CHAPTER IV

WILLIAM BLAKE’S SYMBOLISM

AND

BIBLICAL MYTHOLOGY
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The chapter IV is a study of William Blake’s symbolism and Biblical mythology. It is divided into different parts which are explained respectively. The Songs of Innocence and Experience are explained with a reference to their religious symbolism. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is the first poem in which Blake used Biblical mythology in the character of Rintrah, personifying revolutionary wrath. Blake’s biblical mythology is also explained in the character of Albion in Jerusalem.

The researcher further explains the necessity of symbolism in William Blake’s poetry. The next part is a definition of a symbol in relation to Blake’s symbolism.

The next part includes The Little Black Boy of The Songs of Innocence that is discussed for its amazing mystical symbolism which is centered in the sun as the primary symbol of the poem. The image of the rising sun is a Biblical reference. In addition to this, Biblical allusions in relation to Blake’s The Songs of Innocence and Experience are discussed. In fact, Blake’s religious symbolism attains its full and climatic expression in The Lamb and The Tyger. The subtitle is Shewing the Two contrary States of the Human Soul, Blake reaches an unsurpassed degree of word-image integration in The Songs. Each poem needs the other to enlighten the reader to the perceptions held by Blake on the subject of the never-ending battle between God and Satan, good and evil, The Lamb and The Tyger. It makes us understand Blake both as a mystic and visionary.

Blake’s earliest treatment of human states was twofold rather than fourfold, encompassing Beulah and Generation as Innocence and
experience respectively. These two states form the basis for Blake’s most famous lyrics, Songs of Innocence and Experience, which present situations typical of innocent childhood and of the emergence into experience, or the fall from Beulah. These Songs, often paired for ironic contrast, exploiting a variety of speaking voices and attitudes, are the first works of Blake to have gained critical acceptance.¹

The researcher is going to present a discussion concerning the necessity of symbolism and Biblical mythology for a mystic genius like William Blake. The understanding of this study is a must for penetrating into Blake’s symbolism and Biblical mythology.

1. The Importance of Symbolism and Biblical Mythology

Symbolism is of immense importance in mysticism; indeed, symbolism and mythology are, as it were, the language of the mystic. This necessity for symbolism is an integral part of the belief in unity; for the essence of true symbolism rests on the belief that all things in nature have something in common, something in which they are really alike. In order to be a true symbol, a thing must be partly the same as that which it although works in another plane, it is governed by similar laws and gives rise to similar results; or falling leaves are a symbol of human mortality, because they are examples of the same law which operates through all manifestation of life. Some of the most illuminating notes ever written on the nature of symbolism are in a short paper by R.L.
Nettleship, where he defines true symbolism as “the consciousness that everything which we experience, every fact, is an element and only an element in the fact; that, in being what it is, it is significant or symbolic of more.” In short, every truth apprehended by finite intelligence must by its very nature only be the husk of a deeper truth, and by the aid of symbolism we are often enabled to catch a reflection of a truth which we are not capable of apprehending in any other way. Nettleship points out, for instance, that bread can only be itself, can only be food, by entering into something else, assimilating and being assimilated, and that the more it loses itself, the more it finds itself. If we follow carefully the analysis Nettleship makes of the action of bread in the physical world, we can see that to the man of mystic temper it throws more light than do volumes of sermons on what seems sometimes a hard saying, and what is at the same time the ultimate mystical counsel, “He that loveth his life shall lose it.”

It is worth while, in this connection, to ponder the constant use Christ makes of nature symbolism, drawing the attention of His hearers to the analogies in the law we see working around us to the same law working in the spiritual world. The yearly harvest, the sower and his seed, the leaven in the loaf, the grain of mustard-seed, the lilies of the field, the action of fire, worms, moth, rust, bread, wine, and water, the mystery of the wind, unseen and yet felt, each one of these is shown to contain and exemplify a great and abiding truth.

As distinguished, therefore, from the mystical thinker or philosopher, the practical mystic has direct knowledge of a truth which for him is absolute. He consequently has invariably acted upon this
knowledge, as inevitably as the blind man to whom sight had been granted would make use of his eyes.

The essence of mysticism is to believe that everything we see and know is symbolic of something greater, mysticism is on one side the poetry of life. For poetry, also, consists in finding resemblances, and universalizes the particulars with which it deals. Hence the utterances of the poets on mystical philosophy are peculiarly valuable. The philosopher approaches philosophy directly, the poet obliquely; but the indirect teaching of a poet touches us more profoundly than the direct lesson of a moral treatise, because the latter appeals principally to our reason, whereas the poet touches our transcendental feeling.

So, it is that mysticism underlines the thought of most of our great poets, of nearly all our greatest poets of which William Blake is the best example. English poets who have consciously had a system and desired to impart it, have done so from the practical point of view, urging, like Wordsworth, the importance of contemplation and meditation, or, like Blake, the value of cultivating the imagination; and in both cases enforcing the necessity of cleansing the inner life, if we are to become conscious of our divine nature and our great heritage.

For the sake of clearness, this thought may first be traced very briefly as it appears chronologically; it will, however, be considered in detail, not in order of time, but according to the special aspect of Being through which the researcher felt most in touch with the divine life. For mystics, unlike other thinkers, scientific or philosophical, have little chronological development, since “mystic truths can neither age not die.”

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William Blake sees vision and had knowledge which he strives to condense into forms of picture and verse which may be understood of men. The influence of Boehme and the Swedish seer Emmanuel Swedenborg in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are very far-reaching. In fact, Blake was deeply influenced by them. Since Blake's symbolism was influenced by Swedenborg's mystical concepts, they are briefly explained.

God is thought of as a light or sun outside, from which spiritual heat and light (love and wisdom) flow into men. Swedenborg believes in the substantial reality of spiritual things, and that the most essential part of a person's nature, that which he carries with him into the spiritual world, is his love. He teaches that heaven is not a place, but a condition. That there is no question of outside rewards or punishments, and man makes his own heaven or hell; as Patmore pointedly expresses it:

Ice-cold seems haven's noble glow
To spirits whose vital heat is hell.5

He insists that space and time belong only to physical life, and when men pass into the spiritual world that love in the bond of union, and thought or state makes presence, for thought is act. He holds that instinct is spiritual in origin; and the principle of his science of correspondences is based on the belief that everything outward and visible corresponds to some invisible entity which is inward and spiritual cause. This is the view echoed by Mrs. Browning more than once in Aurora Leigh:
There’s not a flower of spring,
That dies in June, but vaunts itself allied
By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-world
Outside the limits of our space and time,
Where to we are bound.⁶

In all and much more, Swedenborg’s thought is mystical, and it has
had a quite unsuspected amount of influence in England, and it is
diffused through a good deal of English literature.

William Blake is one of the poets who was influenced greatly by
Swedenborg’s mysticism. All mystics are devotional and religious in
the truest sense of the terms. Yet it seems legitimate to group under this
special heading that is devotional mystics, those writers whose views are
expressed largely in the language of the Christian religion, and it applies
in some measure to William Blake. He is the poet who is so conscious
of God that he seems to live in His presence, and who is chiefly
cconcerned with approaching Him, not by way of love, beauty, wisdom,
or nature, but directly, through purgation and adoration.

Blake possessed in addition a philosophy, a system, and a profound
scheme of the universe revealed to him in vision. But within what
category of mystics could Blake be imprisoned? He outsoars them all
and includes them all. We can only say that the dominant impression he
leaves with us, that is of his vivid, intimate consciousness of the Divine
and his attitude of devotion.
The religious poet can not disregard the spirit which is given to us to comprehend spiritual things because it is as foolish as if a carpenter, about to begin a piece of work, were deliberately to reject his keenest and sharpest tool. So the methods of mental and spiritual knowledge are entirely different.

Whatever may be their source, all Blake’s writings are deeply mystical in thought, and symbolic in expression, and this is true of the apparently simple little Songs of Innocence, no less than of the great, and only partially intelligible, prophetic books. To deal at all adequately with these works, with the thought and teaching they contain, and the method of clothing it, would necessitate a volume, if not a small library, devoted to that purpose. It is possible, however, to indicate certain fundamental beliefs and assertions which lie at the base of Blake’s thought and of his very unusual attitude towards life, and which, once grasped, make clear a large part of his work. It must be remembered that these assertions were for him not matters of belief, but of passionate knowledge, he was as sure of them as of his own existence.

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 is God.”

In the Everlasting Gospel, Blake emphasizes, with more than his usual amount of paradox, the inherent divinity of man. God, speaking to Christ as the highest type of humanity, says:
If thou humble thyself, thou humblest me;
Thou also dwellst in Eternity.
Thou art a Man, God is no more;
Thy own humanity learn to adore,
For that is my Spirit of Life.

Similarly the union of man with God, is the whole gist of that apparently most chaotic of the prophetic books, Jerusalem.

The proof of the divinity of man, it would seem, lies in the fact that he desires God, for he cannot desire what he has not seen. This view is summed up in the eight sentences which form the little book in the British Museum, Of Natural Religion.

“Mans desires are limited by his perceptions, none can desire what he has not perciev’d.”

According to Blake, the universe as we know it, is the result of the fall of one life from unity into division. This fall has come about through man seeking separation, and taking the part for the whole. Nature, therefore, or the present form of mental existence, is the result of a contraction of consciousness or selfhood, a tendency for everything to shrink and contract about its own centre. This condition or state, Blake personifies as Urizen or Reason, a great dramatic figure who stalks through the prophetic books, proclaiming himself to be God from eternity to eternity, taking up now one characteristic and now another, but ever of the nature of materialism, opaqueness, contraction. In the case of man, the result of this contraction is to close him up into separate selfhoods, so that the inlets of communication with the universal spirit
have become gradually stopped up; until now, for most men, only five senses are available for the uses of the natural world. Blake usually refers to this occurrence as the flood, that is, the rush of general belief in the five senses that overwhelmed or submerged the knowledge of all other channels of wisdom, except such arts as were saved, which are symbolized under the names of Noah or Imagination and his sons.

The only way out of this self-made prison is through the Human Imagination, which is thus the Saviour of the world. By Imagination, Blake would seem to mean all that we include under sympathy, insight, idealism, and vision, as opposed to self-centredness, logical argument, materialism and concrete, scientific fact. For him, Imagination is the one great reality, in it alone he sees a human faculty that touches both nature and spirit, thus uniting them in one. The language of Imagination is Art, for it speaks through symbols so that men shut up in their selfhoods are thus ever reminded that nature herself is a symbol. When this is once fully realized, we are freed from the delusion imposed upon us from without by the seemingly fixed reality of external things. If we consider all material things as symbols, their suggestiveness, and consequently their reality, is continually expanding.

It is easy to see that this faculty which Blake calls Imagination entails of itself naturally and inevitably the Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice. It is in Milton that Blake most fully develops his great dogma of the eternity of sacrifice. Only through sacrifice thus can the bonds of selfhood be broken.

For according to Blake, personal love or selfishness is the one sin which defies redemption. In Milton, just before his renunciation, there is
a passage which well repays study, for one feels it to be alive with meaning, holding symbol within symbol. Blake’s symbolism, and his fourfold view of nature and of man, is a fascinating if sometimes a despairing study. Blake has explained very carefully the way in which the visionary faculty worked in him:

What to others a trifle appears
Fills me full of smiles or tears;
For double the vision my Eyes do see,
And a double vision is always with me.
With my inward Eye, ‘tis an old Man grey,
With my outward, a Thistle across my way.

Now I a fourfold vision see,
And a fourfold vision is given to me;
‘Tis fourfold is my supreme delight,
And threesfold is soft Beulah’s night,
And twofold Always. May God us keep
From Single vision & Newton’s sleep!\(^\text{10}\)

He says that twofold always, for everything was of value to Blake as a symbol, as a medium for expressing a still greater thing behind it. It was in this way that he looked at the human body, physical beauty, splendour of colour, insects, animate, states, and emotions, male and female, contraction and expansion, division and reunion, heaven and hell.
When his imagination was at its strongest, his vision was fourfold, corresponding to the fourfold division of the Divine Nature, Father, Son, Spirit, and the fourth Principle, which may be described as the Imagination of God, without which manifestation would not be possible. These principles, when condensed and limited so as to be seen by us, may take the form of Reason, Emotion, Energy, and Sensation, or to give them Boehme’s names, Contraction, Expansion, Rotation, and Vegetative life. These, in turn, are associated with the four states of humanity or atmosphere, the four elements, the four points of the compass, the four senses (taste and touch counting as one), and so on. Blake seemed, as it were, to hold his vision in his mind in solution, and to be able to condense it into gaseous, liquid, or solid elements at whatever point he willed. Thus we feel that the prophetic books contain meaning within meaning, bearing interpretation from many points of view; and to arrive at their full value, we should need to be able, as Blake was, to apprehend all simultaneously, instead of being forced laboriously to trace them out one by one in succession. It is this very faculty of fourfold vision which gives to these books their ever-changing atmosphere of suggestion, elusive and magical as the clouds and colours in a sunset sky, which escape our grasp in the very effort to study them. Hence, for the majority even of the imaginative people, who possess at the utmost double vision, they are difficult and often wearisome to read. They are so, because the inner, living, vibrating ray or thread of connection which evokes these forms and beings in Blake’s imagination, is to the ordinary man, invisible and unfelt; so that the
quick leap of the seer’s mind from figure to figure, and from picture to picture, seems irrational and obscure.

