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Fire of imagination | A comparison of the philosophical ideas of William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley

Emmet Edwin Hoynes

The University of Montana

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THE FIRE OF IMAGINATION
A COMPARISON OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS OF
WILLIAM BLAKE AND PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

by

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of works on William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley which have been published in the past decade indicate a renewal of interest in these poets. Equally as important as the revived interest, itself, is the fact that the majority of these works are concerned with the poets' long philosophical works rather than their short lyrics on which their reputations have chiefly rested. Many of these scholars and critics writing on Blake and Shelley have, in passing, noted similarities in the poets' ideas, but, to my knowledge, no extensive comparison of them has been made. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the poets' major ideas, to determine in what areas their thinking was alike, and to show how extensive this likeness was. Secondarily it is hoped that such a comparison will help clarify the ideas of each poet.

The study will show that the similarities in their ideas are broad and deep enough to suggest that Blake influenced Shelley's thinking. However, the present writer has been unable to find any evidence that Shelley knew either Blake or his works, and must, therefore, conclude that the influences of the age in which they lived account for the similarity in their ideas.

-1-
I have approached the problem of comparing the

likes of the poets is from their works, while background
from both primary and secondary sources. The philosophical
material used in this study has been taken

a summary of the results of the study.

The final chapter is

and compared to those of Blake. The final chapter
second part of each chapter supplies these ideas are presented
apparent. These ideas are presented first. In the

ideas could make the similarities between them more

two parts on the assumption that juxtaposing the poets.
Each of these last three chapters has been divided into
comparison of the socio-economic lives of men and

on certain social institutions are drawn together in a

chapter the poets' philosophies are compared and their views

and presentate their philosophic concepts. In the final

The next chapter discusses their views on Christianity
Government, politics, and the social context of their time.

study proper and present the ideas of the poems in

the first two chapters. The third chapter begins the

the poets and their works. These sections appear in

will be helpful. I believe, for those less familiar with
may be unnecessary for scholars of Blake and Shelley, that
the likes of each poet in a biographical sketch. These sections
poets by showing the main points and development in the

I have approached the problem of comparing the
information is from secondary sources. Secondary sources have also been of invaluable assistance in interpreting the poets' mythological figures and in clarifying difficult features of their ideas. In each case where actual material has been used credit is given in the footnote. All secondary sources used for purposes of clarification and interpretation, and for background information are listed in the bibliography. All primary source material for Blake is from The Complete Writings of William Blake edited by Geoffrey Keynes. With one exception, which has been indicated in a footnote all primary source material for Shelley is from The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley edited by Thomas Hutchinson, and Shelley's Prose edited by David Lee Clark.

In this study no attempt has been made to discuss all the works of Blake and Shelley or to show every stage in the development of their ideas. Such a task is impossible in a work of this scope. Those works which best illustrate their ideas and the similarities between them have been chosen for consideration. As a general rule, a number of their short poems and selections from their prose works are used to illustrate their ideas on social institutions, while some of the
long philosophical poems—chiefly Blake's *Jerusalem* and Shelley's *Adonais* and *Prometheus Unbound*—are discussed in connection with their philosophical concepts.

It is obvious, then, that the following study is by no means exhaustive. It is of value only to the extent that it contributes to an understanding of the two poets and shows an affinity between them which has not before been emphasized.
CHAPTER ONE

BLAKE'S BACKGROUND AND MYTHOLOGY

William Blake was born November 28, 1757, the son of James Blake, a hosier of modest means. He was christened in the Church of England despite the fact that his father was a Nonconformist. There is a tradition that the elder Blake was a follower of Swedenborg, but there is no concrete evidence that he was a Swedenborgian. Nothing is known about what religious training Blake may have had as a child and youth. All his life he called himself a Christian, but, outside of three occasions, there is no evidence of his ever having attended church. In fact, as an adult he was antagonistic toward the Church and many of its teachings.¹

At the age of four he had the first of the visions of angels and Biblical prophets which, throughout his life, were a source of inspiration and guidance. He often said his poetry was dictated to him by divine spirits.²


²Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake (New York, 1949), p. 161. I am generally indebted to this work for the biographical information presented in this chapter.
He did not attend a regular school, but learned to read and write at home and showed such aptitude for drawing that, at ten years of age, he was sent to Paris drawing school. He remained there until 1772 when he was apprenticed to an engraver. At twenty-one he completed his apprenticeship and began making a living as an engraver. He also continued his study of art at the Royal Academy where he exhibited some drawings in 1780.

At Battersea Church in 1782, he married Catherine Boucher, whom he taught not only to read and write but also to assist him in his work as an artist and engraver. Blake had begun writing poetry as a child and in 1783 the first volume of his poems, written between his twelfth and twentieth year, was printed privately through the assistance of friends under the title of Poetical Sketches. The copies were given to the poet and the work was neither published nor offered for sale.

Some of these early poems show the hatred of tyranny and oppression which was to become one of the main themes of his later poetry. Blake had reached maturity during the American Revolution, and since he regarded England's war against her colonies as a war of oppression, he sympathized with the American cause.
1750 and in the following year he and his wife attended a copy of Swedenborg's Divine Love and Divine Wisdom about the French Revolution started. He began to study Swedenborg about this time two other events significant for

In 1799, in this new method was the source of illumination, completed. In the new method where the source of illumination, the largest volume he executed, more then illuminated by hand. The largest volume he executed, illustrating them on the same page. These manuscripts process whereby he could print his poems, and drawings, dedicated to became his own publisher and performed a shortly after choosing the printshop in 1767, he

and upon the state of the pictures and illuminated manu-
the commission he could get for drawing and engraving. He rest or the life the poet depended for a living. Upon
ventures and after three years he gave it up. For the
in 1757 he opened a printshop, but it was not a successful
worldly prosperity and recognition as an artist and poet.
series of endeavors which he hoped would bring
"mean chances" and over a period of years engaged in a
From the time of the marriage on he was seeking the

-7-
were further influenced by Swedenborg's doctrines. By 1790, however, he was finding that Swedenborg was not the divine teacher he had at first thought him. He discovered contradictions in Swedenborg's teaching, and some of the doctrines he called "Lies and Priestcraft." Soon he claimed that Swedenborg did not teach anything which Boehme and Paracelsus had not taught before him. In spite of the repudiation, Swedenborg did influence his thinking, and some twenty years later Blake characterized him as a "Samson Shorn by the Churches."

Blake's enthusiasm for revolt against tyranny and oppression had not waned with the end of the American war, so when the French Revolution began he was among those who hailed it as one more step in man's progress toward freedom. In 1791 he wrote *The French Revolution*—one of the many answers written to Edmund Burke's *Reflections* which attacked the revolutionary spirit in France and England. Temporarily abandoning his illuminated printing, Blake had Johnson, the publisher, set in type the first of seven projected "books", but for some reason, perhaps

---


4 *Wilson*, p. 53.
any name; even the few frames who had admired the song

felt constrained to create a mythology of the own. At
the second in this phase found both direct expression and

the French Revolution, year of government pronouncing
suggested as a possible reason for the failure to publish
obscure and esoteric theories. The three has already been
Two major reasons have been offered for the use of these
dreams through mythological theories of his own creation.
the remaining works he disdained the philosophical
in as direct as he had been in the French Revolution. In
the revolution, but only in the sense of experience in the
in these works make present many of the ideas on

The Song of Ice, The Book of Lies, and Beans the Four Good.
for the poetry. There be many the songs of experience
the spent there were also a period of production of creativity
commission for engravings and dramatics, the seven years
he means etched fame and fortune, the did receive numerous

upon moving to London in 1793, he began the period
was never published.

Blaise a four of prosecution by the government, the work

-6-
...the chance was without foundation.

sought that the poet had dreamt the King and made an
get into a controversy with a soldier who discovered
arrangements for the move could be made; however, Blake
partly agreed Blake should return to London. Before
three years the arrangements came to a head and both
more or less free hand in executing his designs. After
at his direction, while Blake assumed he would have a
thought he had employed someone who could work similarly
and are, soon led to misunderstandings. Howey appeared
covered with their very different ideas about poetry;
ship between Blake and Hayley were rather vague and thus;
unfortunately the terms of the business relationship

...change.

In the summer of 1800, he welcomed the opportunity
and made detachments and arrangements for the poet Hayley came
his title. In any event, when the chance to go to Pennsylvania
the letter was to continue and grow for the next of
reminded by the sense of isolation from the Friends.
indicative, but the happiness of the Lamented period was
errors were the cause of his melancholy. Blake does not
of the work, of the mental labor from his creative
incomprehensible. Whether this lack of understanding
were beginning to find this poetry difficult, if not

-10-
but it was January, 1804, after Blake had moved back to London, before he finally was tried and acquitted. Despite their disagreements Blake and Hayley remained on friendly terms for some time, and the "Three Years Slumber on the Banks of the Ocean" were not entirely lost, for there Blake undoubtedly worked on The Four Zoas and probably wrote a large part of Milton.

Upon his return to London Blake expected to procure work as an engraver, but it was not as plentiful as he had hoped, and a number of projects in which he was to have a part came to nothing. In 1805, he was employed by Cromek, an engraver, for a major job of designing and engraving which would have given the poet a substantial commission, but Cromek broke the agreement and cheated Blake of the part of the job which would have given him the most money.

His poetic works having long since failed to attract any general interest, Blake decided, in 1809, to make one final bid for popular favor by holding an exhibition of his paintings at his brother's shop. As far as attracting favorable notice to his work, the exhibition was a failure. The only extant contemporary accounts of the exhibition are two violent attacks on
Blake in the Examiner where he is typified as a madman and a lunatic.

Despite his failure to find a public which understood his art and poetry, he refused to compromise his ideas, and continued to use his mythological figures to expound his philosophy. He completed Milton in 1808, and wrote and revised the last of his prophetic books, Jerusalem, from 1804 to 1820. Blake's faith that the New Jerusalem—the paradise on earth—would be attained in his lifetime diminished as he grew older, but he never faltered in his conviction that his philosophy was the right one.

Blake's chief source of income the last twenty years was the patronage of a few old friends who continued to buy his art and illuminated manuscripts, but, though he was as poor in old age as he had been in youth, his final years were somewhat brightened by the interest which the young John Linnell and his circle of friends took in his work. He died the 12th of August, 1827, and by his own request was buried in Bunhill Fields according to the rites of the Church of England.

A major difficulty confronting any student of Blake's philosophy and "prophetic" poetry is the cryptic
quality of his mythology. Some key to that mythology must be found before the philosophical ideas behind the mythological figures become intelligible. Although the significance of all the mythological figures will not be discussed, some general information and explanation of nine important characters in Blake's mythological structure is in point.

