Soteriology in the poetry of William Blake| The turn from fall to salvation in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem

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SOTERIOLOGY IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BLAKE:
THE TURN FROM FALL TO SALVATION IN
THE FOUR ZOAS AND JERUSALEM

by
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B.A. Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 2000

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

August 2005

Approved by:

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Dean, Graduate School

Date
Soteriology in the Poetry of William Blake: The Turn from Fall to Salvation in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*

Thesis Chair: Bruce Bigley

In his later poems *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, William Blake integrates biblical accounts of humanity's history of fall and salvation into his own imaginative framework. In so doing, he draws upon his willingness to re-envision religious categories to produce poetic accounts of the internal descent into fallen spiritual and imaginative stasis, and the turn through moral, creative action, toward reunion with others and, by extension, with the divine.

Blake's vision of fall and salvation in these two poems involves the use of scriptural forebears to recast the psychic process of internal derangement and reintegration of the various mental, spiritual and creative faculties both as individual phenomena and grand, cosmic processes, making the salvation achieved in the poems' final movements both individual and collective. Furthermore, and more importantly, he asserts the role of ethical action as a means to the achievement of the genuine divine union that he saw to be denied to believers in the dominant Christian religious currents of his time. Blake renders this revelation and subsequent salvation far more successfully in *Jerusalem*, which represents a more fully crystallized vision of a true Christianity, whereas in *The Four Zoas*, he was still attempting to reconcile the religious skepticism of his earlier, political work with his growing desire to re-envision Christianity on his own terms.

Blake's vision of salvation bridges the separation between the temporal and the transcendent, furthering the notion that the divine is immanent within earthly reality. His poems, establish his belief that individual and collective salvation must be gained through creative, collaborative action, which in *The Four Zoas* is exemplified in Urizen's turn from selfhood toward a concern for psychic reunion, and in the later poem, *Jerusalem*, is attained through Los realizing Jesus' moral example in artistic endeavors and Albion's faithful self-sacrifice.
## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction: An Interpretive Scriptural Framework for Blake's Notion of Salvation  
1

Chapter 2: Fall and Reintegration of Psychic Faculties in  
*The Four Zoas*  
20

Chapter 3: Fall of Albion and Restoration of Man and the City of God in  
*Jerusalem*  
54

Chapter 4: Conclusion: Immanence and Religious Experience in Blake's Salvation  
73

Bibliography  
82
1: Introduction: An Interpretive Scriptural Framework for Blake's Notion of Salvation

William Blake was famously skeptical of organized religion, and in particular the consequences of emphasizing reason over personal religious experience in the codification of faith. The Jewish and Christian religious traditions incorporate into their theological systems the notion of soteriology, which in Judaism is defined primarily as a theology of sanctification, and in Christianity the theology of salvation or liberation. While one can assume that Blake would be suspicious of theological systematics, his later work demonstrates his vision of human salvation. Furthermore, while Blake avoided codified theological systems, throughout much of his work condemning them, he nonetheless drew heavily upon Hebrew and Christian scriptural forebears in the creation of his psychic mythologies. Soteriology in these traditions entails the idea that humanity has, through sin, entered a fallen state, yet through a promise made by God to his faithful, they also are given the promise of redemption and salvation. This dynamic of fall and salvation or liberation is common to all of the major religious traditions, as theologian John Hick states in *An Interpretation of Religion* that these traditions "exhibit in the different ways a soteriological structure which identifies the misery, unreality, triviality and perversity of ordinary human life, affirms an ultimate unity of reality and value in which or in relation to which a limitlessly better quality of existence is possible, and shows the way to realise that radically better possibility."  

Hick's definition is useful in that, because of his position as a religious pluralist, he has created a definition of salvation that is sufficiently comprehensive.
and inclusive to include Blake’s wide-ranging and innovative theological thought. The dynamic between the misery, suffering, and fallen state of ordinary human existence, and the transcendence to a superior plane of existence through salvation, is a theme which resonates in Blake’s poems The Four Zoas and Jerusalem. In these works, Blake recapitulates this dynamic of fall and salvation that is contained in both Hebrew scripture and the New Testament, and in doing so enacts what Hick calls salvation’s “transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness.” Blake uses his poetry to envision the “fall” as a self-destructive process of endless division, alienation, and negation on both individual and cosmic scales. Conversely, Blake’s notion of salvation, as manifest in these two poems, conceptualizes the restoration of the fallen, fragmented human faculties in, first, a reintegration of the fallen man, and then the creation of a harmonious inner mental balance that realizes spiritual and creative restoration for both the individual and the whole of humanity. In The Four Zoas, salvation takes shape through Urizen’s transformation from tyrannical self-regard into a beneficent agent of individual psychic restoration and, on a cosmic scale, collective human salvation. In Jerusalem, salvation occurs through a different selfless act, as Albion offers himself in sacrifice for the sake of others, an act which finds its culmination in the restored City of God, Jerusalem. In both of these poems, Blake demonstrates his belief that spiritual stasis leads to self-destruction on an individual and a cosmic scale, and envisions salvation not as a purely otherworldly divine intercession, but a radically better state of existence brought forth by personal, creative self-transformation through moral action of the sort realized by

\[2\]

Hick 52

2
Urizen in *The Four Zoas*, and Los and Albion in the far more successful *Jerusalem*.

In imagining his myth of fall and salvation in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake draws upon both Hebrew and Christian accounts and conceptions, so in order to understand Blake's idea of soteriology, one must first understand the Jewish and Christian notions of spirituality in scripture which inform his poetry. Jewish and Christian soteriologies contain distinct ideas of what constitutes fall and salvation, not only in comparison with one another, but even within each particular religious tradition. In both Hebrew and Christian scriptures, the notions of the fall begin with the Genesis accounts of the Edenic fall, and the idea that this initial turn away from God, and toward self-regard and individuation, has plunged humanity into a history of sin and death. In the Hebrew Bible, this fall into pain, division and acrimony recurs throughout the events recounted in the history of the Israelites, and the patterned dynamic of fall and redemption cycling through its accounts of the Hebrew people. The Christian traditions extend this belief in a fallen history that must be transcended through their sacred scriptures as well, yet they postulate that Christ's salvific sacrifice redeemed humanity from this history of sin and death.

However, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, there are a variety of competing notions of salvation. First, there is the question of whether salvation is a state that is entered into collectively, as a united body of faith, or if it is an individual state, to be gained and entered into individually through personal morality and piety. Systematic theologies within both Judaism and Christianity also differ on the point of whether salvation takes place as a historical end, through a series of transformative events leading
to a salvific telos within earthly time and history, whether salvation occurs as an earthly phenomenon at the end of history, or finally, whether it occurs beyond time and history in an entirely otherworldly realm. In addition, varying conceptions of salvation within Jewish and Christian traditions differ on the point of whether salvation comes about through a transformation of self through the turn toward moral action, or whether the reverse takes place: the Pauline notion that believers are already saved, and that the transformation of the self occurs through genuine acceptance of this salvation. Both notions imply moral action; the former postulates that morality leads to salvation, while the latter presupposes that moral action proceeds from salvation.

In the Hebrew Bible, salvation is primarily imagined as a collective state, since the predominant soteriological concern throughout these texts is God's promise to sanctify and redeem his chosen people, Israel. This promise, or covenant, imbues Jewish soteriology not only with an emphasis upon the collective salvation of Israel as a people, but on this salvation being tied, in accordance with God's covenant, to their promised land of Israel. Therefore, the dominant strain of soteriology implied in Hebrew Scripture suggests that salvation takes place as a collective transformation within earthly existence. Salvation is conceived as a new age for Israel as a particular people in a particular land, in fulfillment of God's promise of providence and salvation, as a movement from the collective fallen state of suffering, alienation and oppression. This interpretation of salvation as an earthly, temporal phenomenon is supported in particular by the prophetic texts, which envision salvation as constituting a social, ethical, and spiritual transformation on earth.
For example, Hosea imagines salvation as something occurring within earthly time. His account focuses on the fulfillment of God’s promise and a time of divine forgiveness and renewal. In the Book of Hosea, God says:

I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily, he shall strike root like the forests of Lebanon. His roots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. They shall again live beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden; they shall blossom like the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.³

In this envisioned account, God says that he will forgive his people’s betrayal, and the renewal of their people is described through a metaphor likening Israel to plants that have their period of deterioration, but are ultimately renewed with new life. God here promises them new life as a restored people through his forgiveness and renewal, and the metaphor of vegetation implies that their salvation is one that occurs on earth, within human time, living “beneath [God’s] shadow.”

The Hebrew scriptures, in the images of earthly salvation in the renewal of Israel’s kingdom, also often associate this salvific time to come with a messianic age, in which a new king will bring in a new age for the kingdom and save humanity from its fallen history of suffering and alienation. A scriptural example of the association of salvation with the messiah is in the Book of Isaiah, which states:

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his

³Hosea 14: 4-7
shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.  

This passage clearly augurs a belief that a messiah would bring about peace in the kingdom. In conjunction with other associations of salvation with notions of a peaceful, righteous kingdom, this passage suggests an interpretation of the messiah as an agent not only of change, but of salvation through political and social transformation.

Although the aforementioned prophetic passages clearly conceive of the Hebrews' notion of salvation as a historical phenomenon to occur through sanctification on earth, within earthly time, some Hebrew scriptures can be interpreted as suggesting a more otherworldly salvation. For example, the book of Ecclesiastes refers to a time in which "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it." This notion of the breath returning to God upon death suggests some notion of a realm of existence with God beyond death. Particularly in alternate translations which use the word "spirit" instead of "breath," there is some hint of a belief in a life for the human spirit in the presence of (or unity with) God after death.

Passages in Ezekiel and Jeremiah also seemingly leave room for the interpretation that the afterlife, and salvation, may be realized in another realm. In Ezekiel, God states: "I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I...

\[\text{Isaiah 9: 6-7}\]
\[\text{Ecc. 12: 7}\]
will bring you back to the land of Israel.... I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil.” This passage, likely a metaphor for the death and rebirth of the Hebrew people, may also be interpreted to suggest a belief in salvation as life after death, but it leaves a bit uncertain whether this Israel will exist on earth, in some sort of a transformed history in which the dead are resurrected, or whether these dead are to be resurrected into another realm in which the land of Israel is fully and peacefully restored to its rightful people. If this resurrection does indeed happen on earth, it must be in a type of transformed earthly state, unless this passage is meant to imply that these risen dead should exist alongside the mortal living. Otherwise, this Israel populated by the risen dead would have to exist in an otherworldly realm. Similarly, in Jeremiah, the Lord comforts his people by saying that their dead “shall come back from the land of the enemy;... your children shall come back to their own country.” As in Ezekiel, these dead must return to either a transformed earth, or must exist in an otherworldly Israel. Clearly, however, this idea of an otherworldly realm of messianic salvation is ambiguous at best in the Hebrew scriptures, and is far overshadowed by the notions of salvation as a restoration of the ideal kingdom of Israel upon the land promised to the Jewish people.

In contrast to the accounts of salvation presented in the Hebrew scriptures, which tend to give it a collective character and place it within earthly time and history, New Testament notions of salvation tend to give it a more otherworldly aspect, and through the

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6Ez. 37: 12-14
7Jer. 31. 16-17
8Gillis 105
link between moral action and salvation, also leave room for individualistic interpretations. In Christian salvation, the focus is on the turn from self-interest to self-giving on behalf of others. Hick states: “The reality of Christian salvation is...an actual and concrete change from sinful self-centredness to self-giving love in response to the divine grace.” This generalized description of the essential nature and dynamic of Christian salvation is one that resonates strongly with Blake in Jerusalem, and in a more secular sense in the more politicized Four Zoas, in which selflessness and sacrifice are the key to the restoration of the mental and spiritual City of God in Jerusalem, and the salvation of Albion in both poems.

The primary account of the realm of Christian salvation occurs in the Gospels, in which Jesus describes the Kingdom of God. In his epistles, Paul explicates the notion of Christian atonement, in which a Christian is given the gift of salvation, and from this gift proceeds the transformation of the self. Aside from the Kingdom of God and Paul’s notion of the church as Body of Christ, the New Testament also offers the restored Jerusalem as a key image of Christian salvation. The most prevalent image of the Christian Kingdom of God, involving a return to God in a realm transcending time and earthly existence, possesses an otherworldly character. In the Gospels, the account in Matthew of the Kingdom of Heaven supports this notion of the Christian state of salvation. In this account, Jesus states:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again the

9Hick 46
kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.10

In Jesus’ images of the kingdom, expressed through analogies so as to make them comprehensible, he speaks of the kingdom as something so precious that one should dedicate his life to attaining it, likening it to a treasure or pearl. In his description of the “end of the age,” in God’s separation of good and evil, heaven and hell, Jesus clearly imbues this realm of salvation with an otherworldly, apocalyptic character. This apocalyptic resonance comes from the sense that the “end of the age” will occur beyond history or in a transformed time, and will entail a direct experience or vision of the divine. Here, the Kingdom of God is to come about at the end of time, and the righteous will transcend the earthly plane to the divine realm of heaven.

The Kingdom of God is not always imagined as the Kingdom of Heaven, and accounts of this salvation that omit reference to “heaven” admit the possibility of salvation into God’s ideal kingdom taking place within earthly time and space. The Gospel of Mark is believed to be the earliest of the four Gospels and, not coincidentally, refers not to the Kingdom of Heaven, like the later Matthew, but to the Kingdom of God. While the later

10Matt. 13: 44-49
account of Luke preserved the language of the Kingdom of God, Matthew changed it to the Kingdom of Heaven to reflect emerging notions of salvation as an otherworldly phenomenon. Mark’s use of the phrase “kingdom of God” in Chapter 4 of his Gospel leaves open the interpretation of salvation as an event to occur within earthly time and history, and tends to emphasize Jesus’ role as an agent of social change, and Christians’ responsibility to continuing to work at effecting this change.