To this difficulty on the side of the reader, there must in fairness be added certain undeniable limitations on the part of the seer. These are mainly owing to lack of training, and possibly to lack of patience, sometimes also it would seem to be defective vision. So that his symbols are at times no longer true and living, but artificial and confused.

Blake has visions, though clouded and imperfect, of the clashing of systems, the birth and death of universe, the origin and meaning of good and evil, the function and secret correspondences of spirits, of states, of emotions, of passions, and of senses as well as of all forms in earth and sky and sea. This, and much more, he attempts to clothe in concrete forms or symbols. And if he fails at times to be explicit, it is conceivable that the fault may lie as much with our density as with his obscurity. Indeed, when we speak of Blake’s obscurity, we are uncomfortably reminded of Crabb Robinson’s naive remark when recording Blake’s admiration for Wordsworth’s Immortality Ode: “The parts which Blake most enjoyed were the most obscure, at all events, those which I least like and comprehend.”

Blake’s view of good and evil is the characteristically mystical one, in his case much emphasized. The really profound mystical thinker has no fear of evil, for he cannot exclude it from the one divine origin, else the world would be no longer a unity but a duality. This difficulty of good and evil, the crux of all philosophy, has been approached by mystical thinkers in various ways, but the boldest of them, and notably Blake and Boehme, have attacked the problem directly, and carrying
mystical thought to its logical conclusion, have unhesitatingly asserted that God is the origin of God and Evil alike, that God and the devil, in short, are but two sides of the same Force. We have seen how this is worked out by Boehme, and that the central point of his philosophy is that all manifestation necessitates opposition. In like manner, Blake’s statement, “Without Contraries is no progression”\textsuperscript{12}, is, in truth, the keynote to all his vision and mythology.

This startling remark and Blake’s Proverbs of Hell open what is the most intelligible and concise of all the prophetic books, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, which Swinburne calls is the greatest of Blake’s books, and ranks it as about the greatest work “produced by the eighteenth century in the line of high poetry and spiritual speculation.”\textsuperscript{13} Certainly, if one work had to be selected as representative of Blake, as containing his most characteristic doctrines clothed in striking form, this is the book to be chosen. Place a copy of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell in the hands of any would-be Blake student; let him ponder it closely, and he will either be repelled and shocked, in which case he had better read no more Blake, or he will strangely stirred and thrilled, he will be touched with a spark of the fire from Blake’s spirit which quickens its words as the leaping tongues of flame illuminate its pages. The kernel of the book, and indeed of all Blake’s message, is contained in the section in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell which is entitled The Voice of Devil.

Then, Blake goes on to write down some of the Proverbs which he collected while walking among the fires of hell. These Proverbs of Hell fill four pages of the book, and they are among the most wonderful
things Blake has ever written. Finished in expression, often little jewels of pure poetry, they are afire with thought and meaning, and inexhaustible in suggestion. Taken all together they express in epigrammatic form every important doctrine of Blake. Some of them in order to be fully understood, must be read in the light of his other work. Thus, “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom”\textsuperscript{14}, or, “If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise”\textsuperscript{15}, are expressions of the idea constantly recurrent with Blake that evil must be embodied or experienced before it can be rejected.\textsuperscript{16}

The prophetic books of the English poet and artist William Blake contain a rich invented mythology(mythopoeia), in which Blake worked to encode his revolutionary, spiritual and political ideas into a prophecy for a new age. This desire to recreate the cosmos is in the heart of his work and his psychology. His myths often describe the struggle between enlightenment and free love on the one hand, and restrictive education and morals on the other.

Among Blake’s inspirations were John Milton’s \textit{Paradise Lost} and \textit{Paradise Regained}, the visions of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the near-cabalistic writings of Jacob Boehme. Blake’s vision went further, in that he not only expanded on the world of Biblical revelation, but sought to transcend it by fusion with his own interpretations of druidism and paganism.

The longest elaboration of this private myth-cycle was also his longest poem, \textit{The Four Zoas}: The Death and Judgment of Albion, The Ancient Man, left in manuscript form at the time of his death. In this
work, Blake traces the fall of Albion, who was originally fourfold but was self divided:

The parts into which Albion is divided are the four Zoas:
Tharmas: representing instinct and strength
Urizen: tradition; a cruel, Old Testament-style god
Luvah: love, passion and emotive faculties; a Chirist-like figure, also
   Known as
   Orc in his most amorous and rebellious form
Urthona: also known as Los: inspiration and the imagination

The Blake Pantheon also includes feminine emanations that have separated from an integrated male being, as Eve separated from Adam:

The maternal Enion is an emanation from Tharmas
The celestial Ahania is an emanation from Urizen
The seductive Vala is an emanation from Luvah
The musical Enitharmon is an emanation from Los.

It is interesting to note Northrop Frye’s comment on Four Zoas in this part, “The Four Zoas remains the greatest abortive masterpiece in English literature.”

The fall of Albion and his division into the Zoas and their emanations are also the central theme of Jerusalem: The Emanation of The Giant Albion.

However, scholarship on Blake has not recovered a perfected version of Blake’s myth. The characters in it have to be treated more
like a repertory company, capable of dramatizing his ideas. On the other hand, the psychological roots of his work have been revealed, and are now much more accessible than they were a century ago.

2. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Rintrah

The beginning of Blake’s mythology can be traced in the character of Rintrah. He first appears in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, personifying revolutionary wrath. He is later grouped together with other spirits of rebellion in The Visions of the Daughters of Albion:

The loud and lustful Bromion
The mild and piteous Palamabron, son of Enitharmon and Los
The tortured mercenary Theotormon.  

The researcher is going to present the beginning section of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell which is called The Argument in order to discuss Blake’s mythology in the character of Rintrah.

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL
THE ARGUMENT

Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burdend air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep
Once meek, and in a perilous path,
The just man kept his course along
The vale of death.
Roses are planted where thorns grow.
And on the barren heath
Sing the honey bees.
Then the perilous path was planted:
And a river, and a spring
On every cliff and tomb;
And on the bleached bones
Red clay brought forth.
Till the villain left the paths of ease,
To walk in perilous paths, and drive
The just man into barren climes.
Now the sneaking serpent walks
In mild humility.
And the just man rages in the wilds
Where lions roam.
Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burdend air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.²⁹

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is more than a lively satirical refutation of Swedenborgianism.²⁰ In The Argument, the contrast is between primitive Christianity, when the just man could be meek, and the eighteenth century, when owing to the corruption of Christianity, humility has become the mark of “the sneaking serpent”²¹, the time-serving clergy and the just man must be filled with a righteous, destructive anger.

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Rintrah is an important figure in Blake’s mythological system, which was still embryonic at this date; like the Tyger, he stands for the natural energies, such as those liberated by the American and French revolutions.\textsuperscript{22}

However, Blake seems to have conceived of tigers as natural symbols for energy, and even hinted at their connection with the revolutionary manifestation of energy, in The marriage of Heaven and Hell.\textsuperscript{23}

It is useful to consider The Development of Blake’s Mythology which is included as a section in John Beer’s book, entitled Blake’s Humanism. The researcher is going to summarize Beer’s classification of Blake’s stages of mythological development.

They are divided into seven classes as follows:

1- An early period of mythologizing, based partly on allegorizing the story of Adam, Eve and the serpent which results in the poems, Tiriel and Thel.

2- A period of political and social concern, resulted in the emergence of new figures to express Blake’s enthusiasm for liberty and his indignation at social wrongs. These feelings are first expressed in the Songs of Experience, where specific wrongs are attacked and the decline of humanity from its original state of liberated vision and desire is ascribed to figure known as Starry Jealousy. In Vision of the Daughters of Albion, Starry Jealousy is
named as Urizen, creator of the universe of Law and abstract thought. Rintrah at his best represents honest indignation, Palamabron, pity and benevolence. Rintrah is usually spoken of with approval. Rintrah dominates The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; Rintrah and Palamabron both appear in Europe. The Song of Los and Milton also belong to this category.

Rintrah, Palamabron, Bromion and Theotormon do not appear together in any book until Milton. It may be observed, incidentally, that names ending in –ah usually express energy in some form, whereas those ending in –on or –en usually indicate a failure of vision.

3- A new biblical myth. Towards the end of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake promises his reader the Bible of Hell, of which the first instalment is offered in the concluding Song of Liberty. The Exodus story is retold as a conflict between tyranny and liberty, between the Moses of the tablets of law and the Moses of the burning bush, between the “Starry king” and the “new-born fire”. In the Book of Ahania, which repeats the confrontation, the fire-spirit is called Fuzon. In Blake’s refashioning of the Bible,

The God of Genesis, equally, is separated into the God of Restraining Law and the God of creating energy, named respectively as Urizen and Los. From this time forward, Los becomes steadily more important.
4- The first attempt at an extended myth. This involves two main themes: I) The Myth of Atlantis, conceived of as a lost city where sublime and pathos were both allowed a place; where the light-giving palaces of light on the mountains were matched by innocence in the pastoral plains. In some primeval catastrophe, the whole was swamped by forces generated by the blind worship of law and quantitative measurement: the Sea of Time and Space rushed in, the lands of innocence and pathos were covered, and of the former mountains of vision only the tips remained, rocks of reason in an Atlantic of opaque vision.

II) Blake’s scheme of energies, first adumbrated in a Proverb of Hell in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: “The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, The hands and feet Proportion.”

The first ordering of Blake’s figures of human energy follows this bodily pattern and is related also to the four elements and to the chief elements in his view of man, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urizen</th>
<th>head</th>
<th>light</th>
<th>lost vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luvah</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td>heat</td>
<td>lost love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariston</td>
<td>genitals</td>
<td>stream of life</td>
<td>sexual beauty driven into secrecy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This pattern dominates America, where the myth of the lost Atlantis is particularly relevant to the confrontation between the “starry king” of English tyranny and the “new-born fire” of revolution.

5- The inclusion of creative forces. These themes, which were adequate to stand mythically behind a short poem like America, proved intractable material for an extended myth. They formed a pattern of decline which was altogether too negative for a long creative work. To introduce a more positive element, Blake brought in two new characters: Tharmas and Los. These represent respectively the quest for a unified vision and the function of creative energy in a visionless world. Los and his emanation, Enitharmon dwell in Time and Space respectively, representing the creative elements in each. Although their lack of vision blinds them into jealousy, they create continuously. It is they, who are pictured as presiding over the history of Europe from the Greeks to the present day. In a world that has seen the slow decline of vision in favour of abstract thought and which has allowed the moral law to forbid the expression of human desire, they are, for all their limitations, the chief positive forces at work.

6- The artist as hero. In the later prophetic books where Blake is preoccupied with the heroic function of the artist as the
only possible saviour of the world that has declined in this way, Los becomes increasingly important. In Jerusalem, he is the artist who, not possessing vision, yet guards it by the very fact of continuing to create; in Milton, he embodies the artistic energy which only awaits the descent of vision to become artistic genius. In this work however, the wheel has come full circle: the hero is not Los but a character who is John Milton reincarnate as William Blake. The initiative which rested with the infra-human forces in previous poems is finally restored to the artist in his historical setting.

7- The permanent myth. The other great organizing principle in Blake’s mythologizing, that of the four levels of vision, exists independently of all these developments. The idea of the four levels was already present when he began his serious writing. It should be recognized, however, that the terms single, twofold, threefold and fourfold do not appear in his extant writings until after 1800. It seems that Blake derived the pattern from his early reading of Boehme and Swedenborg. The more general pattern involved in the four levels takes a dialectic form. The levels of vision pattern sets the state of Light above that of Heat but otherwise retains the basic organization of this pattern. It also stresses further Blake’s conviction that although in each of these states the basic vision of man is fundamentally changed, each includes the levels below it.
ETERNAL HUMANITY
falls into
Light Heat
and is in danger of
Darkness. 29

In conclusion, the mythological character “Rintrah, the angry man in Blake’s pantheon, rears and shakes his fires in the burdened air; clouds, hungry with menace, swag on the deep. The poem is a prelude, establishing the tone of prophetic fury which is to run beneath the Marriage; the indignation of Rintrah presages the turning over of a cycle.” 30

The introductory poem in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is an oblique statement of Blake’s concept of contraries. The cyclic irony of the Argument prepares the reader for the complex ironies that are to come.

Rintrah, later to figure in Europe and Milton, opens the poem on a note of menace. Rintrah is an angry man, Elijah or John the Baptist; a prophetic spirit who prepares the way before a redeemer, in this case Blake himself, who is implicitly compared to Jesus on plate 3.