One cause of the cryptic quality in Blake's mythology is that he created it or changed it to fit his philosophy as he was developing and confirming that philosophy. This is evident from the fact that some of his mythological characters appear in only one of his works, while others appear consistently in all the prophecies. Some characters are dropped, others added, and some change their symbolic meaning from one work to another. In the early prophecies, America and Europe, and in the books of Urizen, Ahania, and Los, Blake's mythological figures often represent ideas in embryonic form. It is not until he wrote The Four Zoas that the poet created "a system" of his own where his characters consistently represent certain ideas. When he created his "system" eight characters became of major significance. They are Urizen, Ahania, Los, Enitharmon, Luvah, Vala, Tharmas, and Enion. Blake saw man as
having four faculties or levels of vision: Reason, Imagination, Love (emotions and passions), and Instinct (sensation.) Each of these faculties had within it a masculine and a feminine principle. The masculine principle of each faculty is represented by a Zoa and the feminine principle by its Emanation. Thus, Reason is represented by Urizen and his emanation Ahania, Imagination by Los and Enitharmon, Love by Luvah and Vala, and Instinct by Tharmas and Enion.

These four faculties are contained in eternal or archetypal man, Albion. He, too, has a feminine principle represented by his emanation, Jerusalem. So, just as Albion embodies the four Zeas, Jerusalem embodies their emanations. Blake felt that when the masculine and feminine principles of each of the faculties were united, and when each faculty took its rightful place in man rather than trying to rule over the other faculties, then archetypal man, Albion, would be united with his emanation, Jerusalem. Albion would then be a whole man and would be united with Christ and God in eternity. Blake treats male and female as two parts of a single unit which he calls "man" and he feels that there must be this union between the male and female principles before a "man" is complete.
In the early prophecies America and Europe Orc, the spirit of rebellion, is Blake's major mythological figure. He is the spirit which brought on the American and French revolutions, but he represents much more than the particular rebellion of those two historical events. He is the spirit which rebels against all the laws and institutions which tyrannize over life and foist limiting bounds upon humanity. He stamps the "stony law" of the Ten Commandments to dust and scatters religion, "as a torn book," to the four winds.

Blake had, at first, hoped this revolutionary spirit would lead man to the millennium and complete freedom, but when it failed to do so he made Orc, in the later prophecies, a symbol of distorted imagination, and Los (imagination) became the leader and the hero.5 The specific relationships between these characters and how their actions and reactions symbolize Blake's philosophical ideas will be considered in detail later.

5Margaret Rudd, Organiz'd Innocence (London, 1956), p. 262-263. I am generally indebted to this work for the above interpretation of Blake's mythological figures.
CHAPTER TWO

SHELLEY'S BACKGROUND

The record of his life shows that Shelley was a voracious reader and that the range of writers and philosophers who influenced him was a wide one. Some of these influences were short-lived; he often would accept a philosophical idea only to discard it later as unsatisfactory. Other influences, however, led him to accept certain principles which he maintained from the time of their inception to the end of his life. A number of Shelley's experiences were the result of his trying to promote his, often unpopular, ideas among other people. Some of these experiences taught him the inadequacy of certain of his ideas and led him to change them. As a result, his philosophical principles and his experiences are so bound up with each other that one cannot be understood without some knowledge of the other.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born August 4, 1792, the eldest child of a well-to-do country squire, Timothy Shelley. He was educated by a tutor until he was ten, at which time he was sent to Syon House Academy, and
thence to Eton in 1804.\footnote{Newman Ivey White, Portrait of Shelley (New York, 1945). I am generally indebted to this work for the biographical information in this chapter.} Being a sensitive, highly imaginative child with an inquiring mind and a remarkable memory, he was little qualified for the environment of either of these schools. The curriculum was so easy as to bore him, and he did not care for the coarse jokes of the masters, or the sports and fights of his fellow students. Because of his girlish looks and sensitive nature he was bullied by other students, and he hated the petty tyranny of the "fagging" system. It was probably a result of this tyranny and bullying that, when still a school boy, he made this resolution:

\begin{quote}
I will be wise
and just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check...\footnote{Thomas Hutchinson, ed. The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley (London, 1935), p. 38, ll. 31-35. Unless otherwise indicated all citations from Shelley's poetry will be from this edition.}
\end{quote}

Shelley had begun writing poetry before he entered Eton, and by the time he left that school he was the author or co-author of four separate volumes of poetry and a Gothic novel, none of which has any significant literary value.
Toward the end of his Eton days his reading of Fliny and Lucretius, and his interest in the legend of the Wandering Jew had made him increasingly doubtful of the justice and reasonableness of Christianity. He felt that the Church tried to bind man intellectually and prevent inquiry into the nature of man's relationship to this world and the next.

It was with these ideas that Shelley entered Oxford in the fall of 1810 where he met and became a fast friend of Thomas Jefferson Hogg, who, like the poet, was interested in inquiry after the truth. Their talks and debates on ethics and religion soon led them to read widely on these subjects. For Shelley, the most influential of their readings were the works of Locke, Hume, and Godwin, particularly Political Justice. The works of the former writers increased Shelley's belief that there was no reasonable basis for belief in Christianity, and the latter work supported the idea that Christianity was only a superstition promulgated to give the clergy tyrannical powers. It also increased his fervor for abolishing tyrannical institutions, including that of marriage.

He became interested in promoting his "enlightened" ideas among other young people, particularly his cousin
Harriet Grove and his sister Elizabeth whom he hoped to unite with Hogg in a love match without "benefit" of clergy. By the Christmas vacation of 1810, however, Timothy Shelley had become alarmed at his son's radical opinions and interest in anti-Christian literature, and believing Hogg a bad influence, cancelled his projected visit to the Shelley family at Field Place. At this same time the poet learned that Harriet Grove whom he had expected to marry was betrothed to someone else—"a clod of earth" as Shelley put it.

He blamed the pernicious doctrines of Christianity for his loss of Harriet and for ruin of his plans for Elizabeth and Hogg. In letters to his friend he declared war on Christianity at the same time that he argued for a belief in some kind of deity.

He returned to Oxford in a state of dejection, but soon plunged into the familiar round of reading, study and debate with Hogg. By this time Shelley was wholly republican. He wrote to Leigh Hunt suggesting that an organization of liberals be formed so they could protect one another from government prosecution.

In the early part of March Shelley published The Necessity of Atheism. The work was, at most, agnostic
in its philosophy, and in view of his arguments for belief in a deity of only a few months earlier, it is doubtful that Shelley had any firm belief in atheism. He had often written to clergymen under various pseudonyms baiting them to see if they could defend Christianity on the basis of reason, and The Necessity of Atheism was probably chiefly intended for a similar purpose. The work was burned by the booksellers shortly after it appeared and for a time it seemed that the storm would blow over, but enough copies had been distributed that the University authorities learned of it. Shelley was questioned about its authorship and was expelled on March 25, 1811, for refusing either to affirm or deny that he was the author.

The poet's expulsion from Oxford caused a breach between Shelley and his father that was never closed. Negotiations between them went on for some time, but finally came to nothing. Timothy Shelley could not legally disinherit his son, but he could disown him and by 1813 had done that. From that time on the contacts between father and son were restricted to matters of finance. For the poet the wandering existence and financial troubles which were to be an almost constant part of his experience began right after his expulsion.
In August, 1811, he married Harriet Westbrook, a schoolmate of his sisters whom he had met the year before. She had been tormented in school for her friendship with Shelley and threw herself on him for protection. Benevolence seems to have been his sole motive for marrying her since he did not love her and marriage was against his principles. Surprisingly, this marriage was a relatively happy one for nearly three years.

Shelley made his first, and last, attempt at practical reform by direct participation in February, 1812, when he went to Dublin with his Address to the Irish People. If enthusiasm for a cause were enough to bring about change he would surely have succeeded, but he discovered that the people were generally apathetic and that patriots could be almost as bigoted, selfish, and ignorant as tyrants. Seeing that little was to be immediately accomplished, he gave up the project.

In 1813 his first long poetic work, Queen Mab was printed. The ideas it presents are essentially those Shelley had held for several years. Tyranny, oppression and warfare are caused by ignorance and selfishness as represented by priestcraft and knigraft, but they will be overcome because Necessity has destined man to live in a paradise on earth some time in the future. Marriage,
itself, is selfish because it limits personal liberty and is an unbearable oppression when one party grows tired of it. The poet presents God as a demogogic tyrant, who is only a creation of the human mind, and Christ as a vengeful hypocrite.

By the early months of 1814, Harriet and Shelley were growing farther and farther apart. She had given up all effort to share his intellectual interests, perhaps not realizing that for Shelley someone who was in complete sympathy with his interests was almost a vital necessity. At any rate he spent several weeks in the Godwin household in June, and he and Mary Godwin soon realized they were in love. After two weeks of anguished indecision and a suicide attempt by Shelley, he and Mary eloped to Switzerland. Upon his return he invited Harriet to join him and Mary as a "spiritual sister" but she refused.

The next two years were the, by now, familiar round of money troubles and moves from one place to another, yet he and Mary were happy together and managed to make many new friends, among them, Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt. They also found time for reading and study, and Shelley wrote Alastor.
In December of 1816 he learned that Harriet had committed suicide and immediately set about securing custody of his two children by Harriet. The Westbrooks refused to give them up and filed suit in the Chancery Court claiming that he was not fit to rear them. The suit dragged on for eighteen months, but he knew long before the final settlement that it was not going to be decided in his favor. Shelley feared that a similar claim might be made concerning his children by Mary so they took the precaution of legalizing their union.

Though he and Mary were now legally married his fear of losing his children persisted and this fear plus mounting financial difficulties and his own ill health made him decide to move to Italy. It was the following March, however, before all the necessary arrangements for the move could be made. In the meantime he was busy writing---a total of nearly six thousand lines of poetry in less than a year, including the fragment Prince Athanase, a large part of Rosalind and Helen, twenty-six short poems and all of The Revolt of Islam. Besides presenting a picture of the ideal of bloodless revolt, this last poem indicates that Shelley had abandoned the Necessity of Queen Mab in favor of
belief in the free will of man; furthermore, at the end of the poem he shows his protagonists enjoying individual immortality in the next world.

The move to Italy did not bring an end to Shelley's moving from place to place. At one time or another during the four remaining years of his life the Shelley household lived in nearly every major city in Italy. After several moves upon their first arriving in Italy, they spent a pleasant summer at Bagni di Lucca. Shelley finished Rosalind and Helen, and translated the Symposium of Plato. From this time on Platonism became a more and more significant influence on Shelley's view of man's relation to the worlds of time and eternity.

The Shelleys' happiness ended with the summer, for on September 24th their daughter, Clara, died. Though the following months were a period of deep despondency for both Mary and Shelley, he seems to have borne the tragedy better than she. During the fall he wrote "Julian and Maddalo," "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills", the first act of Prometheus Unbound, and a number of shorter poems.

After Clara's death they moved to Naples, but by the spring of 1819 they were back in Rome where Shelley finished the second and third acts of Prometheus Unbound.
For the Sherryies. In the summer the poet wrote the letter.

The year of 1820 passed comparatively uneventfully.