According to Christianity’s dominant Pauline concept of soteriology, salvation is brought about as a result of Jesus’ self-giving sacrifice, in which humans’ fall into original sin is redeemed and Christians’ righteousness before God is renewed through Christ’s death and subsequent resurrection. Christians are redeemed into the assurance of salvation simply through faith, as Paul states: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Thus, where some concepts of salvation pose the idea that through moral life and self-transformation one attains sanctification and salvation, Paul asserts the reverse, that salvation has already occurred through Christ’s sacrifice, and that this salvation should, in turn, lead one to self-transformation. The reality of salvation should produce an internal spiritual change. Paul says: “The death [Jesus] died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Paul states here that Christians, in their saved state, are free to re-orient themselves to live lives of faith, for it is through faith that they achieve salvation.

\[\text{Rom. 10: 9}\]

\[\text{Rom. 6: 10-11}\]
Therefore, true acceptance of the gift of salvation entails genuine faith. Genuine faith entails a demonstration of belief and commitment to Christ's words and example, which must involve a turn to action on behalf of others, and away from self-centeredness. Hick recapitulates this notion by stating: "The experience of salvation is the experience of being an object of God's gratuitous forgiveness and love, freeing the believer to love his and her neighbour." Thus does the Christian theological concept of atonement, and its role in Christian salvation, entail a turn to others and God-centeredness in order to genuinely accept salvation.

The turn from the self to unity with others is a dynamic necessary to salvation, and Paul uses the metaphor of the body to offer his image of the realm Christians should strive to attain in their realization of salvation. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul states that believers are "the body of Christ and individually members of it." If the ultimate nature of salvation is unity in the fullness of God, then this metaphor is an apt one, and it is one that can begin to be realized in earthly existence. The parts of a body are individual, yet part of a larger collective; thus, as a metaphor for the Christian's unity in the body of Christ, this image indicates that although we are individuals, each person is fundamentally a part of a larger whole. Therefore, salvation is attained through complete unity with other Christians, and with God as part of this whole. Until then, human beings have a tendency toward individuation and a consideration of themselves as distinct beings, apart from the larger collective.

13Hick 47
141 Cor. 12: 27
Just as importantly, people’s actions reflect this incessant self-concern, and laws, political systems, and behavior demonstrate an interest in the self defined by division and separation from others. In *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake envisions man’s trend toward individuation as the condition comprising the Fall of Albion. In these poems, the fall is both cosmic and microcosmic -- Blake recapitulates the fall of humanity and its entry into a history marked with suffering, alienation and strife; meanwhile, his poems also enact the individual’s fall from proper psychological balance and, especially in *Jerusalem*, from a meaningful relationship with the divine. The division and negation in Blake’s system of being is overcome through creativity, dialectical progress and, most importantly, unity through selfless others-centered action. In *The Four Zoas*, Urizen ultimately ushers in the salvific end-time through selfless action, while in *Jerusalem* the act of saving self-sacrifice falls to Albion. Paul and Blake, therefore, conceive salvation similarly, in the sense that salvation involves unity in God, and not division and selfhood, and a transformation to a better self. As Northrop Frye states in *The Great Code*, scripture offers “not so much a cosmology as a vision of upward metamorphosis, of the alienated relation of man to nature transformed into a spontaneous and effortless life -- not effortless in the sense of being lazy or passive, but in the sense of being energy without alienation.”\(^\text{15}\) In other words, although Blake’s visions of salvation assume a cosmic scope, the fundamental focus, particularly in the more successfully realized *Jerusalem*, is on moral action as a means to spiritual and mental reintegration, so that the self transforms itself and reconnects with the divine to help bring about its own salvation. Blake’s vision of

\(^{15}\text{Frye, *The Great Code* 76}\)
salvation is particularly distinctive, however, not only in its focus on moral action as a means for bringing about this redemption, but on his desire to poetically render his belief in divine immanence, or the existence of the divine in humanity, and in the mundane world. While the use of scripture and recapitulation of fallen history give the poems a cosmic scope, the salvation achieved is not a mere “once-for-all” divine intercession, but a moral turn to others-centered action, which leads to the genuine experience of the divine that helps to restore fallen humanity.

In addition to the images of the Kingdom of God, the New Testament also envisions the realm of salvation as the restoration of the holy city of Jerusalem, which resonates strongly in Blake’s poetic imagery. In the Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven accounts, Jesus uses parables and analogies to put the state of ultimate transcendence into terms comprehensible to his believers. The actual nature of the Kingdom likely defies human description and categories, so Jesus likely used these parables in order to at least give believers a sense of the content of their salvation. Other accounts of salvation, however, use the Hebrew Bible’s prophetic imagery of the apocalyptic restoration of the holy city of Jerusalem to envision this realm of salvation. For example, upon Jesus’ death in Matthew’s Gospel, it describes the resurrection of the dead and their passage into the afterlife, stating: “The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.”

This passage illustrates the association of the holy city with life after death. The Book of Revelation

\[16\text{Matt. 27: 51-53}\]
also illustrates the association of a restored Jerusalem with God's kingdom in the New Testament. The Revelation to John states:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

The Revelation description of this realm of heavenly salvation is then followed by a brief recapitulation of Jerusalem's restoration that is delineated in far more exhaustive detail in Ezekiel. The Revelation account of the new Jerusalem combines the Ezekiel account of a restored kingdom, which may take place within earthly time or beyond it, with the emergent Christian emphasis on salvation as a phenomenon occurring outside of earthly time and existence, when “the first things have passed away.” This otherworldly description of the new Jerusalem combines the social aspect of political and social restoration with transcendence either into a transformed earth, or another world altogether. While Blake's City of God in Jerusalem assumes much of the otherworldly character of the Ezekiel and Revelation accounts, Blake successfully bridges the realms of both the mundane and the transcendent, suggesting a belief in divine immanence and the

17Rev. 21: 1-4
need for personal experience of the transcendent, both of which notions had been lost or elided in the religious currents of Blake’s age.

*The Four Zoas* draws upon the general biblical pattern of a people’s fall and redemption, and recapitulates the crucifixion and Revelation’s apocalypse, or divine vision in a transformative end-time, as the poem progresses. *Jerusalem*, the more overtly theological of the two poems, resonates with the Hebrew prophetic books and the Book of Revelation, as it draws heavily upon their scriptural accounts of a holy city restored. In *Jerusalem*, Blake generally follows the overall pattern of Ezekiel. Ezekiel provides the account of a straying people and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem, and the later restoration and salvation of Israel in keeping with God’s promise to the Israelites, and the construction of the new Jerusalem. Blake usually adheres to this textual dynamic of fall and redemption, with the redemption entailing the reconstruction and restoration of the holy city. Although Blake’s account of Jerusalem’s restoration resonates more with the overall structure of Ezekiel, the apocalyptic tone and overall eschatological content of Albion’s salvation is more in keeping with the Revelation version of the end-time, in which Jerusalem’s restoration clearly occurs in a transformed history. The historical salvific moment in *The Four Zoas* is also tied inextricably to the divinely transformed apocalyptic event, as Urizen’s reform, and that of the other psychic entities, ushers in the end-time and the revival of Albion. In both poems, however, there is an essential interweaving of the supernatural with the temporal, a trait which suggests a belief in the immanence of the divine in the earthly realm. Blake would have been skeptical of a purely earthly social and political upheaval, as he indicates in other texts that revolutions tend simply to replace one
oppressive system with another. However, the transformative moment of salvation, in Blake’s conception, also cannot be purely otherworldly, as this would place the narrative in the realm of distant “futurity,” failing to resonate with immediate human experience and the divinity contained within it. Therefore, his version of apocalypse and salvation takes on some of the otherworldly character of Revelation, although his seems to involve a transformation of the earthly realm so as to unite it with the divine, which is consistent with Blake’s overall philosophy that the divine exists only in its immanence in the human soul and earthly creation. This infusion of the divine into the temporal, and the need for temporal experience of God in order to enter into a proper relationship with the divine, is realized far more fully in *Jerusalem* than in the earlier, unfinished, and often fragmented *Four Zoas*, in which Blake’s seeming personal conversion toward the more overtly Christian sensibility displayed in *Jerusalem* led to a disconnect between the more politicized early nights, and the transcendent later nights. In *Jerusalem*, Blake far more successfully provides an account of how creativity and self-giving service can operate as the means by which the individual can achieve inner salvation. Furthermore, this individual salvation, enacted on a larger scale, can help humanity to achieve a larger, collective salvation.

Blake’s notions of fall and redemption, while distinctive in bridging the perceived gap between collective and personal redemption, as well as earthly and otherworldly states of transcendence, are nonetheless strongly informed by the aforementioned Hebrew and Christian scripture antecedents. In these scriptural accounts, the Fall is fundamentally characterized by a turn away from God, and usually away from other people, and toward
the self. Therefore, the Fall is not located exclusively in the Genesis account, as it is recapitulated in every account – scriptural or historical – of a turn toward selfhood and self-centeredness, at the expense of the concern for others and for ultimate Being. Thus, humanity’s passage into a fallen state is realized both on a cosmic and collective scale, in keeping with popular interpretations of the Genesis account, and on a microcosmic, individual level, in which one’s choices and desires lead the individual out of internal harmony. Blake is keenly aware of this historical repetition of the Edenic fall -- as he often explicitly casts his mythological events in Edenic terms. In general terms, Blake envisions humanity’s Fall to be its pattern of endless division, beginning with mankind’s division into the Four Zoas: Los, Urizen, Luvah/Orc, and Tharmas, each of which represent different faculties of Man. The ideal state is one of unity and creative tension between all of these faculties; Blake realizes that humans have oppositions, or contraries, within them. He believes, however, that these contraries ought to be instrumental in progress through a creative, dialectical process between these contraries. He takes issue not with dialectic, but with negation, in which contraries divide and become separated from one another. Either these isolated contraries stay separate, or one dominates over the other. Either way, there is no creative tension, and therefore no progress. There is only endless, infinitely fragmentary and generative division, without purpose or constructive, creative interplay between contraries. Instead, humans are left with “Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination.” This pattern of division and negation, above all things, constitutes the Fall in Blake’s *Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*.

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185. 58
Furthermore, this division is distinct because in casting the Fall in both cosmic/collective and in individual human terms, Blake suggests an essential connection between the cosmic, collective, and mythical accounts, and the personal, experiential realm of mundane existence -- these accounts all follow the same pattern of fall and redemption, and in their parallels demonstrate Blake’s belief in the presence of the divine in the human, as the grand narratives of Eternal struggle within and among the Zoas are cast in psychic terms of individual internal conflict, leading to divisive action.

While Blake uses scriptural forebears from both Hebrew and Christian traditions to provide models on which he casts his accounts of mental fall and transformation, his poetry is not only a response to universal, internal human conflicts and a collective fallen history of strife and movement toward redemption, but also to religious currents of his time. Blake’s notorious skepticism toward organized religion led him frequently to group religious sects of his time under the heading of Deism, which focused on rational thought as opposed to spiritual experience. Blake’s own thought was influenced in part by his family’s involvement in the Dissenting tradition which, as Blake would do later in poetic form, repudiated state religion’s reliance on reason; the Muggletonians, with whom Blake may have associated in his earlier years, went so far as to refute nearly all claims of organized religions and their rituals. These beginnings shaped some of the Gnostic, dualistic character of Blake’s thought, and led him to pursue other nonconformist theological perspectives, including those of Emanuel Swedenborg, who greatly informed his thought. Although Blake later repudiated his connection to Swedenborg, his influence

19 Bentley 7-12
is undeniable, particularly in the divinity of humanity, which resisted notions in their time of a distant God and a static human nature, and a more general belief in the immanence of God in the whole of the created order. Blake's background is significant, because it demonstrates a willingness to rebel against the strictures of organized religion, and follow the models of traditions willing to reimagine theological and scriptural categories, which Blake does in both cosmic and psychic terms in his poetry. While other traditions and thinkers have, like Blake, reenvisioned the fall and redemption of humanity in psychic terms, Blake's particular accounts are intriguing because they represent an ability to present a vision of salvation that is both cosmic and particular, and which draws heavily upon scriptural antecedents in both aspects.

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20 Davies 31-53
2: Fall and Reintegration of Psychic Faculties in *The Four Zoas*

In *The Four Zoas*, William Blake re-envisions salvation as an internal, psychic phenomenon, yet one in which he, particularly in the later, more expressly theological nights, demonstrates the essential connection between the divinely transcendent and the mundanely earthly. Blake’s theology, to the extent to which one can attempt to codify his implied beliefs, fundamentally calls for a reinfusion of genuine spiritual experience of the divine into earthly life; his characters’ turns from selfishness toward reintegration help them to attain the apocalyptic divine vision, which precipitates the gradual reordering of the fallen world and -- on Blake’s human, individual scale, the mind -- which ushers in a new age of collaborative, creative action. Although the connection between Blake’s idea of man’s fallen state and the later nights’ salvation in *The Four Zoas* is at times indistinct, owing to the unfinished, abandoned state of the poem and Blake’s seeming change from a political focus to a spiritual one in the later nights, the early nights nonetheless exhibit the characteristics of a fall that are fundamental to his poetry, while the salvation of Nights the Eighth and Ninth point toward the idea that salvation is realized through selfless, collaborative action. This concept reaches far more satisfying fruition in *Jerusalem*, as in *The Four Zoas* Blake was never quite able to resolve the tensions between the fragmentary, politicized first seven nights, and the last two nights which reflected his growing desire to reimagine a true Christian salvation.