As a voice crying in the wilderness, Blake typifies the artist rejected by society because his warning truth is too uncomfortable to be borne. Historically, Rintrah is the spirit of unrest and impending war in 1792, symbolizing the time of troubles brought
on by French revolution and English reaction, and is sometimes ironically identified with Pitt.\textsuperscript{31}

3. Blake’s Biblical Mythology, Albion

However, the hero of Blake’s Jerusalem is Albion, a biblical mythological character who is identified with the ancestor of the Israelites, that is, Israel, or Jacob. Blake interprets most of the stories about Jacob as reminiscences of Albion.

Here the Twelve Sons of Albion, join’d in dark Assembly, Jealous of Jerusalems children.\textsuperscript{32}

Jacob has twelve sons, one of whom, Joseph, falls into a deep pit, a pit with much the same significance as the cave of Plato, the physical universe which is the embryo or underworld of the mind. In fact, his jealous brothers make him fall into the pit. The incident in Jacob’s life which chiefly interests Blake, however, is his descent with his progeny into Egypt. This means that Man has forsaken his emanation, his bride-land, occasionally also called Rachel in the Bible, and has fallen under the domination of tyranny and mystery, the Whore whose name is Egypt as well as Babylon. Jacob’s favourite son, Joseph, then finds himself in Egypt and in prison, both symbols of the Fall, the theme of the Great Whore turning up again in Potiphar’s wife, and becomes an interpreter of dreams.\textsuperscript{33}
In fact, Albion, like Israel, has twelve sons, and as the sons of Israel represent ordinary humanity, the sons of Albion are for most of the poem, the aggregate Selfhood or spectral aspect of human nature.\(^{34}\)

No doubt Blake associated each son of Albion with a corresponding son of Jacob, though he nowhere gives a complete list; but the association of Hand with Reuben and of Skofeld with Joseph are explicit. Joseph was the son of Jacob who precipitated the fall, and corresponds to Judas among the disciples. It is Reuben, Israel’s eldest son who sometimes stands for all his brothers, and thereby becomes much the same symbol as Adam, and similarly all the sons of Albion are sometimes represented simply by the eldest one, Hand. Reuben and Hand thus mean the ordinary man and his Selfhood respectively, and Reuben purified his Selfhood would become a prophetic imagination, which Blake in this case symbolizes by the name of the only ancient British prophet, Merlin.\(^{35}\)

4. The Necessity of Symbolism in Blake’s Poetry

However, symbolism is of great importance in Blake’s poetry. Caroline F.E. Spurgeon in her prominent book entitled, Mysticism in English Literature argues that the mystic in fact “is somewhat in the position of a man who, in a world of blind men, has suddenly been granted sight, and who, gazing at the sunrise, and
overwhelmed by the glory of it, tries, however falteringly, to convey to his fellows what he sees. He has felt, he has seen, and he is therefore convinced; but his experience does not convince any one else. They, naturally, would be skeptical about it, and would be inclined to say that he is talking foolishly and incoherently. But the simile is not altogether parallel. There is this difference. The mystic is not alone; all through the ages we have the testimony of men and women to whom this vision has been granted, and the record of what they have seen is amazingly similar, considering the disparity of personality and circumstances.”

Apart from this important reason for symbolizing in Blake’s poetry, the next reason concerns Blake’s double vision. “This is the double vision which Blake dramatizes in all of his poetry. We can see the world one way as a unity and another way as a multiplicity. One of these views is truth, the other delusion. Yet knowing which is which, I might still assert that I see on a beach millions of grains of sand, each a minute particular, each unique, where is the unity? Blake replies that each grain of sand, if looked at as a symbol of reality, divested of material substance, weight, mass, extension, ceases to have the same kind of uniqueness it has in a material world. It is an idea, and as an idea it can stand for things
in the way, a metaphor stands for things, and if the world is a symbolical world, the metaphor is literally true. The grain of sand is the microcosm, the world itself the macrocosm.”

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.

To live in a world of symbols, is to live in a world where the multiplicity of minute particulars is not the multiplicity of material objects, jostling about in space.

The problem of space, time, and symbol is thus central to an understanding of Blake. In the Blakean cosmos, objects expand, contract, become opaque or transparent. And yet they do these things symbolically, depending on the way they are looked at: A grain of sand may be the world, or it may be something most irritating to the corporeal eye. Blake’s system depends on a denial of our conventional views of space and time and a belief that we can know the macrocosmic pattern and can see it repeated symbolic-literally in the microcosm.

However, another reason for symbolism in Blake’s poetry which can be added to the macro-micro relation in his worldview can be derived from the very definition of mysticism. In the second chapter, a very amazing definition of mysticism by Hemy James
was considered in detail, and the researcher is going to consider this definition again because the necessity for symbolism in poetry is at the core of this definition.

Mystical or religious experience is defined as an experience which has four characteristics as follows:

1- Eneffable
2- Transient
3- Passive
4- Noetic

From the very first characteristic, it can be derived that such an experience can not be told, it can only be experienced itself, therefore the mystic poet is to surmount the difficult task of expressing his own mystical experience in such a way that his readers understand it clearly. In fact, the mystic poet has no other choice, unless he freely uses symbolism. In The Tyger and The Lamb, Blake tries to convey his own mystical experience in a symbolical way.

At this point, the researcher is going to present the definition of symbolism for a better understanding of Blake’s poetry. The dictionary says, “A symbol is something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else; especially a material object representing something immaterial or abstract, as a being, idea, quality, or condition; a representative or typical figure, sign, or token. The symbol denotes something else, not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by accidental or conventional relation.”

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Further to this, in poetry at least, a symbol may be an action, or things involved in an action, as well as simply the things themselves. The lack of exact resemblance, and this kinetic quality, are closely linked with poetic as against exegetical symbolism. Indeed, it is not going too far to say that they are implicit in poetic symbolism. If the resemblance is exact, then the conflict of idea with idea, concept with concept, which is the essence of poetry, is lost in the obvious. In this reconciliation of opposites by which poetry lives, the reconciliation must strike the reader triumphantly; and in exact representation there is no sense of imaginative triumph.\(^4\)

Since the symbolism gives poetic reality to Blake’s thought, it is significant to study his symbolism. Stanley Gardner in his excellent book on Blake which is entitled, Infinity on the Anvil, summarizes his findings about Blake’s symbolism in this way “I found intense control, a symmetry of symbols interrelated and ordered, and writing dramatically direct in its attacks. There was no need to appeal to metaphysics for comprehension. The poems did not merely convey philosophy or prophecy, but realized their own meaning; and intrinsic in this meaning, more vital than all else, was the poetic symbolism: not the mythology, among which Blake shifted uneasily at times, but the symbolism, which he directed unerringly.\(^5\)

William Blake was an artist in words and pictures. Many of Blake’s best poems are found in two collections, which the complete collection in 1794 was called *Songs of Innocence and
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair
And be like him, and he will then love me.
Experience Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.

Broadly speaking, the collections look at human nature and society in optimistic and pessimistic terms, respectively and Blake thinks that you need both sides to see the whole truth.43

In this part, the researcher is going to present the symbolism of Blake’s The Little Black Boy in which the interested reader can enjoy comprehending Blake’s amazing religious symbolism. In order to discuss Blake’s symbolism in this poem, the researcher will present both the text of the poem along with Blake’s painting(b) because the picture enables the reader to imagine the situation of the poem.

5. The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav’d of light.
My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say.
Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noon day.
And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
For when our souls have learn’d the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.
Thus did my mother say and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:
Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I’ll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.44

If one were asked to give in a phrase a clue to the whole of Blake’s work, one could hardly do better than quote the sentence from The Little Black Boy:

    And we are put on earth a little space
    That we may learn to bear the beams of love.45

It contains the idea that man is an eternal spirit definitely put upon this earth. It suggests that the world from which he comes is a place of such intense light that he needs the shade of mortality to be able to bear its beams, thereby inferring that the ultimate joy of man is the appreciation and love of God. It puts the period of
human life into Blake’s proportion as “a little space”\textsuperscript{46}, and, while it assumes that life itself is a discipline, it declares that that discipline has the most beneficent purpose we can imagine, since to be as fully as possible the recipient of love is the natural desire of every human heart.

The lines are finely characteristic of Blake in that, while they are full of the tenderest sentiment, they do not show the least sign of toppling over into sentimentality. They are a profound statement of spiritual truth expressed with the maximum of simplicity and human feeling. Above all, they seem to me to succeed in placing the emotion of love, and to be able to do that is perhaps the last word of human wisdom.\textsuperscript{47}

The simple and direct narrative comes from a child, a black boy. This poem has to be seen in the context of Blake’s attitude to slavery. His engravings depicted the dreadful tortures and inhumanity shown to black slaves, especially those who dared to revolt and demand their freedom. Blake’s view of all people as partaking in the divinity of Christ and therefore having equality in the sight of God is shown in this poem through the narrative of the black child and the engraving that shows both children, black and white, being welcomed by Christ, the good shepherd.

The poem works in contrasts between black and white, light and dark, earth and heaven, soul and body. Thus in the first stanza, the child narrator comments: “I am black, but O! my soul is white.”\textsuperscript{48} It is confusing if you have a black skin, to understand the religious equations between black/evil and white/good. The white
English child has no such difficulty and is compared to “an angel”. The simile for the narrator is, “as if bereav’d of light”, with its connotations of ignorance, fear and darkness. The protest that he has light in his soul appeals to the reader to look beyond the outward physical difference to the real person beneath. The contrasts are resolved at the end of the poem, where differences are no longer apparent as both children bask equally in the love of God, in an earthly paradise.

The mother in the poem is shown as wise and loving. She teaches the child that God is responsible for the hot sun where they live, and that, just as their black skin acts as a protection, or cloud, to shield them from burns, so, in the same way, when their souls have learned to bear the heat of God’s love, the clouds that are their bodies will melt away and they will join God in Heaven. God is compared to the sun, with his “beams of love” and the body is seen as a protection, just as clouds protect the earth from fierce sunlight. However, clouds also obscure the light and prevent people from seeing clearly and this can apply both to see God’s love and see each other in a true light. This teaching the black child passes on to the white boy, offering to help and protect him.

Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.

When their bodies are gone, they will both be the same and, in that paradise, “he will then love me.” Their bodies are referred to
as “clouds”\textsuperscript{54}, suggesting that they are hiding the light beneath, in the soul and also that they are insubstantial. The line “When I from black and he from white cloud free”\textsuperscript{55} can also refer to the perceptions, the way people can not see beyond the physical senses. It is sure that Blake’s idea of Paradise on earth includes the vision of dark and white people coming together in love and equality, as the innocent vision of the child foretells. It is this kind of imagination that Blake says people must strive towards, in order to build a better world. As the narrator, the black child can be seen as more experienced than the English boy, just as the chimney sweepers are more experienced than those who play in gardens. He is seen as wiser, passing on his mother’s teaching to the white child.

The poem is written in ballad form, to preserve the simplicity and directness of the narrative, and the use of iambic pentameter gives it a conversational tone, as though the child is addressing the reader. It is also appropriate as much of the poem is an account of what his mother said, which also includes within it the words of God, as she imagines them. It has a satisfying structure, as it sets up contrasts, especially between black and white, which are resolved at the end in a vision of golden tent and silver hair and love.\textsuperscript{56}
The sun is the primary symbol of the poem, as well as the key to understanding it. The important irony of the poem turns on the effect of the sun on human beings. In the poem, the sun represents God, and its beams of light represent God’s love.

In the third stanza, the Black Boy’s mother tells him to look at the rising sun. The image of the rising sun is a biblical reference. In the book of Malachi, God says, “And to all of you who love and revere my name will the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” The sun rises in the east, and it is from the east that Jesus came, teaching love and equality. The beams of the sun bring healing.

The mother points out that the light of the sun is a gift from God for all living things. It is given freely and equally to all of them. Later, she points out that some receive the gift more easily than others.

The middle stanza begins with the words:

And we are put on earth a little space
That we might learn to bear the beams of love.

Here in the center of the poem are words that unlock the meaning of the rest of the poem. The purpose of our time on earth is to learn to “bear”, that is to accept and tolerate the love of God. White people in Blake’s time had not learned to bear it very well at all.
The lesson that the Little Black Boy learns from his mother is that the white people have it backwards. Their white skin, reflects the light, but his black skin absorbs it. His skin makes him able to bear the light of the sun, while the English Boy’s white skin is a liability. Symbolically speaking, the Black Boy can tolerate the love of God, and will thus be able to lean against God’s knee in heaven. The White Boy, on the other hand, will still have to learn to be near God and to receive His love in heaven. Far from being “bereav’d of light,” the Little Black Boy is full of light, because he is able to bask in it, something that the English Boy will only learn after he dies.

When the Black Boy says, “I will be like him,” he does not mean that he has become white like the English Boy. Instead he means that the English Boy finally recognizes that the Black Boy is and always has been just like him. The English Boy is finally able to receive God’s love which is impartial and given to all nature equally, as the third stanza says. Both the Black Boy and the English Boy have shed the “clouds,” which symbolize their physical bodies. They are neither black nor white.