The short remained of the life

to pass, in or around which Oatty Sherry was to spend

in the early months of 1820 after the Sherry's had moved

universe. From whence Upjohn and the Genel were published

rather than necessary is now the supreme spirit of the
dissipate and men will drift in partners. The Pliocene one,

foresee all errors rather than seek vengeance, will with

subject to the human will. In this dream be presence will as

From whence Upjohn. In this dream the presence will as

in November, 1819, Sherry wrote the fourth act of

After the birth of the last child, Pearly Presence,

published while he lived

but neither the work nor the work of Ginger was

the work he was working on. A proliferation view of reform

more intense by the end of September. At the same

The man of America and six other short poems which

about the handsome winner produced the writing of

writing and completed the Genel in August. He hearing

beside the sorrow of this period Sherry went on

theater only remaining child, William died on June 7th.

were completed the household was again in mourning. For

By May he was hard at work on The Genel, but before it
of Atlas, and at the end of the year he met Emilia Viviana with whom he formed one of his Platonic attachments. All his life the poet had searched for a woman who would be in complete sympathy with him—a "soul-mate", and though he, by now, realized that he would never find such a person on earth, he still was attracted to women with qualities he admired, and he often idealized them in his poetry. His poem Epipsychidion, a result of his attachment with Emilia, was written in February, 1821.

At this same time he was also engaged in writing his Defense of Poetry in answer to Peacock's claim that poetry had outlived its usefulness. The first of three projected installments was sent to the publisher in March, but before it could be published the Literary Miscellany, for which it was written, was discontinued so the remaining two parts were never written. The Defense of Poetry illustrated Shelley's belief that the imagination is the supreme faculty in man by which he perceives the true and the beautiful, and because poets exercise this faculty more than other people, they are the "unacknowledged legislators of the world."

The other two events which moved Shelley to write major poems in 1821, were the death of John Keats and the fight for independence in Greece. Adonais, his elegy
on Keats was sent to the publisher in June, and *Hellas*, was finished in October. *Adonais* again illustrates Shelley's Platonism and his belief in the immortality of the soul.

By the time Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound* his views of Christ had changed considerably from those he held when he wrote *Queen Mab*. *Hellas* is a further indication of that change. Shelley had come to agree with many of Christ's teachings and in a note to *Hellas* he indicates his objection is not to Christ but to the idea of a tyrannical God who demands retribution for error after he had tempted man to do wrong.

*Hellas* and *Adonais* are the last major poems Shelley completed. He was working on *The Triumph of Life* when he was drowned in a boating accident on the 8th of July, 1822. In ten years Shelley had moved from an agnostic, materialistic view of the universe, through Godwinian Necessitarianism to a Platonism infused with Christian principles.
CHAPTER THREE

REVOLUTION AND REFORM

Part I: The Prophet of Revolt

One of Blake's basic beliefs was that a paradise on earth was possible. In fact, Blake felt that if certain changes were made in the world man would again attain the perfection he had known when he had existed in perfect communion with God. Initially, he thought that the change needed to bring about this millenium was to free man from priestcraft and kingscraft—the names he applied to the tyrannies of the Church and the State. He felt these institutions oppressed man and were the major, direct or indirect, causes of the social evils of the time.

In the Songs of Experience Blake shows his concern with these evils. "The Chimney Sweeper" condemns child labor; "Holy Thursday" and "A Little Boy Lost" illustrate the hypocrisy of organized religion; "The Garden of Love" and "A Little Girl Lost" show the bounds religion places on love; and the plight of the impressed soldier as well as these other evils is presented in "London".

-28-
In every cry of every man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every Black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infant's tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.1

For Blake the means for redressing these evils and
for breaking the "manacles" which the Church and State
had forged in men's minds was the revolutionary spirit
which was growing in America, France, and England during
the last quarter of the 18th century. He felt that the
formation of republican governments was the first step
toward the millennium when everyone would be freed from
tyranny and oppression. He once said, in jest, that the
shape of his forehead made him a predestined republican.
He didn't believe in predestination, but some of his
earliest poems show that he was a republican from youth on.

"Gwin, King of Norway", written in 1778 champions
the cause of the common people in their revolt against
the king. Blake presents Gwin and his nobles as despotic
parasites who live on the toil of the common man.

1"London", ll. 5-16, Keynes, p. 216.
The Nobles of the land did feed
Upon the hungry Poor:
They tear the poor man's lamb and drive
The needy from their door!  

The cry of the people to "pull the tyrant down" awakens the giant Gordred who leads them in revolt. The people's army, reminiscent of the Minutemen of the American Revolution, is made up of husbandmen, merchants, and workmen who are not deterred by their slight chance of success. The populace is so aroused that the women and children become like "furious wolves" and the men "like lions' whelps." After a great carnage for which Gwin is blamed, Gordred kills him, and his remaining nobles flee.

This poem is unlike some later poems in which Blake writes of actual occurrences, in that Gwin is a fictitious king and the circumstances Blake describes were not drawn from any particular historical events. Still, his warning is unmistakable. He calls to kings in general to listen to his poem, and in the midst of his description of the bloody battle he addresses them directly.

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2"Gwin, King of Norway," ll. 5-8, Keynes, p. 11.
O what have kings to answer for,
Before that awful throne!
When thousand deaths for vengeance cry,
And ghosts accusing groan!

The theme of The French Revolution is essentially the same as "Gwin" except that in this poem the clergy is included in the condemnation of the privileged class. Blake bases this poem on the events which took place in France in June and July of 1789, but he shifts and telescopes the events to suit his purposes, and introduces fictional as well as historical characters. Furthermore, he writes only about the initial, and bloodless, part of the French Revolution. The poem opens with a description of the gloom and deathly pall that hangs over France. The King, sick and unable to wield his scepter, calls his ministers and nobles to advise him on what course of action to take in the face of the demands of the "Nation's Assembly." The Duke of Burgundy, who represents the nobility hostile to the people, recommends the use of the army to force retention of the old order and obedience to the King. He is supported by the Archbishop of Paris—the privileged clergy—who sanctions putting down the rebellion by force. On the other hand, the Duke

\[3\]Ibid., 11. 97-100, p. 13.
of Orleans, a symbol of the liberal nobility, advises negotiation and compromise with the people, claiming that the nobles will have a better life if the people are free. After much debate the King bows to the people's immediate demand that the army be removed ten miles from Paris, and the first book closes with the parties in a state of uneasy truce. ¹

It is impossible to tell what The French Revolution might have revealed about Blake's revolutionary sympathies had it been completed, but the one extant book shows the great hopes the poet had that it was part of the millennial process which, he believed, had begun with the American Revolution. He presents the King as awakening from a five thousand years' slumber—since the time of the Garden of Eden—and indicates that if the King and the privileged class capitulate to the just demands of the people, all will dwell in peace and happiness.

Then the valleys of France shall cry to the Soldier; 'Throw down thy sword and musket, And run and embrace the meek peasant! Her nobles Shall hear and shall weep, and put off The red robe of terror, the crown of oppression, the shoes of contempt, and unbuckle The girdle of war from the desolate earth; then the Priest in his thund'rous cloud Shall weep, bending to earth, embracing the valleys, and putting his hand to the plow,
Shall say: 'No more I curse thee; but now I will bless
Thee; No more in deadly black
Devour thy Labour; nor lift up a cloud in thy heavens,
O Laborious plow,
That the wild reging millions, that wander in forests,
and howl in law blasted wastes,
Strength madden'd with slavery, honesty bound in the
dens of superstition,
May sing in the village, and shout in the harvest,
and woo in pleasant gardens
Their once savage loves, now beaming with knowledge,
With gentle awe adorned;'

In America, etched in 1793, Blake presents the American Revolution as a struggle of cosmic significance and not just a war between a nation and her colonies. He indicates that the real struggle is between the revolutionary spirit of the masses, symbolized by the mythological figure Orc, and all the entrenched powers of the feudal system of monarchy, nobility, and privileged clergy, represented by Albion’s Angel, who is also George III. Other historical figures such as Washington, Paine, Warren, and Franklin appear in the poem, but they are minor characters whose actions are prompted by orc.

The poem opens with Washington’s statement that the kingly powers in England are attempting to enslave America. Seeing Orc hovering over America, Albion’s Angel sounds his “loud war-trumpets” but discovers that when faced with Orc and the resolute Americans his soldiers desert

and his representative in the colonies either join the American cause or are otherwise ineffectual. However, this does not deter him, and he expends every effort to force his will upon the colonies. Blake writes of these efforts in terms of a plague that Albion’s Angel has sent against the colonies, as though he is attempting to destroy the very fruitfulness of the earth, but still he is not successful and his "plague" turns against him and his followers.

Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic,
And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite,
But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire.
The red fired rag'd! the plagues recoil'd! then rolled they back with fury
On Albion's Angels: Then Pestilence began in streaks of red
Across the limbs of Albion's Guardian; the spotted plague smote Bristol's
And the Leprosy London's Spirit, sickening all their bands:
The millions sent up a howl of anguish and threw off their hammer'd mail,
And cast their swords & spears to earth, & stood,
a naked multitude.

Thus Blake represents the repressive and tyrannic measures which Albion's Angel had used in attempting to suppress liberty as turning against their author, and, in a kind of revenge, the revolutionary spirit is increased in England itself, where there was already great feeling against the war with the American colonies.

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America, Plate 14, ll. 17-20, Plate 15, ll. 1-5, Keynes, p. 202.
In the final section of the poem Blake states that Orc has hidden for twelve years and then "Trance receiv'd the Demon's Light," and the thrones throughout Europe were shaken. He ends the poem with the prophecy that the monarchies of Europe will not be able to withstand the revolutionary spirit, and though he avoids mentioning England there is no doubt that he hoped a republican government would be established there too.

At the time Blake wrote America he still believed that the revolt against both political and religious tyranny would bring about the millennium. In fact, Orc proclaims the birth of revolution in America in terms of the Resurrection.

The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd
Reviving snake, inspiring move, breathing, awakening,
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst.

Blake never repudiated the revolutionary spirit, but by 1795 he had seen the revolution in France become the Reign of Terror and he realized that revolution might become a war which only replaced one kind of tyranny with another!

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7Ibid., Plate 6, 11. 2-5.
The hand of vengeance sought the bed
To which the purple tyrant fled.
The iron hand crush'd the tyrant's head
And became a tyrant in his stead.8

Having learned that freeing man from the external oppressions of Church and State was not enough to bring about a paradise in which love and forgiveness reigned, Blake became a pacifist. Oppression still had to be resisted but passive resistance should be employed rather than overt revolution. He saw that if there was to be a paradise on earth, man had to be freed from the "mind-forged manacles" of "selfhood" which thousands of years of tyranny, oppression, and false teaching had inculcated in him.

Untill the Tyrant himself relent,
The Tyrant who first the black bow bent,
Slaughter shall heap the bloody plain;
Resistance & war is the Tyrant's gain.

But the Tear of Love & forgiveness sweet
And Submission to death beneath his feet--
The Tear shall melt the sword of steel
And every wound it has made shall heal.9

Ore, the revolutionary spirit, was not equal to the task of bringing about an internal change in man which would make love and forgiveness supreme, so Blake created Los who strives against oppression and falsehood but who also eternally forgives error.

8Keynes, p. 419, ll. 44-47.
9Ibid., p. 420, ll. 48-56.
Part II: The Champion of Reform

Like Blake, Shelley believed that man was perfectible and that a paradise on earth was attainable if despotic forms of government were abolished and all people made free. He, too, saw kingcraft and priestcraft as major causes of the evils in the world.

