocence in the sense of childish ignorance of evil. But Blake’s use of this image is his own. The maiden queen, the body, a portion of mind that is female as distinct from intellect, whether in man or woman, hides its heart’s delight from its own simplicity till childhood is over. So the simplicity ivies. Morn, the young imagination, blushes. But jealous fears take the weapons of Urizen, and in return find that they have deceived the poor mortal who is a prisoner in his own armour, till innocence that should have saved him from the folly of modesty only returns to find him in the helpless purity of senility.\textsuperscript{139}
THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor:
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;
And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish loves increase,
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.
He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears:
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.
Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpillar and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.
And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.
The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro’ Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.
This is a counterpart to the poem *The Divine Image* in the Songs of Innocence, which undermines the virtues that were seen as divine by recognizing that those virtues can only continue to exist, if the conditions that require them also continue to exist. In the paradise on the earth that Blake wants to create, there would be no need for them. The very first stanza explains this point clearly: ‘Pity would be no more/ If we did not make somebody Poor’. Without poverty, we would not require pity, so the ideal situation is one in which neither poverty nor pity exist: ‘And Mercy no more could be/ If all were as happy as we’. The same idea applies to mercy, if everyone is healthy and happy, there would be no need for it.

If the only kind of peace we have is one based on ‘mutual fear’ of each other’s retribution, then true love cannot flourish, only the love of self will grow ‘Till selfish loves increase’. It is a kind of love proposed by the pebble in *The Clod and the Pebble*, “Love seeketh only self to please/ To bind another to its delight,” and is rooted in materialism and jealousy. The personification of Cruelty as a trapper lying in wait for his victims ‘knits a snare’, sees the way in which people can be deluded into believing that if they have “Mercy, pity, peace, and love” they are fulfilling God’s will, but this is a view from the world of innocence without knowledge of the world of experience and a society whose values are based on material gain and hypocrisy.

The description of the tree in the third stanza shows how intellectualized values like Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love become the breeding-ground for Cruelty. The speaker depicts Cruelty as a conniving and knowing person; in planting a tree, he also lays a trap. His tree
flourishes on fear and weeping; Humility is its root, Mystery its foliage; but this growth is not natural; it does not reflect upon the natural state of man. For Blake, the kind of humility preached by the Church is a way of thinking that allows the priests to know best and to suppress the divine imagination of the individual. Mystery is a way of preventing people from the truth for themselves, just as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

The creatures described in stanza four that prey on things and destroy them, 'the Catterpiller and Fly, are flourishing in the tree of mystery, they are the opposite of imaginative life and of poetic creation. Rather, in stanza five, the tree is associated with 'Deceit' and its branches harbour the 'raven', the symbol of death. The fruit is depicted as desirable but it associated with hypocrisy and with the “mind-forged manacles”

By the end of the poem, we realize that the above description has been a glimpse into the human mind, the mental experience. Thus the poem comments on the way abstract reasoning undermines a more natural system of values. The result is a grotesque semblance of the organic, a tree that grows nowhere in nature but lies sequestered secretly in the human brain. People can rationalise their behaviour by following the laws of the state and the rules of the church, but they are deceiving themselves and are opting for spiritual death by denying their natural divinity and their poetic imagination.

In the Human Abstract, no reader will now have any difficulty in recognizing Urizen in the North. The myth explains the connection of ideas which gave rise to the poem. But the poem helps to explain the
Songs of Experience

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?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
The researcher enriches the text of the poem by Blake’s painting (R) which gives more meaning to The Tyger.

**THE TYGER**

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of night;  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?  
In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes!  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?  
And what shoulder, and what art,  
Cloud twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? And what dread feet?  
What the hammer? What the chain,  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? What dread grasp,  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?  
When the stars threw down their spears  
And water’d heaven with their tears:  
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger burning bright,

In the forests of night:

What immortal hand or eye,

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?\(^{146}\)

This is probably Blake’s most famous poem; easy to remember because of its rhythmic verse and use of rhyming couplets, the animal itself holds a fascination for people, partly because of its beauty and partly because of the danger it represents. For Blake it is a symbol of righteous anger, the emotion he saw as driving progress. In The Proverbs of Hell he wrote “The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction”,\(^{147}\) instruction being associated with schoolmasters and priests.

The poem begins with an image of the creature:

Tyger Tyger burning bright

In the forests of night

The tiger’s flame coloured stripes are associated with passion, while the light and dark of its coat shows both contrast and balance. Forests are associated with experience and therefore with anger. The narrator asks the first of a number of questions in the poem:

What immortal hand or eye

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

While its creator must be immortal, it is a puzzle to know what kind of creator could make such a fearful creature, symmetry refers presumably to its patterning. More questions follow, all of them rhetorical since
there can be no answer, and all of them directed to the origins of the tiger:

    In what distant deeps or skies
    Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

The ideas here of cosmic fire associated with the tiger adds to its grandeur with a suggestion of Prometheus (a character in Greek mythology) stealing fire from the Gods as a gift for man:

    On what wings dare he aspire?
    What the hand dare seize the fire?

There is also an echo of the Greek Icarus, flying too close to the sun and being flung to earth, but the impression is of something universal and even courageous.

    The next stanza takes the idea of the tiger as a physical being:
    And what shoulder, and what art,
    Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

The identification of the parts of the tiger with the creator that made it gives it a supernatural power, while the connection of ‘shoulder’ with ‘art’ is suggesting the combination of physical strength and imagination required to produce such a creature. This is followed by the image of a blacksmith’s forge (perhaps an association with Vulcan, smith to the Gods?), which is also implicated in the making of the tiger:

    What the hammer? What the chain?
    In what furnace was thy brain?

The idea of the tiger’s creation being a combination of nature and creative art is taken a step further here, as though only a cosmic forge
could produce sufficient heat to create its brain. The idea is reinforced by the hammering rhythm that runs throughout the poem.

The image of the stars as a heavenly army, throwing down their spears in surrender to the power of the tiger, or perhaps in horror at its creation, serves to extend the idea of its supernatural qualities. The question that follows, however, is at the heart of the poem and also at the heart of the songs:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

The belief in a single creator must extend to the belief that he who created good must also have created evil, the tiger and the lamb share the same world. They are two contrary states of the human soul, representing the worlds of innocence and experience. If the lamb represents goodness, innocence and meekness, the tiger represents passion, wrath and energy.

The final stanza repeats that at the beginning, with the difference being that the question is no longer whether a creator would be able to ‘make’ the tiger, but how he could ‘dare’ to do so. The circular structure of the poem indicates the eternal nature of the questions and the themes within it. There is no real answer to the ‘problem of evil’ in the universe, or to whether the creator of the lamb would smile at his unleashing of the tiger. The words that are repeated throughout the poem, such as ‘dare’ and ‘dread’ suggest something at once brave and awful, while the images of ‘burning’, ‘fire’ and ‘furnace’ suggest not only the tiger’s orange stripes but the two eyes in the darkness and the anger burning in its brain. Fire is associated with creation and
destruction, with cleansing and with warmth. These contradictions are present in the world, just as good and evil are both present.148

Blake believed that his own visions, which included end-of-the-world images and sometimes a sense of cosmic oneness, prefigured this, and that his art would help raise others to the perception of the infinite. For Blake and for many Christians, the purpose of creation is as a place for our own growth, in preparation for the beginning of our real lives. Although the natural world contains much that is gentle and innocent (Songs of Innocence), those who are experienced with life (Songs of Experience), know that there is also much that is terrible and frightening. The fearful symmetry might be that of the lamb and the tiger, innocence and experience.

A student of Blake has to understand Blake’s mystical-visionary beliefs to appreciate The Tyger. The poem is about the benevolent creator of nature. The poem may ask: why is there bloodshed and pain and horror? It actually finishes without an answer.

The Tyger is about having your reason overwhelmed at once by the beauty and horror of the natural world. For Blake, the stars represent cold reason and objective science. They are weaker than the sun of inspiration or the moon of love.

Some people may think that The Tyger is about the evil in the world. The poem inspires a certain horror and a sense of awe, that we are in the presence of a transcendent mystery at the very heart of creation, and a certain terrible beauty. If Blake’s lyric has brought this to our attention, it has been successful.
The Songs of Experience are about the terrifying and horrible side of life. But the companion piece is The Lamb, and everybody knows that Christ is the Lamb of God. It is significant that both poems are about created beings. In The Lamb, Christ becomes a child.

The reader of Blake may also enjoy reading about T.S. Eliot and Christ, The Tiger. Yesterday's romantic poets and today's liberation theologians write about Christ as rebel, liberator, advocate for the politically oppressed, type of Prometheus. Do you think The Tyger is actually about Christ's coming?\footnote{149}

The speaker in The Tyger can do no more than wonder. The wonder about the Being who could create the tiger comes to a climax in the penultimate stanza where the speaker refers to the possible reaction of the immortal Maker on viewing His handiwork. In asking if a human reaction was evoked, the speaker is speculating on the nature of the Creator:

Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Even the inhuman stars who are already created have thrown down their spears and wept in pity and regret that such a thing as tiger should come into being and if the Creator can smile, it is either because He can afford to do so or because He is above pity; either because He knows more than the stars and can see a place for this new creature in the light of His superior understanding, or because the sight of the voracious tiger appeals to His inscrutable nature. In either case, the mind
of the Creator is beyond the speaker’s comprehension. Anyway, the speaker just does not know what happened. Perhaps there is more than one Creator: the lamb made by a gentle Being and the tiger by a fierce one.

