The Messenger: October Special Insert

The Secrets of Heaven Radicalized: An exploration of the Swedenborgian Radicalism in Blake's Illustrations to the *Book of Job*

Dell J. Rose

Blake as a Reader of Emanuel Swedenborg



Behemoth and Leviathan," *Illustrations to the Book of Job* 1825, Tate Britain, London.

Introduction to the Project:

William Blake's

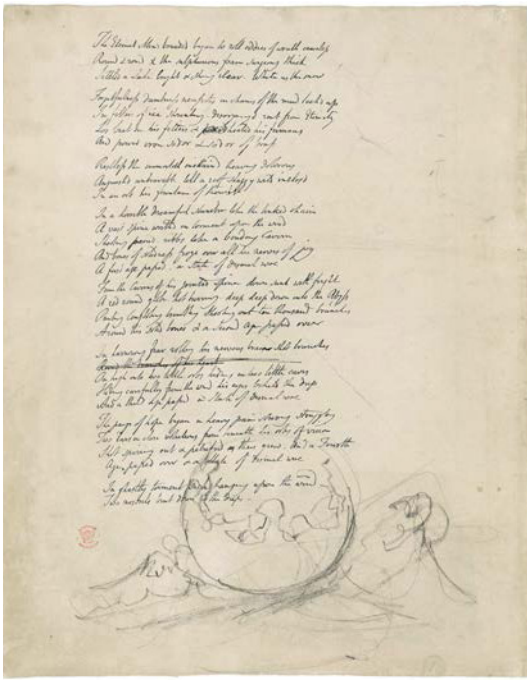
complex relationship with Emanuel Swedenborg stands as one of the most fascinating and misrepresented intellectual encounters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Contrary to persistent legend, Blake's Swedenborgianism was neither ingrained from childhood nor simple in its trajectory. Instead, Blake was an acute and highly original reader of Swedenborg—at once one of the Swedish seer's fiercest critics and, paradoxically, one of his most penetrating interpreters. This dynamic opposition and profound engagement are not only textual but are made visible in Blake's mature work, most especially in his celebrated illustration series for the Book of Job.

In the Book of Job sequences, where Blake's pictorial and poetic strategies may be read as reformulations—sometimes subversions, sometimes fulfillments—of Swedenborgian vision. In examining the phases of Blake's relationship with Swedenborg, surveying his explicit commentary and marginalia, and analyzing the Job designs as a key interpretive crux, I will show that Blake's "fierceness" as a critic and his "devotion" as an interpreter form two interdependent aspects of his approach to Swedenborg and the Western mystical tradition(s) more broadly.

Though we will follow more than one line of thought through this examination, one of the least remarked upon, from the perspective of art history, is the serpentine imagery found throughout the work. As such, it is not so much the focus of this article as perhaps a solid means of exploring Blake's complicated and, importantly, Swedenborgian cosmos. I have also tried my very hardest to engage the engravings in the context of Blake's religious milieu, a task which I feel has tremendous value for the reasons presented below. This reading is based on extensive scholarly investigation into the intellectual world that Blake inhabited and draws from academic handlings of not only Swedenborg (1688-1772) and the German theosopher Jakob Böhme (1575-1624), but also many lesser-known mystical traditions.[4]

Though some may feel that this sort of article inappropriate for the messenger, I do not. Many of us find in Blake something essential to the Swedenborgian path, and I decided to include this for those who wish to think on these topics with greater attention. For those of you more unfamiliar with Blake's work, I have provided a sheet with introductions to some of the characters mentioned throughout the text. I have also decided, begrudgingly, on using US spellings. The exception is *spectre,* which is also a type of character within Blake's work.



Page 54" (Bentley 209.54) *Vala or the Four Zoas* 1794-5, The British Library, London.

In Swedenborg's theology, the Lord's descent into the human condition is not merely a historical event but a metaphysical necessity—a divine condescension that enables the regeneration of both the cosmos and the individual soul. This descent is marked by a series of correspondences: symbolic bridges between the spiritual and natural worlds that allow divine influx to permeate fallen creation. Blake, steeped in this visionary framework, re-imagines these correspondences in his Job engravings through serpentine imagery that is neither wholly diabolical nor purely redemptive but transitional—liminal.