The characters who inhabit his poetic mythological system to cause the fall and, ultimately, the redemption of the Eternal Man, Albion, also represent Albion’s internal human faculties or members. Throughout the poem, Blake re-casts the biblical dynamic of
fall and redemption within the human being's intellectual, emotional, instinctual, and creative capacities, and their progressive derangement and fragmentation, followed by an apocalyptic re-ordering of these faculties into an again-harmonious unity. Blake's imaginative re-telling of humankind's fall provides the crisis of The Four Zoas, as humanity alienates itself from nature and, more significantly, itself, as the Zoas -- Urthona, Tharmas, Luvah and Urizen -- enter into enmity and strife, characterized by Urizenic warfare associated with these faculties' domination by restrictive, corrupted, organized religion. This fall is defined by selfishness and division on the part of the various human faculties, as the divided self continues to fragment, and these fragments -- the integrated self's faculties' emanations and spectres -- oppose one another and create earthly disharmony by perverting the mind, emotions, impulses and desires of the Eternal Man, who falls into stasis. Salvation is achieved in the poem, then, through a turn from static self-regard, alienation, and unproductive fragmentation and division, to a commitment to re-integration of the mental faculties. This dynamic is rendered in terms of a mental apocalypse, in which the psyche enters its own radical transformation as a result of its contact with the divine. This transformation occurs as a commitment to selflessness allows humanity to again commune with the divine that is, in an integrated harmonious world, immanent within the earthly and human. This salvation is neither purely otherworldly, which devalues the temporal and physical realm, nor a matter of mundane political and social revolution. Rather, it unites the earthly with the divine in a reconstituted Creation and integrated human psyche, which is precipitated by the apocalyptic return of the Lamb of God, but requires selfless creative collaboration among
all of the human faculties, led by a metamorphosed Urizen, in order to achieve fruition. This integration of the transcendent with the mundane, and Blake's emphasis on authentic experience of the divine in one's movement toward salvation, counters the rationalistic religious systematics that were gaining currency in Blake's time, including Deism, and Blake's poetry reacts to these currents by demonstrating the role of the divine vision in one's path to religious transcendence, as well as both personal and collective salvation.

**Albion's Fall into Division and Strife**

The fall of the Zoas, as Albion's faculties gradually become increasingly deranged and fragmented, begins in Night the First of *The Four Zoas*, in which Blake introduces the disharmony beginning to afflict the Eternal Man, and the fall of Tharmas and Luvah. Blake establishes in Night the First the fundamental disharmony afflicting mankind, stating: "Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity/ Cannot Exist, but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden/ The Universal Man."\(^2^1\) The poem as a whole conveys the fundamental struggle implied by this early passage -- the lack of unity among the Four Zoas within the human psyche, and the fact that these may only exist in perfect harmony within the Eternal Man within the realm of Eden. The fall and redemption movement of the poem demonstrates this lack of a "perfect unity," and an eventual realization of the Edenic state, as Albion experiences "His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity/ His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death & his Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead."\(^2^2\)

\(^2^1\) 4-6
\(^2^2\) 4-5
In the poem's published form, Tharmas is the first of the Zoas to experience a fall into disharmony, as human instincts become divided and corrupted. This fall begins with an alienation from Tharmas' emanation, Enion, who embodies maternal impulses. Enion articulates her and Tharmas' affliction (and indeed that of other aspects of the Eternal Man) as she states: “All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love/ And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty/...in mazes of delusive beauty/ I have lookd into the secret soul of him I lovd/ And in the Dark recesses found Sin & cannot return.”

Enion’s lament shows the condition into which humanity is progressively descending throughout the fall described in the poem. The Eternal Man, microcosmic of all of humanity (yet fascinatingly representative of each individual), has fallen into fear and strife, and is motivated no longer by a desire for liberty and love, but by hatred and excessive concern for restrictive laws and the “delusive beauty” of organized religion, that serve to limit human instincts toward love and unity and lead humanity away from a desire for personal, moral self-transformation. Enion then applies her assessment of this general condition specifically to Tharmas, who has fallen into this same condition, and because of his fall, they are estranged from one another.

Enion and Tharmas' mutual denunciation suggests similarities with Adam and Eve's alienation from one another in the Edenic fall from grace, which further demonstrates Blake's use of parallelism to recapitulate scripture in his own work, and more importantly, to redefine these myths in both grand and cosmic, as well as human, mental, and experiential, terms. For his part, Tharmas admits his sin but censures Enion,

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²³A. 18-19, 25-27
stating: “I know/ That I have sinned & that my Emanations are become harlots/ I am already distracted at their deeds & if I look/ Upon them more Despair will bring self murder on my soul/ O Enion thou art thyself a root growing in hell/ Tho thus heavenly beautiful to draw me to destruction.”\textsuperscript{24} Tharmas’ recriminative accusation of harlotry against Enion indicates Blake’s notion of human fall from grace, as it shares with the Edenic fall the theme of alienation from others, as well as the integrated self, as Enion dies and Tharmas falls into a state of generation, with “His Spectre issuing from his feet.”\textsuperscript{25}

Thus does Tharmas enter into a state of unproductive generation and division, as he is replaced by his Spectre, representing the selfish and corrupted aspects of his being, who weaves the Circle of Destiny that turns Tharmas’ harmonious realm, Beulah, into Ulro, the land of the fallen and Eternal Death. This fall also has the consequence of restricting liberty, suggested by the fact that the Daughters of Beulah “closd the Gate of the Tongue in trembling fear.”\textsuperscript{26} Tharmas and Enion’s mutual fall into enmity and alienation, and their respective descents into aimless wandering and death, illustrate the initial element in Blake’s dynamic of human salvation -- the fall into sin, characterized by selfishness and division. This fall is significant in that it, like other examples throughout the course of the poem’s early nights, recapitulates the Genesis accounts of the fall, even as this fall is alternatingly cast in political, religious and mental terms, bridging the cosmic and collective account of humanity’s fall with the contemporary currents of warfare, strife and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24}4. 35-40
\textsuperscript{25}5. 15
\textsuperscript{26}5. 43
\end{flushright}
alienation that become more evident as the poem progresses.

The dynamic of the fall, typified by division and strife, continues throughout the rest of Night the First, as Los and Enitharmon sink into enmity and violence, as Urizenic war begins to take dominion and Urizen rejoices in “the heavens...filld with blood.”

Again, the fall takes on both a cosmic and contemporary character for Blake, as the account works both as an imaginative retelling of the Genesis account of alienation and strife, and as a reaction to rationalism’s violent and divisive consequences in Blake’s time. As in the case of Enion and Tharmas, Los and Enitharmon’s relationship resonates as a recapitulation of the Edenic myth, as they resent one another and therefore become divisive and hostile. Los and Enitharmon unite “in discontent & scorn” within a fallen context of warfare and stasis on the part of mankind’s various faculties, epitomized by the demonic nuptial song:

Let us refuse the Plow & Spade, the heavy Roller & spiked
Harrow, burn all these Corn fields. throw down all these fences
Fattend on Human blood & drunk with wine of life is better far
Than all these labours of the harvest & the vintage. See the river
Red with the blood of men. swells lustful round my rocky knees
My clouds are not the clouds of verdant fields & groves of fruit
But Clouds of Human Souls. my nostrils drink the lives of Men
...

once the Child was fed

2712. 35
With Milk; but wherefore now are Children fed with blood.\textsuperscript{28}

This powerful passage demonstrates the consequences of Albion’s fall, as mental and spiritual sloth take over, and Urizen is allowed to establish and maintain a tyrannical, malevolent dominion over the human psyche, as he subdues the other faculties and enslaves them by force. Where on a cosmic level Urizen’s rule could be associated with the role of temptation and selfish desires in perverting humanity in scripture, in the historical realm it represents the destruction Blake perceived to be the result of deranged human desires. The motif of the plow and spade, which are here refused in favor of the violence brought on by succumbing to Urizen, returns in Night the Ninth, when these same tools of harvest are essential instruments in salvation.

The references to consumption of human blood indicate not only an acquiescence to warfare, but Blake’s hostility toward organized religions, as the images of drinking blood suggest a reference to the practice of communion. Of course, organized religion and violence (physical as well as spiritual, mental and psychological) are inextricably linked in Blake’s mindset, as he criticized violence enacted in the name of religion, and was extremely skeptical of these religions’ claims to providing an authentic path to salvation. Blake’s envisioning of Deism in particular, against which he was especially vehement in his denunciations, offered a vision of a distant God, a static human nature, and a claim that the laws governing our existence are purely discoverable by way of human reason. While Deism was actually but one of the Christian sects against which Blake rebelled, he characterized many strains of organized religion under the title of

\textsuperscript{28}14. 8-14, 21-22
Deism, because he felt that they shared this excessive focus on reason, static human nature, and a loss of genuine desire to know and achieve unity with the divine. Blake's focus, by contrast, is on genuine revelation, a notion lost on the rationalism of the religious currents of his time, and a belief that human nature must be active, creative, and mutable in order to achieve the ultimate revelation needed for salvation.

The second night of Blake's *The Four Zoas* continues the progressive degeneration of the Zoas comprising the integrated Man, who has fallen into the sleep of nature and lost his eternal aspect, as this night focuses primarily on Luvah's continued decline and the repressive nature of Urizen's rule. This night is significant in that it provides more detail on the violent nature of Urizen's dominion, under which the Fallen Man experiences continued degeneration in the middle nights of the poem. Luvah's fall represents the perversion and fragmentation of human passion, as Urizen has taken dominion over the psyche and bound human passion to his purposes of warfare and restriction. The second night begins, in fact, with Albion's abdication to Urizen, as Urizen ascends to power over the Fallen Man:

Urizen rose from the bright Feast like a star thro' the evening sky
Exulting at the voice that calld him from the Feast of envy
First he beheld the body of Man pale, cold, the horrors of death
Beneath his feet shot thro' him as he stood in the Human Brain
And all its golden porches grew pale with his sickening light
No more Exulting for he saw Eternal Death beneath
Pale he beheld futurity; pale he beheld the Abyss
Where Enion blind & age bent wept in direful hunger craving
All rav'ning like the hungry worm, & like the silent grave
Mighty was the draught of Voidness to draw Existence in.\textsuperscript{29}

This passage not only illustrates Urizen’s rise to supremacy, but suggests that he serves as Albion’s Spectre, as he “stood in the human brain” and “shot through” Albion’s feet in taking power. Such an interpretation is consistent with the role Urizen plays in this early stage in the poem, as an embodiment of, in Blake’s view, humanity’s worse impulses to hyper-rationalism and overzealous adherence to restrictive laws. This passage also further demonstrates the fallen world of which Urizen has assumed power, as he blanches at the dire “futurity” before humanity, and the “draught of voidness” into which creation has descended.

Urizen’s authority is chiefly characterized by limitation and repression, reflecting the existing current of rationalism in Blake’s time, which tempers the human passion that Luvah epitomizes. Much of the second night delineates Urizen’s act of dividing and limiting the realms of creation, as Urizen and his sons “Measure the course of that sulphur orb that lights the darksom day/ Set stations on this breeding Earth and let us buy & sell/ Others arose & schools Erected forming Instruments/ To measure out the course of heaven.”\textsuperscript{30} Urizen thus endeavors to gain mastery over humankind and nature, in an expressly scientific reinterpretation of the Genesis creation account, through his process of rational, scientific measurement and classification. This need to measure and classify,

\textsuperscript{29}23. 9 - 24. 1
\textsuperscript{30}28. 18-21
however, implies an impulse to separate and divide, which is among Urizen’s primary faults as he accelerates the degeneration of the Eternal Man. Thus is creation of the earthly realm itself in part constitutive of a fall; in the integrated Eternal realm, there is no separation between the earthly and the transcendently divine. Furthermore, Luvah becomes enslaved to Urizen, and the repressive process of delineating difference and boundaries curb passion, as “they separate the furious particles/ Into mild currents as the water mingles with the wine.” Urizen’s rule proceeds to become one of empty ornamentation and repression, as Urizen draws creation into the “Mundane shell” of fallen earthly existence:

But infinitely beautiful the wondrous work arose
In sorrow & care. a Golden World whose porches round the heavens
And pillard halls & rooms receivd the eternal wandering stars
A wondrous golden Building; many a window many a door
And many a division let in & out into the vast unknown

[Cubed] in [window square] immoveable, within its walls & cielings
The heavens were closd and spirits mournd their bondage night and day
And the Divine Vision appeard in Luvahs robes of blood.32

In Blake’s systematized mythology, the fall of humanity is brought about by division, limitation and selfishness, all of which are evident in Urizen’s rule, and are exemplified in these passages which illustrate Urizen’s central project of separation and division in

3129. 12-13
3232. 7-14
Blake’s imaginative retelling of the creation story. This process of fragmentation
continues as the fall of Albion and his internal faculties progresses.

Urizen’s fall, which is the climactic event of Night the Third, is also precipitated by
his tyrannical paranoia, in this case toward Ahania, his emanation. Throughout Blake’s
poetry, fallenness is characterized not only by generative division, but by the consequent
strife between these now-separate entities, which are often Eternals and their emanations.
Tharmas and Enion, Los and Enitharmon, and now Urizen and Ahania epitomize this
dynamic, which echoes the Edenic myth recounting the origins of human alienation.
Ahania, perceptively noting the corrupted, wretched nature of Urizen’s dominion over the
human psyche, rebukes him for his faults and questions Urizen’s degenerate rational
impulses, as she says:

No longer obedient to thy will thou art compell’d
To forge the curbs of iron & brass to build the iron mangers
To feed them with intoxication from the wine presses of Luvah
Till the Divine Vision & Fruition is quite obliterated
They call thy lions to the fields of blood. they rowze thy tygers
Out of the halls of justice, till these dens thy wisdom framd
Golden & beautiful but O how unlike those sweet fields of bliss
Where liberty was justice & eternal science was mercy.33

In this appeal, Ahania longs for a more peaceful period of harmony, and makes pointed
reference to the warfare and strife, as well as the restrictive delusions in which one

3359 4-11
confuses the virtuous objectives of liberty and mercy with, respectively, justice and eternal science.