The questions asked in *The Tyger* are posed in such a way as, finally, to be unanswerable for they search a realm altogether beyond human experience. The creation takes place outside time and is effected by a Being who is, by definition, incomprehensible. We do, however, learn something about the speaker of the poem: first, that he likes speculation of a highly abstract sort for its own sake and, secondly, that such speculation must have some point of departure in reality, his mind finds that reality in the existence of the terrifying. A universe that contains beasts of prey must be a ruthless one, and his questions are so framed that any possible answer must first explain that. Religious notions erected on such an awareness as the speaker displays, can only be mysterious to satisfy his love of the abstract and awe inspiring to satisfy his preoccupation with the dreadful.

The speaker in *The Lamb* may know less, in a worldly sense, than the speaker in *The Tyger*, but the preoccupation of the latter poem, to the degree that it is a theological one, is more unreal, deals with a topic too remote, and so is more superficial.

The first stanza presents the tiger as a wonderful creature, even though it is one to shrink from, like the fire it is compared with. The speaker cannot even guess at the powers of the Being who could conceive the tiger and bring it into existence though the animal has
symmetry, has proportions that may be recognized as fitting. The first stanza is collected, is a single question, but the questions become more breathlessly urgent in the three stanzas that follow as the speaker pursues the trend of his speculation about the Creator. All these questions reflect the wonder felt at the tiger which could only be formed in fire and fierceness, the substance of its being fetched in difficulty and daring from undefinable ‘deeps or skies’. Once the material is available, only a Being of great power could manipulate it:

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

The twisting of the sinews conveys not only the strength of the Creator, but also the necessarily savage and implacable nature of a beast formed in something akin to agony. The tense power of the tiger is taken up into the concentrated activity of the Maker, so intent on the task that He is seen only in His active members: as the feet that move about the anvil and the hand that executes the task of the smith. Now the sentences that form the questions are broken off in gasps of breathless wonder as the intensity of the process of creation and the degree of force involved increase, and as the purpose of the workman becomes manifest in a creature that defies full understanding.

*The Tyger* is a Song of Innocence rather than of Experience, for though the speaker does not, on a first reading, seem to know God through the virtues of delight, his knowledge does come through his breathless wonder at the tiger. He shows amazed reverence, which is
love of a sort. Experience is woken to wonder only by something very startling, perhaps, as by the tiger, but it can be woken, and if its waking here takes the form of a preoccupation with the unknown and hypothetical Creator, this does not gainsay the real excitement felt in the poem. The theology is an accident that must not only be forgiven but accepted, for we have seen, in the Songs of Innocence, that the spontaneous being must accept the materials that come to hand, must take the jaded religious, political and moral notions that are given to it and by contributing its enthusiasm renew the notions so that they are once more fit for use. In The Tyger, an experienced speaker has been startled into Innocence. The wonderful beast of the created world has surprised the speaker into finding new resources of meaning in his myth of the Creator.

The Tyger presents us with the movement of a mind, experienced in its regular habits, slipping into the mode of Innocence in a moment of breathless contemplation. In the poem, the formula of Experience become the vehicle for more vital energy. It would be well, in concluding this study of The Tyger, to emphasize the fact that the Innocence shown is not sought in any special way, but has come while pursuing the forms and thoughts proper to Experience. This reminds us that there is no programme for releasing the innocent energies, that there is no formula for attaining Innocence. The gentle wind inspires us when it can, but there is nothing to be gained from longing for it or attempting to force it. We can respect it when we recognize it in others, but there is nothing we can do to induce it in ourselves, and our duties and programmes must be executed in the realm of experience. It is only
when we are meeting the duties of that realm that the spirit is able to find us.

The greatest danger to the student who sees Blake’s distinction between Innocence and Experience is, perhaps, to attempt to ignore Blake’s separation; to suppose that as experienced beings we can take Innocence into our scheme of things instead of respecting it as a joy that flies on its own wings. As experienced beings (outsiders and spectators in our own lives) we can force nothing, must take our responsibilities in our own laboured way and hope for the occasional invitation to enter. But even hoping should not be engaged in too anxiously, and it is better to be content with the powers we do have, while realizing their limitations. It is only by taking our experienced ideas seriously, in the knowledge that they must always be imperfect, that we are likely to transcend the state.150

7. THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

The next work is The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The intellectual conundrum of the Songs of Experience is here solved. The mood is one of triumph, resolution and buoyant humour. The approximate date of this work is usually given as 1790, but there are good reasons, for thinking it was written later. It may be that the plates were not all written at the same time, and most probably the work as a whole was not completed before 1793.151

Like his other books, it was published as printed sheets from etched plates containing prose, poetry, and illustrations. The plates were
Energy is Eternal Delight.
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; see Isaiah xxxiv & xxxv Chap. 

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

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

Without Contraries is no progression.
then coloured by Blake and his wife, Catherine. This book is a series of
texts written in imitation of biblical books of prophecy, but expressing
Blake’s own intensely personal Romantic and revolutionary beliefs. The
work was composed between 1790 and 1793, in the period of radical
ferment and political conflict immediately after the French revolution.
The entire book is written in prose, except for the opening “Argument
and the Song of Liberty.” The book describes the poet’s visit to Hell,
a device adopted by Blake from Dante’s Inferno and Milton’s Paradise
Lost. As several others of Blake’s works, The Marriage of Heaven and
Hell was influenced also by the mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg.

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is divided into different parts as
follows:
The Argument,
The Voice of the Devil,
A Memorable Fancy,
Proverbs of Hell,
A Song of Liberty,
Chorus

The Voice of the devil and Proverbs of Hell in fact form the heart of this
work. These sections will be explained further. The researcher includes
two of Blake’s painting (S,T) for The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.
These paintings as Blake himself intended, help the reader to have a
better understanding of the text.
The Voice of Devil

All Bibles or sacred codes, have been the causes of the following Errors.

1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body and a Soul.
2. That Energy, called Evil, is alone from the Body, and that reason, called Good, is alone the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are true.

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned 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.\textsuperscript{154}

PROVERBS OF HELL

Unlike that of Milton or Dante, Blake’s conception of Hell begins not as a place of punishment, but as a source of unrepressed, somewhat Dionysian energy, opposed to the authoritarian and regulated perception of Heaven. Blake’s purpose is to create what he called a ‘memorable fancy’ in order to reveal to his readers the repressive nature of conventional morality and institutional religion, which he describes thus:
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 and numerous senses could perceive. And particularly they studied the genius of each city and country, placing it under its mental deity. Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of and enslav’d the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood; Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. In the most famous part of the book, Blake reveals the Proverbs of Hell. These display a very different kind of wisdom from the Biblical Book of Proverbs. The diabolical proverbs are provocative and paradoxical. Their purpose is to energies thought. Several of Blake’s proverbs have become famous:

“The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom. The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction. Where man is not nature is barren. Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion. Exuberance is Beauty. Eternity is in love with the productions of time. One Law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression.”

Blake explains that:
“Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.”

During a visit to a ‘printing house in hell’, Blake learns that diabolic printing is conducted with corrosives (that is by etching). This method helps to clean the doors of perception. Blake promises to adopt this infernal method in his own works back on Earth.

The book ends with a series of revolutionary prophecies exhortations, climaxing into a fierce proclamation for the different peoples of the world to break the bonds of religious and political oppression.

Blake’s text has been interpreted in many ways. It certainly forms part of the revolutionary culture of the period. The references to the printing house suggest the underground radical printers producing revolutionary pamphlets at the time. Ink-blackened print were jokingly referred to as ‘printing devils’, and revolutionary publications were regularly denounced from the pulpits as the work of devil. In contrast the book has been interpreted as an anticipation of Freudian and Jungian models of the mind, illustrating a struggle between a repressive superego and an amoral id. It has also been interpreted as an anticipation of Nietzsche’s theories about the difference between slave morality and master morality.
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is probably the most influential of Blake’s works. Its vision of a dynamic relationship between a stable ‘Heaven’ and an energised ‘Hell’ has fascinated theologians, aestheticians and psychologists. Aldous Huxley took the name of one of his most famous works, The Doors of Perception from this work. Huxley’s contemporary, C.S. Lewis wrote The Great Divorce about the divorce of heaven and hell, in response to Blake’s Marriage. It also inspired many artists and musicians, notably Ulver, who used the work as the lyrical basis for their double album Themes from William Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Interestingly, an allusion from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, depicting Aristotle’s skeleton, is present in Wallace Stevens’s poem Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit.158

Blake in A Memorable Fancy introduces two portions of Being, one is Prolific and the other is Devouring. “These two classes of men are always upon earth, and they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence. Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.”159

Blake attacks Swedenborgian religious principles when he explains: “Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth: Now hear another: he has written all the old falsehoods.”160

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the parody of the Bible and of the religious teachings of Emanual Swedenborg (1688-1772), as well as the assaults on popular images of heaven and hell, point to the genre of satire. On the other hand, the repeated announcements
that a new age is at hand indicate that the work is a manifesto or a prophetic proclamation. Much of the originality of the Marriage consists of encounters between ideas not customarily considered together. Blake altered Swedenborg’s models to accommodate his apocalyptic premises and added other dimensions through his use of illuminations. His free-wheeling medley of humour and seriousness, exposition and anecdote, prose and poetry, demands readers who are quick-witted and not too literal-minded, who do not assume that every word in a book is the straightforward opinion of its author. Page by page it becomes more clear that the Marriage does not propose to abolish or simply invert conventional moral categories, but rather it undermines unimaginative, simplistic systems in which passive good is valued over active evil.