The Colour Symbolism

Black and White represent different things to different people in the poem. To the English, their white skin means that they look “angelic” while black skin means that Africans are “bereav’d of light.” To the Little Black Boy’s mother, they are just different
kinds of clouds. The black cloud absorbs or "bears" light, while
the white cloud can only reflect it back without taking it in.

Gold and silver are used for things that are beyond black and
white. The tent of God is golden, referring back to the sun. At the
end, the transformed English Boy has silver hair. He is no longer
white. He can finally bear God’s love and can finally love the
Black Boy as he should have all along.

Blake believed in the innate goodness of all human beings and
in universalism. For Blake, there could not be simply a good guy
and a bad guy, because that kind of dichotomy simply did not fit
into his worldview. Therefore, he saw human life on earth, and
even the after life, as a learning and growing experience from
which everyone would eventually emerge morally sound. He
rejected the doctrine of Hell or of any kind of judgment or wrath on
the part of God.66

Although most of people who are religious types may struggle
their whole lives for those precious moments of God
consciousness, William Blake had a direct pipeline to the beyond.
Heavenly visions dominated his mind in an overwhelming way.
Those heavenly moments he could best describe in the symbolic
terms of the ages, a language that has been largely forgotten since
the Enlightenment by our materialistic culture, which despises
anything other than the hard reality of dollars and cents.

The researcher is going to present two of Blake’s esoteric
symbols: The sun is the symbol of God and Eternity. The moon is
the symbol of mortality, the realm of the world.
6. What is the Symbolism of William Blake’s Poetry?

If the reader asks, what is the symbolism of Blake’s poetry?, one can answer that, however, it depends on the poem because Blake uses a range of symbols to represent his themes. Blake is considered one of the major poets of the Romantic Period (1785-1830), which is roughly around the time of the industrial period. Many of the poets who are now grouped under the Romantics, shared an idealistic view that the human spirit would prevail over the turmoil of that age, or any future age. Revolution was another common theme, and many critics believe that the poets at that time, particularly Blake, were prophets because their poetry often contained warnings about machines replacing a more agricultural lifestyle. If one were to choose a dominant theme for Blake, it might be the imaginative vision that surpasses the common experience. He once said that “all he knew was in the Bible”\(^6\), and so spiritual themes and symbols are often found in his work. The Lamb and The Tyger are two of the most prominent examples; these poems are often juxtaposed when teaching his work to demonstrate his observations about the power and contradictions of a creator who could create both such meek and fierce creatures. One could argue that these animals also symbolize contradictions in human nature, especially since Blake and his contemporaries believed in Transcendentalism or the idea that God exists within all living things. Because Blake is often called a poet-prophet, his use
of spiritual language and symbols may be considered part of his prophecy.\textsuperscript{68}

7. The Concept of the Poet-Prophet in Blake’s Poetry

Since the researcher introduced the concept of the Poet-Prophet in the first chapter of this thesis, she is going to follow it in Blake’s poetry which in a sense is the culmination of this concept in the Romantic period.

The poet-prophet is one of the most important figure in William Blake’s early writing. Although he is never talked about explicitly in third person, he appears regularly as the first person narrator. In this part a narrow range of the texts, namely the Songs of Innocence and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and the Songs of Experience are going to be studied. These texts mark the beginning of Blake’s production of so called illuminated texts, in which he invested tremendous time and effort. With regard to the Poet-Prophet as their fictional author, they set the scene for later writings which came to be known as Prophetic books. In fact the existence of the Poet-Prophet is important in Blake’s texts.

The word prophet is of Greek origin and means “to speak for”.\textsuperscript{69} In Christian theology, it usually refers to men and women who are thought of as speaking on behalf of God, especially those of whom the so called prophetic Books of the Old Testament report. In Biblical writing, the content of a prophet’s message usually concerns those matters in which the prophet’s contemporaries failed to follow the will of God. This is connected
frequently with warnings about God’s punishment. In younger Old Testament texts, the notion of God’s judgment at the end of time appears. This has become of central importance for Christian theology. One way in which Biblical Prophets learn about the will of God, are moments of spiritual ecstasy. Although ecstasy is not a trait commonly identified with prophets in our contemporary, popular understanding of the word, it is quite commonplace in Biblical writing.

The Songs of Innocence and Experience have a double structure. The work is meant to be read as a whole of two complementary sections. Both sections start with a poem called Introduction. Both Introduction poems establish the following poems as being recited by their lyrical ‘I:the Poet-Prophet’.

Introduction to the Songs of Innocence

The first verses of the Introduction to the Songs of Innocence introduce the Poet-Prophet to be as a person playing a pipe in open nature. Nature as opposed, itself as the opposite of culture, embodies a state of innocence, reflecting the young man’s innocence. He plays a pipe, the most basic of wind instruments. The motives are best described as basic, bare, unsophisticated, but with the positive connotation of a Romantic poet. The third verse introduces a new character: a child on a cloud asking the piper to play a song about a lamb. Again, child and lamb are symbols of
youth and innocence. Arguably they could both be symbols for Christ. In any case, the child sitting on a cloud makes clear that it is of transcendent rather than of material nature. The child asks the piper to play, sing and later to write down his song. Note that it does not formulate the words of the song, it is the piper’s own song. The child approves of the song when it is piped, that is, when it is pure emotion. It is through the child, the transcendent figure, that the piper is authorized, to write the songs “Every child may joy to hear”\(^7\), or in other words, reach a broad audience with it. It is significant that it is the piper’s own creativity that creates the song, that he is the author. Only the authority to speak out about the transcendent comes from the transcendent figure. The way the poem describes the piper’s work of writing down the song is also significant. He uses a “hollow reed”\(^7\) as a “rural pen”\(^7\), simple, bare and unsophisticated as he himself, alluding to the first stanza’s motif of innocence. “And I stain’d the waters clear”\(^7\) refers to the actual printing technique used to reproduce the text the original audience was reading. The wording of the text and the medium carrying it express that the fictional character piper, who was confirmed by a transcendent figure as a prophet, actually created the physical text at hand, thereby assuming a great deal of prophetic authority.
Introduction to the Songs of Experience

The Introduction to the poem of the second part seems like an intermezzo of the whole composition. Here the piper from the first part has become a bard, a professional musician, matured through experience. In this poem, it is not a transcendent figure who bestows authority on the Poet-Prophet, but his significance is derived from his ability to see “Present, Past, and Future”74, that is, to transcend time. His significance is expressed by self consciously imploring the reader to “Hear the voice of the Bard!”75. The stanza goes on to state that the bard has “heard the Holy Word”76 and “walked among the ancient trees”.77 To hear the holy word is to transcend corporal matter and touch the holy, the spiritual. This way the Poet-Prophet gained knowledge inaccessible to others. “To walk among the ancient trees”78 has essentially the same meaning. It refers to a dislocation in terms of time and place to gain knowledge on the origins of now and here. In his commentary, Keynes identifies these trees with those in the Biblical Garden of Eden. This fits well with the rest of the poem, which warns earth that is sleeping, and thus unaware of the holy, and in a state of decay, which according to popular Christian mythology, is due to the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden. The poem re-establishes the presence and the authority of the Poet-Prophet, underlining the importance of what he has to say by contrasting his knowledge to earth’s ignorance during its sleep.
The Voice of the Ancient Bard

The last of the Songs is titled The Voice of the Ancient Bard. It closes the entire collection. The ancient bard is the same fictional character as the piper of the first Introduction, and the bard of the second. His training as a professional singer and his experience at outlandish or transcendent places and times have given him enough knowledge to appear ancient to the young people who surround him to be taught. He warns them about folly and vanity, “Dark disputes and artful teasing.” His ages make him transcendent in his own right, because he was born before any of the other figures could have been born, in a time inaccessible to them. The bard now has his own authority, entitling him to be a teacher.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is a collection of prose texts which have a prophetic tone to them as a whole.

“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, and the return of Adam into paradise; see Isaiah XXXIV and XXXV Chap.”
This plate contains a number of intertextual references. Each of the texts referred to is approved as if with prophetic authority and incorporated into the religious system of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. This system, which is considered to be a coherent religious conception by most scholars, is the background for Blake’s later writing, especially his so called prophetic books. The Poet-Prophet is constructed as being just as important and owning just as much authority as Swedenborg and even as much as the Biblical prophets. The subject matter of the prophetic statement is the salvation of the earth from evil, something, anyone must naturally be interested in. The text not only claims prophetic authority, but also universal relevancy. The Poet-Prophet’s rank among Biblical prophets is referred to again on plates 12 and 13. This text is a fictional account of someone’s dinner conversation with Isaiah and Ezekiel. It is written from the perspective of a first person narrator, of whom one argues that he is the Poet-Prophet. First, the narrator is dining with the Biblical characters, indicating that he is a peer of theirs or even that he shares a certain degree of friendly intimacy with them. The subject matter of the dialogue is prophetic speech as such, indicating the narrator’s interest and participation in this particular phenomenon. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is written in a prophetic mode throughout. The 1-narrator, whom one calls the Poet-Prophet, claims prophetic authority on the level of Biblical prophets. He conveys the impression to talk about matters of universal interest concerning the end of the current state of existence and the establishment of a
new, better way of being. This theme, which is at the center of regular Christian faith, is being transferred from the distant future, where the Old Testament prophets projected it, to the now and here, thereby confirming his own teachings. The Poet-Prophet, though, never explicitly talked about, is the central figure of the book and one of its most noteworthy constructions.

Singing the Prophetic Tune

Poetry is the most emotional, the most intensely felt form of written communication. When sung to a melody, it comes to life through the human voice at its greatest excellency. The piper and the bard and the ancient bard, the three figures who structure the Songs, are all three musicians. Like a poem that is brought to life by singing it, all texts of Blake’s Songs of Innocence and Experience are enriched emotionally by their illustrations, they are illuminated texts. The images not only decorate the text, but are closely interwoven with it. As Keynes remarks in his introduction to Songs that the poems were never intended to be read in letter-print. They belong to the images. This is not so much to create a clearer rational understanding of what the poem is supposed to say, but to stir the imagination of the onlooker. And that is precisely what poetry is all about. To illustrate the importance of poetry’s musical qualities and the concept of Poet-Prophet in The Songs of
Experience, one of the most powerful poems, The Tyger is going to be explained.

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

Keynes calls The Tyger, “pure poetry, because its superb poetical form conveys no communicable meaning.” In fact there is meaning in the poem’s words, but that meaning is ambiguous, to make room for the reader’s imagination to develop his own. This imagination is given a specific starting point: The feeling of urge, of power and ambivalence the poem conveys. The impressions of urge and powerful motion are created by the poem’s rhythm, a continuous pattern of stress-no-stress in every verse and an AA-BB rhyme scheme in every stanza. Rhythm is, besides melody, the main characteristic of music. Perhaps both patterns resemble the notion of a cat running, contracting its body and leaping forward in a powerful explosion of strength. In his commentary Keynes associates it with the hammer stroke of the craftsman, referring to the implied blacksmith whose tools are mentioned in the third stanza: hammer, furnace and anvil. The rapid motion of the smith’s arm being similar association of strength and power. Ambivalence, one of the text’s central traits, owing to the notion of contraries is
expressed in the poem’s language, even if not understood precisely in their symbolic meanings. The first stanza talks about the Tyger’s “fearful symmetry”\textsuperscript{83} and in the penultimate stanza, the final of the poem’s questions reads: “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”\textsuperscript{84} The tension between the carnivore and prey could not be greater. The prophet which the text constructs, must be a Poet-Prophet, imagination is his trait. This is expressed by depicting him as a musician, who emotionally enhances the prophetic words by singing them out to a melody and by the musical quality, rhythm of the texts. It is also eminent in the way the texts have been closely interwoven with illustrations to stir the imagination of the reader.

**Conclusion to the Poet-Prophet Concept**

The presence of the Poet-Prophet and the fact that they convey their meaning on two levels, the obvious literal meaning and their emotional impact. The texts have a mode of righteous anger, the voice of someone who is certain that what he sees is right and that it is significant. The Poet-Prophet gives them a sense of earnest and seriousness. They question their reader, his social and religious attitudes, his entire conception of reality. Nobody likes to be questioned. But most people have understood that being questioned is a necessary step to maturity.\textsuperscript{85}
8. Biblical Allusions in The Tyger and The Lamb

The researcher is going to explain the biblical allusions in two of Blake's most famous contrary poems, namely, The Tyger and The Lamb. Since this part contains religious allusions from The Book of Genesis, Chapter I, first some parts of The Bible will be quoted and then their relation to the poems will be explained.