Urizen attacks Ahania in jealous rage, accusing her of indolence and claiming that she posed a threat to pull him into her weakness and passivity; however, his destruction of Ahania leads to his own fall and demise. He accuses her of "Reflecting all my indolence my weakness & my death/ To weigh me down beneath the grave into non Entity/ ...thus I cast thee out."^44 Male and female relationships, as in the aforementioned examples and the Edenic fall, degenerate into anger and mutual recrimination, which in this case results in Urizen ensuring that "Ahania fell far into Non Entity."^35 However, and quite ironically, the banishment of Ahania, whom Urizen feared would cause his downfall, itself expedited his own fall from power. In rejecting Ahania, whom he had loved in an earlier, purer time, Urizen guaranteed his own self-destruction. Upon Ahania's disappearance into the abyss, Urizen's structure limiting creation imploded, leaving Urizen "dashed in pieces from his precipitant fall."^36 Again, to return to the guiding mechanisms at work in Blake's notion of humanity's fall from harmony and mental paradise, these manifestations of disharmony have their fundamental cause in the corrupted desire for selfhood, which necessarily implies division and strife. Urizen's fall demonstrates how his tyrannical paranoia rendered him unable to see the truth of Ahania's words, as she chides him for his self-delusions which, given his power, have given him the ability to delude humanity as a larger

^43 18-22
^44 5
^36 20

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whole. Furthermore, the association of Urizen's fall with strife between him and his female counterpart reflects the Edenic fall, which not only provides further evidence of Blake's desire to recast scriptural forebears in his own mythology, but further draws the Edenic myth into his own distinct mythology in which these cosmic, ahistorical struggles take on a particular individual character within the human mind of fallen Albion, and a historical character in their reactions to social and religious conflicts of his time.

The fourth night of the poem completes the process by which humanity falls into division and degeneration, which in Blake's imaginative account is innovative, in that the narrative represents both cosmic and individual fallenness as consequences of collective and personal choices to follow perverted desires, or allow one aspect of humanity to gain undue prevalence over the others. All four of the Zoas have become corrupted and fallen into submission or impotence, as each has engaged in hostility, corruption and selfishness that have led to their respective downfalls. Where in Eternity the Zoas Tharmas, Luvah, Urizen and Urthona represent, respectively, the human capacities for instinct, passion, intellect, and creativity in their most perfect forms, in the fallen world created throughout the first four nights of *The Four Zoas* one witnesses these same faculties turned against each other, and often themselves. Frye states: "The fallen world is the eternal one turned inside out, and the positions of the Zoas in eternity are reversed in the Fall."37 This process of descent is all too evident in this first portion of the poem, as the human faculties, through unproductive division, fragmentation, and consequent strife, become dreadfully deranged, to the point at which it is only through a supernatural intercession by

37Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* 291

32
the hand of the divine that Albion is prevented from falling any further into mental
disintegration. The psychic deterioration of Albion’s faculties follows the biblical schema
of human frailty leading to a fall, and as the poem’s continued progression will
demonstrate, Blake’s poetry also recapitulates the scriptural notion of the turn toward
God, which leads to salvation. This fall and salvation is unique not only in Blake’s
creative reinterpretation of scriptural antecedents and recasting of the cosmic Fall in
psychic terms, but in the implications of these choices: Blake’s movement from fall to
salvation cannot be properly interpreted as either collective or individual, or the state into
which the saved pass either purely historical or purely otherworldly. Blake’s poetry is
unique in that he carves out a space in religious experience for genuine revelation and a
notion of divine immanence, making the mundane sacred and the transcendent accessible
through a path of moral, creative, collaborative action.

While the fifth through the seventh nights of the poem continue the trend of
Albion’s internal power struggle among his constitutive faculties or members as they
continue in their divisive, deranged states, the second part of the seventh night signals
Blake’s transition, halting and fragmentary as it was in the poem’s unfinished state, into
the expressly theological portion of the poem. Although the first portion of Night the
Seventh continues to depict Urizen’s grip on fallen history, as he seeks to solidify the
Enlightenment’s grip on the human psyche, the second portion offers the poem’s first
substantial suggestion of salvific hope, as the pattern of division and pointless generation
which has thus far defined the poem is for the first time reversed. The Spectre of Urthona
precipitates this radical change toward a better possibility when “the Spectre enterd Los’s
bosom" and "Los embracd the Spectre first as a brother/ Then as another Self; astonishd humanizing & in tears/In Self abasement Giving up his Domineering lust." This event is extremely significant because it reverses the divisiveness which has thus far in the poem defined the Zoas' disintegration into deluded or largely impotent entities. The movement toward reunion of these human impulses signals a desire for re-integration, which is the impetus behind the Fallen Man's transition toward salvation.

Collaboration in the Creative Regenerative Process: Salvation in *The Four Zoas*

Before a productive analysis of salvation can be attempted, it is necessary to ascertain the condition from which one is being saved. The first six, and part of a seventh, nights of *The Four Zoas* render in cosmic terms the psychological ruin of Blake's humanity, epitomized in the fallen Albion. The fall unfolds through systematic division, and alternation of chaos with tyrannical restrictiveness. In ethical terms, the fall has come about because the Zoas, and the beings who divide from them, have undermined their efficacy in guiding the harmonious Man by acting selfishly, giving in to the darker impulses in their earthly manifestations' natures. Blake's notion of fallenness offers an additional defining aspect in the ruined characters' incessant division. For Blake, for whom salvation necessitates unity, the division of the Four Zoas, and the enmity between these consequent beings, constitutes a fall into the alienation presented in the Edenic myth that is often recapitulated in various forms throughout Blake's work. In the Genesis account, the alienation from God leads to the division between other humans and the beginning of fallen history. In Blake's version, all things are one in the Eternal realm, as in the ideal

3895 26-31

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state the divine is united with the material, so the very individuation between the earthly
and the Eternal suggests a fall, from which point further division and separation ensue.
This fall of the Zoas renders humanity vulnerable, then, to deluded human capacities. This
pattern is evident in Urizen's despotic dominion, as well as in the morally compromised
roles the degraded Orc, Los and Tharmas often occupy. All of these beings, in their fallen
states, follow the worst parts of their natures, and in so doing, simply perpetuate violence,
repression, and division.

Therefore, the process of salvation requires a reversal of the wretched generation
and restriction of human energy which fills much of the poem, and a realization on the part
of the members of fallen Albion of their potential unity with the divine, something they lost
through Creation's fall and the subsequent individuation. Night the Seventh suggests the
beginning of the salvific process, as the Spectre of Urthona, who had previously corrupted
Los' creative vision, seeks reunion with Los. The Spectre states: "If we unite in one[,] another better world will be/ Opend within your heart & loins & wondrous brain." The Spectre's awareness of unification as a mutually beneficial process is a pivotal moment in
the poem. Although Los is initially hostile to the Spectre's suggestion, he agrees to unite
with the Spectre and Enitharmon. Enitharmon, still afraid, hides "beneath Urizens tree,"
indicating a fear of abandoning Urizen's familiar structures, pernicious though they may
be. Los does join in this union, however, "mingling together with his Spectre the Spectre
of Urthona/ Wondering beheld the Center opend by Divine Mercy inspired." Here, Los'

395. 43-4
4087. 2-3
movement toward union helps him to achieve a vision of the divine.

Harold Bloom also maintains that this crucial passage in the poem, and the union of Los and his Spectre, suggests a transformative possibility. Los and the Spectre’s embrace opens up the possibility of Albion’s other aspects again merging in harmony. Bloom states: “At this moment,...fallen man’s will and imagination are joined again, and the humanizing process at last begins....Los learns the necessity of ‘Self annihilation,’ the overcoming of the impulse to appropriate for oneself, and by sharing reaches reality.” Bloom’s analysis of this crucial passage in the poem is consistent with the means by which salvation is achieved; if the fall is fundamentally characterized by self-centeredness, then self-annihilation, and a turn toward a larger, unified ultimate reality, would be a path to salvation. When the Center opens, offering a possibility distinct from the Vortex of Eternal Death, this better horizon of ultimate possibility is revealed to Los and his Spectre.

Los and the Spectre regain their innate creative energies, which they devote to the task of constructing Golgonooza, which, states Frye, “when complete will be the emanation or total created achievement of Albion, Jerusalem.” Therefore, Los and the Spectre not only move the narrative of the poem toward a redemptive end through their reuniting embrace, but through their creative action, as they regain the faculties which had fallen into delusive, unproductive activity.

However, the salvation hinted at is not fully achieved at this stage in the poem, as Los is not yet entirely prepared for the transformative possibilities before him, and is yet

41Bloom 254
42Frye, Fearful Symmetry 248

36
unwilling to relinquish Urizen’s hold upon him. Urizen and Enitharmon, recapitulating the Edenic roles of Satan and Eve, respectively, tempt Los into eating the fruit and suffering despair and “Cares & Sorrows & Troubles/ Of six thousand Years of self denial and of bitter contrition.” This reference to mankind’s period of fallen history, however, pales in comparison to Blake’s rendering of the redemptive acts of Los and his Spectre, as they turn from the preoccupation with the self and move toward unity. By reaching this unity, the two regain their creative abilities and use them to build the New Jerusalem.

Night the Seventh further begins the transformative process from fall to salvation by demonstrating Los’ selflessness, which is an essential prerequisite to the mental salvation toward which Blake’s poem is gradually progressing, and while this movement is not ultimately realized in the salvific moment of the unfinished and, even in its “final” state, fragmented The Four Zoas, it is resumed in Jerusalem to a far more fulfilling extent. When the Spectre expresses his trepidation at the “Spectres of the Dead” existing in human history and blames himself for “the dreadful state/ Of Separation,” seeking a way “to Ransom & Redeem,” Los comforts him and offers a redemptive possibility that utilizes their creative capacities. Los suggests that they use their creative energies to create “counterparts” for the Spectres, in the form of created bodies, to save the Spectres from the realm of Eternal Death, and also to create more integrated beings that can at least engage in creative tension between body and Spectre.

Los also acts selflessly toward Enitharmon, consoling her in her moment of doubt.

\[87. 27-8\]
\[87. 30-34\]
and fear, helping her to see the divine vision as he reassures her and the Spectre that they need not be afraid. The divine vision involves Luvah, returned in the form of the Savior, who later has a significant impact in helping the Fallen Man to regain his integrated self as the poem moves toward its conclusion. When Los and Enitharmon witness “the Lamb of God/ Clothd in Luvahs robes of blood descending to redeem,” Los consoles them, offering the implied possibility of transcendence through a restored human wholeness.\(^45\) This notion of a centripetal movement of the fragmented aspects of the Fallen Man is suggested by Los’ words of consolation to the Spectre and Enitharmon:

\[
\text{Couldst thou but cease from terror & trembling & affright}
\]
\[
\text{When I appear before thee in forgiveness of ancient injuries}
\]
\[
\text{Why shouldst thou remember & be afraid. I surely have died in pain}
\]
\[
\text{Often enough to convince thy jealousy & fear & terror}
\]
\[
\text{Come hither be patient let us converse together because}
\]
\[
\text{I also tremble at myself & at all my former life.}\(^46\)
\]

Los not only offers solace, showing a self-awareness of his own culpability in the fallen state of the Eternal Man, but a means of reversing the destructive division. He encourages Enitharmon and the Spectre to patiently “converse together” with him, rather than act in a selfish, reactive manner. The movement away from selfishness is further revealed by Los’ desire to move humanity toward selfless action within “our gardens of labour/ Which now opend within the Center we behold spread abroad/ To form a world of Sacrifice of

\(^{45}\) 87. 43-44

\(^{46}\) 87. 46-51

38
brothers & sons & daughters/ To comfort Orc in his dire sufferings. The opening of the psychic and (within the context of the poem) cosmic Center has renewed hope for transformation, and Los meets this hope with a properly ordered desire to remain creative in the “garden of labour,” and at the same time turn from selfish impulses that had precipitated the fall and provide comfort to Orc. In so doing, Los hopes to draw Orc back toward the Center in Albion’s rehabilitative process. Los’ creation of counterparts draws divided beings together into productive relationships, illuminating the movement toward psychic recentering, and at the end of Night the Seventh resulting in comfort for Tharmas, at the prospect of reunion with Enion. This impulse toward collaborative action, rather than divided, solitary ambition becomes far more significant as the poem continues toward the reintegration of the divided Eternal Man.

The process by which Albion’s disparate faculties become reconciled and re-integrated intensifies in Night the Eighth, as he begins to awaken from the Sleep of Death into which he had remained fallen for the first seven nights of the poem. As God sets a Limit of Contraction upon his fall and he begins to awaken and move toward restoration, Los and Enitharmon continue to establish themselves as agents of salvation, experiencing the Divine Vision:

Los said I behold the Divine Vision thro the broken Gates

Of thy poor broken heart astonishd melted into Compassion & Love

And Enitharmon said I see the Lamb of God upon Mount Zion

98. 9-13
Wondring with love & Awe they felt the divine hand upon them.48

The central emotions experienced by the characters in this scene -- compassion, love, and awe -- signal a movement toward reconciliation with the divinity residing within the Eternal Man, but which had been repressed by the deluded ambitions and passions of the fallen faculties. As the poem draws toward its resolution, divinity begins to fully suffuse the realm of creation; instead of division between the mundane and the divine, all of Los’ and the other beings’ environment becomes united with the Vision, so that “whether they lookd upward they saw the Divine Vision/ Or whether they lookd downward still they saw the Divine Vision/ Surrounding them on all sides beyond sin & death & hell.”49 The Divine Vision becomes inescapable, penetrating the surroundings and, in so doing, transcending creation. Furthermore, the Vision even overshadows sin, death and hell, the realities of the fallen realm that threaten and bind humanity, rather than bring about the unity that the Savior suggests through his appearance.