The title page of the work proclaims a Marriage and depicts an embrace, yet disputations in the body of the work are all won by the devils or their disciple. The design of the title page confirms what the narrator has learned by exploring the underworld: the place to look for the confrontation of powerful contraries is beneath surface appearances. Aside from the struggle of Contraries, the chief idea in Blake’s counter-system is the expansion of sense perception. A vision of the infinity and energetic holiness of the world through expanded senses is the good news of Blake’s Gospel of Hell; it owes nothing to Swedenborg, but is derived from imagination.

In the context of the French Revolution the affinity of the Marriage with the eternal desire for spiritual and political liberation is particularly evident. Belief that a new era should begin now was
signalized by the adoption of the French Revolutionary Calendar in October 1793. During this period Blake may have been completing the plates of the Marriage, while realizing that he had antedated the New Age. The concluding Song of Liberty contains a more explicit political allegory in telling of the conflict between a new-born terror, or revolution, and the aged forces of reaction. The concluding line, "For every thing that lives is Holy"\(^1\) is repeated in Visions of the Daughters of Albion and America: A Prophecy, two other works on the theme of freedom through expansion of consciousness.\(^2\)

8. AUGURIES OF INNOCENCE

The last line of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, that is "For every thing that lives is Holy,"\(^3\) relates our discussion to Blake’s most mystical poem, namely, *Auguries of Innocence*.

William Blake is probably most famous for the opening verse of his Auguries of Innocence:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour\(^4\)

The verse was Blake’s rephrasing of ‘as above, so below’, expressing Blake’s adherence to the notion of correspondences. He shared with the Hermetics that if one could really see, everything was double, micro-
and macro-cosmic. To this he added, that "Without Contraries is no progression." The future, as the opening verse might suggest, was Blake’s obsession, but so was the past, as the future would restore the glories of the past.

Caroline F.E. Spurgeon in her book, entitled Mysticism in English Literature explains Blake’s Auguries of Innocence. Blake is peculiarly daring and original in his use of the mystical method of crystallizing a great truth in an apparently trivial fact. We have seen some of these truths in the Proverbs, and the Auguries of Innocence, is nothing else but a series of such facts, a storehouse of the deepest wisdom. Some of these have the simplicity of nursery rhymes, they combine the direct freshness of the language of the child with the profound truth of the inspired seer.

If Sun and Moon should Doubt,
They’d immediately Go out.

It would scarcely be possible to sum up more completely than does this artless couplet the faith, not only of Blake, but of every mystic. Simple, ardent, and living, their faith is in truth their life, and the veriest shadow of doubt would be to them a condition of death. Mystics are the only people in the world who are the possessors of certainty. They have seen, they have felt: what need they of further proof? Logic, philosophy, theology, all alike are but empty sounds and barren forms to those who know.

Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear
A Skylark wounded in the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing\textsuperscript{169}

To Blake the presence of the Divine in all things is the one overwhelming fact. As a result of this sense, the consciousness that everything is closely related, closely linked together, and simply holy is ever present in his \textit{Auguries of Innocence}.

Blake, even more than Milton, is the poet of Righteous Fury: at times, his indignation with all that is corrupt in his country and his religion spills unchecked into the pages of his work. Coupled with his vivid, often hallucinatory imagery and his deceptively simple syntax, this has resulted in a number of wonderful poems which are unparalleled in their power and honesty. So much so, in fact, that certain critics have bestowed upon him the title of “Greatest Poet Ever”\textsuperscript{170}.

\textit{Auguries of Innocence} is Blake at his most, amazing, Blakean, so to speak, all his usual themes are stated, with a passion which would border on self-parody if it were not for the absolute firmness of his convictions, and the strength of his beliefs. The language is simple, yet powerful; the thoughts are direct enough to make an impact, yet subtle enough to avoid being trite moralizings; the poem as a whole is a moral masterpiece.

Several of the couplets in Auguries of Innocence have achieved immortality, one way or another:\textsuperscript{171}
The Bat that flits at close of Eve  
Has left the Brain that wont Believe  
The Harlots cry from Street to Street  
Shall weave Old Englands winding Sheet  
The Catterpillar on the Leaf  
Repeats to thee thy Mothers grief  
Every Night and every Morn  
Some to Misery are Born  
Every Morn and every Night  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to Endless Night  
We are led to Believe a Lie  
When we see not Thro the Eye  
Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night  
When the Soul Slept in Beams of Light  
God Appears and God is Light  
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night  
But does a Human Form Display  
To those who Dwell in Realms of day.\textsuperscript{172}

\textit{The Auguries of Innocence} contains a series of wonderful and amazing riddles, presented in a simple language, but the profoundest truth is actually hidden beneath the plain surface. It is an invitation to contemplation, the whole of creation is the subject of contemplation.
The reader of the poem, is going to confess at the end of the process of contemplation to the holiness of creation.

*Auguries of Innocence* is a poem full of paradoxes. It brings up situations that are unfathomable in our realm of human understanding. Our minds are capable of many things, but not all things are readily understandable. One such paradox is the idea of holding infinity in a finite space. Infinity is also an idea that is not tangible or able to be felt, thus it cannot be held inside of anything, especially our hands. Another paradox in this poem is very much alike the above mentioned. It too has to do with a humanly ungraspable concept. The ability to hold an immeasurable amount of time within an hour, which can be measured, is in the human mind impossible. This poem presents many interesting ideas. All of the situations may be possible but almost impossible to be understood. This shows that the human mind is not the ultimate thinking machine. It also shows that not every thing is meant to be understood. However, if we look at this from a different angle, one can see that maybe it takes time for human knowledge to develop and obtain a higher understanding of life and nature.173

*The Auguries of Innocence* is a moral and religious masterpiece. This ability to see the divine in all is best summarized in Blake’s immortal poem.174

Blake found his great myth on his perception of unity at the heart of things expressing itself in endless diversity. “God is in the lowest effects as in the highest causes. He is become a worm that he may nourish the weak...Everything on earth is the word of God, and in its essence in God.”175
In Blake’s view the qualities most sorely needed by men are not restraint and discipline, obedience or a sense of duty, but love and understanding. “Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed and governed their Passions, or have No Passions, but because they have Cultivated their Understanding.” To understand is three parts of love, and it is only through Imagination that we can understand. It is the lack of imagination that is at the root of all the cruelties and all the selfishness in the world. Until we can feel for all that live, Blake says in effect, until we can respond to the joys and sorrows of others as quickly as to our own, our imagination is dull and incomplete:

Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear
A Skylark wounded in the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing

When we feel like this, we will go forth to help, not because we are prompted by duty of religion or reason, but because the cry of the weak and ignorant so wrings our heart that we cannot leave it unanswered. Cultivate love and understanding then, and all else will follow. Energy, desire, intellect; dangerous and deadly forces in the selfish and impure, become in the pure in heart, the greatest forces for good. What mattered to Blake, and the only thing that mattered, was the purity of his soul, the direction of his will or desire, as Law and Boehme would have put it. Once man’s desire is in the right direction, the more he gratifies it the better.
9. MILTON

In 1804 in London, Blake engraved *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Those, with the exception of The Ghost of Abel, a dramatic fragment written very early, but not appearing until 1822, were the last poems published by him.178

In this prophecy, Blake reconsiders at length his epigrammatic criticism of Milton’s theology and artistic psychology as set forth in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Among the ideas in the earlier critique is that Milton’s image of God is too rationalistic, his vision of hell contains all the energy, and his conception of the Holy Spirit is nonexistent. To understand Blake’s strictures, we should recall what Milton meant to literate people during the century and more following his death in 1674. He was remembered not only as a man who depicted eternal states, Heaven, Hell, Paradise, but also as a man who opposed tyranny, purified the Christianity of his time, and despite his blindness, labored mightily in his poetic vocation. Milton’s presentation of Christian mythology was perhaps more influential than that of the Bible itself, and his exemplary life strongly influenced ideals of behaviour. Far more than any other writer, what Milton said and did were felt to be immediately relevant to the reader’s own salvation and the salvation of the English people.

Milton had served in an important position in the English revolutionary government of Cromwell, and had considered nationalistic subjects while planning his master work, but when his major poems
appeared after the restoration of the monarchy they were on Biblical subjects and touched on little that was specifically English. This neglect, whatever its cause, concerned Blake. Also, although the affliction of blindness is not mentioned in *Milton: A Poem* one aspect of the poet’s personal life that did seem important to Blake was his relationship with women. The fact that Milton had three wives and had stormy relations with the first as well as with his three daughters, was part of his legend: moreover, Milton’s belief in the preeminence of the male as head of the family and some of the emphasis in his characterizations of Eve and Dalila seemed antifeminist even by eighteenth-century standards. A further dimension to this area of his life was added by having written in favor of divorce on the grounds of incompatibility, still a scandalous idea at the beginning of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Milton’s defense of unlicensed printing, contained in his treatise, Areopagitica, had come to seem by Blake’s time an admirable formulation of liberal standards, even though the logic of his argument was still unacceptable to conservative forces. Strands from these aspects of the Milton legend are interwoven with theme, images, and stories from Blake’s own life and mythological inventions, to make up the plot of the epic Milton. In addition to the illuminated poem, a full account of Blake’s relationship to Milton would have to take into account several series of water-colour drawings which Blake made to illustrate five of Milton’s major poems; these, with the designs in Milton, comprise more than a hundred separate pictures that celebrate various aspects of the Miltonic legacy.
I come to Self Annihilation.
And Los behind me stood, a terrible flaming Sun.
However the researcher includes two of Blake's painting (U,V) for a better understanding of the text of the poem. *Milton: A Poem* is concerned with prophetic succession or how the role of a major poet is transmitted from the leading spirit of an age to the next, and how all people are influenced by the arts. The events that occur in the poem are few: in Book I Milton, unhappy in the heaven he had imagined in Paradise Lost, hears a Bard's song that inspires him to reenter the world of time and space in order to achieve self-redefinition through his influence on Blake. Milton falls through the bosom of Albion, the giant spirit of Britain, enters into Blake the artist, and wrestles in the Holy Land to reshape Urizen. Here Blake draws together what Milton had put asunder, Biblical myth and English history, and fuses them with a new psychological myth. The rest of Book I is taken up with a description of the works of Los, the spirit of Imagination.