God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” God saw that the light was good and God divided the light from the darkness. The light God called Day and the darkness He called Night. There was evening and there was morning, one day. God said, “Let there be a firmament between the waters to divide waters from waters,” so God made the firmament and separated the waters under from the waters above the firmament; and it was so. God called the firmament Heaven. There was evening and there was morning, a second day. God said, “Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place and let dry land appear,” and it was so. God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of the waters He called Seas, and God saw that it was good. God said, “Let the earth produce vegetation, various kinds of seed-bearing herbs and fruit-bearing trees with their respective seeds in the fruit upon the earth,” and it was so. The
earth produced vegetation, various kinds of seed-bearing herbs and fruit-bearing trees with their respective seeds in the fruit, and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day. God further said, “Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant over all the earth, and every fruit-tree, the fruit of which grows seed; it will be your food. And to all the animals on earth, to all the birds of the air and to every living creature that creeps on the earth I have given the green vegetation for food,” and it was so. God saw that everything He had made was excellent, indeed. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.$^{86}$

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?$^{87}$

The researcher has put these two sections from The Book of Genesis and The Tyger side by side purposefully to demonstrate the biblical allusions in Blake’s The Tyger. The first part illustrates God’s satisfaction with his creation at the end of the process of physical creation, the second part, on the other hand illustrates the artist’s satisfaction with his creation at the end of the process of ideal creation. Perhaps the artist in a sense is comparing his process of creation to that of God’s, and one subtle clue to it can be the
name of the beast which is not tiger but Tyger. The artist has taken the real tiger in nature as his model but indeed in the actual process of creation he comprehends and transcends the real tiger and successfully managed to create his own Tyger. It seems that both creators smiled seriously when they saw their works completed. Perhaps both creators have experienced the same torments and sufferings in the process of creation. But the most amazing part is the creation within the creation, a circle within another circle, an atom within a molecule, a symbol within a symbol, a world within a world, a creator within a creator, and The Tyger within the tiger. It seems that the creator of The Tyger has reached a mystical and religious union with the creator of the tiger, in the painstaking process of creation. Another clue to this claim, is perhaps the circular structure of The Tyger, it starts and ends with the very same stanza except “Could” in the first stanza which converts to “Dare” in the final stanza. Also the circular structure of the poem is a reminiscent of the Biblical apocalypse which was Blake’s lifetime obsession. Not only the structure of the poem is symmetrical but also the orange stripes in the tiger’s body is symmetrical. Another clue to this claim is the word “symmetry” which is repeated in the first stanza as well as in the last:

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
72. The Tai-chi symbol
73. Michael and the Dragon
9. The Symbolic Structure of The Tyger and The Lamb

The researcher is going to present the symbolic structure of the climatic poems in The Songs of Innocence and Experience, namely, The Tyger and The Lamb by explaining The T’ai-chi symbol and its relation to Blake’s painting namely, Michael and the Dragon. Thus the researcher provides the reader with two pictures (c,d) in order to understand the symbolic structure of Blake’s poetry better.

The simplest symbolic expression of the duality of light and dark, which emerges from, and is contained in, an all-embracing unity, is the ancient Chinese symbol of the T’ai-chi, or the Great One. Unity is represented as a circle or globe; a sinuous changing line divides the sphere into a light and dark half. There is in each half an eye, or sperm, or nucleus, which represents its activating principle. As each half develops, the one now becomes two, the Yang and the Yin, and out of them develop the ten thousand things, that is, the endless chain of phenomenal existences. But Tao leads the philosopher back again from the multiplicity of phenomena to the Great One.

However, Blake’s symbols and the names of his mythical personages can not be tied down and tabulated, except in the most general and hypothetical way; for they are always changing. The whole purpose of his invented names and personages is to keep this flux of meaning ever ebbing and flowing. Change, in the world of creation, is the essential of experience. The laws of change are far
more important for anyone who is concerned with his relationship with the Great One, than are the laws of cause and effect, and similar logical constructions. This principle is the essence of Blake’s prophetic work in verse and pictures.

When Blake conceives Michael and the Dragon, as interlocked in continually struggle, he is expressing an image which has the same archetypal origin as a symbol such as the T’ai-chi. Michael and the Dragon, heaven and hell, the light and dark principles, the one with the key, the other with the chain in this design, are locked in combat. There can be no victory, no solution within this circle, so long as the struggle remains on this same level; for the opposites are part of the essential structure of creation. The contraries are positive, as Blake affirms. The strife of contraries can only be redeemed by an act which takes place on a higher dimension.

The two half circles are really spheres, or globes, which interlock. The dark sphere contains the wrathful principle of God the Father. The light sphere contains the principle of the Spirit. The two spheres are contained within a greater sphere.92

The researcher is going to connect this symbolic structure of the two opposites within a circle and also Blake’s Michael and the Dragon to the representation of The Songs of Innocence and Experience, Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. The contrast between The Tyger and The Lamb is also represented by this structure as the climatic poems of the Songs.
Hazard Adams in his excellent book entitled ‘Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision’, also explains the old Chinese symbol in relation to Blake’s work:

Old Chinese symbolical thought saw reality as a circle, the ovum mundi, the great monad, which is divided by two arcs with opposite centers. These two halves, perpetually whirling after one another, were the material or feminine principle yin and the spiritual or masculine principle yang. They are Blake’s contraries without which “is no progression.”

Another opposition symbolized by the Chinese circle is that of male and female, which suggests man striving for completion of self. The feminine creature comes to symbolize not only the error of materiality for material creates separation, but also a perverted chastity.

10. A List of William Blake’s Principal Symbols

The researcher is going to present a general guide to William Blake’s double vision. The following list of the principal symbols is useful to this study:
1- Innocence symbols (pre-sexual and amoral as well as Christian): children, sheep, wild birds, wild flowers, green fields, dawn, dew, spring, and associated images, for example shepherds, valleys, hills.

2- Energy symbols (creative, heroic, unrestrained as well as revolutionary, righteously destructive): lions, tigers, wolves, eagles, noon, summer, sun, fire, forges, swords, spears, chariots. These overlap into:

3- Sexual symbols (from uninhibited ecstasy to selfish power over the beloved and jealousy): dreams, branches of trees, roses, gold, silver, moonlight, and associated images for example nets, cages, fairies, bows and arrows. These overlap into:

4- Corruption symbols (hypocrisy, secrecy as well as town-influences, including abstract reasoning): looms, curtains, cities, houses, snakes, evening, silence, disease. These overlap into:

5- Oppression symbols (personal, parental, religious, political): priests, mills, forests, mountains, seas, caves, clouds, thunder, frost, night, stars, winter, stone, iron.

Although it would be unwise to assume that the images in this list always carry the symbolic meanings indicated in every one of Blake’s poems, they generally do. And the list is not by any means complete.\footnote{95}
11. Symbolism in The Lamb and The Tyger

Blake's use of symbolism in these poems is directed to show the two contrary states of the human soul and also the necessity to see both sides in order to comprehend the whole truth.

THE LAMB

In The Tyger, Blake points to the contrast between these two animals: the tiger is fierce, active, predatory, while The Lamb is meek, vulnerable and harmless. In the first stanza Blake, as in The Tyger, asks questions, and these are again directed to the animal, although the reader has less difficulty guessing the answer, which the poet in any case gives in the second stanza. The picture of The Lamb’s feeding "by the stream and o'er the mead" is a beautiful one, which suggests God's kindness in creation, and has an echo of similar descriptions in the Old Testament book of Psalms, especially Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" and the parables of Jesus.

In the second stanza, Blake reminds The Lamb, and us, that the God who made The Lamb, also is like The Lamb. As well as becoming a child (like the speaker of the poem) Jesus became known as The Lamb of God: Jesus was crucified during the Feast of the Passover (celebrating the Jews' escape from Egypt) when lambs were slaughtered in the temple at Jerusalem. This was believed to take away the sins of all the people who took part in the
feast. So when Jesus was killed, for the sins of all people, according to the Christian faith, He came to be called The Lamb of God. Although this is an image mainly of meekness and self-sacrifice, in the last book of the Bible (Revelation) Jesus appears as a lamb with divine powers, who defeats the Anti-Christ and saves mankind. Blake’s poem seems to be mainly about God’s love shown in his care for The Lamb and the child and about the apparent paradox, that God became both child and Lamb in coming, as Jesus, into the world. 

THE TYGER

Blake was regarded in his time as very strange, but many of his ideas make sense to the modern reader. When his poem was written, it was most unusual for writers to show interest in wild animals. People did not have access to wildlife documentaries on television, as we do today: exotic animals might be seen in circuses and zoos, but tigers would be rarity, perhaps turning up stuffed or as rugs. Just as today the tiger is a symbol of endangered wildlife, so for Blake, the animal is important as a symbol, but of what? One clue is to be found in the comparison with The Lamb. Blake’s images defy simple explanation: we cannot be certain what he wants us to think the tiger represents, but something of the majesty and power of God’s creation in the natural world seems to be present.
Blake’s spelling in the title The Tyger, at once suggests the exotic or alien quality of the beast. The memorable opening couplet points to the contrast of the dark “forest of the night” which suggests an unknown and hostile place and the intense “burning” brightness of the tiger’s colouring: Blake writes here with a painter’s eye.

The questions that follow are directed at the tiger, though they are as much questions for the reader. They are of the kind sometimes called rhetorical because no answer is given. For example, the answer to the first question might be God’s, but Blake is asking not so much ‘whose?’ as ‘what kind of?’ We are challenged to imagine someone or something so powerful as to be able to create this animal. The idea that the tiger is made by someone with hands and eyes suggests the stories in the Biblical book of Genesis, where God walks in the Garden of Eden and shuts Noah in his ark. It is again the painter and engraver who observes the complexity of the tiger’s markings in their “fearful symmetry”. The sensitive human artist is awe-struck by the divine artistry.

Blake asks where the fire in the tiger’s eyes originates. It is as if some utterly daring person has seized this fire and given it to the tiger as, in Greek myth, Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to men. The poet is amazed at the complexity of the tiger’s inner workings, “the sinews of thy heart”, at the greater power that set the heart beating, and wonders how the animal’s brain was forged: “What the hammer…in what furnace…what the anvil?”
The penultimate stanza takes us back to Genesis and the creation story there: on each of the six days, He rested on the seventh, God looked at His work and “saw that it was good.” God is represented as being pleased with His creation, but Blake wonders whether this can be true of the tiger. If so, it is not easy to see how the same creator should have made The Lamb. The poem appropriately ends, apparently with the same question with which it started, but the change of verb from “could” to “dare”, makes it even more forceful.

The poem is not so much about the tiger as it really is, or as a zoologist might present it to us; it is the Tyger, as it appears to the eye of the beholder. Blake imagines the tiger as the embodiment of God’s power in creation: the animal is terrifying in its beauty, strength, complexity and vitality.

The Tyger and The Lamb go well together, because in them, Blake examines different, almost opposite or contradictory, ideas about the natural world, its creatures and their Creator. How do you see the two animals depicted? What images do you find interesting, and what do they tell you? Blake explains how these poems show contrary states. Also Blake explores different ideas about God and nature. Both poems use simple rhymes and regular metre. Does this mean the ideas in the poems are simple, too?

Although the reader could consider these poems apart, but there is a clear connection between the outward subjects and the deeper truths they express. Thus, The Tyger and The Lamb are apparently about a wild and a tame animal, but are really about
God’s power in creation or the power of the natural world and the
nature of God as shown in Jesus.

In The Tyger and The Lamb, the argument takes the form of a
conversation with the animal, to which many questions are
addressed, in The Lamb, Blake gives the answers. The Lamb has a
simple form which reflects the structure: one longish stanza of
questions, and an equally long stanza of answers.

However, in order to discuss the key images in Blake’s
poetry, it is virtually impossible not to spot what the images are but
sometimes almost impossible to say what they mean! Blake’s
poems are full of references to nature, but these are not made from
direct observation as a naturalist or a poet like Wordsworth makes
them: rather nature is understood as in a book for children or in the
Bible: we find exotic, fiery tigers, innocent, wooly lambs, magical
trees bearing deadly fruit and sinister caterpillars and ravens.

BRIEF NOTES FOR REVISION
THE LAMB

Subject and theme: Lamb is symbol of suffering innocence
and Jesus Christ.
Key image: The Lamb as seen through the eyes of a child.
Technical features:
Repeated questions, directed to the lamb, but easier to answer than
those addressed to the tiger: answers given in the second stanza.
Idyllic setting of “stream and mead.” Contrasts with “forests of
night” which are exotic and dangerous in Tyger. It suggests
Biblical book of Psalms especially the 23rd psalm, with its “green pastures.”\textsuperscript{109} As well as making The Lamb, God becomes like The Lamb: Jesus is both the “Good shepherd”\textsuperscript{110} and “The Lamb of God.”\textsuperscript{111} Like the Passover lamb, He is sacrificed to redeem the others.

\textbf{THE TYGER}

Subject and theme: Tiger as a symbol of God’s power in creation.

Key images: The tiger as seen by Blake’s poetic imagination: “fearful symmetry\textsuperscript{112}; “burning bright, fire”, \textsuperscript{113} “hammer, chain, furnace, anvil.”\textsuperscript{114}

Technical features: Repeated rhetorical questions; contrast with meekness of The Lamb; The Tyger is addressed directly; simple metre and rhyme; incantatory rhythm like casting a spell; creation like an industrial process in the fourth stanza.

\textbf{GENERAL NOTES ABOUT THE LAMB & THE TYGER}

Themes to look for are nature and human nature; animals and plants as simple but profound symbols of powerful forces: “contrary states of the human soul”, \textsuperscript{115} for example, good and evil, or innocence and experience.