The Pyramids shall fall
And Monarchs, so shall ye:
Thrones shall rust in the hall
Of forgotten royalty,
Whilst Virtue, Truth and Peace shall arise
And a Paradise on earth
From your fall shall date its birth,
And human life shall seem
Like a short and happy dream
Ere we waken in the kingdom of the skies.10

Though Shelley did not write as many poems on the specific evils of the time as Blake did, notes to some of his poems, and many of his prose works, as well as The Mask of Anarchy, indicate that he was just as aware of the prostitution, the child labor, and the exploitation of the soldier and the workingman as Blake had been.
The view of the privileged class which he presents in "Song to the Men of England" in 1819, is the same as that

which Blake gives in "Gwin." Only the metaphor is different.

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat—may drink your blood?11

The "Men of England" do not, however, rise in armed rebellion, nor did Shelley advocate that they do so. The French Revolution taught Shelley the same lesson Blake had learned from it—that wars themselves are a kind of despotism and that even revolutionary wars for freedom may result in a Reign of Terror and further tyranny rather than in a paradise on earth. Shelley was like Blake in that he abhorred the excesses which followed the French Revolution, but neither of the two repudiated it as many of its early supporters in England did. In fact, in the preface to The Revolt of Islam Shelley argues effectively that it is hardly surprising that "men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquility of freemen..."

11"Song to the Men of England", 11. 1-8, Hutchinson; p. 566.
The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilised world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent?12

Although Shelley was essentially a pacifist and believed that armed rebellion against tyranny was justified only as a last resort—after all other means of bringing about reform had been exhausted—he felt that man's innate urge to be free could not be suppressed for long. The revolts which occurred in Spain, Greece, and Naples from 1820 to 1822 gave him hope that the yoke of oppression would gradually be thrown off all over Europe. He commemorated these revolutions with the "Ode to Liberty", Helles, and the "Ode to Naples." Even as he wrote this last poem, he knew that the Austrian Army would soon subject the city to tyranny again, but he felt it was his duty to support the cause of freedom wherever it existed and regardless of how fleetingly.13

Shelley never wavered in his belief that all people should be free; nevertheless he struggled with the problem

12Preface to The Revolt of Islam, Hutchinson, p. 33.
13White, p. 374.
of how this goal was to be attained for several years, and his solutions to the problem changed and matured as his basic philosophical ideas developed. In his first poem of major length, Queen Mab, he shows all the evils of the past and present for which he holds the tyranny of Church and State responsible, and prophecies that there will be a change in the future when the forces of tyranny will be overcome, all people will be free, and there will be a paradise on earth. But he does not indicate when the millennium will be accomplished and the problem of how it is to be accomplished is taken care of, perhaps a little too conveniently, by his presenting Necessity as the "mother of the world" who has destined that the millennium will occur.

By the time he wrote The Revolt of Islam Shelley had abandoned the predestinary doctrine of Necessity and had come to believe man possessed free will. The poem presents the beau ideal of revolution in contrast to the errors of the French Revolution. In the preface Shelley summarizes his poem.

It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth of the individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its tendency to awaken public hope, to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to
In the preamble to the Report of Israel, Muthombo, p. 25.

which

Futity, he made no attempt to recommend the measures.

a formidable task it was to bring about change peace and

how enunciated the powers of opposition were, and that

he never, for the expedition to Iceland had shown him

an electorate rather than a peasant example of

be bettered. Shadily reared that the was denominating

the oppressors, overthrown the too easily accomplished to

faith and gratitude in the people in too rapid and

However, in realistic, practical terms, the change which

and for a short time liberty and universal love return.

universal love so that they refuse to be ruled by tyrants.

warrant to inherit in the people the desire for liberty and

love, loam and gratitude, the liberation program.

their impassioned speeches and the example of their universal

enhancement of oppressors is to be brought about. Therefore

he had avoids in Green Wed—of how the problem—much

In the poem Wally read up to the problem—much

and benefactors of the pharaoh's benefactors, and the universal

successful participation, and the unattributed

deduced into submission the lamented

united reads to retributive justice by when they had been

the prerequisite of moral duty and freedom; the

true sense of moral duty and freedom; the
ing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument."15

On the contrary he hoped that the very idealism of the poem "would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which led to [His] moral and political creed..."16

Shelley had great difficulty devising a practical method for making men free because, on one ground or another, he objected to most of the practical methods available. He wanted freedom for all people as rapidly as it was possible and practical but was sure that the tyrants would never relinquish their powers of their own accord. The most rapid means of getting rid of the oppressors was armed rebellion, but he felt the method was to uncertain, and being a pacifist, he could not advocate war. On the other hand, one could work for reform peacefully through organizations and legal channels, but his experience in Ireland had shown him that this process was slow and, he felt, ineffectual unless some kind of pressure could be applied to make the tyrants change.

It was not until he wrote The Mask of Anarchy in 1819 that he solved this problem and presented a method of resisting oppression which was both practical and, on
the part of the revolters at least, bloodless. This method was the same Blake had come to accept earlier—passive resistance. In this poem he again indicts kingcraft and priestcraft for keeping the people in a state of misery and abject slavery. To resist these oppressors Shelley calls on all those in England who love freedom to assemble, and if the tyrants attempt to disperse them by spilling blood they should remain calm and resolute.

With folded arms and steady eyes
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away. 17

Faced with such opposition the tyrants would have little choice but to grant at least some of the people's wishes.

By the time Shelley wrote The Mask of Anarchy his experiences had taught him that there would have to be some changes in mankind as well as in institutions if there was to be a paradise on earth. He realized that even passive resistance would require fortitude and forbearance on the part of the people if it was not to explode into war. In A Philosophical View of Reform, which he was working on at this time, he indicates that the people must be satisfied with even a modest beginning and not attempt to rush into complete freedom before they are ready to govern themselves.

We shall demand more and more with firmness and moderation, never anticipating but never deferring the moment of successful opposition, so that the people may become habituated to exercising the functions of sovereignty, in proportion as they acquire the possession of it.\textsuperscript{18}

Though Shelley never finished \textit{A Philosophical View of Reform}, it contains some of his most practical and mature thought on government. It also contains the principle which had become a major basic doctrine in Shelley's philosophy, and here he is in complete agreement with Blake. Both poets felt if there was to be a paradise on earth all mankind would have to embrace the principles of forgiving error.

There is one thing which certain vulgar agitators endeavour to flatter the most uneducated part of the people by assiduously proposing, which they ought not to do nor to require; and that is retribution. Men having been injured, desire to injure in return. This is falsely called an universal law of human nature; it is a law from which many are exempt, and all in proportion to their virtue and cultivation. The savage is more revengeful than the civilized man, the ignorant and uneducated than the person of a refined and cultivated intellect;...\textsuperscript{19}

Shelley presents this idea in its fullest form in \textit{Prometheus Unbound} where his hero, the classic example of revolt, frees himself from oppression by forgiving his enemy. But this is the subject of a later chapter.


\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 261.
CHAPTER FOUR

CREATING A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

Part I: Unorthodox Christianity

The antagonism Blake felt toward the Church had a number of causes, but they can be grouped into two general, related categories---his disagreements with Church practices, and his disagreements with Church doctrines. It has already been noted that he indicted the Church and the State together as tyrants and as the causes of the social evils of the time. One of the major reasons he did so was because he felt that the Church had become a partner of the state in exerting tyrannic power over the people. It was the complicity of these two institutions which prompted his marginal comment in Watson's Apology, "The Beast & the Whore rule without control."

Blake could see this complicity almost anywhere he looked. Appointments to bishoprics were more often political preferments than ecclesiastical ones, and many bishops, chiefly interested in their own worldly advancement, lived in London most of the time---visiting their dioceses only a few months of the year, if at all. They intrigued and

\footnote{Annotations to Watson, Keynes, p. 383.}

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used their influence in parliamentary elections, but at
the same time were subservient to governmental officials
who might promote their careers. 2 Such practices promoted
harmony between the Church and State and allowed the latter
to gain religious sanction for almost anything it chose
to do, but as far as Blake was concerned they were only
abetting each other in their crimes. Thus "State Religion,
the source of all Cruelty," was the cause of England's war
against France. 3

State religion, however, was not the only cause of
the worldliness of the Church. The overemphasis of reason
had led to the "natural religion" of Deism. Blake believed
that the combination of State religion and reason led
to worship not of Christ but of Augustus Caesar or tyrants
like him.

Our Father Augustus Caesar, who are in thy
Substantial Astronomical Telescopic Heavens, Holiness
to thy Name or Title, & reverence to thy Shadow. Thy
Kingship come upon Earth first & then in Heaven.
Give us day by day our Real Taxed Substantial Money
bought Bread; deliver from the Holy Ghost whatever
cannot be Taxed, for all is debts & Taxes between
Caesar & us & one another; Lead us not to read the
Bible, but let our Bible be Virgil & Shakespeare;

2J.G. Davies, The Theology of William Blake (Oxford,
1948), pp. 9-10.

3Annotations to Watson, Keynes, p. 393.
& deliver us from Poverty in Jesus, that Evil Ops.
For thine is the Kingship of Allegoric Godship,
& the Power, or War, & the Glory, or Law, Ages after
Ages in thy descendants; For God is only an Allegory
of Kings & nothing Else.4

It seemed to Blake that all true spiritual matters
had been reasoned right out of the Church and that that
institution had lost all interest in Christian doctrine
except as it supported Christian ethics. The moral law
had supplanted the teachings of Christ as the basis upon
which the Church operated and it taught a kind of philo-
sophical morality rather than the Christian religion.
A major effect of this was the "Clergymen in the Pulpit,
scourging Sin instead of Forgiving it." The sermons of
Tillotson were particularly popular during that time, and
one, which was held up as an example of the duties of the
Church and clergy, vividly illustrates the very thing
Blake most hated about Church practices.

For God's sake, what is Religion good for, but to
reform the Manners and dispositions of Men, to
restrain human Nature from Violence and Cruelty,
from Falsehood and Treachery, from Sedition and Rebel-
lion? Its utility in this view is perhaps condescend-
ingly recognized, and even that of a ministry some-
times acknowledged, as being a body of men whose
business it is to enforce the obligations to good order
and moral duty, and to terrify those who might hope to

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4Annotations to Thornton, Keynes, pp. 788-789.
evade human laws, by holding up to their imagination and their fears an invisible power, and a future retribution.  

The result of this emphasis on ethics was that the sermon became a moral essay which stressed obedience to the Law and promised damnation if that Law was broken. Blake felt the Church cursed the few joys the people had and became an organization for their suppression. "As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys."  

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;  

And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars thy joys & desires.  

Hand in hand with Blake's objection to the Church's using moral law to suppress the people went his criticism of its lack of real charity. On Holy Thursday it would make a show of being kind to poor children, but it fed them with a "cold and usurious hand" and forgot them the rest of the year. The cry of the little chimney sweeper  

5 As quoted in J.G. Davies' *The Theology of William Blake*, p. 15.  
6 *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Keynes, p. 152.  
7 "The Garden of Love" ll. 5-6, 11-12, Keynes, p. 215.  
8 "Holy Thursday", Keynes, p. 212.
ought to appall the Church but instead the Church requires
his parents to leave him while they go up to the church
"to praise God & his priest & King who make up a heaven
of our misery."  