In Book II, Milton's feminine counterpart, his sixfold emanation, Ololon, follows Milton down into Blake's garden in Felpham and despite the intervention of the Covering Cherub who always seeks to keep humanity from reclaiming Paradise, the lovers are reconciled. In this union, Jesus is made manifest and as Albion stirs in his sleep, the Last Judgment and harvest are about to begin.

Though Blake is at pains in *Milton* to explain a number of his cosmological symbols, the poem can seem bewildering because customary expectations regarding the identities of characters and the sphere of their actions are not respected. A condition of Being outside time and space, called Eternity, is presupposed. Insofar as Eternity is superior to the mundane world and is the home of postmortal existence
it is like traditional ideas of heaven, but insofar as it is a state of cosmic consciousness, it is a total comprehension of mundane life. Time and space as well as Eternity are variously subdivided so that what are essentially the same events may be described in varied and apparently contradictory ways, and some events which are separated in ordinary space and time, take place simultaneously in Eternity. Within Time and Space, there can be no single adequate account of what happens; everything depends on the shifting perspectives of the observer, who also participates in the action.

Similarly, characters are not assigned a single invariable set of characteristics but are rather conceived as bundles of possibilities and perspectives expressed differently according to circumstances. Something analogous to Blake’s *Milton* might be seen in a production of *Hamlet*, if one group of actors performed the hero’s role according to varied critical interpretations of the play and another group of actors performed the heroine’s role (A composite of Ophelia and Gertrude), according to Hamlet’s ambivalent responses to womankind. One actor in each group would also have to portray the male and female members of the audience and another pair would portray Shakespeare and the important women in his life. In Milton, the two redemptive quests out of Eternity into time and space, undertaken by Milton and by Ololon, are described sequentially. But they are to be understood as occurring simultaneously, for all redemptive action takes place in a single moment. The action occurs not only in Eternity but also in the three places where Blake, the artist lived, Lambeth, Felpham, and South Molton Street. As Bloom has noted, the heroic quest of Milton is also a
journey into the depths of the self. The new Milton at the end of the poem is Milton as Blake reimagined him, a reintegrated and regenerated person at one with his better self.

All four copies of this major prophecy have the date, 1804 inscribed on the title page. All are divided into two Books; the two earlier copies including the Preface, the two later copies, omit the resounding Preface.179

In life, Blake claimed that Milton had appeared to him several times. Others have stated that he had gone as far as to think that he was a reincarnation of Milton. Either way, his poem Milton is often seen as his achievement of the state of mystical union, his spiritual glory, with the remainder of his work, Jerusalem, the illustrations for the Book of Job and Dante as the retention of it.180

However, literature is basically of two types, the realistic and the symbolic. The realists are Chaucer, most of Shakespeare, Fielding, Jane Austen, and the travelogues of Melville, to name a few. These works treat of individuals in human society set in a three-dimensional world. The symbolists are Dante, Spenser, Shakespeare’s supernatural plays, Milton, Blake, Shelley, and the novels of Melville. These works deal not with men but with Man, in a psychological universe.

Blake used to be treated as a freak, a stray out of the real line of literature, simply because the symbolic line was not recognized. But the line is clear. Milton told Dryden that his original was Spenser, and the scholars have since proved his constant, deep indebtedness. Blake wrote Flaxman: “Milton lov’d me in childhood and shew’d me his face”181 and all through his career, Blake followed Milton.
Blake was the first person, and until our day the only one, to recognize that Milton was a symbolic poet. The great bulk of readers took Paradise Lost as simply an expansion of Biblical history, although it is no more history than the Divine Comedy is a travelogue. While the educated gentlemen admired the formula of Aristotle, Blake, however, knew that Milton was trying to say “Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime”\(^{182}\); he read the stories of Satan and Adam as profound studies in the processes of Sin; and Milton’s worlds of Heaven and Hell were written analogically about Man, who contains both.

But Blake did not copy Milton: he was inspired by him. Where Milton experimented, he carried the experiments further; and when Milton expressed an idea, Blake either attacked it or extended it to new conclusions.

Blake’s Milton is a frank attempt to revaluate and correct Milton’s chief ideas. The poet enters Blake through his left foot. Milton’s descent from Eternity is a study of the development of his thought, illustrated with quotations from Paradise Lost. At the end, Milton sees and renounces his errors.

Blake also illustrated all Milton’s chief poems, except Samson Agonistes. No other illustrator was ever so precise in following the text, and no other ever included interpretations of his own.

Thus the works of Milton influenced Blake more than any other book except the Bible. He agreed that Milton was one of the greatest poets, but for better reasons than the world had yet suspected. He knew that Milton had seen clearly and deeply into the mysteries of the human soul, but had not always understood what he saw; that he thought
profoundly, but was cramped by traditional theology. Therefore Blake accepted the challenge of Milton’s philosophy, and engaged with him in that warfare of ideas which is one of the greatest joys of eternity, where the soldier fights for truth and calls the enemy, his brother.\textsuperscript{183}

To be absolutely precise, Blake believed himself to be the living embodiment of the spirit of Milton. Blake’s Jerusalem was written as a preface to Milton. Here, John Milton, returns from heaven and encourages Blake to develop his relationship with dead writers. The poem is apocalyptic in its setting and deals with the union of the dead and the living.\textsuperscript{184}

Theodore Roszak in his book, The Making of a Counter Culture, observes that a “perfectly sensible interpretation of Blake’s works would tell us, that the poet Blake, under the influence of Swedenborgian mysticism, developed a style based on esoteric visionary correspondences and anything that Blake ever wrote seems supremely relevant to the search for alternative realities.”\textsuperscript{185}

At the heart of the poem, \textit{Milton}, is the question of what such a character might mean to William Blake, and how, long after Milton’s death, he might be of some use. A lot of works have been written to give an author the opportunity to say something that he would not have otherwise had a chance to say, and this book seems to be one of the unique cases of a work which tries to say something that no one else is saying. Instead of treating Milton like anyone who had been dead for more than a hundred years, the treatment of Milton’s thought supposes that it exists through an emanation, sixfold, perhaps because Milton had three wives and three daughters. Bloom thinks this book is a result of “a
complex relation of responsibility to what he has made, though his creation is in torment because scattered through the creation." After John Milton had become blind, his wives and daughters represented a tremendous portion of his remaining contact with the world.

In common with other mystics, with Boehme, St. Teresa, and Madam Guyon, William Blake claimed that much of his work was written under direct inspiration, that it was an automatic composition, which, whatever its source, did not come from the writer's normal consciousness. In speaking of the prophetic book, Milton, Blake says:

"I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without pre-mediation and even against my will. The time it has taken in writing was thus rendered non-existent, and an immense poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long life, all produced without labour or study."


Milton, the poet, distinguishes between two kinds of epic, namely brief and diffuse. Blake’s three epics, The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem, are all brief epics.

We have to remember that much of Blake’s obscurity is due to the fact that he never in his whole life received the smallest public
encouragement to complete and perfect his canon: the public, of course, never knew that there was a canon.

A bald summary of what happens in Milton is unpromising enough. It begins with material taken from The Book of Urizen and The Four Zoas about the creation, and goes on to a dispute between Palamabron and Satan which obviously suggests the relations between Blake and Hayley at Felpham. Then Milton, in eternity, determines to “go to Eternal death”\textsuperscript{1189}, which means physical life, and after a long struggle he enters this world and reincarnates himself in Blake. The first book ends with a moment of illumination in which the whole reality is absorbed within the perceiving mind of the poet. Then, we are told, Milton’s purpose in reincarnating himself was to redeem his emanation, Ololon, who is called “Sixfold”\textsuperscript{190}, recalling the three wives and three daughters who kept Milton reminded of the “female will” during his life. The descent of Ololon, the final redemption of Blake-Milton, now united also with Los, and the casting-off of Satan-Hayley in the shape of Antichrist form the subject of the second book. To the corporeal understanding, this is a sufficiently absurd farrago, which implies that if we put our intellectual powers to work on it, it will emerge a great imaginative masterpiece.\textsuperscript{191}

It is important to consider the importance of Bible for both Milton and Blake. The Bible is the historical product of a visionary tradition. It records a continuous reshaping of the earlier and more primitive visions, and as it goes on, it becomes more explicitly prophetic, until the confused legends of an obscure people take the form of the full cyclic vision of fall, redemption and apocalypse.\textsuperscript{192}
Milton, the poet thinks of himself continually as an inspired prophet sent by God to present his vision to the English people. Milton in his *Paradise Lost* distinguishes four states of existence, heaven, Eden, (Blake’s Beulah), the fallen world and hell.  

However, the beginning of *Milton* is significant, where a number of Classical writers, including Plato, are attacked and contrasted with the “more consciously and professedly Inspired Men” of the *Bible*.  

The process of Milton’s reincarnation forms the heart of this great epic. When Blake imagines himself to be a reincarnation of Milton, then, the imaginative power that is reborn is not a different form, as in ordinary life, but the same form which in the process of transforming itself has purged and clarified its vision. Jesus, however, owes his divinity to the fact that he was the Son of the same nature as his Father, and the Word or clarified expression of that Father. For Blake, therefore, to imitate Milton is to imitate Jesus, just as, for Virgil, to imitate Homer was to imitate nature. And for Blake, imitation is recreation.