The process of salvific transcendence continues with Los and Enitharmon’s creative work in creating counterparts to help bring the fallen beings back into harmonious, creative balance, and end their dreadfully divisive states. Through this process of bringing these faculties into proper balance, the creative beings undermine Urizenic warfare, and begin to return the fallen humanity to an integrated state.

Although the eighth night begins with a movement toward salvation, stubborn Urizen still resists the union and reintegration of the Eternals offered through the creative

\[48\] 99. 15-18
\[49\] 100. 13-16

40
work of Los and Enitharmon, who are inspired by the appearance of the Lamb of God in the form of Eternal Luvah. Urizen’s resistance symbolizes again the grip of organized religions suggested earlier in the poem, and which Blake saw as a divisive force divorcing believers from genuine religious experience, a relationship with the divine, and moral self-transformation. Urizen, enlisting the help of the Shadowy Female Vala as a purveyor of “laws & deceitful religions” and a “Direful Web of Religion,” begins an apocalyptic war in which he fills the role of Satan. His war represents a final struggle to impose his demented order and overcome the saving action of Luvah, Los and Enitharmon, even as Jerusalem begins to take shape. Urizen assembles a council that meets with the purpose of destroying Luvah, the Savior, and reestablishing the supremacy of Satan’s Urizenic rule, as well as the authority of organized religions. Here, Vala is:

A False Feminine Counterpart Lovely of Delusive Beauty
Dividing & Uniting at will in the Cruelties of Holiness
Vala drawn down into a Vegetated body now triumphant
The Synagogue of Satan Clothed her with Scarlet robes & Gems
And on her forehead was her name written in blood

By devilish arts abominable unlawful unutterable
Perpetually vegetating in detestable births
Of Female forms beautiful thro poisons hidden in secret.®

®103. 22-23
®109. 11-23
Here, Vala and Rahab seem to unite, as Rahab in *The Four Zoas* represents the corrupt, earthly manifestation of the Church of England, which for Blake conjured associations with the abuses and hypocrisy of organized religion. The passage implies an association of earthly religion with warfare, which is suggested by the reference to Vala’s regal, ornamental dress, and the fact that Blake depicts her with her name written in blood. The juxtaposition of her attire and the suggestion of violence, then, demonstrates Blake’s belief that organized religion is an empty set of restrictive laws and hypocritical piety, demanding “holiness” even as it condones Urizenic warfare.

Luvah, incarnate here as the Lamb of God, is crucified in a scene obviously reminiscent of Christ’s crucifixion, as Luvah is presented in this late stage of the poem as the Savior figure, demonstrating Blake’s desire to establish divine immanence in humanity by envisioning Christ as one of the primary internal human impulses. If the repression and tyrannical hypocrisy embodied by Urizen serves as the figure of Satan, then it stands to reason that the opposite of systematic restraint, the figure of human passion, should occupy the oppositional role of Savior, who must undergo his own passion and suffer at Urizen’s hands. Luvah’s crucifixion, as Jerusalem temporarily flees, represents a temporary fall, compounded with Urizen’s passage into a static, “stony form.” Upon Urizen’s fall, the remaining two Zoas become afflicted with this “stony stupor,” as Tharmas and Los fall into a similar condition of “living Death” at the hands of “the nameless shadow” of religion. These “stony” forms illustrate Blake’s condemnation of organized religion, as he promotes a spirituality defined by creativity and self-

\[52^{106.9-40}\]
transformation, not the static image of human nature popularized by purveyors of natural religion in his time.

Unlike other earlier nights of *The Four Zoas* in which the human faculties suffered a fall from power, Night the Eighth ends with apocalyptic hope upon the returns of Ahania and Enion. Ahania's desire for salvation is less significant, because she still seems to seek restoration through Urizen. However, Enion offers an inspiring vision, echoing the Book of Revelation, of the salvation to come in the poem's final movement, as she foresees the end-time of the fallen order as it exists:

Behold the time approaches fast hast thou shalt be as a thing
Forgotten when one speaks of thee he will not be believd
When the man gently fades away in his immortality
When the mortal disappears in improved knowledge cast away
The former things so shall the Mortal gently fade away
And so become invisible to those who still remain.\(^{53}\)

Enion provides an eschatological vision of the incipient end-time for the mortal Man, as her words imply a radical transformation of the created order. Enion's words offer a hope that counterbalances the uneasy weakened state of the Zoas, as she goes on to describe the Lamb of God's anguish at the notion that "Man should Labour & sorrow & learn & forget & return/ To the dark valley whence he came to begin his labours anew."\(^{54}\) Enion's speech demonstrates a concern, which Luvah passionately shares, over Man's ability to

\(^{53}\) 113. 29-34
\(^{54}\) 114. 19-20
break the cycle she describes in the aforementioned passage, and come to the true transformation of humanity’s nature that she describes in her apocalyptic vision at the beginning of her monologue.

Although the end of Night the Eighth is unsettling, with Rahab’s apparent victory of organized, natural religion over the genuine human passion needed to be a fully harmonious and integrated human being, Enion’s speech offers hope and a challenge for the other human faculties to seize the opportunity for a radically transformative, salvific possibility.

The final movement of *The Four Zoas*, Night the Ninth, offers a powerful vision of salvation consistent with the notion that salvation represents a turn from self-centeredness to God- or Reality-centeredness, accompanied by a transformation of the self to one integrated with the divine. This must be achieved through selfless action, as opposed to the division and fragmentation which, for Blake, is nearly always a characteristic of his characters’ declines into degraded states, if not death. Night the Ninth offers evidence of a path to salvation in which creative action endeavored upon with others, on behalf of others, leads the fallen Albion from his wretched, divided state back to a harmonious, transformed Eternal Man.

While the seventh and eighth nights of the poem involve the fallen human faculties engaging in self-rehabilitative action, they are seemingly unable to transcend the grip of Urizenic religion, and the consequent repressive mentality that diminishes the other human aspects. Night the Ninth ushers in a proper apocalypse, in the sense that although selflessness and collaborative creativity and productivity are still crucial to salvation, the
process is catalyzed by an otherworldly transformation of the poem’s world.

The transformation of creation which takes place echoes the apocalyptic overturning of a fallen creation’s order that is present in the Book of Revelation; Los precipitates this conversion, as Blake describes:

Los his vegetable hands
Outstretchd his right hand branching out in fibrous Strength
Siezd the Sun. His left hand like dark roots coverd the Moon
And tore them down cracking the heavens across from immense to immense
Then fell the fires of Eternity with loud & shrill
Sound of Loud Trumpet thundering along from heaven to heaven
A mighty sound articulate Awake ye dead & come
To judgment from the four winds Awake & Come away
Folding like scrolls of the Enormous volume of Heaven & Earth. 55

Los’ prominence as the poem’s creative agent of salvation continues, as he reaches to the realms of both Urizen (the sun) and Luvah (the moon), pulling down the heavens and beginning the process of apocalyptic transformation, characterized by a radical overturning of the status quo upon contact with and contemplation of the divine. The reference to the folding scrolls resonates with Revelation 6:14, in which the apocalyptic account also involves the heavens folding like scrolls; the similarity suggests a conscious desire on Blake’s part to have his apocalypse echo the natural and moral transformations to take place, although Blake affords a far greater role to individual poetic agency.

55 117. 6-13
The apocalypse, both in Blake and his scriptural forebears, involves not only a transmutation of the natural world, but a reordering of social hierarchies. Blake describes the social upheaval that accompanies Los’ disruption of the heavens:

The thrones of Kings are shaken they have lost their robes & crowns
The poor smite their oppressors they awake up to the harvest
The naked warriors rush together down to the sea shore
Trembling before the multitudes of slaves now set at liberty
They are become like wintry flocks like forests stripd of leaves
The oppressed pursue like the wind there is no room for escape.56

Blake returns to this theme of social tumult in the established hierarchies, when he states:

Kings in their palaces lie drown'd Shepherds their flocks their tents
Roll down the mountains in black torrents Cities Villages
High spires & Castles drown'd in the black deluge Shoal on Shoal

... Mystereys tyrants are cut off & not one left on Earth.57

For Blake, the demonic figure of Mystery, representing the organized religion he views as delusive and destructively restrictive to other human energies, is associated with the upper classes of the established social order. The apocalypse will not only transcend the crude strictures of earthly religion, but will overthrow the social order with which the religion is so closely bound, and which established religion often serves to legitimize.

56117. 18-23
57119. 8-13

46
Although Blake’s vision of salvific apocalypse follows scriptural forerunners in its accounts of natural and social upheavals, Blake’s focus on the fall, rehabilitation, apocalypse, and salvation as a mental (which is to say, spiritual and imaginative) phenomenon characterizes his vision of the internal, transformative end-time. Blake maps the patterns of fall and salvation onto the human psyche, seeking to cast salvation in terms of regaining creative energy and freeing human energies from the strictures, such as religion, which bind and corrupt them. Blake clearly reveals his conception of salvation as a psychological reality, when during his account of apocalyptic turmoil, he uses the following phrase at two different points in the narrative: “From the clotted gore & from the hollow den/ Start forth the trembling millions into flames of mental fire/ Bathing their Limbs in the bright visions of Eternity.” This phrase succinctly epitomizes Blake’s vision of human transformation. For Blake, mental stasis is akin to death, and he depicts it as such throughout his poetry. Furthermore, this stasis leads to sloth in all areas of mental life, and leaves one vulnerable to mastery from external influences, such as the systematized strictures that fallen Urizen champions. The “clotted gore” of the above passage suggests the warfare that results from the predominance of Urizenic minds in positions of political and religious power. Blake’s apocalypse offers the divine vision of mental salvation to humanity, but they must first struggle, as have the characters in the poem, through trials described as “flames of mental fire.”

The Eternal Man awakens, but is not fully restored, as the inner faculties must transform themselves, moving toward their true, Eternal natures. The Eternal Man

58 118. 17-19, 119. 21-23

47
questions when “the Man of future times [shall] become as in days of old,” meaning that he yearns for a restoration of Man’s idyllic, Edenic state. While this is never fully achieved in the poem, Albion does undergo a significant rehabilitative restoration, because of the selfless creative action of his constitutive entities, establishing a pattern in which the turn from self-regard to others gradually leads to a vision of the divine, and a restoration of a better states. This pattern, while presented in occasionally fragmentary for in *The Four Zoas* given the poem’s unfinished state, is more fully realized in *Jerusalem*.

Albion’s role in his own movement toward restoration is significant, in that he threatens Urizen, convincing him to repent his misdeeds, and reshape his corrupted identity and ambitions. Urizen admits his faults, and recognizes the futility of “in spaces remote/ Seeking the Eternal which is always present to the wise.” Although the realization arrives terribly late in the poem’s narrative, Urizen submits to Albion’s censure, finally grasping the notion that the Eternal is found within the human mind and imagination, and is not to be found through a search for external rational proofs or claims to absolute truth. Urizen finally relents his hold over the other Zoas, as well, in his abandonment of empty religion, signaling a movement toward his own recovery and reintegration into Albion.

Urizen’s progress toward restoration is significant, because it ushers in another apocalyptic upheaval, the nature of which undoes much of the division and fragmentation that Urizen was guilty of instigating. In a description resonating with Ezekiel’s own apocalyptic imagery, Blake states:

59 121. 9-10
Rivn link from link the bursting Universe explodes
All things reversed flew from their centers rattling bones
To bones Join, shaking convulsed the shivering clay breathes
Each speck of dust to the Earth's center nestles round & round
In pangs of an Eternal Birth in torment & awe & fear
All spirits deceased let loose from reptile prisons come in shoals

... Many a woful company & many on clouds & waters
Fathers & friends Mothers & Infants Kings & Warriors
Priests & chaimd Captives met together in a horrible fear
And every one of the dead appears as he had liv'd before.  

The transformation consequent to Urizen's reordered desires reverses some of the consequences of his divisive dominion over the human psyche. With Urizen ceding control and retreating to a more balanced role, the fragmentation and division he caused is reversed; the centrifugal process of division, fragmentation and alienation reverses itself, and a movement back to the center, even from death to life, takes place.

In the larger pattern of fall and salvation, the beings who bore the pain of Urizen's rule are offered restoration and return to their former stations, as Urizen repents of his miscarriages of despotic power, and his instruments of violent, repressive rule are abolished, as the Sons of Urizen

Sieze the instruments of harmony they throw away

60122. 26-41
The spear the bow the gun the mortar they level the fortifications
They beat the iron engines of destruction into wedges
They given them to Urthonas Sons ringing the hammers sound
In dens of death to forge the spade the mattock & the ax
The heavy roller to break the clods to pass over the nations.  

This passage, strongly reminiscent of Isaiah 2:4, is significant not only because it offers further evidence of the sorts of radical transformations and reversals occurring with the unfolding apocalypse in the poem, but because it suggests a specific type of salvation that becomes vital to the movement toward a better inner human condition — which, of course, would lead to a more peaceful external condition for humanity. While the reversal itself is important, what is even more crucial is the fact that Urizen's armaments are being converted into tools for planting, growing and harvest. In other words, the tools of warfare that initially caused and exacerbated the fall have been converted into constructive tools designed to propagate life, not expedite death. These tools are also significant in this poem because the creative process of nurturing new life, be it earthly or mental and creative, is the fundamental means by which Albion is brought to salvation in *The Four Zoas*.