Technical features: always start by identifying and explaining the central images in the poem; look at repetition, contrast and simple
rhyme and metre, the rhymed words are nearly always important nouns and verbs; look for unusual language effects, Blake’s non-standard spellings for example, “tyger”\textsuperscript{116}, “caterpillar”\textsuperscript{117}, and Biblical words “wrath”\textsuperscript{118}, “harlot”\textsuperscript{119}, puns and other wordplay.\textsuperscript{120}

In the poems The Lamb and The Tyger, William Blake uses symbolism, tone, and rhyme to advance the theme that God can create good and bad creatures. In these contrasting poems, Blake shows symbols of what he calls “The two contrary states of the human soul.”\textsuperscript{121} In The Lamb, Blake uses the symbol of the lamb to paint a picture of innocence. The lamb is a symbol of Jesus Christ. The lamb is also a symbol of life. It provides humans with food, clothing, and other things humans need to survive. The line, “For he calls himself a Lamb,”\textsuperscript{122} is a line that Jesus himself has used. A lamb is a very meek and mild creature, which could be why Blake chose to use this animal to describe God’s giving side. He even refers to God as being meek and mild in line fifteen:“ He is meek, and he is mild.”\textsuperscript{123} Blake wants to show his readers that God is vengeful but a forgiving and loving creator.\textsuperscript{124}

However, The Lamb by Blake portrays three main Romantic themes: childhood, nature and spiritual truth. This part is explained to show the spiritual truth of the poem which is closely related to its symbolism.

Little Lamb, who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee\textsuperscript{125}
This poem begins with a child asking a little lamb, “who made thee?” Blake leaves no room for speculation. “Who made thee?” is a question that all of us have asked. The question, of course, has taken different forms and has been the subject of philosophy since Socrates. Blake would answer that a creature could only exist because a creator has made it. In this poem, Blake leaves no other answer but that somebody made everything. It is a personal question, “Who made thee?” Who is the who? It must be somebody. It cannot be chance. It cannot be an impersonal being. It must be a person who created the lamb and a little boy, according to Blake in this poem:

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.

What a beautiful analogy to the Christ of the New Testament. Blake affirms with the Protestants, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholics, that the God of the world and everything in it, who “Gave thee life & bid thee feed...Gave thee clothing of delight; Softest clothing wooly bright:” is the Lamb. Christ was called the Lamb many times in the New Testament, most notably in Revelation 5:8-13: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain...Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever! Anybody who is familiar at all with the Old Testament realizes that the Lamb (or Christ/Messiah) would take away the sins of His people by dying on a cross. This small poem gives us, not only, a great depth of knowledge about how the Old and New Testaments fit together, but how Blake really knew the scriptures. The reader can find great comfort in The Lamb because it points all of us to the Creator, who has given us everything, “life...feed...(and) clothing.” All of us should be just as thankful as Blake; we exist because of the Lamb. The next question is how does this Lamb want us to live?

Blake’s questioning of God reflects the influence of the Enlightenment period. God is represented in two different ways by Blake. In The Tyger, Blake asks what kind of god could make such a fearful creature. In this God, it is easy to insert the image of an angry, wrathful God, immensely powerful; one who does not always use his power for good. Paradoxically, in The Lamb, God is described as being “meek and mild”. This is the typical description of the Christian God: a forgiving and loving God who takes care of his children. This God gives the Lamb, “clothing of delight, softest clothing, wooly bright.”

The Tyger and The Lamb can be interpreted as the two contrary states of the human soul. The Tyger is the part of human nature that is not inherently good. This “tyger” state if being is fierce and terrible, with “fearful symmetry”. Blake seems to be referring to the Tyger as being a sort of mirror image of the angry, vengeful God.
However, the Lamb is the part of human nature which Christians would like to believe mirrors God. The Lamb is also a prominent figure in the Christian religion, representing God’s human ‘children’. The Lamb is typically as being meek and in need of protection.

Blake’s The Tyger is a poem about the nature of creation, much as is The Lamb. However, this poem takes on the darker side of creation, when its benefits are less obvious than simple joys.

**THE LAMB & THE TYGER**

William Blake, an influential poet of the eighteenth century’s romantic period, examined the world of the living and divine. He integrated his paintings to clarify and express a deeper sense of meaning. Throughout the two poems, The Lamb and The Tyger, Blake grapples with the biblical ideas of creationism. In them, he compares and contrasts the making of good and evil with biblical references and allusions; the comparisons of the psychology of child and adult; with also references of industrial revolution. Mankind has a nature of evaluating the world by means of religion. As they age and require experiences, these ideas become more developed. This way of viewing life can be seen in The Lamb, in contrast to The Tyger. The Lamb is a soft and lighthearted view of creationism, and also profoundly naïve. The speaker, a child, asks the lamb, “Little Lamb, who made thee?” This question which is so complex, is to receive a simpler answer. In the first stanza, the
child lists the glorious things that were supposedly given to the lamb by God. Listed are the basic needs of the lamb’s survival: “feed” for food; “stream” for cool drinking water; “clothing” is the wool on his body; “mead” the place for the lamb to live. The imagery formed from the lamb’s God given gifts are heavenly. The lamb has great lofty pastures with a beautiful sparkling stream, he has everything he will ever need. This is being told by the child who probably has the same fulfillments. There are no evils known in their world to be concerned with. Life is simple.

The lamb is “wooly, bright” with a “tender voice”. These phrases create the visualization of innocence. There is nothing to fear from a little lamb. A creature that is soft and gentle. Just by the presence of the lamb, the “vales rejoice”. This meek creature becomes an image of perfection. The only known being, in the Christian religion, of perfection, is Jesus Christ. In the answer to the age-old question of who is the creator, the child compares the creator with his creation. The child explains to the lamb that he shares the same characteristics as Jesus Christ. “He is called by thy name, For He calls Himself a lamb.” In the Bible, Jesus is often referred to as “The Lamb of God.” The lamb and Jesus are both innocent beings. Both would not cause harm to another. They are “meek” and “mild.” With the uses of capital H’s, Blake attempts to convey that the child is referring to divine figure. “I a child, and thou a lamb, We are called by his name.” The lamb meets the generalization of the Christian faith: gentle, meek, and mild. The child and the lamb both share titles, youth and
innocence. Mankind are often referred to as “The children of God” and also “lamb”, is another name for Jesus. The Bible depicts Jesus as a Godlike man. He was born to earth to die as a sacrifice for mankind’s sins. Before Jesus died, he became sin, so that no one would go to hell if they repented their sins. In Judeo-Christian religion, it was customary to sacrifice a lamb to God. This is the incredible story the child must have learned and then grew his appreciation of Jesus and God.

The child appears to be naïve of other factors of life. The little boy dies, not to speak of the evils in the world. He is the one, who quickly accepts his teachings with no doubts. A life of innocence can be seen as one of ignorance. The young narrator preaches that God is the creator with strong conviction. When a person is young, he views most things as right and wrong. He is lacking the experience and the knowledge to think otherwise, instead he is blinded by his passion. Any knowledge the child obtains, he flaunts. When the child becomes an adult, perhaps he will view life completely different based on the events he may encounter throughout his life. He may even grow to despise God, if something bad comes to pass. His appreciation for God may dwindle in the worst of times. The child’s world which is free from all evils, will not last, this is inevitable.

The poem is being told as a nursery rhyme, song and prayer. There is a repetition of lines like, “Little Lamb, who made thee?”, “Little Lamb, I’ll tell thee;” and “Little Lamb, God bless thee!” This is done, so a child would understand, and so
that an older reader sees the perspective as a child. The first stanza contains questions and the second contains declarations shown with exclamation marks. The poem ends with the blessing of God. This is very much like saying ‘Amen’, therefore making the poem seems like a prayer.

On the other hand, The Tyger is a dark, philosophical and two sided view of creation. The possibilities for The Tyger’s creator are God and the Devil. The narrator attempts to grasp with the idea of how a creature with such an evil violence could be created by the same being who created the innocent lamb.

From the calm dark void The Tyger’s hellish eyes appear. The poem begins, The Tyger appears, as do the questions. The basic question being asked is: Who could create such a beautiful creature that has such a capacity for violence? The two possibilities for who is responsible for this monstrosity are either God or the Devil. “In what distant deeps or skies. Burnt the fire of thine eyes?” God lives in heaven which is supposedly in the skyward direction, while the Devil dwells in the depths of the earth. The narrator is trying to understand The Tyger’s origins by deductive reasoning. If The Tyger is not from one place, he must be from the other.

“On what wings dare he aspire? What the hand, dare seize the fire?” This couplet is the most intriguing. It appears to be referring to the battle of heaven. The Devil, once a high arch angel, known as Lucifer, sought to have the power equal to that of God’s. Therefore, it is fitting to be stated, “dare to seize the fire.” Fire
means power to create and destroy. For Lucifer’s act, he and his minions were sent to the fiery depths of the earth. This was the ultimate fight of good and evil.

However, Blake detested the Industrial Revolution. These feelings are expressed in his poetry in the Songs of Experience. Particularly, these feelings are revealed in The Tyger, in the third stanza. “What the hammer? What the chain? In what furnace was thy brain? What the anvil? What dread grasp, Dare it’s deadly terrors clasp?” The beast has been created by an unbearably hot furnace, an image of a hellish creator. A tiger is considered to be a mechanical-killer, this can be explained by it’s mechanical means of being created. It kills and eats automatically without a thought. Pure terror is produced within anyone in the presence of such a beast. The tools listed in this stanza are those of industry. Up to this point the creation of The Tyger has a devilish side. During the Industrial Revolution, people moved off farms and into factories, where they were paid with minimum wages. Children and women were eventually forced to work. This then led to child labour. In turn these tools are looked upon as objects of evil, they are a part of the large production line. The Tyger is one of many creations.

There is a gray and dark image created in the fourth stanza, with the “spears” and “tears” which may symbolize lightening and rain. A time of turmoil when The Tyger was created. The question appears that aligns the two poems together, “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” The idea of a good and kind creator making both a violent beast and a mild lamb in
unbelievable. A Tyger will only harm the weak, innocent creatures. The final stanza is the same with the exception of one word. In the first stanza, “Could frame thy fearful symmetry?” is changed to “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” This change of phrase is due to the developed thoughts. The Tyger that has been created is a defying act of the Devil, in spite of God. Though the question is not answered, it is left as a possible and not the defiant answer.

To compare The Lamb and The Tyger, is to compare one’s life in youth and old-age. The child has conviction, while the narrator in The Tyger is doubtful and unsure. Blake perhaps is stressing that when one is young, he is sure of the world, and as the years pass, he becomes uncertain, a revelation that must have occurred within Blake himself. The Songs of Innocence were written after the American Revolution, in a time of hope and possibilities. Then The Songs of Experience were written after the French revolution, a time of despair. When terror ran throughout France, for anyone who was associated with the aristocracy of the old regime. People were being executed by guillotine.

Blake would illustrate his poems with exquisite artistry that collaborates with the themes, and they are sometimes explanatory. In both works of art, the colours are soft. It is difficult to comprehend the paintings for The Tyger. The Tyger does not appear to be the ferocious beast that has been portrayed by the narrator, but as a tiger would appear in nature. In the wild, a tiger would be a beautiful sight but, the evil remains within the beast. The picture in The Lamb is happy and peaceful. A pair of doves
rest upon the manger, a symbol of peace and prosperity. The poem, The Lamb, evokes happiness with sunny meadows and sparkling streams. The opposite, The Tyger, creates fear with darkness and fiery glowing eyes.

The question of creation appears in the first line of The Lamb, and is answered with simplicity. The Tyger is faster, harsh and rhythmic with the question that is being asked in the fourth line and the remaining unresolved. The Tyger makes more sense in the fact that no person knows who is responsible for creature, the unresolved thoughts are the ones of realism. Whether God is in charge of all that is good and the Devil of bad, it makes no difference. Religion attempts to resolve the answers to life, but fails because religion is faith.

There are many stages to mankind’s thought processes. In youth, one prosecutes and declares his beliefs. When older, one becomes more reasonable and aware of the world around him. The Lamb demonstrates youth and The Tyger, adulthood. The thoughts of religion and life which develop in the two poems, may coincide with Blake’s. The child’s thoughts have no depth. He examines difficult topics with ease, while the narrator of The Tyger remains unsure. The Songs of Innocence was constructed five years earlier than Songs of Experience, whether these five years altered Blake’s views of religion to become more questionable. As one becomes older, life becomes harder to explain with religion. It is even harder to explain why God would create such evil in the world. Therefore, there must be an opposing force of creation, the Devil.166
However, the researcher finds the unique explanations of Blake's symbolism in Stanley Gardner's book, entitled, 'Infinity on the Anvil'. This book describes the heart of these poems, namely, The Lamb and The Tyger and shows the relation between the creation and the creator.

Blake's symbolism is directly related to his imaginative development, and the very nature of his poetry is the conflict of symbol with symbol, and the dramatic qualification of the symbolism as we shift from Innocence to Experience. There is nothing static, nothing emblematic about the symbolism, and what is the major difficulty, a good deal that is unconventional. This makes the easy answer particularly suspect with Blake.