*Milton* opens with a bard’s song in eternity which inspires Milton to reincarnate himself, and the subject of that song, the contest of Palamabron and Satan, is an expansion of an episode in Blake’s own life, his sojourn, at Felpham with Hayley, Blake’s patron. If we know anything of Blake’s biography, we can see that the bard’s song can be partly interpreted from it, Palamabron is Blake, Satan Hayley, Blake’s wife Elynittria, the emanation of Palamabron, and probably some of Hayley’s relatives are included in the symbolism.

When Milton reincarnates himself in Blake and Blake’s imagination is purified, Satan is cast out of both of them as once and revealed for
what he is. He is a lot of things, but fundamentally moral virtue, the
alternative good of passive conformity which the world offers the
imagination. Blake clarifying this point still further, sees that evil is
dangerous in proportion as it is protected and concealed by society.
Hypocrisy is more dangerous than crime; self-deception is more
dangerous than hypocrisy. Blake believed that all men are composed of
imagination and selfhood, and all men should cherish the former in
themselves and love it in other men, while hating all selfhoods and
trying to annihilate their own.197

Milton, therefore, wants to re-enter the world and gain a new vision.
This vision will do two things for him: it will enable him to see the
physical world as Satanic rather than divine, and it will enable him as a
result to see his emanation, or totality of the things he loves, as part of
himself and not as a remote and objective female will. So, the former is
the climax of the first book of Milton; the latter is the climax of the
second.198

It is interesting to note that Milton and Blake are reincarnated, and
then Los, the imaginative form of time also enters the reincarnation.
Thus, the integration of Milton, Blake with Los results in a complete
vision of the shape of time, in which time and history are seen as a
single human form.199

Blake’s poem, Milton, attempts to recreate the central vision of life,
based on the Bible, which made Milton a great Christian poet. Blake is,
therefore, trying to do for Milton what the prophets and Jesus did for
Moses; isolate what is poetic and imaginative, and annihilate what is
legal and historical. This is also what he is trying to do for himself, and
there will always be a curse on any critic who tries to see the Christianity and the radicalism of Blake as a dichotomy instead of a unity.²⁰⁰

William Blake in his masterpiece, Milton, distinguishes three classes in eternity, elect, redeemed, and reprobate. It is in the first book of Milton, then he starts explaining them to the reader:

And one must die for another throughout all Eternity.
Satan is fall’n from his station and never can be redeem’d
But must be new Created continually moment by moment
And therefore the Class of Satan shall be call’d the Elect, and those Of Rintrah, the Reprobate, and those of Palamabron the Redeem’d
For he is redeem’d from Satans Law, the wrath falling on Rintrah,
And therefore Palamabron dared not to call a solemn Assembly
Till Satan had assum’d Rintrahs wrath in the day of mourning
In a feminine delusion of false pride self-deciev’d."²⁰¹

In the second book of Milton, there is a famous statement which reminds the reader of Blake’s Proverbs of Hell:

There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious find
This Moment and it multiply. And when it once is found
It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed."²⁰²
Some critics believe that there is an experience of mystical union in Milton. The amazing mystical union can be illustrated in the poem. This experience is beautifully described in the second book. The researcher is trying to attract the reader’s attention to this experience. It forms the climax of mystical experience. Because a mystic’s quest can be experienced in the mystical union finally:

Terror struck in the Vale
I stood at that immortal sound
My bones trembled. I fell outstretched upon the path
A moment, and my Soul returned into its mortal state
To Resurrection and Judgment in the Vegetable Body
And my sweet Shadow of Delight stood trembling by my side.203

As William Blake tries to describe the experience of mystical union, it seems to be a combination of terror and sweet delight. It is really sweet delight because it is the end of a mystic quest, but it is also terrifying because it is an unknown experience. How difficult it is for a mortal human being, who is enclosed within five senses to experience the immortal, indefinite Being and how to describe such an experience, seems to be even more difficult.

However, Blake before reaching to the experience of mystical union, explains self-annihilation. Perhaps self-annihilation is a necessary condition to experience the mystical union:
To bathe in the Waters of Life; to wash off the Not Human
I come in Self-annihilation and the grandeur of the Inspiration
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from Albions covering
To take off his filthy garments, and clothe him with Imagination
To cast aside from Poetry, all that is not Inspiration.\(^{204}\)

The last line of the poem reminds us that Milton is indeed the prelude to a longer poem on the theme it announces, the building of a continuing city in England of the “Satanic mills.”\(^{205}\)

10. JERUSALEM

*Milton* and *Jerusalem*, then are inseparable, and constitute a double epic, a prelude and fugue on the same subject, for *Milton* is Blake’s longest, greatest and most elaborate Preludium. The lyric “And did those feet in ancient time”\(^{206}\), which opens *Milton*, is connected even more closely with the theme of *Jerusalem*, and our hymnbooks have rechristened it accordingly. *Milton* is an individual prologue to the omen of something universal coming on. The Last Judgment lies on the distant horizon, and is prophesied in the final line of the poem; and the Western Gate, the power to realize what the visionary sees to be real, symbolized
Weeping was in all Beulah, and all the Daughters of Beulah
Wept for their Sister the Daughter of Albion, Jerusalem.
Los took his globe of fire to search the interiors of Albion’s Bosom. . . .
Self was lost in the contemplation of faith...
Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality
by the Atlantic Ocean which still blots out Atlantis west of England, remain closed all through it. Jerusalem deals with the complementary awakening in man and the full apocalypse. One is resurrection and the other Last Judgment, corresponding to the first and second coming of Jesus\textsuperscript{207}.

*Jerusalem* is divided into four parts: To the Public, To the Jews, to the Deists, and To the Christians. Unlike Milton which was composed in two books, Jerusalem is contained within four chapters. The researcher accompanies four of Blake’s paintings (W,X,Y,Z) for a better comprehension of the text.

The more consolidated and extended work of Jerusalem bears the date 1804 on its title page. *Milton* and *Jerusalem* constitute a single epic, it is unlikely that any long interval of time separates the end of *Milton* from the beginning of *Jerusalem*. The same symbolism runs through both poems, and the same method, employed in all sections except the second part of *Milton*, of starting with a challenging prose manifesto and following it with a lyric which summarizes the main theme of the section. *Jerusalem* is exactly twice as long as *Milton*, having four parts, one hundred plates and four thousand odd lines to Milton’s two parts, fifty plates and two thousand odd lines; and *Milton* describes the attainment by the poet of the vision that *Jerusalem* expounds in terms of all humanity.

It was Milton’s function to recreate the form of Christian vision for an English public, and any attempt to continue his tradition will involve a renewed study of his archetype, the *Bible*. In reading *Jerusalem*, there
are only two questions to consider: how Blake interpreted the Bible, and how he placed that interpretation in an English context.

The imaginative vision of the human life sees it as a drama in four acts: a fall, the struggle of men in a fallen world which is what we usually think of as history, the world’s redemption by a divine man in which eternal life and death achieve a simultaneous triumph, and an apocalypse. These four acts correspond to the four parts of Jerusalem. We have dealt with Blake’s doctrine that the only defense of error is confusion and mystery, and that every victory of imaginative vision consolidates a body of error into a comprehensible form, and makes it obviously erroneous. Each part of Jerusalem presents a phase of imaginative vision simultaneously with the body of error which it clarifies. Part One, addressed to the public, sets the Fall over against Golgonooza, the individual palace or watchtower of art from which the visionary may see nature in its true form as a sleeping giant. This perspective was attained in Milton, the theme of which is thus incorporated into the larger design. Part two, addressed to the Jews, sets the vision of the world under the law over against the evolution of the Bible out of history. Part Three, addressed to the Deists, contrasts the coming of Jesus with the resistance to his teachings which Deism expresses. Part Four, addressed to the Christians, deals at once with the apocalypse and the final epiphany of Antichrist. Most of the fourth part is given over to defining the Antichrist. We find in Jerusalem almost no working-up of climax.  

Jerusalem is Blake’s ideal of art as the urbanity of the city of light, a clarity of vision beyond all faith from which everything that is not
humane has disappeared, a spontaneous yet disciplined speech in language, outline and melody spoken only in a world of fully conscious innocence.

*Jerusalem* is analytic because its primary effort is to see the Antichrist as the face of things, the literal appearance of a fallen world. Jerusalem is harsh because the Lord’s Prayer is not very euphonious when said backwards, and *Jerusalem* is continually muttering or howling sinister spells to compel the devil to appear in his true shape.

The beauty of *Jerusalem* is the beauty of intense concentration, the beauty of the Sutra, of the aphorisms which are the form of so much of the greatest vision, of the figured bass indicating the harmonic progression of ideas too tremendous to be expressed by a single melody.²⁰⁹

However, Blake’s vision of the apocalypse is, like that of the *Bible* itself, presented in a curiously mechanical context, and the word, machinery, in its old-fashioned sense of the articulation of an epic plan, is only too applicable to the symbolism of *Jerusalem*. As a recreation of the *Bible*, *Jerusalem* fits the parts of that vast and chaotic book together with a more than theological precision. We are expected to make every dry bone in the *Bible* live, to recognize that its catalogues and genealogies preserve a fossilized memory of otherwise forgotten history, to appreciate the puns and associations of the proper names in their Hebrew significance.