Urizen's commitment to rehabilitation continues as he helps to collaborate in the process of Man's salvation, planting the Seed of Men in an effort to undo the deathly division he had wrought. Blake states: "Then follows the golden harrow in the midst of Mental fires/ To ravishing melody of flutes & harps & softest voice/ The seed is harrowd

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61 24. 17-22
in while flames heat the black mould & cause/ the human harvest to begin."⁶² Urizen takes delight in the creative process; his delight signals his inner recovery, as this creative action is of the very sort that he would likely have desired to destroy, earlier in the poem. This dynamic of renewal and return ushers in Ahania's reappearance, as the alienation between beings and their emanations begins to reverse itself.

Urizen's role as a beneficent leader in the poem becomes more prominent in Night the Ninth, as the transformation the characters undergo is primarily mental, which is Urizen's primary realm. Urizen's benign authority is evident in this night, as he draws beings and their emanations back toward the mental center, where they can cooperate in the integrated Man's harmonious existence. For example, Luvah and Vala return, at which point Urizen returns them to their proper realm of nature. Similarly, Tharmas and Enion also experience a renewed harmonious relationship, and are restored to their proper roles.

The reunion of these many beings reaches its climax in the revelatory moment when Urizen proclaims the arrival of the pivotal apocalyptic moment, as he announces that the "Times are Ended," a proclamation resonant with the end-times of the Book of Revelation, at which point Urizen begins to reap the harvest of humanity, and harmony seems to have been restored.⁶³ Blake states:

[Urizen] went forth & began to reap & all his joyful sons

Reapd the wide Universe & bound in Sheaves a wondrous harvest

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⁶²125. 17-20
⁶³131. 31
The feast was spread in the bright South & the Regenerate Man
Sat at the feast rejoicing & the wine of Eternity
Was servd round by the flames of Luvah all Day & all the Night.\textsuperscript{64}

Urizen, in his restored state, can truly delight in the apocalyptic return of the Regenerate Man, whose recovery was brought about by the creative, productive, unifying act of planting and harvesting mankind. Urizen's rehabilitation has led him from being the leader of the repression of humanity, to being the chief precipitator of his recovery, as in the Harvest of Man he occupies a position akin to the reaper in Revelation 14, who is called upon to reap "the harvest of the earth."\textsuperscript{65} The act of the harvest is a collaborative, creative act that draws in the entirety of the human mental and spiritual sphere; Urizen's self-aware rehabilitation from the strictures of delusion and fruitless religion, and desire to reintegrate Albion, prompted him to become a creative, productive force, and through his influence, the Zoas return to their proper stations and achieve inner human harmony.

If salvation can be defined as the movement of one's spirit from self-centeredness to God- or Reality-centeredness through a reordering of one's desires so that the focus is on others, then Urizen epitomizes the process of fall and salvation. In \textit{The Four Zoas}, no character falls farther or is more wretched, and no character has a larger role in bringing about the reintegration of the fallen Eternal Man. Although Blake's intended purpose in the poem was to forward a message more political and introspective than theological,

\textsuperscript{64} 132. 5-12
\textsuperscript{65} Revelation 14: 14-16

52
Urizen’s transformation and impact on Albion’s recovery, and therefore the inner recovery of all humanity, is truly astonishing. In *The Four Zoas*, William Blake conceptualizes fall and salvation as internal, mental and psychological phenomena, but ones with larger-scale consequences in the political domain. From the darkness and derangement of the human faculties in the first four nights of the poem, to the slow progression and reordering of desires, to the culmination in Urizen’s successful transformative harvest, the poem exemplifies the manner in which division, strife and selfishness characterize the fallen self, and the unity and creative productivity spurred by Urizen’s human mind in acts of selflessness help to bring about humanity’s recovery and the salvation of humanity as individuals but, more importantly, as a whole. Albion’s return to internally harmonious existence provides the salvation toward which the poem progresses, and given the combination of the poem’s political resonances and supernatural apocalyptic transformations, this salvation requires the will of the divine, but must be brought about by the creative, selfless acts of the human imagination. Furthermore, this return to a harmonious existence, given its cosmic and individual resonances as an account of both fallen history and collective redemption, as well as the individual journey to spiritual and mental reintegration, demonstrates Blake’s notion of immanence, and his apparent desire to use his poetry to counteract rationalist religious thought and create space for personal, revelatory experience of the divine within each human.
3: Fall of Albion and Restoration of Man and the City of God in *Jerusalem*

As in *The Four Zoas*, in *Jerusalem* William Blake conceives the fall as the process of endless division, separation and negation. His “salvation” envisions the restoration of fallen Jerusalem through Albion’s self-giving sacrifice, implying that salvation must be brought about through the unity achieved through selfless actions on behalf of others, reversing the fallen trend toward division and self-absorption. For Blake, salvation is not realized simply through the Pauline notion of atonement on the cross, which for Blake would seem to be far too abstract and divorced from genuine experience, but through adherence to Jesus’ example of self-giving sacrifice, epitomized by Jesus’ suffering and death on the behalf of humanity, as well as his moral example of selfless, loving service. Blake’s poetry suggests an emphasis not on the systematic theology of Christ as a figure of atonement, but on the experiential model Jesus provides as a perfectly integrated figure who set out to liberate humanity from the strictures of Urizenic law, and provide for them an example for how to live a moral life as an integrated, creative being. Blake’s vision of Jesus focuses not on the theological notions of Christ’s expiatory sacrifice as a means of collective atonement, but on an individual understanding of Jesus’ moral example, and how his human actions, in their selflessness and unifying creativity, were fundamentally divine. This interpretation of Jesus’ salvific role in Blake’s poem is further buttressed by Blake’s recasting of the Fall in psychic terms, which suggests that he sees the Fall not so much through the Christian lens of original sin and depraved humanity’s need for salvation, but through an understanding that the Fall is a part of human nature and an inevitability resonating through all ages, and that Jesus’ example provides a possible means
for overcoming these temptations. As the poem demonstrates, self-giving sacrifice is essential to salvation, as Blake again exemplifies his innovative reconciliation of the collective and individual, and the historical and trans-historical, states of spiritual and mental salvation.

**Albion's Fall: The Eternal Man Divided**

In this text, Albion's Fall is characterized by the separation of the human faculties, and the apparent dominance of the faculty of unchecked reason, which seeks to divide, separate and classify. This process of division is present from the earliest stages of the poem, in which Blake recasts the creation of the twelve tribes of Israel as an event constituting a type of fall, because as in all falls in this poem, it is an event defined by division. Thus, the creation of the Twelve Sons of Albion is a vision of a fall, compounded by the consequent further separation of these Sons into male and female beings, as the Daughters of Albion are also formed. The poet himself laments the state into which humanity has fallen, as Blake states:

> The Male is a Furnace of beryll; the Female is a golden Loom,
> 
> I behold them and their rushing fires overwhelm my Soul,
> 
> In Londons darkness; and my tears fall day and night,
> 
> Upon the Emanations of Albions Sons! The Daughters of Albion^65

Blake reenvisions the Sons of Israel as progenitors to a process of human division in this poem, as the creation of the Sons and Daughters of Albion signals the beginning of a process of degeneration, an interpretation suggested by Albion's sadness, and the poem's

^65: 34-7
continued progression into its characters’ fallen states. Again, the unique element of this and other scriptural reinterpretations is the extent to which this Biblical references support his vision of salvation as a reality to be entered into through human experience, realized through moral, others-centered action. Setting this passage in England infuses the mundane and immediately historical realm with a sense of the cosmic and divine, supporting Blake’s larger notion of the immanence of the divine in the earthly realm. The endlessly generative process of the fall, defined by continual division, is destructive to the integrated man when not checked by the creative faculties which seek to establish unity, not division. Los states:

Negations are not Contraries: Contraries mutually Exist:

But Negations Exist Not: Exceptions & Objections & Unbeliefs

Exist not: nor shall they ever be Organized for ever & ever:

If thou separate from me, thou art a Negation: a meer Reasoning & Derogation from me, an Objecting & cruel Spite

And Malice & Envy: but my Emanation, Alas! will become

My Contrary: O thou Negation, I will continually compell

Thee to be invisible to any but whom I please, & when

And where & how I please, and never! never! shalt thou be Organized

But as a distorted & reversed Reflexion in the Darkness

And in the Non Entity....

Here, Los resists this pattern of division and negation that characterizes the Fall of Albion,

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67 17. 33–43
leaving "Man, a little grovelling Root, outside of Himself."68 The human faculties continue to separate and create not creative tension between the contraries, as Los the Poetic Genius would favor, but endless negation and consequent Fall. Here, Los dreads the systematization of this process of negation, but this systematization has taken place through the focus since Albion passed into sleep upon restrictive systems of moral virtue, incarnated in religious institutions and political and social systems. As the Divine Voice says:

Albion must Sleep

The Sleep of Death, till the Man of Sin & Repentance be reveald.

Hidden in Albions Forests he lurks: he admits of no Reply

Of Action, for Obedience to destroy the Contraries of Man[.]

He hath compellld Albion to become a Punisher & hath possessd

Himself of Albions Forests & Wilds! and Jerusalem is taken!69

Blake here illustrates how this negation has resulted in a systematization of the dominant faculty of reason, turning Albion into a Urizen-like figure privileging rationality and division over creativity and unity. Humanity has come to value obedience to a moral code, and punishment for those who transgress the social and religious code. This obedience frequently takes shape in the form of religion, and for Blake, a religion conflating the spiritual with nature, which he sees as a deceiving path. In a passage also used in the third night of *The Four Zoas*, Blake states: "Albion walkd on the steps of fire

68 17.32
69 43.11-17

57
before his Halls/ And Vala walks with him in dreams of soft deluding slumber. He looked up & saw the Prince of Light with splendor faded.” In both poems, Blake expresses his skepticism, if not disgust, at the delusive influence of Vala, or nature, combined with Urizen, whose realm includes religion. Natural religion and morality are classified as agents of the Fall, as the narrator states, “The Building is Natural Religion & its Altars Natural Morality/ A building of eternal death: whose proportions are eternal despair.”

Blake repeatedly characterizes religion and consequent rational moral law as the primary agent of division, negation and Fall. He states:

The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man; & when separated
From Imagination, and closing itself as in steel, in a Ratio
Of the things of Memory. It thence frames Laws & Moralities
To destroy Imagination! the Divine Body, by Martyrdoms & Wars.

Thus, Blake clearly envisions the Fall in Jerusalem as the emergent dominance of the rational faculty in shaping Man’s priorities, which is a result of the division of the Four Zoas and the negation of the more creative faculties in favor of the rational, in negation’s dynamic of dominance, without dialectical creative interplay between the rational and creative forces in human nature.

This fall of the human faculties is exacerbated and accelerated by Albion’s — and thus, in microcosm, humanity’s — inability to resist Vala, who represents natural religion,

43. 33-35
66. 8-9
74.10-13

58
or religion that locates a vision of God through what flawed humans can perceive through limited reason. Blake, a believer in actual divine revelation and religious experience which transcends the rational, condemns natural religion, which he also often combines with Deism in his characterizations. Thus, part of humanity’s fall in Jerusalem is defined by the acquiescence to these religious currents of organized Christianity, which Vala embodies. Albion, coming upon Jerusalem and Vala “assimilating in one” in a sort of connubial union, confuses the two and rejects Jerusalem as a “dissembler,” and allows himself, and therefore humanity, to be enshrouded in Vala’s veil of static, limiting religion, instead of Jerusalem’s state of divine union and creative liberty, which the poem’s fundamental movement seeks to restore.73

In envisioning the Fall as the poem progresses, Blake recapitulates the creation narrative of Genesis, retelling it within the context of his notion of organized religion, and the strictures of Urizenic religious practice. He states:

I stood among my valleys of the south
And saw a flame of fire, even as a Wheel
Of fire surrounding all the heavens: it went
From west to east against the current of
Creation and devourd all things in its loud
Fury & thundering course round heaven & earth
By it the Sun was rolld into an orb:
By it the Moon faded into a globe,

73 19.40-21.50
Travelling thro the night: for from its dire
And restless fury, Man himself shrunk up
Into a little root a fathom long.

... 

Jesus died because he strove
Against the current of this Wheel: its Name
Is Caiaphas, the dark Preacher of Death
Of sin, of sorrow, & of punishment;
Opposing Nature! It is Natural Religion
But Jesus is the bright Preacher of Life
Creating Nature from this fiery Law,
By self-denial & forgiveness of Sin. 74

This passage clearly and powerfully asserts Blake's view of organized religion, the dividing and alienating dynamics of which he conflates with the Genesis account of creation, in which all of creation is divided and parceled. Blake's version does not share the divine validation of the Genesis account, yet in its creation of the sun, moon and humanity from roiling chaos, it is clearly a reinvention of the creation myth. In Blake's imagination, in which he casts the creation narrative in terms of the beginnings of organized natural religion, the creation is a limiting, oppressive process, redeemable only by adherence to the self-giving, sacrificial example set forth by Jesus' life, and willingness to live and die for others. Blake associates natural religion with the strict, limiting

7477. 1-23

60
Pharisaic law of Jesus' time, and envisions Jesus as an individual whose example can help humanity free itself from the laws that cause division and strife, and move toward genuine, others-centered action, a movement which itself constitutes a notion of spiritual salvation. Organized religion, and belief in abstract principles, are not a way to revelation and transformative salvation on either a collective or individual scale; in *The New Apocalypse*, Thomas Altizer asserts: "No way lies through the labyrinth of the Church to Jesus, no true image of Jesus is present in the dead letter of the Church's Bible, and the Church's dogma is a dark and subtle web of Vala's Veil." Rather, the way to unity with the quintessentially human and divine Jesus is accomplished through experientially realizing his example, a notion which is consistent with Blake's notion of immanence and his desire to turn religious thought away from rational principles, and toward genuine religious experience. Blake makes the mundane realm of earthly existence sacred in this way, as he seeks the poetic path to spiritual salvation by locating Jesus' example, and the salvation to follow upon its experiential realization, in earthly, moral action.