Actually, when a symbol develops with Blake's thought in this way, the development is always dramatically true, and identifiable from associated symbols and from the context. A symbol may extend as Blake's vision expands. Back to the study of Blake's symbolism in The Lamb and The Tyger, the reader should note that The Lamb is always a symbol of the meekness and joy of Innocence; its meaning is absolute. On the contrary, the forests in The Tyger are still associated with secrecy. Thus, the forest is always associated with the Urizen concept, the concept of the god who oppresses, and restricts, and fosters false desire, and conceals joy behind the curtains of night, and separated mankind from mankind, and promises the allegorical abode where existence has never come to those who deny themselves in his name; or, the concept of that part of man's nature that does all this, which is
fearsomely presented in Urizen’s symbolic acts. Yet, while the forest always occurs in this tyrannic context, there is no Innocence in this symbol ever, it is not therefore flat and static in its significance, and isolated from Blake’s poetic development. The forests where superstition lurk cover the hills of Innocence; they are secret from the beginning and secrecy is one aspect of the Urizen’s concept. This secrecy is very important in the symbol of the forests because the symbol extends to infinite range as Blake’s imagination extends from revolt and oppression on earth, to the infinite theme of the Creation as in The Tyger.  

Therefore, The Tyger extends into realm beyond realm of meaning. The implications in those six short verses are more vast than in anything else Blake wrote of comparable length, and the concentration of cosmic distance and depth, within a single fiery frame, is intense. And, having caught infinity within two burning eyes, and eternal action in a single deed, Blake, in the incredible afterthought that now stands as the fifth stanza, gathers yet another universe of meaning to the immensity he has already grasped.

At the beginning, the glowing tiger burns in the “forests of night”. In the second stanza, the fire of his eyes burns “in distant deeps or skies”. The word “burning”, being repeated in “Burnt”, concentrates the whole being of the tiger in the fire of his eyes, a concentration reinforced in the question:

What immortal hand or eye?

Which keeps the mind of the reader in this aspect of the creator, as well as the tiger. The echo of “burning” in “Burnt” and the
repetition of the fire symbol also carries the reader into an association of the “forests of night”\textsuperscript{176} with “distant deeps or skies.”\textsuperscript{177} Blake developed the symbol of the forest to infinite range, by the association of ideas as appears in The Tyger, a poem of creation. The implication of that infinite forest of darkness and of the immense symbol of the ocean, are essentially relevant to The Tyge. The range is implicit in the phrase, “distant deeps or skies”\textsuperscript{178} and is self-evident. The imagination sweeps from the vast symbol of spatial ocean, to the skies, a movement intensified by the related meaning in:

\begin{quote}
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

Where the first line takes the imagination in an arc of flight from deep to sky, and the second sets the hand around the fire that burns there. The skies, moreover, are the skies around the fire that burns there. The skies, moreover, are the skies of night, “the forests of the night”\textsuperscript{180}, a conception which leads to the stars of the “Lamb”\textsuperscript{181} stanza, and provides a link of poetic meaning there.

“The tigers of wrath”\textsuperscript{182} are beasts of ferocious revolt in Blake, as well as animals of predatory instinct, lust, which stalk the Child and the Lamb of Innocence. Whichever meaning we associate with the tiger in this poem, it is clear that a symbolic connotation is intended. The tiger of revolt burns in the forests of oppression. A hand seizes this fire as the fire of revolt is seized in A Song of Liberty, or the tiger is the burning ferocity of the lustful king of night, which is seized and fixed within the frame of mortality. Both meanings are acceptable, and both may be present.
Not only is The Book of Urizen relevant to The Tyger, but America is too, where we see revolt generated from within the symbols of the forest and the deep.

No detail extraneous to the poetic meaning is given, either of the tyger or the creator of the tyger. The first stanza sets the fire of the tiger in the eternal night, and suggests the power of the eye or the hand that could contain its “fearful symmetry” within a “frame,” within a physical body. We are not concerned with the mind of the creator, anywhere in the poem. His is entirely an act of corporal strength, and our imagination is fixed on the limbs engaged. In the second stanza, the relationship between the tiger and the eternal forest and ocean is extended, until the complementary theme is reasserted in the final question of the stanza:

What the hand, dare seize the fire? 

Within the symbolic implications there is this juxtaposition of the timeless, immortal distances of forest, night, and deep, and the measured, mortal concentration of fixing the tyger’s symmetry within a finite frame. Both themes are introduced in the first stanza, and repeated in stanza two, where the question: “On what wings dare he aspire?” forms the link between the two themes. The transition having been made, and the wrath of the tiger having been seized, the imagination is focused on the intensely corporal theme, on the shoulder which can “twist the sinews” of the tyger’s heart;
and on the art which directs the power of the shoulder. This word, art, gives the action immensity, besides bringing abstract creative thought into synthesis with the intensely creative deed. Art always implies two things in Blake: physical labour and length of time; that is, precisely the two opposites, which are reconciled in this poem. The word, art is related to infinity, and to the forge symbol; these two dominant associations and that of art with incessant labour indicate the meaning of the word in The Tyger.

As the intensity of the physical action deepens, the tiger ceases to be a fire in the forests of eternity, and meets mortality. As soon as the sinews of the heart are knotted into existence, they pulse with mortal life:

And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

The heart begins to beat, and the verse measures its beat with it. We associate “feet” strongly with its rhyme “beat”, and the association gives the word “feet”, its inherent movement. We are no longer aware of its choice for the sake of rhyme, for the rhyme becomes inseparable from the full poetic meaning. Further, the transition from the beginning of the heartbeat to the reference to the feet of the creator is true to reality. As the heartbeat gives the tiger life distinct from the creator, so the word, “feet” gives the creator, corporal existence distinct from his act of creation. It separates.

What dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
The imagination at once moves away from the location in the forge of physical creation, and we associate this less specific question with the first theme of the poem, the setting in the “forests of the night”\textsuperscript{196} in space, since it echoes the earlier transitional question:

What the hand, dare seize the fire?\textsuperscript{197}

It may be added that the presence of concrete detail in that question (hand, fire, seize) leads towards the immediate concrete action, while the abstracts in the later question (dread grasp, deadly terrors, and the static verb, clasp) lead away from the physical act to a more spacious perspective. The poetic control is complete.\textsuperscript{198}

However, the final stanza is controlled in its significance by the poetic experience that precedes it.

When the stars threw down their spears
And water’d heaven with their tears:\textsuperscript{199}

The stars are a symbol of material power. In the throwing down of the spears, the instruments of strife are cast aside, and pity assumed; and the Creator, no longer Los or Urizen, but the God of Innocence, smiles upon the triumph of the Lamb.

In the symbol of the stars throwing down their spears, the symbolism of night implicit in The Tyger is itself used to express the triumph of Innocence over Experience, and the vision moves here, as it has already done in the earlier stanzas, from the spatial
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?  

The rejection of war in infinity leads to the only two lines of complete Innocence, when the tiger and the Lamb exist in eternity together, in the whole of the Songs of Experience.

The stanza of the Lamb is closely related to the rest of the poem in its detail, as well as in its general implications. The line which precedes it, directs the imagination to the clasping hand; and the throwing down of the spears is itself an action of a clasped hand. Moreover, the hand is an image paramount throughout the poem; and another is the eye. This is relevant to the second line of stanza five, to the word, tears.

The stanza of the Lamb is the only one in which not only the tiger of wrath and rebellion is brought to harmony, but the universe of stars and night as well. The tiger lies down with the Lamb. And from this, the final stanza takes on an impulse and a direction not given to the opening of the poem; the meaning in the final stanza, and our reaction to it, are generated in, and dominated by, the poetic experience through which we have just come.

Throughout these poems of Experience, the full panoply of Blake’s symbolism is drawn across a divided and separated

Heaven a mighty circle turning...

Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality
mankind. The imagination drives with the storm into each secret heart. No thought is innocent; Experience is inescapable.\textsuperscript{201}

The researcher finds it very amazing that the process of creation in The Tyger is so intense, that the creator of The Tyger is only observable in his active members, such as hand, eye, shoulder, and feet. Among these members, the first two, hand and eye still gains the strongest emphasis. Another significant point in The Tyger is that Blake almost in all his works, conceives of God as a human being, which is presented in his paintings as an old man with long, white beard, sometimes perhaps larger than a normal human being. In colour plate 17, The Ancient of Days, related to Europe: A Prophecy, and also colour plate 31: Jerusalem, this claim comes true. The researcher includes these two paintings (e,f) for a better understanding.

Margaret Bottrall in her interesting book, William Blake, Songs of Innocence and Experience comments on Blake’s The Tyger as far as God’s creation is concerned:

The present analysis suggests that Blake was more concerned with man than God. In fact, the famous poem, The Tyger, so often taken to be an expression of naïve wonder at the greatness of a god who could create both tiger and lamb, seems to me to be more a comment on the limited capacity of man to conceive God at all. The poem consists of a number of questions posed in anthropomorphic terms, what shoulder, what art, what dread hand, what dread feet, what the hammer, what the
chain, what the anvil, etc. the cumulative effect of which is to suggest that the poet is not only unable to conceive of a god in terms other than human, but that he is unable to grasp the concept at all. The incredulity of “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”^202 may be an incredulity at the whole notion of an all-creating god. Blake gives a capital letter to the lamb, a reality he can vouch for. God is he, conceived only as a series of questions. Similarly, the boy who asks too many questions and is burned in a holy place, says:

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?^203

Man is limited to being man. Blake’s most considered conclusion appears to be that Man’s most creative occupation is to develop to his fullest within that structural limitation.^204

In the Songs of Innocence, Blake’s symbols are largely drawn from the Bible, and since he makes use of such familiar figures as the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God, there is not much difficulty in seeing what he means; but in the Songs of Experience, he often uses symbols of his own making, and his meaning is more
elusive. What he describes are not actual events as ordinary men see and understand them, but spiritual events which have to be stated symbolically in order that they may be intelligible. In the Songs of Innocence the symbols convey a special kind of existence or state of soul. In this state, human beings have the same kind of security and assurance as belongs to lambs under a wise shepherd or to children with loving parents. Nor is it untrue to say that both the shepherd and the father of Blake’s poems is God. It is He who is Himself a lamb and becomes a little child, who watches over sleeping children and gives his love to chimney sweepers and little black boys. In the fatherhood of God, Blake’s characters have equal rights and privileges. But by it he means not quite what orthodox Christians do. Blake, despite his deeply religious nature, did not believe that God exists apart from man, but says expressly:

Man is All Imagination. God is Man and exists in us and we in him…Imagination or the Human Eternal Body in Every Man…Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man.  

For Blake, God and the imagination are one; that is, God is the creative and spiritual power in man, and apart from man, the idea of God has no meaning. When Blake speaks of the divine, it is with reference to this power and not to any external or independent godhead. For Blake, God is the divine essence which exists potentially in every man and woman.
However, “Blake indeed believed that his words were often dictated to him by some supernatural power.” The researcher finds it true when she comes to study The Tyger in the light of Blake’s assertion.

The Tyger is the pure poetry of Blake’s trust in cosmic forces. The images of The Tyger recur in the prophetic books, but in the poem, detached from any very specific context, they have a special strength and freedom. The tiger is Blake’s symbol for the fierce forces in the soul which are needed to break the bonds of experience. The “forests of the night”, in which the tiger lurks, are ignorance, repression, and superstition. It has been fashioned by unknown, supernatural spirits, like Blake’s mythical heroes, Orc and Los, prodigious smiths who beat out living worlds with their hammers; and this happened when “the stars threw down their spears”, that is, in some enormous cosmic crisis when the universe turned round in its course and began to move from light to darkness, as Urizen says in The Four Zoas, when he finds that passion and natural joy have withered under his rule and the power of the spirit has been weakened. But The Tyger is first and last, a poem. The images are so compelling that for most purposes, they explain themselves, and we have an immediate, overwhelming impression of an awful power lurking in the darkness of being and forcing on us questions which pierce to the heart of life.

There is the Lamb stanza in The Tyger which reminds the reader of Blake’s The Lamb, with its artless question:
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?\textsuperscript{211}

Blake sets his poem about the tiger with its more frightening and more frightened questions. The Lamb and The Tyger are symbols for two different states of the human soul. When the lamb is destroyed by experience, the tiger is needed to restore the world.\textsuperscript{212}

Indeed, The Tyger has many meanings, not only because it is an emblematic masterpiece which by itself supports a variety of valid interpretations, but because its context in Blake’s thought as a whole gives it many. Its very inclusiveness of meaning enables us to approach it through any relevant particular meanings, and to suggest that it may have been connected with a specific point in history, without implying any limitation of the poem as a whole. Therefore, no single interpretation, whether political, religious, ethical, or sexual can be sufficient in itself.