In *Jerusalem* the reader finds Blake’s division of history into seven periods identified with the Biblical eyes of God, and called by Blake, Lucifer, Moloch, Elohim, Shaddai, Pachad, Jehovah and Jesus. The
vision of Jehovah, thus purified, constitutes the essential Bible. The Bible as a whole gives a fairly connected account of the six thousand years which stretch from the establishment of the present human body, or Adam, the chief event in the third or Elohim Eye, to the apocalypse accompanying the return of Jesus.²¹⁰

The hero of Blake’s symbolism is Albion, the spiritual form of his own public, and the character in the Bible who corresponds to Albion is therefore the eponymous ancestor of the Israelites, that is, Israel, or Jacob, and most of the stories about Jacob are interpreted by Blake as reminiscences of Albion.²¹¹

The symbolism of Jerusalem is based on a combination of English and Biblical imagery. There are two aspects to this, one geographical, the other historical. Blake associates the events in legendary English history with Biblical events which are asserted to be contemporary with them.²¹²

However, the traditional number of cities in Albion, as recorded by Geoffrey, is twenty-eight, a complete list being duly given in Jerusalem. The number twenty-eight reminds us of the twenty-eight Churches into which the history of man from Adam to Milton is divided. There is no indication that Blake associated any of the cities with any of the Churches, but numbers with double associations, one referring to time and the other to space, are frequent in Blake.²¹³

The true Jesus is the present vision of Jesus, the uniting of the divine and human in our own minds, and it is only the active Jesus, the teacher and healer and storyteller, who can be recreated. The passive Jesus can only be recalled, and by means of a ceremonial and historical
tradition. In each day, Blake says, there is a moment that Satan cannot find, a moment of eternal life which no death-principle can touch, a moment of absolute imagination. In that moment, the mystery of the Incarnation, the uniting of God and man, the attaining of eternity in time, the work of Los, the Word becoming flesh, is recreated, and thereby ceases to be a mystery.\textsuperscript{214}

The function of \textit{Jerusalem} is to recreate the vision of the Jesus of action, the divine man whose impact miraculously increased the bodily and mental powers of those who saw what he was, in order to bring that impact directly to bear on the English public.\textsuperscript{215}

Northrop Frye suggests that the Covering Cherub in Jerusalem is the totality of fallen life stretching between fall and apocalypse and blocking our view of what life was like before it fell. And as before the Fall, Man existed as an eternal city, so the Covering Cherub is the whole body of the fallen city.\textsuperscript{216}

William Blake’s holy city of Art, a spiritual form of London, encompassing all Britain, like the biblical New Jerusalem. There at his seven furnaces, Urthona’s manifestation, Los melts all of nature into gold for the City of God and gives form to uncreated things. His labour is the imaginative creation of all that can be redeemed. The architecture of the city therefore unites it with the four levels of human existence: Ulro, hellish nature untamed by humans; Generation, love’s struggle to rise above savagery; Beulah, the subconscious realm of recovered innocence, a sleepy place of respite from the fury of creative inspiration; and Eden, a paradise where reason has been dominated by imagination.\textsuperscript{217}
Jerusalem therefore corresponds to the History of Britain, which Blake expands into the fall and resurrection of Albion, the history of all mankind. His daughters are named for the women in that book. Blake’s explanation of his free septenaries is a bold expansion of Milton’s explanation of his blank verse. In the final apocalypse, Milton appears in the heaven with Chaucer and Shakespeare.218

Though Jerusalem is generally considered to be one of the most enigmatic works produced by a major figure in English literature, actually William Blake explains its theme and structure within the work itself. The very nature of the structure is one of interfolded growth.219

Bernard Blackstone considers Jerusalem as a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine, emphasizing self-forgiveness and feels it to be a unity, despite its many windings, with Jesus as the unifying force. David V. Erdman finds Jerusalem with greater thematic unity than in the earlier epics.220

In the beginning of Jerusalem Blake repeats his claim that Jerusalem like Milton is dictated to him:

This theme calls me in sleep night after night, and ev’ry morn
Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me
Spreading his beams of love, and dictating the words of this mild Song.221

William Blake in the first chapter of Jerusalem, which is addressed to the Public, tries to express his motivation for composing Jerusalem:
Trembling I sit day and night, my friends are astonish’d at me. Yet they forgive my wonderings, I rest not from my great task! To open the Eternal worlds, to open the immortal Eyes Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. The human Imagination O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness and love: Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!²²²

William Blake in *Jerusalem* tries to make his readers imagine the world within:

What is Above is Within, for every-thing in Eternity is translucent:
The Circumference is Within: Without, is formed the Selfish Center
And the Circumference still expands going forward to Eternity.
And the Center has Eternal States! These States we now explore.²²³

In the last chapter of *Jerusalem*, which is addressed to the Christians, Blake explains the worship of God, so that people do not go astray.

Go, tell them that the worship of God, is honouring his gifts In other men: and loving the greatest men best, each according To his Genius: which is the Holy Ghost in Man; there I no other
God, than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity.\textsuperscript{224}

In Jerusalem, Blake tries to describe the divine vision, because its understanding forms the heart of his recreation of Bible:

The Divine Vision became First a burning flame, then a column
Of fire, then an awful fiery wheel surrounding earth and heaven.\textsuperscript{225}

It seems fair to conclude that Blake in \textit{Jerusalem} was at times willfully obscure, but only in the sense that he was attempting to stimulate his readers’ imagination that they might apprehend and appreciate what he felt, could not be expressed in rational terms. However, \textit{Jerusalem} is Blake’s \textit{Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost,} and \textit{Paradise Regained} in condensed form. In view of the direct statement of his theme early and late in the work, the division of the work into four distinct parts, with a prose address to each and a frontispiece to the whole and to each of the last three chapters, the clear explanation of a structure of growth in the summary passage of plate 98, and his earlier claim that all his works contain the three regions of childhood, manhood, and age, his intention of a definite structure seems well established.\textsuperscript{226}

However, \textit{Jerusalem} is a revolutionary message calling on people to rise up and destroy the industrial hell that was destroying their lives. Jerusalem is indeed a religious poem, but religion pre-Marx, was often used to convey radical, social ideas. Christ was seen as a radical figure,
protecting the poor and fighting against oppression. The poem opens by asking if Jesus did indeed walk on England’s “green and pleasant land.” Blake among others believed that he might have been taken to Britain to escape Herod and that later Joseph of Arimathea returned to Britain with the Holy Grail and set up a church at Glastonbury. He then goes on to proclaim that he will do all in his power to rebuild this state of grace. However, the Jerusalem that Blake wishes to build, replacing the “dark Satanic Mills” is not a physical reconstruction of Jerusalem in Palestine but a metaphorical place where want and misery do not exist, where men and women can live free and happy.

Since the researcher is going to discuss Blake’s relevance to modern man in the last chapter of this thesis, and it is closely related to Blake’s Jerusalem and the role of Albion as the whole humanity in this epic, therefore some detailed explanations concerning Jerusalem’s religious interpretation seems to be necessary.

However, each of the four chapters in Blake’s longest illuminated book begins with a prose and verse preface to a special audience: To the Public, To the Jews, To the Deists, and To the Christians. A consideration of the meaning and relationship of the central figures, Jerusalem and Albion, along with their story of the fall, history, and redemption of mankind, may be postponed until these four prefaces have been studied, for in them Blake approaches his readers in unexpected ways that bring out his major themes.

In the first preface, the audience is not the reading public, whose favour the author solicits; rather, it is a congregation of “Sheep” and “Goats” at the Judgment who must be lectured on the need for
forgiveness and the importance of artistic freedom in a free state. In the second preface, Jews are addressed not as sinister devotees of a mistaken faith but as fellow believers in one religion, now divided, who need to be instructed in the connection between Jewish tradition and primordial Christianity as it developed mythically among the ancient Britons. To this audience, Blake proposes that their own Cabalistic myth of cosmic man ought to be understood as applying to Albion, the traditional ancestral personification of England. Though Blake urges the Jews to follow Jesus, he is not seeking to convert them to the established church; rather, he is recognizing that they are already fellow Christians in the sense that they share such virtues as humility, and he is inviting them to join in the British enterprise of building the new Jerusalem, a homeland in their place of exile. The conversion of the Jews had been prophesied as a sign of the Second Coming. Blake is saying that the conversion has already taken place and needs only to be acknowledged.

The exhortation to the Deists against natural morality and natural religion in the third preface charges that despite their libertarian principles and their disapproval of religious superstition, these rationalists have a false religion of their own: a devotion to things as they are, or the God of this World. In rejecting Christianity the Deists have rejected its central tenet of the forgiveness of sins and have cut themselves off from the source of spiritual rebirth. They have explained away the problem of evil by redefining natural man as good. The thinkers of the Enlightenment such as Rousseau and Voltaire have something to learn from the religious extremism of the monks and the Methodists whom they hold in contempt. Finally, the Christian
audience, is urged to practice its faith by laboring in art and science to build up Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem promised in Revelation. Christian virtue should consist of activity or mental warfare rather than restraint, the development of mental gifts rather than the accusation of sin in others. The rest of the fourth preface is made up of a poem that characterizes Jesus as antireligious and a hymn on the union of Jerusalem and England which proclaims the return of the Lamb of God to “Englands green and pleasant bowers”\textsuperscript{232}. With reference to specific communities of believers, Blake directs each of the four prefaces toward a definition of true Christianity as the spirit of forgiveness which releases the energies of a society into constructive activity, the building of Jerusalem.