While Jesus, in his return in the apocalyptic scene at the end of *Jerusalem*, is the primary figure in helping Albion to actualize his redemption and salvation, Los' stubborn resistance to the negating forces of reason as he continues his poetic task at his anvil places him in the role of prophet. Los' is the voice of righteousness and change throughout the poem, as he seeks to reverse the fallen state of affairs that has accompanied the emanation of the Four Zoas and the emergence of the rational faculties over the creative. While Los does not ultimately bring about the salvation of man, he does

75 Altizer 65
act as a prophetic force, preparing the way for the salvific turn at the end of the poem and at least inciting some of the turn toward unity that precedes the apocalyptic final group of plates. In so doing, he provides an example by which one can in part understand the means to salvation, as he selflessly toils to do his part, even given his limited capacities, to bring about Albion’s restoration and the return of Jerusalem.

Los’ role as prophet is to try to intercede on Albion’s behalf to try to effect Albion’s restoration and salvation, a role he fulfills through his identity as poet and creative genius in his stubborn refusal to acquiesce to stasis and abandon humanity. He wants to help to bring about the turn away from the self, and toward others and salvation’s unity in the God within humanity, stating that his task is:

To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the Immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
Every expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination
O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:
Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!  

Jesus fulfills the role of savior in the poem, because through his appearance and role in the poem humanity is saved and Jerusalem is restored. Albion could also be interpreted as the savior figure, as it is ultimately his self-giving action that brings about the idyllic, harmonious world depicted in the final plates. However, as Jesus returns to inspire humanity to selfless action, Los prefigures this appearance and change by continually reinforcing creativity and self-giving as the path to redemption and restoration, even if he

765. 18-22
ultimately does not effect this change.

If division and creative stagnation are characteristic of the Fall, then unity and creativity are the necessary agents of redemption and salvation. In his prophetic role, Los embodies this notion of unity, which is enacted in human affairs through selflessness and forgiveness. He states:

To beat

These hypocritic Selfhoods on the Anvils of bitter Death

I am inspired: I act not for myself: for Albions sake

I now am what I am: a horror and an astonishment

Shuddring the heavens to look upon me....

Los, through his stubborn creative enterprise on Albion’s behalf, seeks to “awake Albion from his long & cold repose” by replacing the divisive, moralistic systems that have enslaved the Eternal Man’s creative faculties with a system that liberates. As he states, “I must create a System, or be enslav’d by another Mans/ I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create.” Los therefore announces his prophetic intent is not only to act selflessly on behalf of Albion, but more specifically, to bring about a system that allows for creativity, as that is his function, and in doing so to offer a liberating alternative to the state of affairs in which humans are enslaved to the division and negation brought about by monolithic systems of prescriptive and punitive reason and morality. Los’ “system,” if it

778. 15-18
7815. 10
7910.20-21

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can be called a system, is defined by creativity, the very essence of which is dynamism, growth, and a resistance to the stasis which defines the Urizenic state of the human psyche into which humanity had fallen. The fact that Los’ system is founded on creativity means that it should resist the monolithic, static nature which defines the psyche that Los seeks throughout the poem to rehabilitate through his tireless work.

In summary, Blake envisions the fall as a product of excessive rationalism, which as a divisive force produces negation, repression, and endless generation, leading to chaos. Los acts as the prophetic force in preaching and embodying creativity and self-giving action on behalf of others, while resisting the temptations of his Spectre and acting in a moral fashion. Creativity is a unifying force that can remedy the divisive effects of unchecked reason, as creativity is itself characterized by dialectical interplay between contraries, producing constructive flux and growth, as opposed to the unchecked multiplication without creative tension or interplay that is embodied in emanation and negation. Blake attacks rationalism, and institutional religion based on nature and rationalism, as particular forces of division that are instrumental in Albion’s fall. Finally, if redemption is to be achieved through unity with the divinity within Man, the ultimate ground of creative being, then division and negation would necessarily draw fallen Man farther from the God within him, necessitating the activity of Los, in trying to effect a turn from self to others -- and, in so doing, God -- ultimately culminating in the final plates’ scenes of apocalyptic redemption and salvation.

The final scenes of redemption and salvation in Jerusalem, brought about through the turn from the self to others in the act of self-giving sacrifice, is instigated by the
appearance of the Antichrist, who embodies the divisive power of selfhood. The narrator describes the Antichrist, stating: “Thus was the Covering Cherub reveal'd majestic image/ Of Selfhood.” Thus does the dynamic inherent in the Fall, the division internal and external, between human faculties and different peoples, reach its epitome in the Antichrist, the agent of individuation. Even Blake's description of the Antichrist is heavily divided and itemized into a list of the Antichrist's various divided parts, indicating the fact that he embodies division and individuation.

The appearance of the Antichrist inspires Los to offer his contrary vision of unity, in which particulars exist not in separation and isolation, but in unity and as particulars pointing towards a larger whole. Los offers the means to the Divine Vision, as he states:

He who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole
Must see it in its Minute Particulars; Organized & not as thou
O Fiend of Righteousness pretendest; thine is a Disorganized
And snowy cloud: brooder of tempests & destructive War
You smile with pomp & rigor: you talk of benevolence & virtue!
I act with benevolence & virtue & get murder'd time after time:
You accumulate Particulars, & murder by analyzing, that you
May take the aggregate; & you call the aggregate Moral Law:
And you call that Swelld & bloated Form; a Minute Particular.
But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every

80 89.9-10
81 89.9-51
Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus.²

Los establishes the proper relationship between particulars – that they should not exist in separation, which breeds further division without progress, and eventually leads to chaos, but rather that they should exist in unity with a larger whole. General forms, without particulars, would be abstract and lifeless, but particulars without some unity in general forms would be chaotic and equally problematic. Therefore, the general and the particular must coexist, each in the other. This dynamic is best embodied in the relationship between Man and God, in which each particular individual is united in the divine Jesus, while the reverse is also true – divinity exists in its embodiment in its particular forms, human beings. This notion of human participation in the divine, and divine immanence in the earthly realm, resonates strongly with Paul’s notion of the analogy between the believer’s relationship to God and the body parts’ relationship to the larger body. Los augurs the incipient appearance of Jesus as Savior of Albion when he recapitulates this idea of unity with the divine (and human) Jesus, stating: “Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. he is become One with me/ Behold him here! We shall not Die! we shall be united in Jesus.”³

This notion fits with the very characteristics that make Blake’s vision of salvation so compelling: he manages to create a vision of salvation that encompasses a phenomenal scope of particular concerns, as it accommodates collective and individual notions of salvation, and offers an apocalyptic vision of transformed history that is neither mundane nor distantly otherworldly. Rather, Blake’s vision involves a notion of the cosmos in

³93. 18-19

²91. 20-30
which the ideal state is supreme unity, devoid of alienated individuation.

In the final plates of *Jerusalem*, Albion is resurrected amid a wash of apocalyptic imagery, and the Four Zoas are returned to their proper stations as harmony is restored between Albion and England, as Jesus appears “with the likeness & similitude of Los” to enact Albion’s salvation. Jesus tells Albion that his self-sacrifice is the means to redemption, stating:

Fear not Albion unless I die thou canst not live  
But if I die I shall arise again & thou with me  
This is Friendship & Brotherhood without it Man is not....  
And if God dieth not for Man & giveth not himself  
Eternally for Man Man could not exist.

Jesus illustrates the dynamic essential to salvation: the turn from self to others. Jesus brings about the redemption of Albion through his self-sacrifice, offered in friendship and brotherhood, so that Albion may rise again along with Jesus. As Jesus offers this message of self-giving sacrifice and others-centeredness, the Antichrist looms threateningly overhead, and when Albion feels that Jesus is being threatened by the Antichrist, he offers himself instead, throwing “himself into the Furnaces of affliction,” before it is revealed that the danger to Jesus was simply a vision.

Although Albion’s sacrifice is instrumental in realizing humanity’s salvation, it is

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8596.14-16, 25-26  
8696.35
Los’ prophetic role that provides the most extensive and comprehensive example of self-giving sacrifice. As prophetic genius, Los toiled on behalf of the greater whole of humanity -- or, in microcosm, of the individual human psyche -- in order to keep the creative spirit alive. Although Albion enacts a Christlike sacrifice near the end of the poem, Los’ extended toil is at least equally Christlike, and offers a notion of the turn toward others-centeredness, and resistance to the selfishness which precipitates the human fall, that is far more resonant with human experience than Christ’s blood sacrifice. Where Albion acts on behalf of humanity through giving himself in attempted sacrifice, Los’ toil is at least equally crucial in bringing about the poem’s inner salvation, as his poetic toil on behalf of humanity represents a life lived in selflessness, as he attempts throughout the poem to reverse the fallen states of humanity’s inner faculties. Blake, too, realizes Los’ Christlike role, suggesting strongly that Los is the salvific hero of the poem by closely associating him with the Savior upon the appearance of the poem’s apocalyptic Divine Vision:

Then Jesus appeared standing by Albion as the Good Shepherd
By the lost Sheep that he hath found & Albion knew that it
Was the Lord the Universal Humanity, & Albion saw his Form
A Man. & they conversed as Man with Man, in Ages of Eternity
And the Divine Appearance was the likeness & similitude of Los

This passage indicates the extent to which Blake validates poetic genius, and more generally, creativity, as a salvific act, which justifies Blake’s choice of Los as the primary

8796. 3-7

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figure of salvation in *Jerusalem*. In *The Four Zoas*, Urizen ultimately serves as the character who guides the poem toward its apocalyptic, transformative conclusion. However, part of the somewhat unsatisfying nature of *The Four Zoas'* conclusion is, first, that Urizen never seems to truly merit his sudden transformation into a benevolent, creative force, and second, that Urizen no longer seems like Urizen in the poem's final stages -- his actions are more characteristic of Los'. This issue is rectified in *Jerusalem*. While Albion is instrumental in salvation through his faithful self-sacrifice, it is Los' constant toil on behalf of humanity which fundamentally moves Albion toward even being in the position of being able to effect his own salvation. Through Los' poetic work, the poem attains its final, truly Christian divine vision of self-giving sacrifice, demonstrating Blake's belief in a true Christianity defined by creative action. He states: "I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination."* Art is the quintessentially dynamic, mutable human endeavor, and in a vision of the fall defined by stasis, Blake’s natural redemptive counterpart is art, which for him is the seat of the divinity that exists within each human. In this poem, creativity serves as a means to salvation on both the cosmic and internal scale, but also how he advances the notion of immanence, giving the divine a poet's form, and the ability to converse as a man, with a man. Thus, Blake bridges the divide between the transcendent and the mundane by humanizing the divine, and exalting the selfless action of the poetic genius.

Albion's self-giving sacrifice on behalf of Jesus illustrates the fundamental concept

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*87.17-18*
of salvation: the turn from self-centeredness to others-centeredness, which is fundamentally God-centeredness, since in Blake’s view, divinity rests within each individual. In other words, in Blake’s work, because divinity is immanent in humanity, God-centered action is necessarily others-centered action. So, Los acts in his prophetic role on behalf of Albion, preparing the way for the appearance of the divine Jesus, and Albion’s sacrifice on his behalf. Upon Albion’s selfless action, Jesus restores Jerusalem and all of earth and heaven is united in harmony. Because Albion is the universal Eternal Man, his selfless action indicates a transformation of all of humanity from division and individuation toward unity with God in acting in accord with the divine moral example embodied in Jesus’ self-giving sacrifice. When Albion sacrifices himself, he participates in Jesus’ self-giving example, and therefore achieves unity with him. In his implicit notion of salvation as a transcendence into an idyllic state brought on by humanity’s turn toward unity with Jesus through acting on behalf of others, Blake seems to accept the notion of salvation as a phenomenon that occurs within history, but in a history and earthly reality transformed through unity between human and divine. If the Fall is characterized by division, then salvation would necessarily have to involve a reuniting of the eternal and the temporal, the divine and the earthly. Blake’s philosophy is that the divine is immanent within the earthly, and that it is a type of Fall to separate them. Therefore, he would not devalue the earthly by locating salvation in a distant, otherworldly realm, nor would he exalt the purely political and social realm of human affairs by making salvation simply an earthly revolution, without divine resonance. Rather, Blake interfuses the two, because in their ideal, redeemed state, earthly and divine are one and the same.
Through creative and self-giving action, it is humans’ place to work toward their own salvation. Because Albion, the Eternal Man, helps to enact his own redemption on behalf of all of humanity, one can conclude that Blake conceptualizes salvation as a collective state. Moreover, considering his philosophy on division as a fallen state of existence, it stands to reason that Blake, in his account of humanity’s salvation through a collective turn to others-centeredness, would say that personal salvation still involves a division, and that salvation must necessarily be corporate and collective. Through self-sacrifice, Albion acts as Jesus himself did in his own sacrificial death, and he therefore unites with Jesus by realizing his example. Thus, Albion’s role in effecting humanity’s salvation by turning toward selfless action echoes the Pauline notion that all believers are united in the body of Christ, because Albion, representing humanity, through his action demonstrates how humans might turn toward the divine through living Jesus’ example.\footnote{Ryan 161-162}

However, although Albion is crucial to the turn toward salvation through his act of faithful sacrifice, Los’ prophetic role, progressively readying humanity for this turn toward salvation through his tireless toil, offers a true portrait of how individuals might work toward their own salvations, through creativity and selfless action, both of which reverse the static, divisive state that characterizes Blake’s idea of Urizenic fall.