Dear Mother, Dear Mother, the Church is cold
But the Ale-house is healthy & pleasant & warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some Ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the live-long day,
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, & drink, & sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest dame Lurch, who is always at Church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.10

However, the suggestion that the Church might learn something
from the ale-house about how to treat people would be re-
garded by the cursers of innocent joys as a blasphemous
outrage.11 The purpose of the priests and the Church was
not to succor the people but to repress them.

...the purpose of thy Priests & of thy
Churches is to impress on men the fear of death, to
Teach trembling & fear, terror, constriction, abject
Selfishness.12

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10"The Little Vagabond", Keynes, p. 216.
11"A Little Boy Lost", Keynes, p. 218.
Another consequence of the predominance of reason in the Church was that the Church tended to be skeptical about Inspiration and Vision. It denied that God appeared to men as he had in the first ages of the Church. To deny Inspiration and Vision was, to Blake to deny Spiritual life itself, and this explains his repudiation of Reason. "Downright Plain Truth is Something, but Reasoning is Nothing."13 "Man by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perceived."14 Reason's eminence as the highest faculty of man was based on the idea that perception was limited by the five senses, but Blake did not accept this idea. "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover."15 Imagination, not Reason, is the highest faculty in man and it gives him a higher perception than that of the senses. Imagination or Inspiration allows him to look through, not with, the eye and see that "There exist in the eternal World the permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature."16 It was to

13 Annotions to Watson, Keynes, p. 394.
14 "There is no Natural Religion", Keynes, p. 97.
15 Ibid.
this faculty in himself that Blake attributed his ability
to see visions which, in turn, inspired his art and poetry.
He was "under the direction of Messengers from Heaven,
Daily & Nightly." 17

He believed that it was the loss or denial of Imagina-
tion and Vision which had led the Church into errors, not
only in its practices, but in its doctrines as well, so
that "The Modern Church Crucifies Christ with Head Downwards." 18

An important basic doctrine upon which Blake disagreed
with the Church was that of Atonement. He did not believe
in a revengeful God. "O God, thou art Not an Avenger." 19
And he thought Atonement a "horrible doctrine. If another
man pay your debt, I do not forgive it." 20

Doth Jehova Forgive a Debt only on condition
that it shall be payed? 21

Must the Wise die for Atonement? Does Mercy endure
Atonement?
No! It is Moral Severity & Destroys Mercy in its
Victims. 22

Man needed to be redeemed from the error into which
he had fallen, but not by having his sins paid for. The

17 Letter to Thomas Butts, January 10, 1802, Keynes, p. 812.
19 Jerusalem 1. 28, Keynes, p. 676.
20 As quoted by J.G. Davies, p. 116.
21 Jerusalem 11. 17-18, Keynes, p. 694.
22 Ibid., 11. 25-26, p. 666.
reason Christ came was not to atone for the sins of man but to show him wherein the true reality of liberty and eternal happiness lay, and to teach him to forgive error in others eternally.

Why did Christ come? Was it not to abolish the Jewish Imposture? Was not Christ marter'd because he taught that God loved all Man & was their father & forbade all contention for Worldly prosperity in opposition to the Jewish Scriptures...23

What Jesus came to Remove was the Heathen or Platonic Philosophy Which blind the Eye of Imagination, The Real Man.24

Blake here mentions two specific philosophical and religious systems which Christ came to remove, but removing these systems was only incidental to the Savior's larger purpose of teaching man the true way to immortality and everlasting happiness. "What then did Christ Inculcate? Forgiveness of Sins. This alone is the Gospel, & this the Life & Immortality brought to light by Jesus..."25

Closely connected to his ideas about the reason for the coming of Christ was Blake's disbelief in moral systems. The Ten Commandments are a perversion of the Reason26 and

23Annotations to Watson, Keynes, p. 387.
24Annotations to Berkeley, Keynes, p. 775.
26America, Plate 8, ll. 3-4, Keynes, p. 198.
"no flesh nor spirit could keep these iron laws one moment." 27  "No virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments." 28  Indeed, it was morality or the Moral Virtues which caused Christ to be crucified.

The Moral Virtues in Great Fear
Formed the Cross & Nails & Spear,
And the Accuser standing by
Cried out, "Crucify! Crucify!
Our Moral Virtues ne'er can be,
Nor warlike pomp & Majesty; 29

Moral systems only bind man's "innocent joys", compound his errors, and lead him to greater evil. The loss of Vision had resulted in man's passing into various states of error which cause him to commit evil acts.

Yet they are blameless, & Iniquity must be imputed only
To the State they are enter'd into... 30

But these acts were evil, not because they broke any moral law but because they led man away from true Vision of the need for eternal forgiveness and Universal love which would unite him with God. Man sinned not against God or a moral law, but against himself. It is "A World

27 The First Book of Urizen, Plate 23, ll. 25-26, Keynes, p. 235.
28 The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Keynes p. 158.
29 "The Everlasting Gospel", Keynes, p. 759.
in which Man is by his Nature the Enemy of Man, In pride of Selfhood..."31

For Blake Selfhood was the original sin. Man had become aware that he was an entity separate from God and had fallen in love with himself. Since the Fall he had existed in one state of error after another, but he had only to practice the lessons Christ taught of universal love and eternal forgiveness of sin to absolve himself of his errors and return to the state he had enjoyed in the Garden of Eden. Since Blake believed that God forgave error eternally, he did not believe in an immortal hell. The only hell that existed was the one that man created for himself on earth.

Mark that I do not believe there is such a thing literally, but hell is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man, for All Life is Holy.32

Both in his rejection of the doctrine of redemption and in the formation of his own ideas, Blake was influenced by Swedenborg. He adopted, and, at times, adapted some of the major ideas of the Swedish theosophist for his own philosophy. The idea of selfhood being the original sin is much the same as Swedenborg's doctrine of the proprium,

31Jerusalem, plate 43, 11. 52-53, Keynes, p. 673.
32Annotation to Lavater, Keynes, p. 74.
and while Blake's use of "states" is not the same as Swedenborg's, he got the idea from that philosopher.

Two other important ideas of Swedenborg which affected Blake were the doctrines of God and of Correspondences. He, like Swedenborg, wishes to be specific and precise in his conceptions of spiritual being; consequently he was in accord with Swedenborg's idea that God could not be conceived of except as a man and that the form of divine order is the form of man. "God is Man & exists in us & we in him."33

God Appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night,
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day.34

Heaven as well as God has the form of man.

Then those in Great Eternity met in the Council of God
As one Man, for contracting their Exalted Senses
They behold Multitude, or Expanding they behold as one,
As one Man all the Universal family; & that One Man
They call Jesus the Christ...35

Blake used Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences, which is essentially the Platonic idea of the natural world being an imperfect copy of the eternal world, to extend his application of the idea that God and heaven have the

33Annotations to Berkeley, Keynes, p. 775.
34"Auguries of Innocence", 11. 129-132, Keynes, p. 434.
35The Four Zoas, 11. 469-473, Keynes, 277.
form of man. God not only had this form but embodies within it the Eternal Forms of all things.

There exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Savior...36

Blake's repudiation of Swedenborg rested on three major differences in their ideas. First, the poet rejected Swedenborg's belief that man must live according to the Ten Commandments. Second, he felt that the Swedish philosopher placed too much emphasis on Reason. And finally he came to believe that Swedenborg taught predestinarianism which Blake strictly opposed.

With one significant exception Blake was also opposed to Swedenborg's ideas on marriage. Since he believed that man, in his original state, had been androgynous and would be again in heaven, he could not accept Swedenborg's idea that the nuptial state continued in heaven. "In Eternity they neither marry nor are given in marriage."37 On the other hand, Blake agreed with Swedenborg that sexual love is not sinful. Blake felt that the Church and its moral laws were responsible for sexual love, which was

37 Jerusalem, Plate 34, l. 15, Keynes, p. 660.
originally natural, innocent and beautiful, being regarded as sinful and evil. Nowhere does he display his reasons for hating moral systems so well as in his statements on love and sex.

I saw the limbs form'd for exercise contemn'd & the beauty of Eternity look'd upon as deformity, & loveliness as a dry tree. 38

...Man dare hardly to embrace His own Wife for the terrors of Chastity that they call By the name of Morality. 39

The result of such moral repression of love was that it found an outlet in lust and came to be regarded as a sin.

Children of the future Age Reading this indignant page Knew that in former time Love! Sweet Love! was thought a crime. 40

Furthermore moral law drives love to secracy with perversions of it being the result.

The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys In the secret shadows of her chamber: the youth shut up from The lustful joy shall forget to generate & create an amorous image In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.

38 Jerusalem, Plate 9, ll. 7-8, Keynes, p. 628.
39 Ibid., Plate 36, ll. 45-47, Keynes, p. 663.
40 "A Little Girl Lost", ll. 1-4, Keynes, p. 219.
Are not these the places of religion the rewards of continence...41

Besides causing jealousy, lust, possessiveness, and perversion the moral laws on sexual love result in hypocrisy. Since "no flesh nor spirit could keep these iron laws one moment",42 there is only outward observance of the law which is a travesty of truth.

...pale religious lachery, seeking Virginity,
May find it in a harlot, and in coarse-clad honesty
The undefil'd, the revish'd in her cradle night and morn.43

Blake saw that behavior with regard to love and sex could not be legislated. Love depended upon the disposition of the spirit and therefore should be free.

I cry! Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as mountain wind!
Can that be Love that drinks another as a sponge drinks water,
That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all the day...44

But Blake's main reason for believing love should be free was not because it could not be regulated by moral laws, but because he believed that man had been divided into separate sexes as a result of the Fall and that in sexual

41Visions of the Daughters of Albion. Plate 7, ll. 3-8, Keynes, p. 194.
42The First Book of Urizen. Plate 23, ll. 25-26, Keynes, p. 335
43America, Plate 8, ll. 10-12, Keynes, p. 1991
44Visions of the Daughters of Albion. Plate 7, ll. 16-18, Keynes, p. 194.
union man and woman were united—if only momentarily—as they had been in the Garden of Eden in a single androgynous unit. He regarded sexual intercourse as a means of entering into eternity. In speaking of the sense of touch which he equated with sex he states: "Thro' one [sense] himself pass out what time he please." Thus, sexual intercourse, when engaged in by people who loved each other, took on the aspect of a sacrament whether within the bonds of matrimony or outside them. His objection to marriage was that it was a part of the restrictions and evils of the moral laws which have already been discussed. Blake did not advocate open promiscuity, but he thought sex a very important part of love between men and women and if man was ever to reach the millennial state where love was the ruling principle, all restrictions upon it would have to be abandoned. Furthermore, he believed that when the millennium was reached man would return to his androgynous state and there would be no question of marriage.

45 *Europa*, Plate, iii, l. 5, Keynes, p. 237.
46 *Davies*, p. 150.
Part II: From The Necessity of Atheism to the Platonic One

Though Blake believed in the divinity of Christ and in the immortality of the soul, the various ideas presented in the first part of this chapter make it apparent that his "Christianity" was far from orthodox. Shelley, on the other hand, was even more vehement and passionate in his aversion toward Christianity than Blake had been. This vehemence led him not only to reject institutionalized Christianity as a whole, but to argue, agnostically, in The Necessity of Atheism, that there was no reasonable basis for belief in the existence of a deity of any kind. That Shelley's views on belief in a deity changed, and that he came to accept some of Christ's teachings will be shown later. Now, it is worth noting that the Church practices to which Blake had objected and the Christian doctrines which he had refused to accept were, to a large degree, the cause of Shelley's rejection of Christianity.