However, Blake’s introduction of stars and heavens into the poem marks a turning point in its symbolism:

When the stars threw down their spears
And water’s heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?\textsuperscript{213}

We can approach these symbols most clearly and concretely through Blake’s use of them in his contemporary historical prophecies. In his work in general, stars and heavens symbolize the
rigidly categorical restrictions imposed upon man by laws derived from abstract reason, and the weeping of the stars symbolizes at the cosmic level an apocalyptic melting or breaking down of these barriers, separating man from his own humanity, a return of man from the “forests of night.” But an important particular meaning of these symbols, as Erdman has shown, is that of political repression, specifically the agents of repression, kings and nobles. So, when Blake describes the repentance or defeat of tyrants, consistently shows the starry forces throwing down their spears (and swords and muskets) and weeping.

The pattern of the starry kings’ armies throwing down their weapons and weeping, whether in repentance or in the unrepentant anguish of defeat, is similar to the action in the first two lines of the stanza to indicate that these lines do at one level describe a victory for political liberty, if only as a symptom or a result of the apocalypse. And the context of the rest of the poem shows that this victory is a result of the creation of the dread tiger.

The crucial lines of the poem are those in which Blake shifts away from the tiger to introduce the results of its creation, in the symbolism of stars and heavens. These lines show a marked change in mood. “Did he smile his work to see?” is a question in which the speaker no longer asks simply whether the creator was in general pleased with his tiger, but asks more specifically whether he was pleased with it, when it caused the stars to throw down their spears and weep. Put this way, the question becomes obviously rhetorical. And the question: “Did he who made the Lamb make
thee? becomes a positive rhetorical climax which sums up the whole poem. The real climax, of course, which resolves everything, is the word “Dare” that is substituted for “Could” in the closing return to the strophic stanza. Coming after the image of the tiger is completed, the last two lines are not a question, not even a rhetorical one, but a cry of wonder.

The researcher is going to present some significant points related to Blake’s religious symbolism in The Lamb and The Tyger, and then concludes this chapter.

What does Blake refer to when using a hammer, chain, furnace and anvil in The Tyger? Is this a reference to the Industrial Revolution? Blake’s poetry in general shows a fascination with the Bible and his attempt to find answers to questions like: What is the source of evil? Why does God allow evil?

In The Tyger, the primary question Blake asks, is who created evil or the devil? The Tyger represents evil as witnessed by the words “what dread hand?”, “what dread feet”? In the fourth stanza he uses the images of the hammer, chain, furnace and anvil to symbolize “deadly terrors”. These could be oblique references to the Industrial Revolution but it seems that Blake has a larger purpose in mind. In the next stanza, Blake writes:

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?
This is an obvious Biblical reference to the fall of Satan, mentioned in Ezekiel 28:12-29 and Luke 4:10. So it seems that the images refer more to Satan and the deadly tools he possesses than simply the Industrial Revolution.

Most of the disagreement about the poem centers around the image of the tiger itself. Some say it represents a strong but volatile force that was present during the French Revolution, which was occurring when Blake published his poem. Others say the tiger simply represents the devil or evil itself. The speaker, however, simply wonders whether the origin of this force was demonic or divine.225

WILLIAM BLAKE’S THE TYGER

However, this is an explication of one of the English-speaking world’s best loved poems. The explication uses a Biblical analysis, which works; in addition, Blake draws from his own mythology to write his poetry, one that is very different from the Biblical mythology.

Blake’s The Tyger is a poetic metaphor or allegory using the symbol of the tiger, mythological allusions, and images of Creation, Heaven, and Hell to make a point about the nature of good and evil. One reason for the poem’s immortality is its exciting, unusual, and evocative imagery and another reason is its universal and timeless theme.
The poem is structured in six stanzas. The rhyme scheme is AABB with a near rhyme at the end of the first and last stanzas; "eye" does not exactly rhyme with "symmetry", and it seems that this is an intentional error made to add emphasis to the word "symmetry" by unbalancing it against the rest of the stanza.

Literally, the poem is asking a number of questions of a tiger, or "Tyger." In the first stanza, the question is what immortal could have "framed", or fashioned the Tyger’s "symmetry", its perfection and balance. The second stanza questions whether this creation might have taken place in some "distant deeps or skies", outside of normal human experience, and then again asks about the creator. The third and fourth stanzas ask the Tyger about the process of his making, and the fifth stanza, inquires about the final reaction of the Tyger’s creator to his creation. The final stanza is a repetition of the opening stanza with one minor modification.

The first image in the poem, is of the Tyger "burning bright" in the forest. Due to early English colonialism in 1794 at the writing of this poem, English readers would have had an excellent idea of what a tiger was and what sort of jungle it inhabited, but their image would not have been the warm and fuzzy one, we have today. With their lack of scientific knowledge and environmentalism, the tiger would be seen as a dangerous assassin capable of killing good English soldiers in the dead of night from the cover of its mysterious jungle.

The "immortal hand or eye" that can frame the Tyger is, of course, the immortal Christian Creator, God. The use of the hand
and the eye, though, sets up a dual meaning for the image “frame”. Framing the Tyger with the hand is to fashion, shape, or build, but to frame the Tyger with the eye is to simply be able to see and comprehend it. So, this question asks who can conceive of such a beast, plan it, then build it.

The “deep or skies”235 imagery refers to places mankind cannot normally see, such as Heaven or Hell. The distant skies can also be the Sun, to where Icarus “dare aspire”236 on his wings of feathers and wax. The deeps are the depths of the sea where he fell. The Greek mythological allusions are continued in the next line by the question of the hand that “dare seize the fire”,237 an allusion to Prometheus. Both mythological images share a common theme; both Daedalus, who made Icarus’ wings, and Prometheus, who stole the fire from the gods, attempted to help advance mankind by their work, but their gifts of invention and fire had negative, tragic aspects as well as good and progressive ones.

The organic imagery of the creation of the heart of the beast in stanza three is contrasted by the mechanical imagery of stanza four. In these mechanical images, the picture of a forge is painted by the references to the hammer, furnace, anvil, and grasp (blacksmith’s tongs). However, in industrializing England, the “chain”238 mentioned in this stanza would not have been used in the common work of a village blacksmith, but instead would have been used to lift large iron objects in a full foundry, with many men and great heat and black coal smoke and the noise of dozens of trip-hammers hammering at the same time, a hellish inferno-like image.
The image of the “stars (throwing) down their spears” in the fifth stanza may be interpreted as the stars either surrendering or hurling their spears of starlight, but in either case creates the Heavenly image of creation in Genesis: 1:3: “And God said, ‘Let there be light! And there was light.’” This beatific imagery contrasts with the earlier infernal imagery and brings a closing to the creation of the Tyger by illuminating the finished product.

The stars watering Heaven with their tears is paralleled by the very next image in the Bible, in Genesis 1:6. “And God said ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters’...and (He) separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.” The “waters” are the sea, and the “firmament” is Heaven, together reinforcing the “distant deeps or skies” imagery of the second stanza and helping place creation of the Tyger at a time before the creation of the Earth.

The poem gives the image of God, the maker of the Lamb, Jesus, possibly smiling over the creation of the deadly Tyger. It is in this comparison of the Tyger to the Lamb that the allegory makes more sense; if the Lamb and the Tyger are both the creations of God, and the Tyger is the opposite of all the peace and compassion that the Lamb stands for, then the Tyger is the Anti-Christ, or Satan.

With Satan as the Tyger, the poem’s images begin to become clear. The first question of the poem, “What immortal hand or eye” could create the Tyger, is rhetorical; God did it. He created
the Tyger in the distant “deeps or skies”, Hell or Heaven, and created the Tyger for a reason; like Icarus on his waxen wings or mankind with Prometheus’ destructive gift of fire, the Tyger is an agent of free will. Just as Icarus has the choice to aspire to fly too high and man has the choice to use fire for war rather than warmth, Satan’s tricking Adam and Eve into eating of the Tree of Knowledge brings us the gift of free will, the choice between good and evil.

Other images also fall into place. The twisted sinews of the Tyger’s heart refer to the idea that Satan is really Lucifer, brightest of God’s angels, but with a heart twisted by ambition and pride. The infernal foundry image appears as literally being hell, sulphurous flames (from the burning coal) and all. The scene of the stars throwing down their warlike “spears” appears to be the war of angels in heaven, in which one-third of the heavenly host follows Lucifer into rebellion against God.

The first question asked, “What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry”, and that question is answered along with allegorical justification for God’s actions. The final question still remains, however, no matter whether or not evil as well as good is required for free will. The last stanza is subtly changed to who “Dare frame thy fearful symmetry”; asking what God could be bold enough to create such a powerful enemy as compared to his gentle Lamb?

However, most reader’s response to The Tyger is one of interest, curiosity, wonder, and entertainment. The question of evil
is the problem of why evil exists in a universe created by an omnipotent, omnibenevolent being, and even not being Christians, the readers feel that the problem of evil apply to them, if not more so to a Christian; at least the true Christian can believe in a God whose ways are strange and mysterious and unknowable to mankind, thus any seeming contradictions in His definition are blamed on lack of human understanding. To the agnostic, the question of evil is less explainable and this is one of the most succinct and aesthetic treatments of that question that the readers have found.²⁵⁰

12. Religious Symbolism in The Lamb and The Tyger

CONCLUSION

William Blake deals with themes of innocence and experience in his poems, The Lamb and The Tyger with his significant use of religious symbolism. His poems convey the philosophical questions regarding good and evil and how one must exist with the other. The Songs of Innocence and Experience by William Blake contain companion poems by which each shed light on the other. The Lamb, a Song of Innocence, when compared with The Tyger, a Song of Experience, demonstrates the dramatic change in the poet’s view of the relationship between the meaning of life and the dominant theological beliefs of the time. They were written in the context of the late 1700’s, when Europe was on the brink of industrial, social, political and scientific change. Reflecting these
upheavals is the transformation of Blake’s simple child-like belief in inherent goodness of the world to a perception where society was a darker, more malevolent place.

The Lamb was written when Blake had held a highly idealistic perception of life, drawn from the dominant religious iconography of the time. The persona of the poem is that of a child whose voice resonates with innocence as he asks: “Little Lamb, who made thee?” This child-like simplicity and symbolic reference to the wonder of creation reveal Blake’s positive view of a loving and benevolent deity. Enhancing these qualities is the successive repetition of the rhetorical questions posed by the child to the lamb. The persona’s own answers: “Gave thee life and bid thee feed... gave thee such a tender voice”, show God’s bountiful gifts bestowed on this one creature.

The Lamb also reflects Jesus Christ, the Son of God in Christianity, “He is called by thy name... He is meek and he is mild.” The Christian message purports that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son as a sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of all mankind. This emphasis on God’s great love and compassion is connected by the tender, lyrical flow of the poem. To the child, the world is a beautiful place of innocence and love. Such beliefs are concrete as a child’s mind has not developed the experience or the capacity to question the ostensible goodness of the world.

If The Lamb represents the ideal, then The Tyger by contrast signifies reality. Where the tone in the former is light, loose and
airy, the latter is darker, heavier and more brooding. Their poetic structures and rhyme schemes can also be compared. The melodic pattern of The Lamb gives it a nursery rhyme impression. The Tyger is more tightly constrained into quatrains and within these, rhyming couplets. This rhythmic movement reflects the slow and supple motions of the wild beast. It is this fascination, yet dread of evil that Blake is exploring, “What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”

By contrasting the Tyger, symbolic of Satan and the Lamb, symbolic of Jesus, light is shed on the conflicting human beliefs on good and evil. As propounded by the religious doctrine of the institutionalized Church, Satan is the definition of pure evil. He, as a Tyger, is a great predator, the devourer of men’s souls. He is to be shunned and feared. Yet, the poet subverts the Church’s teaching by revealing a dark awe at his magnificent existence, “And what shoulder, and what art...?”

The second to fourth stanzas dwell on the existence of Satan, once the arch-angel, Lucifer, now a fallen star. “On what wings dare he aspire?” refers to the heights to which Lucifer’s ambitions had soared, to the extent of desiring godhead and supplanting God himself. There follows a long list of rhetorical questions which, in contrast to The Lamb, are not answered. Rather, they serve to generate more questions on the philosophical truths of good and evil.

Blake also refers to the celestial war between God and Lucifer, “When the stars threw down their spears”, ending that
stanza with, “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” This draws the reader to question the ability of an all-powerful God to create the innocent and pure Lamb, but yet at the same time, to mold the terrible and dark image of the Tyger. God, the epitome of goodness has a flaw in His creation and this flaw was the element that could have the capacity to rise up and challenge His power. It is suggested that for good to exist, evil is also essential in God’s creation, whether in the physical or spiritual realm.

Each poem needs the other to enlighten the reader to the perceptions held by Blake on the subject of the never-ending battle between God and Satan, good and evil, the Lamb and the Tyger. The Lamb demonstrates Blake’s innocent belief that pure goodness can be achieved as God has offered mankind salvation and hope. However, in The Tyger, Blake’s idealistic attitude has changed. In this poem, he does not demonstrate any hate or repulsion of evil. Instead, he reveals his simultaneous horror and fascination of it. Good can not exist without evil as evil can not without good. Such ideas outline the complex nature of God’s creation and man’s significance within in.