Both visions of moral action, modeled on Jesus’ example, are consistent with Blake’s focus on unity and integration, as opposed to division, and the idea that through a collective turn away from the self and toward one another, humans can reunite with the deity residing in each particular individual’s breast, bringing about the true union between...
the human and the divine that constitutes salvation. Both Los and Albion demonstrate
behavior that is consistent with Blake's vision of Jesus in Jerusalem, in which he focuses
not on the theological importance of Jesus' blood sacrifice, but on his self-giving action as
a moral example of ideal human interaction. In contrast, in The Four Zoos, the only major
Christological reference occurs during Luvah's crucifixion, a demonic scene that hardly
conjures Jerusalem's characterization of Jesus as moral exemplar. In Jerusalem, Blake
takes care to ensure that he uses the name "Jesus," and not "Christ," as part of his effort
to characterize this figure as the preeminent example of what it means to live morally,
creatively, and humanly, avoiding the theological resonances of expiatory blood sacrifice
and collective atonement that accompany the name "Christ." Much of the reason for
Blake's more fully realized poetry in Jerusalem owes to the fact that this latter poem
demonstrates a much more fully developed understanding of his own conception of
Christianity, a process which was begun in the latter stages of The Four Zoas, but which
was not fully achieved to satisfying results. Where Jesus, as a moral exemplar and
paragon of self-giving, creative action, is not present in The Four Zoas, he remains a key
figure in Jerusalem, inasmuch as the salvation of mankind, and the restoration of the inner
creative city of Jerusalem, is brought about by Los and Albion's successful realization of
his example.
4: Conclusion: Immanence and Religious Experience in Blake’s Salvation

William Blake’s idea of salvation, while patterned upon biblical antecedents reenacting the dynamic of fall and redemption, is significantly a reaction to the failures of established, organized religion and demonstrates a desire to overcome the rationalist strictures of religion in an effort to revitalize notions of divine immanence, and the possibility of genuine religious experience. Blake’s notions of division and fragmentation of the human being’s inner faculties as a type of fallen state, and the reintegration of these faculties, or Zoas, as a means to an inner salvation, are universal, in the sense that all individuals experience struggle in balancing intellect, passion, creativity, and instinct, even as they reflect Blake’s particular experience. In The Four Zoas and Jerusalem, the characters experience a fall from the Eternal state, as they selfishly seek dominion, often engaging in strife with the other inner faculties, before gaining salvation through collaborative, selfless action on behalf of others that perpetuates a turn from the self toward Jesus, who represents the divinity within the selfless, integrated Man. Blake conception of this spiritual salvation is particularly unique because, unlike most accounts which limit themselves to the strictures of their own traditions, Blake has created a sufficiently broad and comprehensive notion of salvation to accommodate the collective and the individual, as well as the historical and the otherworldly notions of transcendence.

Blake’s skepticism regarding organized religion resulted in large measure from the increasing prominence of rational thought, even in religious and spiritual life, and its manifestation in the growing role of natural religion and its codification in Deism. Deists’ belief in a distant, uninvolved God, a “static and uniform” human nature, and the notion
that the world is governed by natural law, which can be acquired by way of rational thought, are all notions Blake found abhorrent. The attempts to devalue revelation in favor of rational human thought and experience denied the genuinely revelatory and salvific, undermining the divine, while simultaneously degrading humanity by denying God's immanent nature in humanity. In *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake implied that a religion grounded in rational thought was dangerous because it elevated reason while it denigrated the other elements of one's spiritual life, such as creativity, instinct and passion. Although the division and fragmentation that constitutes the fall of humanity in the poem is applicable to numerous historical and religious contexts, it is nonetheless important to consider Blake's historical moment, and the prominence in Blake's time of a religion grounded in restrictive rationality, denying the sublime, creative and revelatory aspects of religious experience.

For Blake, the fall of humanity takes place in the individual derangement of Albion's various faculties, yet he represents in microcosm the fall of both individual and collective humanity into selfishness and violence. In *The Theology of William Blake*, J.G. Davies presents a useful articulation of Blake's notion of humanity's fall, claiming that "Man...was an integrated whole, with his four elements -- thinking or the reason, feeling or the emotions, sensation or the body, and intuition or the spirit -- balanced and united....The disruption in this harmony in 'heaven's darling' led to the Fall." Davies' statement is evident in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, through Blake's accounts of the

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90 Davies 23
91 Davies 97

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systematic derangement and fragmentation of the Eternal Man’s inner life, as he falls from the eternal state to the mundane life of division and strife which occupies much of these poems. In these poems, the fall is marked by an inner desire, often on the part of Urizen, to achieve power over the rest of the inner human psyche, which is consistent with Davies’ claim that “the Fall is attributed to the attempts of one or other of man’s four elements to achieve domination.” In these particular poems, this movement occurs through the Eternal Man’s rational component, Urizen, contemplating and attempting to master the creative, instinctual, and passionate elements of the human psyche, represented respectively by Urthona/Los, Tharmas, and Luvah/Orc. This attempt resulted in the division which provides the central conflict of both poems, and which must be reversed through a movement toward selflessness in order to achieve the salvation characterized by the re-integration of these mental faculties.

As salvation can generally be conceived as “the transformation of our human situation from a state of alienation from the true structure of reality to a radically better state in harmony with reality,” Blake’s notion of fall and redemption exemplifies this dynamic through the Eternal Man’s progressive alienation from his eternal, heavenly, integrated and harmonious state -- the “true structure of reality” -- followed upon by a turn toward a regained harmony, as exemplified in the inner apocalypticism which perpetuates a radical turn away from the divided self, and toward the Eternal. Blake implies in his poetry that this divided self creates the Fall, as Davies states: “Man’s

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92 Davies 97
93 Hick 10
Original Sin was the establishing of his own selfhood, the setting up of himself against God. According to Blake the source of evil was...the separateness of the individual soul from the rest of the universe -- in other words, self-consciousness." Once self-consciousness is achieved in Blake's poetry, then reason inevitably attempts to gain dominion, in both *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, and it is then incumbent upon the human spirit to reintegrate itself in a movement toward a personal salvation.

Blake is concerned with the return to the reintegrated state, free of the strictures with which organized religion and science bind the human passions and desires, and to that end, he envisions salvation as a reality to be obtained not solely through an external divine intercession, but through humanity's self-transformation from self-centeredness to a concern for harmony, creativity and collaborative action. Although the apocalyptic is a key element in the salvific transformation in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, the turn away from the selfhood sought by the separated human faculties is far more crucial in this metamorphosis.

In *The Four Zoas*, this turn away from selfhood is gradual, and is evident in the slow reintegration of the fallen Zoas, who progressively reemerge and reconcile. Urizen experiences the most drastic transformation, as he moves from a demonic figure of division and violence into one of the chief figures precipitating the apocalyptic reversal of the fallen created order, and the rehabilitation of Albion. The salient images, however, informing this turn toward reintegration exists in the agricultural sowing and harvest as the reintegrated Man is regenerated and brought toward harmony. This human harvest’s

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94Davies 100
redemptive role in *The Four Zoas* demonstrates that the means to salvation is through collaborative, creative action.

Similarly, it is the self-giving sacrificial action of Albion in the ultimate transformative event of *Jerusalem*, as well as Los’ continual work to resurrect Albion through creative toil, that also exemplify the notion that salvation must be brought about through human self-transformation from a fallen state to a harmonious being. As in *The Four Zoas*, in *Jerusalem* Albion has fallen into disarray, and the limiting strictures of organized religion and political ambition have forced the human faculties into strife and generative decay. However, through selfless work to reintegrate the fallen aspects of the human psyche, Albion achieves restoration to a more integrated, harmonious state.

In *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake reenacts scriptural forebears, demonstrating not only a resonance in terms of theological parallels between Hebrew Bible and New Testament accounts of humanity’s struggle for salvation and Blake’s own, but an overall grasp of the cyclical nature of fallen human history in the quest for salvation, as he creates an account of redemption sufficient for both a collective turn to the divine, and an individual desire for transcendence. Furthermore, Blake also bridges the divide between historical and otherworldly notions of the salvific realm, offering visions of post-apocalyptic realms that, while occurring in history, clearly occur in a history transformed by the divine intercession and continued moral action. The Bible demonstrates a pattern of fall and redemption, beginning with the Edenic fall and culminating with Revelation’s apocalyptic redemption but with many cycles in between, of which Blake is keenly aware, and which he recapitulates in his own poetry.
In *The Four Zoas*, Blake draws upon the Edenic myth in Genesis and, although less significantly, the New Testament crucifixion in order to cast the fall of the human faculties in appropriately grand, mythic terms, as well as to imply the universality of his own mythical system, incorporating scriptural antecedents into his own mythology. The division of beings from their emanations throughout *The Four Zoas* continually recapitulates the Edenic Fall, as Tharmas and Enion, Los and Enitharmon, Luvah and Vala, and Urizen and Ahania experience division and alienation that, coupled with purposeful language recalling Eden, reenacts the genesis of humanity's fallen history. Luvah's crucifixion, causing the flight of Jerusalem in Night the Eighth, further cements Blake's incorporation of scriptural accounts of fallen human history into his own.

Similarly, Blake uses biblical imagery in *Jerusalem* in order to create parallels to these accounts of fallen history, as well as to imply a similar level of universality in his own work. Blake's fall of Jerusalem parallels Ezekiel's account of Jerusalem's destruction, as it follows the prophet's pattern of the Israelites straying from God, and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem. While Blake description of the fall of Jerusalem resonates with Ezekiel’s account of Jerusalem’s fall, Blake also adheres to Ezekiel’s account of the restoration and salvation of Israel, and the construction of the New Jerusalem.

Blake’s use of biblical images of fallen history are coupled with, as in the case of the restored Jerusalem’s similarities to Ezekiel, scripturally based accounts of redemption and salvation. The combination of biblical allusions to both fall and redemption, as well as the aforementioned Blakean dynamic of division and reintegration in these poems, indicates Blake’s desire to model his poetry on biblical forebears. This claim is further
supported by the fact that in both *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, each poem’s salvific
denouement draws upon both New Testament accounts and interpretations of Jesus’ life,
as well as the Book of Revelation’s apocalyptic imagery and themes. In *Jerusalem*, self-
sacrifice is a crucial element in the passage from humanity’s fragmented state to its
ultimate reintegration. Los works selflessly for Albion’s return, and although Los is
typically envisioned as a prophetic figure, here his selfless behavior is particularly resonant
with Jesus’ example of a life lived in creative, unifying service. Far more significantly,
Albion’s self-sacrifice on behalf of Jesus demonstrates a successful return from self-
centredness to oneness with the divine, as Albion realizes his own divinity by acting in a
Christlike fashion. In *The Four Zoas*, self-sacrifice is demonstrated through Urizen’s
work to rehabilitate humanity, echoed far more effectively in *Jerusalem* in Los’ creative
work throughout the poem.

Both *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem* use the Book of Revelation’s imagery and
themes of judgment and redemption in order to ground their accounts of the saving,
transformative event in Christian mythical antecedents, as well as to create thematic
parallels. In both poems, the apocalyptic moment offers a radical reversal of the natural
and social orders that is similar — and, indeed, uses much of the language of — the account
in Revelation. Furthermore, both poems offer a vision of the divine akin to that in
Revelation, although in this case *Jerusalem* draws much more heavily on scripture, as it
does in the poetic description of Jerusalem’s restoration as the City of God.

A recapitulation of these scriptural parallels is useful not only as a means of
drawing attention to Blake’s incorporation of scripture into his own mythology, but as a
means of demonstrating his reenvisioning of the governing cyclical dynamics of scripture. This dynamic is articulated most comprehensively by Northrop Frye in *Words with Power*, in his account of the Bible’s fundamental “cycle of the order of nature, the cycle of descent and return, death and new life,” a mythical typology that Frye argues is also manifested in non-Judeo-Christian myths. In Blake’s biblical allusions in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, he uses images of descent/death, such as the Edenic Fall, fall of Jerusalem, and the crucifixion, and images of return/new life, including the restoration of fallen Jerusalem, and the reversal of the natural and social order in the Last Judgment. These allusive images and events, incorporated into Blake’s own mythology of the fallen human psyche, help to solidify his own reenactment of this descent/return, death/new life pattern.

In *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, William Blake envisions the struggle within the human psyche in mythological terms, and patterns it upon the biblical dynamic of fall and redemption, descent and return, death and new life, creating his own mythology that is effective on both cosmic and individual levels of interpretation. The pattern is evident when one considers the larger movement of the poems, and the reasons for the poems’ fundamental conflicts. Each of the two poems involves a fall from an Edenic state into one of division, fragmentation, generative decay, and strife, as the Eternal Man falls into a deathlike slumber. One cannot have salvation without first being fallen in some sense, and Blake spends most of the two poems detailing the fallen state of divided humanity, and its consequences in warfare and restrictive organized religion, the latter of which Blake sees as a Urizenic distortion of true Christian values of selflessness and creativity. As the Zoas

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95Frye 253
fragment and engage in negative, unproductive tension, they reach the nadir of their
descents from their formerly integrated states. Blake’s fundamental movement to the
poems’ resolutions, then, involves a redefinition of salvation in terms of psychic harmony,
yet it still must be achieved through a turn from the self to divinity, or the God-in-
humanity that Blake believes to exist within each individual, which can be realized in
selfless action and creativity. Such a transformation entails selfless action, and creativity
as a mode of keeping humanity vital, and staving off the stasis into which humanity
regresses in its fallen state. Both poems offer powerful renderings of this patterned
dynamic of fall and descent, and while Blake draws upon biblical forebears in order to
advance his themes of fall and salvation, his recasting of this pattern in inner mental and
spiritual terms makes his mythology unique, and his notion of salvation as both collective
transformation and psychological reintegration, in a realm of a transformed history that
neither rejects the mundane nor diminishes the transcendent, his own distinct creation.
While the scope of the Hebrew Scriptures’ and New Testament’s vision encompasses the
whole of fallen and redeemed history, Blake reenvisions this history in microcosmic terms
through the fall and redemption of the Eternal Man who, while an individual, represents all
of humanity as he struggles to achieve his “upward metamorphosis.”

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96 Frye, *The Great Code* 76
Bibliography