For Shelley as for Blake institutionalized Christianity had become an accomplice of the State in exerting an oppressive and tyrannical power over the people. It tried to limit inquiry, and it tried to force belief in its doctrines and ethics.

That Shelley had even more reason than Blake for be-
lieving Christianity was tyrannical had already been shown implicitly in the sketch of his life. Blake had observed Christianity's tyranny, but Shelley had both observed it and suffered from it. He believed, and not without cause, that his loss of Harriet Grove, his expulsion from Oxford, and his loss of his children by Harriet Westbrook were the result of his refusing to let Christianity manacle his mind and curb his inquiry. Alarm at Shelley's free-thinking had caused Harriet Grove and her family to break off his relationship with her. The authorities at Oxford had expelled him because he had dared challenge accepted Christian beliefs. And the religious views that Shelley had expressed in *Queen Mab* were instrumental in Lord Eldon's decision that the poet should not have custody of his children. In each of these cases it was not the Church, directly, which had persecuted him, but he felt that the narrow prejudices of Christianity were the ultimate cause of his suffering.

Now did Shelley assume that he was alone in suffering from Christianity's attempt to limit inquiry. The imprisonment, in 1812, of Daniel Isaac Eaton for publishing part of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* prompted the poet to write his *Letter To Lord Ellenborough* which is an eloquent argument for freedom of inquiry as well as a defense of Eaton.
The answer which heathen Athens made to Socrates is the same with which Christian England must attempt to silence the advocates of this injured man: "He has questioned established opinions." Alas! the crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven. Implicit faith and fearless inquiry have in all ages been irreconcilable enemies.\(^{47}\)

A tyranny of even greater enormity for Shelley was Christianity's attempt to force belief in, and conformity to, its doctrines and ethics by use of coercion and punishment. He had a lifelong conviction that belief in religion was not a voluntary matter and that no amount of coercion would make an individual believe something he did not find credible. Torture could, perhaps, make him profess the doctrines or ethics of Christianity, but it could never make him believe them.\(^{48}\)

Besides seeing Christianity as a tyrannical institution which oppressed man, Shelley found many of its doctrines and beliefs "incredible." He simply could not accept the idea that God was a wrathful, vengeful Being who had created man, allowed Satan to tempt him, and then had subjected him to the pain of death and the possibility of everlasting torment because he had disobeyed his creator. Nor could Shelley accept the belief that God


\(^{48}\)Ibid.
had required atonement for man's sins in the form of Christ's agony and death. This seemed to Shelley, as it had seemed to Blake, a "monstrous" concept. He felt that the Christian God was only something man had created in his own image.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image...49

Being a projection of man's image, the Christian God was no better, in terms of being just and good, than man himself. In fact, He was worse because His omnipotence made Him a tyrant. Shelley felt that Milton had presented the correct view of the Christian God in Paradise Lost.

Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torment. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil.50

Incidentally, Shelley is again in agreement with Blake who claimed that Milton "was of the Devil's party."51

49 The Revolt of Islam, II. 4054-55, Hutchinson, p. 135.
50 The Defense of Poetry, Clarke, p. 290.
51 The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Keynes, p. 150.
Shelley's rejection of Christianity's doctrines of God and redemption implies, of course, his rejection of its concept of the origin and character of evil.

Since Shelley's ideas on government were directly influenced by his concept of evil, something of the development and change in his thoughts on evil has been indicated in the preceding chapter. In Queen Mab he portrayed evil as external---the product of the institutions of government and religion; thus, evil, being external to man, could be eradicated by abolishing the institutions which promoted it. But, just as he had learned that the overthrow of tyranny did not necessarily bring freedom, so did he come to realize that institutions had no monopoly on evil. He saw that "good and evil subsist in so intimate an union that few situations of human affairs can be affirmed to contain either of the principles in an unconnected state."52

This does not mean that Shelley believed evil so inherent a part of man's nature that it could not be overcome, but that thousands of years of ignorance, selfishness, and revenge---thousands of years of "selfhood" as Blake would have termed it---had so blinded humanity that it did

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52 *Essay on Christianity*, Clark, p. 198.
not recognize what was truly evil, nor did it recognize the means of overcoming evil. When man learned to recognize true evil and the correct means of combatting it, he could overcome all evil, except possibly that which might arise from some accident of nature. For Shelley the means of overcoming evil were the same as they were for Blake—the Christ-taught principles of universal love and eternal forgiveness of error.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy power which seems omnipotent;  
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.53

Shelley came full circle in his view of Christ—from a youthful suspicion that He was "an ambitious man who aspired to the throne of Judea" to admiration of Him as a wise man of sublime character and a great moral teacher. The poet's view of institutionalized Christianity, however, did not change much, and here again his ideas are similar to Blake's. He felt Christianity was hypocritical because it claimed to promote the teachings of Christ—universal love, forgiveness of error, and the brotherhood of man—but it more often promoted the very evils He had spoken against.

53Prometheus Unbound, IV 11. 570-574, Hutchinson, p. 264.
Christianity is not the established religion... War, imprisonment, murder, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. We derive from our ancestors a belief thus fostered and supported. We quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance.54

Basic to nearly all of Shelley's specific objection to Christianity, and for him of greater importance than its hypocrisy, was his belief that Christianity misguided people as to what was truly evil, and taught them to be selfish and revengeful. He felt this fault was particularly evident in the "narrow and unenlightened" morality of Christianity. "In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand compose a practical code of misery and servitude."55 Individuals were misled as to what was truly evil because Christianity condemned as sinful, actions which were not, in themselves, immoral.

Like Blake, Shelley did not believe in moral systems as such, but thought that happiness was the criterion by which morality must be measured.

It is admitted that a virtuous or moral action is that action which, when considered in all its accessories and consequences, is fitted to produce the highest pleasure to the greatest number of sensitive beings.56

54Letter to Lord Ellenborough, Clark, pp. 77-78.
55"Even Love is Sold," Note to Queen Mab, Clark, p. 117.
56A Treatise on Morals, Clark, p. 162.
Shelley claimed that love was "the sole law which should govern the moral world" and was especially vehement in his condemnation of the restrictive moral laws on love. His statements on this subject illustrate what he felt was wrong with the whole Christian moral code.

He was in agreement with Blake that love was, by nature, free. It was compatible "neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear," and the attempt to control it by moral and marriage laws was not only absurd, but a positive cause of evil. The result of "the fanatical idea of chastity" was that love, whose characteristics were "generosity and devotedness," was debased to selfishness and lust. Women, "for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite," were driven to prostitution with its resultant misery and disease. Marriage laws only compounded the evil because they could not, in any way, sustain love or change the way two individuals felt about each other, but they could cause "misery, violence and falsehood" by forcing those individuals to remain united after there was no longer any love in their union.

57Preface to The Revolt of Islam, Hutchinson, p. 37.
58"Even Love is Sold," Note to Queen Mab, Clark, p. 116.
A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other; any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. 59

Shelley did not advocate sexual promiscuity, but he believed that love withered under constraint and, that rather than preventing sexual promiscuity, Christian moral laws only succeeded in degrading or destroying love. Furthermore, he felt that when mankind learned to practice universal love, marriage would be abolished and "a fit and natural arrangement of sexual connection would result." 60 For love to become universal and the law of the moral world, however, the restrictive Christian moral code would have to be removed. Just as Blake had cast the "stony law" of the Ten Commandments to dust and scatter religion "as a torn Book," so that man might indulge his "innocent joys," so Shelley felt that "the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God ere man can read the inscription on his heart." 61 He claimed that the greatest writers of all ages had celebrated the dominion of love and that it was the force which would bring about a moral regeneration in man.

59 Ibid., p. 115. 60 Ibid., p. 117. 61 Ibid.
The acutest critics have justly reversed the judgment
of the vulgar and the order of the great acts of the
*Divine Comedy* in the measure of the admiration
which they accord to the Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise.
The latter is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love.
Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all
the ancients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the
greatest writers of the renovated world; and the music
has penetrated the caverns of society and its echoes
still drown the dissonance of arms and superstition.
At successive intervals Ariosto, Tasso, Shakespeare,
Spenser, Calderon, Rousseau and the great writers of
our own age have celebrated the dominion of love,
planting as it were trophies in the human mind of
that sublimest victory over sensuality and force.62

Shelley was like Blake in his belief that imagination
was the faculty which would show mankind that universal
love and forgiveness of error were the means by which
happiness and moral good would be attained.

The great secret of morals is love...A man, to be greatly
good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; had
must put himself in the place of another and of many
others; the pains and pleasures of his species must be-
come his own. The great instrument of moral good is
the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect
by acting upon the cause.63

Shelley never attained Blake's faith in the divinity
of Christ or his complete certainty about the nature of
immortality so he did not go quite so far in making claims
for the imagination as Blake. His imagination did not
enable him to see visions or to receive messages from heaven,
but the difference in their view of the power of the

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imagination was a difference of degree rather than a difference of kind. He indicates this difference of emphasis in *A Defense of Poetry* where he discusses the prophetic quality of poetry[^64] which is the expression of the imagination. He believed that imagination makes poets prophetic in the sense that they "foreknow the spirit of events", but not in the sense that they hold converse with immortal spirits.

Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called in the earlier epochs of the world legislators or prophets; a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of the latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretense of superstition which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not.[^65]

Furthermore, Shelley ultimately came to believe, as Blake did, that imagination was a more important faculty for ascertaining "The true and the beautiful" than reason.

[^64]: It should be noted that Shelley applied the name poet to all who "apprehend the true and the beautiful---in a word, the good" and "who imagine and express" its "indestructible order." See *A Defense of Poetry*, Clark, p. 279.

[^65]: ibid.
Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities...Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent; the body to the spirit; as the shadow to the substance. 66

Imagination allows man, as Blake claimed, to "perceive more than sense (tho ever so acute) can discover". The truths which poetry communicates are the product of the imagination and are such as reason cannot attain.

What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship; what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolation on this side of the grave and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the soul-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will...for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure...This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts: a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or media of the process. 67

The credo which Shelley presented on poetry and imagination in A Defense of Poetry was the product of years of philosophical speculation, and it shows he was no longer the rational sceptic of 1811. The growth of his belief

66 Ibid., p. 277. 67 Ibid., p. 294.
that a "poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one," and that imagination is superior to reason in showing man the eternal verities, was paralleled by his increasing faith that man attained immortality and that some supreme power ruled the universe. Ultimately for Shelley this supreme power was the World Soul or Platonic One which embodied Universal Love, the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The influence of Platonism on Shelley and his growing acceptance of the concept of the One, evident in a great many of his works, has been traced by several scholars so there is no need to attempt duplicating their efforts here. However, reference to two works, Prometheus Unbound which will be discussed in the next chapter, and Adonais, which was written the same year as A Defense of Poetry, will illustrate Shelley's concepts of the supreme power and immortality.

Shelley saw the material world as an imperfect reflection of the ideal world where all things are embodied in the One. It is the One that gives the things of the material world their form.