Job and the Serpents

Slithering around Blake's Job Sequences[2], we find a plethora of lepidopteran (referring to the order of flying insects including moths and butterflies) and reptilian symbolism. Yet these scaly and fluttery additions are not only for decoration; rather, they act as visual keys to one of Blake's most essential themes: divine alienation, or the internal separation of the godhead from itself. This article argues that the serpentine elements of the Job Sequence convey important visual representations of the inner life of both Job and the Divine figure, 'the angel of the presence.'[3] The serpent is a vital connection in displaying how vision and redemption emerge through Job and the divine figures' encounters with one another. Crucially, the serpent is not merely emblematic of temptation or evil but becomes a liminal symbol of visionary transition and redemptive encounter. The serpent, in this reading, functions as a Swedenborgian cipher: a visual emblem of transformation, mediating between states of being. It embodies the tension between constriction and awakening, judgment and mercy. This is not a one-sided redemption of Job alone; rather, the divine figure itself undergoes a process of internal reconfiguration, echoing Swedenborg's notion that the Divine Human (the Lord) reorders the spiritual cosmos by entering into its disorder.

Thus, in looking at only one link in Blake's mythology in the Swedenborgian consideration, the serpent links (expressed literally in plate 14) the fallen and the redeemed, the natural and the spiritual, the human and the divine. It is a symbol of spiritual inversion—where what once signified punishment or alienation now becomes the very vehicle of vision. In this way, Blake's engravings enact a Sweden-

borgian drama of mutual transformation, where redemption is not imposed from above *but arises through reciprocal recognition and interior change.*

The divine actor of the Book of Job, Blake synchronizes with the characters of Urizen and Nobodaddy from his mythos, and the serpentine symbolism helps to convey the inner states of relation by the divine figure to the created world. In Blake's sequence, the serpent coils through scenes of suffering and revelation, often entwined with divine figures whose own rigidity (Urizen, Nobodaddy) must be softened through encounter. Although the entirety of Blake's corpus has been gone over with a fine-toothed comb, apart from a few paltry mentions, here and there, the serpentine imagery has escaped widespread attention and has never, to my knowledge, been connected with Blake's Swedenborgianism. However, it is contended here that the reptilian symbolism of Blake's illustrations has cosmic significance for the artist, and became a visual metaphor for his understanding of the 'Cosmic Fall,' which generated the physical world, the division of the sexes, and the illusion of the self. Many of these ideas were also of central importance to the work of Swedenborg, and, in turn, they may be thought of as Blake's own reworking of Swedenborg's cosmology. The symbols, presented by Blake in his illustrations, mirror his mythological perception of divine contraction and alienation, which occurred in eternity, well before Satan's deception of Eve in the Garden, and is exemplified by Urizen and Nobodaddy, each an image of the divine forgetting itself and its human connections. These visual elements serve as both illustrations and commentary on the 'primary' Job narrative, working beneath and through the metaphors of the Biblical story to reveal deeper truths in a manner quite similar to Swedenborg's own spiritual vision.

Rending the Vale of Eternity: Understanding the Blake Sequence as a Reflection of Blake's Reintegrative Vision

Before considering the Book of Job in Blake's Swedenborgian inflection, we must consider Swedenborg's doctrine of 'Church Ages,' as it was essential to how Blake conceptualized the Bible. For Swedenborg, the inspired books of the Bible contained in their essence truths about '[4] In the 'Most the nature of the universe, and he called these connections, 'correspondences.Ancient Church,' when people still understood all of the correspondences in the physical world, it was possible both to understand one another and the mind of heaven.[5] Due to the loss of divine influx and through a progressive series of misunderstandings, humankind lost access to this 'science' and fell away from the true faith and began to set up for themselves manifestations of their misunderstandings (which for Swedenborg were idols). Though Blake, as he was wont to do, individualized Swedenborg's concept and pushed it to some of the most radical conclusions imaginable; much of the logic present in Swedenborg's arguments continues in a variety of imaginative contexts.[6]