Though Blake was so little a patriot, he made his country the hero, the scene of action, and the focus of concern in his master work. Blake seeks to reunite England with its spiritual center, Jerusalem, and to awaken the English people to their Christian heritage, which has been polluted by the religious establishment. To this end, he employs a rich, complex of Anglo-centric histories that had been developed by eighteenth-century speculative mythologers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was not a chauvinistic folly to think that what the British did, affected the lives of people throughout the world: “All things Begin and End in Albions Ancient Druid Rocky Shore.”\textsuperscript{233} A spiritual awakening of the most powerful industrial and military country in the world might easily be imagined as the apocalyptic event that would reunify the warring nations and shake humanity out of its crippling self-limitations.
In contemporary life, the sleep in despair of the Giant Man, Albion takes the form of war, empire, and exploitation. These miseries result from Albion’s estrangement from his consort Jerusalem, spirit of freedom, a city yet a woman. He has been seduced and enslaved by the world of appearances, the beautiful but destructive nature-force called Vala or Babylon. His eyes have clouded over so that he no longer sees the Divine Vision, the spiritual presence within every human breast; he thinks of God as remote, jealous, inhuman. This condition of error is represented geographically by the separation between Biblical and English place names for what should be one landscape in the mind. In self-defense against his alienated God, Albion turns inward and his body of earth and stars is scattered away from him as he lapses into nightmare. The chief suspense in the poem is whether and by what means he can awaken, recognize his divine nature, and be reunited with his soul mate, Jerusalem.

Through a process of self-division Albion engenders a legion of negative characters who, in various alliances and rivalries, act out the symptoms of their father’s illness. The twelve sons of Albion, sometimes interwoven with twelve tribes of Israel, are named after Blake’s artistic and political enemies, though the evils they embody are much more significant than the deeds of their real-life counterparts. The point is not so much to vindicate Blake personally as to expand into myth specific instances of the kind of things that happens over and over when a country falls ill, breaks apart, loses its soul, and rejects its spirit of liberty and forgiveness.
Just as the Sons of Albion show what is wrong with Englishmen, so the daughters of Albion, offspring or subdivisions of Vala, show what is wrong with Englishwomen. Almost all of them bear names of royal women in British legend, and they torture and dominate men and defame their rival, Jerusalem. In contrast, the benevolent Erin, or Ireland, and the merciful Daughters of Beulah open time and space to eternity and protect the outcast Jerusalem. Blake's assignment of a redemptive role to the spirit of Ireland, is in itself an act of vision, penetrating the blindnesses of English policy. Other right-minded characters, the masculine Friends of Albion, who are personifications of the cathedral cities of England, try without success to bear up their fallen comrade. A fearsome amalgamation of male and female characteristics looms up in the form of the Covering Cherub as the poem draws to a conclusion; until this absolute negation is revealed and exorcized, no real progress can be made in freeing Jerusalem from bondage and Albion from self-deluded idolatry.

The major character in Jerusalem, retaining his power of action is Los, the creative blacksmith whose work preserves some basis of civility during the chaotic eons of Albion's sleep. Despite the antiartistic cynicism of his Spectre or alter ego and the domestic distractions of his consort Enitharmon, Los works with them both to build up the model city of Golgonooza upon and within the continually disintegrating physical city of London. The Los plot depicts the efforts of the self-disciplined artist to redeem society and the attempts of the imagination to reawaken vision in mankind. Los not only imagines a better world but also encourages the faith of others and works patiently with them to
bring the new world into reality. In Los’s self-sacrifice, Albion comes to recognize the spirit of Jesus and to break free of his self-centered fantasies.

Like Los, Blake himself laboured over the years to give form to his Jerusalem. Blake deployed all the techniques perfected in earlier illuminated books to produce his climactic and comprehensive masterpiece. *Jerusalem* is physically as well as thematically related to *Milton*; not only does it fulfill the promise of Apocalypse with which Milton ends, but each page is twice the size of those in the companion piece, also dated 1804 on the title page, and Jerusalem contains twice as many pages as Milton.²³⁴

The researcher is going to repeat Northrop Frye’s belief about Blake’s Jerusalem because it is essential for the understanding of the structure and theme of this great religious epic. Frye says that Jerusalem is Blake’s recreation of the Bible.

In Jerusalem, there is a key section which can decode this great poem for the curious reader:

> Throughout all the Three Regions immense
> Of Childhood, Manhood and Old Age.²³⁵

This part contains lines which effectively hint at the form and substance of the poem. It has often been noted that, after the first chapter, which is addressed To the Public, each chapter is directed at a specific group: Chapter II to the Jews, III to the Deists, and IV to the Christians. What have escaped notice are the progressive relationships
of these three religions to the three phases of human growth, childhood, manhood, and old age, for it can be demonstrated that Blake, in Jerusalem, considers the Jews to be in a state of mental childhood, the deists in manhood, and the Christians either in maturity if the theoretical potential of Christianity is realized or in senility if it is not. Earlier in Jerusalem, when describing the whole body of his work, Blake points out that everyone has the three regions, childhood, manhood, and age.\textsuperscript{236}

Another section which needs a brief explanation, and is closely related to the major conflicts in the poem, is going to be studied:

\begin{quote}
And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic which Bright
Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty.\textsuperscript{237}
\end{quote}

They are visionary, since the old, classical, religious, and philosophical symbolism had for Blake become too closely associated with the shadowy world, the world of death, Ulro. They are made dramatic by Blake’s frequent placing of them in direct opposition: Vala debates angrily with Jerusalem; Albion with both of them; Los, despite his own domestic difficulties, continually attempts to save Albion, who refuses to be saved; Jerusalem questions the ways of Jesus. There is also internal conflict: Los undergoes a personal struggle with his rational self and with his sexual desire; Albion suffers within, as does Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{238}

\textit{Jerusalem} is in many ways Blake’s major achievement. It is an epic poem consisting of 100 illuminated plates. Blake dated the title page
1804, but he seems to have worked on the poem for a considerable length of time after that date.

In *Jerusalem*, Blake developed his mythology to explore man’s fall and redemption. As the narrative begins, man is apart from God and split into separate identities. As the poem progresses, man’s split identities are unified, and man is reunited with the divinity that is within him. In chapter I, Blake announces the purpose of his “great task”:\(^{239}\)

\[\text{To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes} \]
\[\text{Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity} \]
\[\text{Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. The Human Imagination.}^{240}\]

It is sometimes easy to get lost in the complex mythology of Blake’s poetry and forget that he is describing not outside events, but a mental fight that takes place in the mind. Much of Jerusalem is devoted to the idea of awakening the human senses, so that the reader can perceive the spiritual world that is everywhere present.

At the beginning of the poem, Jesus addresses the fallen Albion:

\[\text{I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;}\]
\[\text{Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me.}^{241}\]

However, in his fallen state, Albion rejects this close union with God and dismisses Jesus as the “Phantom of the over heated brain!”\(^{242}\) Driven by jealousy Albion hides his emanation, Jerusalem. Separation from God leads to further separation into countless male and female
forms creating endless division and dispute. Blake describes the fallen state of man by describing the present day. Interwoven into the mythology are references to present-day London. There one finds that inspiration is refused and genius is forbidden by laws of punishment. Instead of inspiration, man is driven by reason or the power that negates everything. It is against this mental error that Los warns:

I must Create a System, or be enslav’d by another Man’s
I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.\(^{243}\)

Like the poet Blake, Los emphasizes the importance of the human imagination. Systems of thought, philosophies or religions, when separated from man, destroy what is human. To put an end to the destructive separation, Los struggles to build Golgonooza. Like a work of art, Golgonooza gives form to abstract ideas. It represents the human form and is composed of bodies of men and women.

In chapter II, the disease of Albion leads to further separation and decay. As the human body is a limited form of its divine origin, the cities of England are limited representations of the Universal Brotherhood of Man. Fortunately for man, there is a limit of contraction, and the fall must come to an end. Caught by the errors of sin and vengeance, Albion gives up hope and dies. The flawed religions of moral law can not save him. Our limited senses make us think of our lives as bounded by time and space apart from eternity. In such a framework, physical death marks the end of existence. But there is also a limit to death, and Albion’s body is preserved by the Saviour.\(^{244}\)
Jerusalem is actually Blake’s masterpiece which contains his interpretation of the Bible. In this great epic, Blake tries to build a new Jerusalem, the soothing, spiritual state of heavenly innocence, despite the threatening, materialistic state of hellish experience, which is at the heart of the poem. Even Blake invites his readers to attempt to build such a state of purely innocence or Jerusalem in their own mind. This long poem shows the dialectical function of Blake’s mind, to which the attention of the reader should be attracted because it forms the fifth chapter of this thesis which is entitled fearful symmetry.

The last part of Jerusalem, connects this discussion to the beginning of A Vision of the Last Judgment, which corresponds to the second coming of Jesus. Also the last line of Blake’s Milton predicts the appearance of A Vision of the Last Judgment in the horizon. This poem is actually like a horizon, it is like the line at which the earth and sky seem to meet. It is where earthly life approaches eternal life, and actually reunites with it. It is better to read the last lines of Milton which function like a bridge and connects us to Blake’s eternity:

Rintrah and Palamabron view the Human Harvest beneath
Their Wine-Presses and Barns stand open; the Ovens are prepar’d
The Waggons ready: terrific Lions and Tygers sport and play
All Animals upon the Earth, are prepar’d in all their strength
To go forth to the Great Harvest and Vintage of the Nations.  

The poet-prophet must lead the reader away from man’s fallen state and toward a revitalized state where man can perceive eternity.
11. A VISION OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT

Practically all the poetry Blake wrote after Jerusalem was occasional. One such poem is the dedication of his Last Judgment to the Countess of Egremont, written in 1808. This occasional poetry shows no sign of a falling-off in technical competence: it shows only that Blake still could write exquisitely or powerfully whenever he wanted to and that he no longer often wanted to.