...the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear.

68Adonais, ll. 381-385, Hutchinson, p. 436.
The One is eternal and remains, while "the many", which are but shadows on Earth, change and pass. The One is the eternal Goodness, Beauty, and Love toward which all men aspire.

That Light whose smile kindles the universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.69

Shelley shows that Adonais' death is not his annihilation but an awakening to true life from the "dream of life" which mortals know. He employs the Christian idea that it is in dying that man is born to eternal life.

...Die
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!70

The concept of immortality which Shelley presents in this poem has been the cause of some confusion because he first portrays Adonais as becoming a part of the World Spirit which pervades the universe and gives life and form to all things. Adonais is "made one with nature," and becomes "a portion of the loveliness" which is the One. This

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69 Ibid., ll. 478-486, p. 436.
70 Ibid., ll. 464-465.
suggests that the soul does not retain an individual identity but flows into, and becomes an indistinguishable part of the immanent World Spirit. Later however, he shows Adonais and other poets as having retained their identities in the immortal state. Shelley's conception seems to have been that souls remained individual even though they were contained within the One. As a cell within the human body has an identity even while it is a part of the larger whole, so the soul retained individuality though it became a part of the World Spirit or One. In this conception Shelley is similar to Blake who believed that all things in the eternal world retain their identities even though they are contained within "the divine body of Jesus Christ." The chief difference between Blake and Shelley in their views of the supreme power was that Blake's God was a personal being with the form of a man—namely Jesus Christ, while Shelley's was an immanent Spirit or World Soul without form.

Shelley's faith in the Platonic One was never so strong as Blake's belief in his personal God, for the younger poet was still struggling with his philosophic system at the time of his death. That his views changed much between the writing of Adonais and his death a year later, however,
is to be strongly doubted. The very nature of Shelley's idealism made his belief in the supreme power of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful almost inevitable. "The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded that he was born only to die."\(71\)

\(71\)Letter to Horace Smith, as quoted by White, p. 459.
IMAGINATION AND PORTRAYAL

CHAPTER FIVE

Part I: Les
was an entity separate from God. Thus reason's "pride of selfhood" led archetypal man, Albion, into Selfhood and caused his fall into division and error. "O why did foul ambition seize thee, Urizen, Prince of light?"¹

Albion fell down, a Rocky fragment from Eternity hurl'd
By his own Spectre, who is the Reasoning Power in every Man...²

After the Fall this error of Selfhood—selfishness and self-love—spread through all the Zoas and Emanations except Los. The other Zoas fight and try to dominate each other and Albion, with the result that the archetypal man is led deeper and deeper into error, and further and further from the principles which would save him. Thus, Blake illustrates his belief that all the evils since the time of the Garden of Eden are the result of the contention and disharmony in man's faculties.

All Love is lost: Terror succeeds, & Hatred instead of love,
And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty...³

Los elaborates upon these evils and presents greater detail.

¹The Four Zoas, Night the Fourth, 1. 141, Keynes, p. 301.
²Jerusalem, Plate 54, 11. 6-7, Keynes, p. 685.
³The Four Zoas, Night the First, 11. 36-37, Keynes p. 265.
He sies'd the bars of condens'd thought to forge them
Into the sword of war, into the bow and arrow,
Into thundering cannon and into the murdering gun.
I saw the limbs form'd for exercise contemn'd &
the beauty of
Eternity look'd upon as deformity, & loveliness as
a dry tree.
I saw disease forming a Body of Death around the Lamb
Of God to destroy Jerusalem & to devour the body of
Albion,
By war and stratagem to win the labour of the husbandman.
Awkwardness arm'd in steel, folly in a helmet of gold,
Weakness with horns & talons ignorance with a rav'ning
beak,
Every Emanative joy forbidden as a Crime
And the Emanations buried alive in the earth with
pomp of religion
Inspiration deny'd, Genius forbidden by laws of
punishment.4

Tharmes (Instinct) and Luvah (Love) are partially
responsible for these evils, but Urizen (Reason) is the
major offender—first because Reason had caused Albion's
fall, and second, because even after the fall Urizen
believes that he is the supreme Zoe, "God from Eternity
to Eternity," and he further complicates Albion's errors.
In his selfhood Albion is confused, in despair, and does
not know how to regain his perfect state. He, too, be-
lieves Urizen is the supreme Zoe and commands him to
create order out of the chaos, not realizing that Los
is the only Zoe who can restore order and bring man (Albion)
back to paradise.

4Jerusalem, Plate 9, 11. 4-16, Keynes, p. 628.
Turning his Eyes outward to Self, losing the Divine Vision,
Albion call'd Urizen & said: "Behold these sick'ning Spheres...
Take thou possession! take this Scepter! go forth in my might,
For I am weary & must sleep in the dark sleep of Death."

In an attempt to control the Zoas and Emanations and to create order Urizen writes his "books" which he claims contain the secrets of wisdom and the laws which will bring order and harmony to the universe.

Here alone I, in books form'd of metals,
Have written the secrets of wisdom...
Laws of peace, of love, of unity,
Of Pity, compassion, forgiveness;
Let each choose one habitation,
His ancient infinite mansion,
One command, one joy, one desire,
One curse, one weight, one measure,
One King, one God, one Law.6

Urizen does not have the insight to recognise that such qualities as love, pity, compassion, and forgiveness neither know, nor abide by laws. He thinks everything can be weighed, measured, and fixed in its proper place by his mathematical calculations. Since Urizen believes that Love (emotions and passions) is the greatest threat

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5The Four Zoas. Night the Second, 11. 2-6, Keynes, p. 280.
s one other reason. However, each is ridden with a sense
continuance to unite with the own reaction or that of
these, and the desire for action is too strong each has
at it. But, because love cannot be controlled by
--- motion---the desire to be as they were before the Fall
and the reaction, that their nature desires for sexual
continence the sense and their experiences, and thus action
through this secondary reaction without меняю to

I said As coming time...

*deep

All things subject to one another! Ennongent is
therefore upon death, a by declining appetite
dearth! that without a reason I could not be save'd from death

Is was by that I knew that I had sinned, if then I
flame!

And then in the deeps beneath I gather'd on the muddy
flame of reason, myertion there. For nutrethion this
filled with doubts in my accustmation, beyond the

But how good on the earth of transgression, weeps the

the, given the is extric'd by the relation.
and sex are sins and the sins must be atoned for. For a
real to, the same tenets of this relation are that love
relation as a part of the system in an attempt to con-

To his supremacy and is strict not overlist a "Myself"
of guilt and sin for these transgressions of Urizen's religion.

Have you known the Judgment that is arisen among the Zoas of Albion, where a Man dare hardly to embrace His own Wife for the terrors of Chastity that they call By the name of Morality? 8

Even Urizen cannot keep his own laws regarding love and sex because he wishes to be united with his Emanation, Ahania. Seeing that his laws and religion are complicating Albion's errors and increasing his "sickness" rather than creating order and harmony, he despairs of man (Albion) ever attaining salvation.

He form was there, no living thing, & yet his way lay thro' This dismal world; He stood a while & look'd back over his former Terrific voyage, Hills & Vales of torment & despair; Sighing, & weeping a fresh tear, then turning round, he threw Himself into the dismal void... 9

While Urizen created his laws Tharzas and Luvah were causing further difficulties by trying to dominate

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8Jerusalem, Plate 36, ll. 44-47, Keynes, p. 663.
9The Four Zoas, Night the Sixth, ll. 149-153, Keynes, p. 315.
Albion. Only Los works for the good of Albion rather than himself and his great task is made even more formidable by his error of believing in Urizen's religion. He believes that his love for Enitharmion is sinful, and drives her away at the same time that he longs to be united with her. He hates Urizen for having grown ambitious, for having caused disharmony in the faculties, for having brought about Albion's fall, so he plots revenge against him.

Los spoke. "Thy God in vain shall call thee if by my strong power I can infuse my dear revenge into his glowing breast. Then jealousy shall shadow all his mountains, & Ahabia Curse thee, thou plague of woeful Los, & seek revenge on thee."10

Despite the fact that he is in error in believing love sinful and in seeking revenge, Los never falls into the error of Selfhood and he never completely despairs of regaining paradise as Urizen, Tharmas, and Iavah do. He is the Zoa who keeps "The divine vision in time of trouble."11

10The Four Zoas, Night the Second, 11. 336-339, Keynes, p. 289.

11Jerusalem, Plate 95, l. 20, Keynes, p. 742.
Albion is dead! his Emanation is divided from him!
But. I am living! yet I feel my Emanation also dividing...
What shall I do, or how exist divided from Enitharmon?
Yet why despair?...
God is within & without: he is even in the depths of
Hell. 12

His selflessness and his faith in the "divine vision"
keep Los striving even when all the Zoas, the Emanations,
and Albion, himself, are against him. The "divine vision"
teaches him that Urizen's religion is only a "dark deceit"
and that love, rather than being sinful, is the means
by which Albion can be cured of his errors and made perfect
again. Los continues his rebellion against the tyrannies
and evil of the Zoas and Emanations, but he realizes
that instead of seeking revenge for the wrongs they do
to him he must forgive them. There must be "mutual
forgiveness between Enemies," and "pity must join to-
gether those whom wrath has torn in sunder." 13 When
he does gain temporary control of Urizen he discovers
that he no longer hates him.

Startled was Los: he found his Enemy Urizen now
In his hands; he wonder'd that he felt love & not hate.
His whole soul loved him. 14

12 Jerusalem, Plate 12, II. 6-15, Keynes, p. 631.
13 Jerusalem, Plate 7, II. 62-66, Keynes, p. 626.
14 The Four Zoas, Night the Seventh, II. 496-498,
Keynes, p. 332.
Having learned that there must be universal love and eternal forgiveness of error, Les sees that the same lesson must be taught to the Zoas and Emanations and to Albion and Jerusalem if they are to be united in eternity. "I will quell my fury & teach Peace to the soul of dark revenge, & repentance to Cruelty."  

...Trouble me not with thy righteousness  
I have innocence to defend and ignorance to instruct: I have no time for seeming and little arts of compliment in morality and virtue, in Self-Glorying and pride.

Blake portrays Les as having labored for harmony in the faculties and for the regeneration of Albion for six-thousand years—from the Fall to Blake's own time. Sometimes his patience is strained and he becomes furious at the Zoas, the Emanations, and even at Albion for their persistence in error, but he always forgives them and renews his efforts.

Then Les grew furious, raging: "Why stand we here trembling around Calling on God for help, and not ourselves, in whom God dwells, Stretching a hand to save the falling Man? are we not Four Beholding Albion upon the Precipice ready to fall into Non-Entity?..." 

15 The Four Zoas, Night the Seventh, ll. 368-369, Keynes, p. 329.
16 Jerusalem, Plate 42, ll. 25-28, Keynes, p. 670.
I will not endure this thing! I alone withstand to death
This outrage! Ah Me! how sick & pale you all stand round me!
Ah me! pitiable ones! do you also go to death's vale?
All you my Friends & Brothers, all you my beloved companions,
Have you also caught the infection of Sin & stern repentance?
I see Disease arise upon you! yet speak to me and give
Me some comfort! why do you all stand silent? I alone
Remain in permanent strength. Or is all this goodness & pity only
That you may take greater vengeance...17

Los' task is a long and arduous one because Selfhood has become ingrained in both the male and female principles of the faculties. Even after Los has demonstrated that love is not sinful, the Emanations fear that if they are united to the Zoas they will be annihilated by their loss of identity. Each Zoa fears that if he stops fighting and trying to dominate Albion the other Zoas will annihilate him. Finally, by his example of patience, love, and constant forgiveness of error, Los is able to convince them that it is by giving up their Selfhood that they will live in eternal harmony in Albion. The archetypal Man, too, must give up his Selfhood, and like

the others he believes that in foregoing Self he is plunging into eternal death.

Albion reply'd: "Cannot Man exist without Mysterious Offering of Self for Another? Is this Friendship & Brotherhood? I see in thee the likeness & similitude of Los my friend..."

Albion stood in terror, not for himself but for his Friend Divine; & Self was lost in the contemplation of faith.

And wonder at the Divine Mercy & at Los's sublime honour.

"Do I sleep amidst danger to Friends?...Eternal Death is abroad!"

So Albion spoke & threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction.

All was a Vision, all a dream: the Furnaces became Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine.

His faculties once again being in harmony, Albion's abandonment of Selfhood opens the way for his union with Jerusalem and Christ in eternity.

And Urizen & Luvah & Thumas & Urthona arose into Albion's Bosom. Then Albion stood before Jesus in the Clouds Of Heaven, Fourfold among the Visions of God in Eternity

"Awake, awake, Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion, Awake and overspread all Nations as in Ancient Time; For lo! the Night of Death is past and the eternal Day Appears upon our Hills..."

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18 *Jerusalem,* Plate 96, 11. 20-37, Keynes, pp. 743-744.

The salvation of the archetypal man is accompanied by
a regeneration throughout the universe. The millennium
has arrived.

The Sun has left his blackness & has found a fresher
morning,
And the mild moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless
night,
And Man walks forth from midst the fires: the evil is
all consum'd.
His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night &
day;
The stars consum'd like a lamp blown out, & in their
stead, behold
The expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous
worlds;

Blake recognized that the millennium was not going
to occur during his lifetime and his having Los labor for
six thousand years shows his realization that it was not
to be attained easily. However, he never lost faith that
it could occur whenever man learned to practice the
basic principles which Christ had taught, universal love
and constant forgiveness of error and recognized that he
was meant to be free and not bound by laws, religion,
and moral codes. Furthermore, he was sure that man's
imagination was the faculty which would finally show him
the way to liberty and eternal happiness.

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20The Four Zoas. Night the ninth, ll. 825-830.
Keynes, p. 379.
Part II: Prometheus

A clear understanding of the similarities between the ideas Shelley presents in *Prometheus Unbound* and those of Blake in *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem* requires the recognition that in the play, as in Blake's works, the major conflict dramatized takes place within Man. This conflict is between those qualities in Man which strive for good and those which cause Man to be selfish, seek tyrannical power, and do evil.

Shelley did not use so many mythological figures to present his ideas as Blake did with the result that one of Shelley's figures often represents several ideas which are similar to Blake's but which the older poet symbolized by using several different characters. Consequently the qualities a Shelley figure symbolizes cannot be established so exactly as in Blake's works. For example, Prometheus represents Man in the sense of mankind or archetypal Man, and the conflict mentioned above occurs within him. But besides representing Archetypal Man, Prometheus also represents that part of man which constantly seeks the good. On the other hand, Shelley used a separate figure, Jupiter, to represent the selfish or evil qualities in man. For the sake of comparison a distinction be-
Than Prometheus himself.

For three thousand years by the guilty spectator the
blasphemer, when the play opened, he has been tolerated
placed him, Prometheus as a symbol of man to much like
as he shown by the situation in which Shelley
in mind, the second meaning has been called iteration.
and with Shelley's statements in A Defense of Poetry
seen these two meanings of Prometheus has been made
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
Se ruining the lair wherein they raged.\footnote{Ibid., 11. 49-58.}

There is further similarity between Prometheus and Albion in that each of these figures holds the power to depose his own particular tyrant who causes evil. Jupiter is no more supreme over Prometheus than Urizen was over Albion. "O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power, and my own will."\footnote{Ibid., I, 1. 274, p. 210.} To overcome Jupiter, however, Prometheus must stop sharing in the evil that the tyrant creates in the same way that Albion had to stop sharing the Selfhood Urizen had caused. Prometheus says that "he who is evil can receive no good."\footnote{Ibid., I, 1. 389, p. 213.}

\[\ldots I hate no more\]
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall... 
I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within.\footnote{Ibid., I, 11. 57-71, p. 205.}

With the evil desire for revenge being replaced by the desire that "no living thing suffer pain"\footnote{Ibid., I, 1. 305, p. 211.} Prometheus (Man) has learned to forgive error and return good for evil.
By this act Man overcomes the cause of evil within himself, and Jupiter, as its symbol, is doomed.

In the above paragraphs Jupiter had been compared to Urizen, and though he, perhaps, cannot be identified specifically as Reason, he is that quality within Prometheus (Man) which causes Selfhood and thus evil. That Shelley saw Jupiter in this way rests upon several arguments. First, it has been shown in the preceding chapter that Shelley came to believe that evil was an internal, though not an inherent, part of man whose cause man served through selfishness and ignorance. Secondly, Jupiter apparently caused evil only after he was given the power to do so by Prometheus (Man) himself. If he had caused evil before Prometheus gave him power the Titan would not have endowed him with that power. Finally, as has been shown, Prometheus is able to overcome Jupiter only when he rid himself of the error of desiring revenge and forgives the tyrant.

Prometheus as Imagination, embodies the same major qualities as Los. He is the "wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love" within Prometheus the Man which rebels against Jupiter's tyranny and evil just as Los rebelled against the errors of the faculties in Albion.
Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do.27

It is against Prometheus as Imagination that Jupiter
sends his terrors because it is Imagination which keeps
the tyrant from completely subduing Man. Still Prometheus
as Man must also endure these torments because he remains
in error. These torments, which come in the form of
the Furies, are mental, and the anguish they cause is
endurable only because of the strength of Imagination.

Furies: We are the ministers of pain and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and
hate...
Vexing the self-content of wisest men
That we will be dread thought beneath
thy brain.

Prometheus: Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs
within.28

Prometheus as Imagination is most like Blake's Los,
however, in his bringing Prometheus the Man to the reali-
sation that he must forego revenge and forgive evil if
he is to overcome it. Since "a man, to be greatly good
must imagine intensely"29 it is clear that it is

29A Defense of Poetry, Clark, p. 283.
Imagination in Prometheus, as it was imagination in Albion, which shows him the means of attaining the Good.

Finally, Prometheus is like both Los and Albion in that he yearns to be united with his female counterpart, Asia, the eternal feminine. Asia is not only Prometheus' female counterpart but she is also the symbol of Universal Love for which Prometheus as Man also yearns. Prometheus is the "soul" by which she lives, but she must remain in exile as long as Jupiter reigns and Prometheus is a slave to evil, in the same way that Jerusalem and.multi.ram were divided from Albion and Los as long as they contained the evils of Selfhood. There cannot be a union of Universal Love and Man until he has given up hatred and revenge, but once he has learned to forgive evil Asia and Prometheus not only become united but Love pervades the universe and a paradise on earth results.

All things had put their evil nature off...
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle wise: but man
Passionless?---no, yet free from guilt or pain.30

Shelley did not portray Prometheus as uniting with the One as Blake had shown Albion uniting with Christ. That he believed in the One, however is indicated by the fact that in his instruction of Asia, Damagorgor makes a distinction between the author of "thought, passion, reason, will, imagination," and all the living world contains and the author of "terror, crime, remorse" and all evil. The author of these latter qualities is Jupiter who is himself a slave because he serves evil. The only name Damagorgon applies to the author of the former qualities is "almighty God" but he later says that the only thing which is supreme is "Eternal Love" which, along with Goodness, Beauty, and Truth, was the name Shelley applied to the One.31

Unlike Blake, Shelley believed that Man would still be subject to "Death, Chance and Mutability" in his paradise on earth, but in other respects the two poets had similar views of the paradise on earth. And they were in complete accord as to how to attain that paradise.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;

31 Ibid., II, iv, 11. 5-120, p. 232-234.
To defy power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory Titan, is to be
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., IV, 11. 570-578, p. 264.
CONCLUSION

It has been shown that William Blake and Percy B. Shelley were both very much aware of the social evils of their time and were alike in believing the tyrannical, oppressive institutions of Church and State caused those evils. Consequently they rebelled against these institutions. The political upheavals of the American and French Revolutions gave Blake the hope that man everywhere was going to throw off oppression. He was followed in this hope by Shelley who supported the ideals of the French Revolution and wars for independence in Spain, Italy, and Greece, and though these struggles for freedom were not always successful neither poet repudiated his support of them. Both poets did, however, come to see that wars for freedom might only replace one kind of tyranny with another and became convinced that while resistance to tyranny had to continue, it should be passive.

It has also been indicated that the poets shared the belief that the Church perverted the teachings of Christ and taught man all kinds of superstitions and ridiculous doctrines for the purpose of increasing its control over him. Furthermore they felt it only taught
man to be selfish and revengeful. Aversion to the Church caused Blake to repudiate the majority of its doctrines and beliefs, and, on the basis of essentially the same objections as those of Blake, Shelley rejected Christianity as a whole. Each poet developed his own philosophy independently but in their major concepts and ideas they were remarkably alike.

Neither Blake nor Shelley believed in moral systems because such systems were unnecessary, ineffectual, and often a positive cause of evil, but both men did believe in the immortality of the soul. Blake felt that in eternity the soul became a part of God who had the form of man and contained within himself the eternal forms of all things. At the same time he believed that the soul retained an individual identity. For Shelley, God was the World Soul or Platonic One rather than Jesus Christ, but he, too, thought that the soul became a part of the Platonic One at the same time that it retained its individuality.

Other basic beliefs that Blake and Shelley had in common were that man was essentially good and that a paradise on earth was possible. They thought man was most good when he was most free and consequently had
... the major results of their philosophical in that he has been shown that Blake and Shelley emulated in their study would be attained.

When he had learned things at last lessons the people have to learn to forget all errors and to love all men. Lay in expectation for the happiness of all. Man would be made to realize that his own happiness is the happiness of others. Men would have to give up the pretense of being the one man to be freed from evil. Both Christianity they were of one mind in following Christ's

White sheep and black had repelled against

can condense to be better and self-seeking as well as errors within they had incoherent in him, but from the oppression of the church and state and from the because men needed to be freed not only from the accident at which of paradise was going to be a long process part of men. Shelly us well as Blake say that the would not bother all because if he became an integrated man but that is about the paradise on earth. The poets came to realizing that the separation of Church and state would almost automatically

Ininity bettered that the opposite of the tyrant...
evil, strive for good, forgive error, and love all mankind. Finally they embody the quality which Blake and Shelley felt would ultimately show man the need for forgiveness of error and universal love. That quality was Imagination. For both poets the fire of imagination was literally the gift of God to man to free him from the powers of evil.
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