However, writing *A Vision of the Last Judgment* shows a shift in Blake’s poetry. The transition from prophecy to painting is at first a shift of emphasis. In the first place, Blake stops illustrating poems and starts commenting on pictures. Take, for example, his treatment of the Last Judgment. In The Four Zoas, we have a long and ecstatic poetic treatment of this theme. In Milton and Jerusalem, Blake’s treatment is far more compressed and is set in a pictorial design. Following Jerusalem, come pictures with commentaries. The Last Judgment design is still an illustration to a poem, but an illustration quite independent of its text. As a climax to this series comes the still larger design, perhaps intended to be the first of the great masterpieces of the last period, of which nothing remains except a commentary. In the second place, Blake’s chief interest in writing passes from creation to criticism, and from poetry to prose. Even in the prophecies themselves, we can see that the poetic utterance becomes for Blake increasingly a means of explanation or comment on the central form of the poem, and after Jerusalem all his important literary ambitions were concerned with prose.
criticism. The prophecies were re-engraved, but with one exception, were not rewritten or redesigned.\textsuperscript{247}

The work of art suggests something beyond itself most obviously when it is most complete in itself: its integrity is an image or form of the universal integration which is the body of a divine Man. All Blake’s own art, therefore, is at the same time an attempt to achieve absolute clarity of vision and a beginner’s guide to the understanding of an archetypal vision of which it forms part. We can not understand Blake without understanding how to read the Bible, Milton, Ovid and the Prose Edda at least as he read them, on the assumption that an archetypal vision, which all great art without exception shows forth to us, really does exist. If he is wrong, we have merely distorted the meaning of these other works of prophecy; if he is right, the ability we gain by deciphering him is transferable, and the value of studying him extends far beyond our personal interest in Blake himself.\textsuperscript{248}

Blake’s doctrine is that “Every Poem must necessarily be a perfect Unity.”\textsuperscript{249} When we try to express the quality of a poem, we usually refer to one of its attributes. Blake teaches us that a poem’s quality is its whatness, the unified pattern of its words and images.\textsuperscript{250}

In order to explain The Vision of the Last Judgment, Max Plowman in his book, Poems and prophecies by William Blake has a brief and helpful comment. Blake did not write an extended essay on the subject of the Last Judgment: what we have are notes on a picture which extended themselves to the proportions of an essay. Similar notes from the same source have made up what has been called the Public Address, but they are considered to be of lesser interest.\textsuperscript{251}
However, *A Vision of the Last Judgment* is Blake’s masterpiece as a painter. Blake’s insistence that he knew exactly what each detail in his Last judgment represents, has encouraged Blakists to apply his claim that there is no insignificant mark to the study of his other works as well. Despite his Romantic-sounding dismissal of allegory, his discussions of particular figures in the painting are nothing if not allegorical in some senses of the word.\(^{252}\)

Perhaps, Blake derived the initial idea for his Last Judgment from the Bible and Dante’s Divine Comedy. Blake painted many pictures for Dante’s Divine Comedy. Blake read the Bible several times during his lifetime and he even called the Bible, the great code of art. His insistence on revelation is another result of reading the Bible. Perhaps, after writing Jerusalem, he was attracted to illustrate the afterlife in painting. It is in prose and his tone is very serious. Since the painting of the Last Judgment (a) is very helpful to the understanding of the text, the researcher includes it in this thesis.

According to the Dictionary of the Bible Revelation “accurately foretells what will happen in the last days of history before the end of the world.”\(^{253}\) The illustrated Bible Dictionary is of similar opinion: “happenings that will take place in connection with the second coming of the Lord...leads up to the final establishment of the rule of God...Futurist views take with the greatest seriousness the language of the book about the end-time.”\(^{254}\)

Bible prophecy reveals events of our time and world-shaking events preceding the Second Coming. The Bible is God’s book of history,
prophecy and revealed knowledge of God’s purpose and master plan for humanity from its beginning on into eternity.

The religious regimes and millions of their deluded followers will battle God Almighty’s message of the resurrection and last Judgment, because they will refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned. So it was prophesied in the Bible and Quran, and so will the unbelievers mock and defy the Resurrection and Last Judgment!\(^\text{255}\)

We will begin studying the Bible with what William Blake foresaw and warned two centuries ago as narrated by David Bindman in William Blake: His Art and Times:

“Uninitiated Christians mistakenly worship the creator, as if he were God; they believed in Christ as the one who would save them from sin, and who they believed had risen bodily from the dead: they accepted him by faith, but without understanding the mystery of his nature, or their own. But those who had gone on to receive the gnosis had come to recognize Christ as the one sent from the Father, whose coming reveled to them that their inspiration envied those who spoke out in public at the worship service and who spoke in prophecy, taught, and healed others. William Blake, noting such different portraits of Jesus in the New Testament, sided with the one the Gnostics preferred against the vision of Christ that all men see”\(^\text{256}\).
The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
Is my Visions Greatest Enemy
Thine has a great hook nose like thine
Mine has a snub nose like to mine
Thine is the friend of All Mankind
Mine speaks in parables to the Blind
Thine loves the same world that mine hates
Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates
Socrates taught what Melitus
Loathd as a Nations bitterest Curse
And Caiphas was in his own Mind
A benefactor to Mankind
Both read the Bible day and night
But thou readst black where I read white

The apocalyptic and revolutionary nature of Blake’s beliefs, as he well knew, rendered normal publication of his Prophetic works virtually impossible, for their denunciation of the social order was unlikely to be encouraged by its beneficiaries and upholders. That is why he speaks of his great task in the beginning of Jerusalem.

William Blake was undeniably a man in earnest in the Carlylean sense, conceiving of a God-given mission to communicate the higher truth to his fellow men. While he had a dislike of any form of institutional religion, his metaphysical beliefs were not fundamentally different from those of other dissenters in the 17th and 18th centuries who took literally the Christian premise that the world is in a Fallen
state until its Redemption through Jesus Christ, and who believed that the Book of Revelation gave a true account of the end of the world. It follows from these beliefs that all man’s material ambitions are irremediably corrupt. Any church that created a priesthood, gave divine authority to kingship, or compromised with materialist philosophy or science in its doctrine was necessarily inimical to the Spirit, which offered the only salvation through Jesus. Self-evidently rules and churches would have to pervert the true message of the Gospel to justify their claims to Christianity, erecting idols and persecuting those who exposed them.

In the Book of Revelation, from chapter 17 onward the judgment is described. It is the judgment of the great City sitting upon seven hills, a new heaven and a new earth coming down and a new Kingdom of God being established. What John seems to be suggesting is that when the triumph of God comes over the Vatican and her daughters, a new heaven and earth will be created. This new heaven coming on the earth is a pure spiritual Kingdom of God within humans, in contrast to the kingdom without, that is, that of wicked people.\(^{258}\)

As it is illustrated in Blake’s painting of the Last Judgment, heaven and hell are shown as two contrastive poles of afterlife world. In many religious traditions, Hell is a place of suffering and punishment in the afterlife, often in the underworld. Religions with a linear divine history often depict hell as endless, for example Hell in Christian beliefs. Religions with a cyclic history often depict Hell as an intermediary between incarnations, for example. Chinese Diyu.
Punishment in hell typically corresponds to sins committed in life. Sometimes these distinctions are specific, with damned souls suffering for each wrong committed like Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. Sometimes they are general, with sinners being relegated to one or more chambers of hell or level of suffering. In Islam and Christianity, however, faith and repentance play a larger role than actions in determining a soul’s afterlife destiny. In Christianity and Islam, Hell is traditionally depicted as fiery and painful, inflicting guilt and suffering. Despite the common depictions of Hell as a fire, Dante’s *Inferno* portrays the innermost circle of Hell as a frozen lake of blood and guilt. Hell is often portrayed as populated with demons, who torment the damned. Many are ruled by a death god. Hell appears in several mythologies and religions. It is commonly inhabited by both demons and the souls of dead people. Hell is often depicted in art and literature, perhaps most famously in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

In contrast to Hell, other types of afterlives are abodes of the dead and paradises. Abodes of the dead are neutral places for all the dead rather than prisons of punishment for sinners. A paradise is a happy afterlife for some or all the dead. Modern understandings of Hell often depict it abstractly, as a state of loss rather than as fiery torture literally under the ground.²⁵⁹

However, Blake derived the myth for the Vision of the Last Judgment, from the Bible, particularly the Book of Revelations, commonly called the Apocalypse. For Blake, the last judgment, when it occurs, represents a change of consciousness. Actually Blake wrote a

This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity. It is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation is Finite and Temporal. There exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this vegetable Glass of Nature. All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour the True Vine of Eternity.260

There are many religious allusions in Blake’s A Vision of the Last Judgment to the Bible and also to great prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Mohammad. It is amazing to note Blake’s specific definition of a last judgment when he says:

What are the Gifts of the Spirit but Mental Gifts. Whenever any Individual Rejects Error and Embraces Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual.261

However the researcher in A Vision of the Last Judgment can hear delicate echoes of Blake’s Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Because the Last Judgment in a sense is an amalgamation of both Heaven and Hell.
In conclusion to our discussion of the Last Judgment, two sections from this text explain Blake’s idea not only about the Last Judgment but also concerning the function of a divine vision:

Men are admitted into heaven not because they have curbed and governed their Passions, or have No Passions, but because they have Cultivated their Understandings.262

“What” it will be Questiond, “When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea?” O no, no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying “Holy, Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty.” I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight: I look thro it and not with it.263

William Blake is emphasizing the true function of imagination or vision. We are not required to see with our organs of perception, our eyes, but we are invited to see through them, to use our spirit’s eyes, in order to see the eternal truth beyond the vegetative or material world. At the end of A Vision of the Last Judgment, Blake seems to concentrate once more on his great god-given mission as a religious artist.