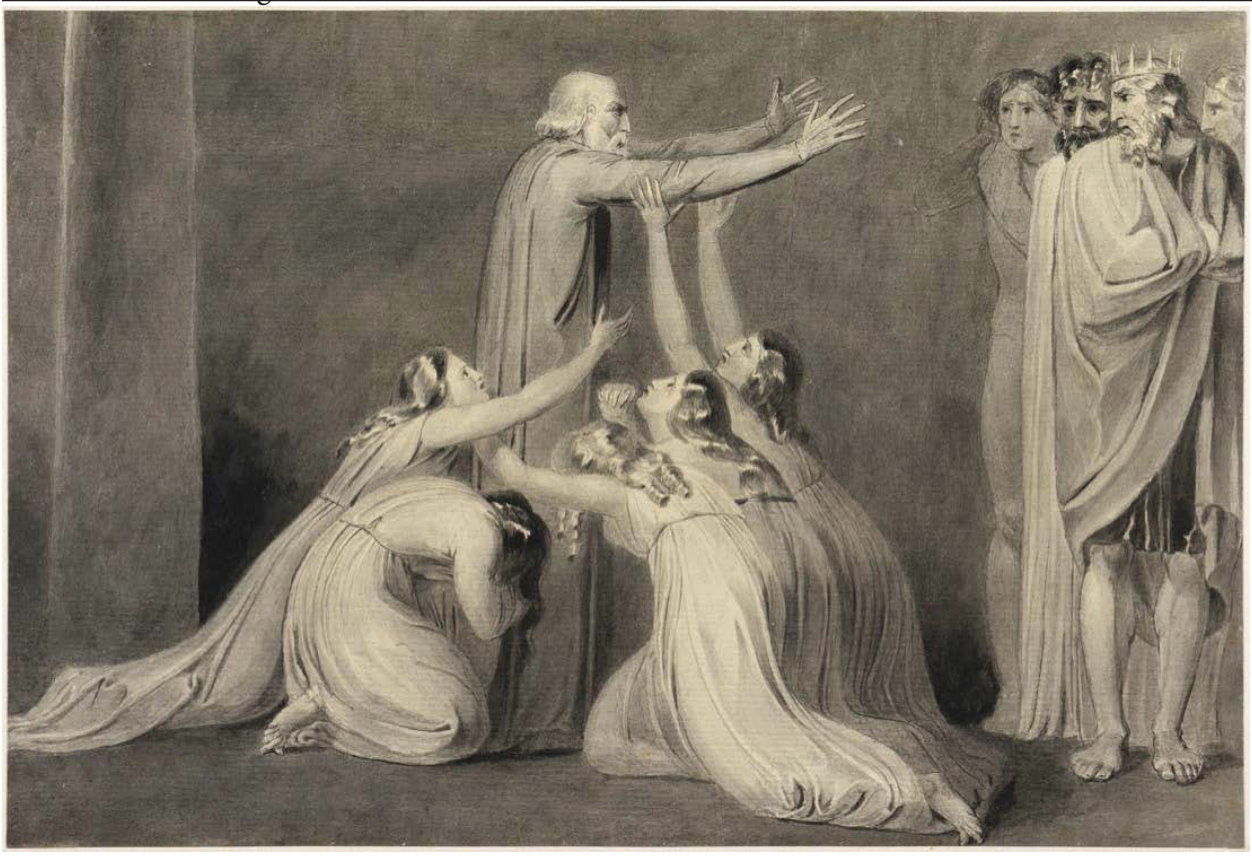
Blake's contention that the Bible was a 'great code of art' comes from this Swedenborgian understanding, and that in a very real sense, by seeing

through the nominal meaning of the text to its correspondences, he was re-enlivening the power of the original Ancient Church. Blake furthermore links this early lack of imaginative capacity to the same processes that create the proprium, especially in terms of the falsity of self-sufficient existence. Blake, like Swedenborg, also links the calcifying of the spiritual faculties in the rise of the proprium to the creation of false religion. It is important to note, however, that whereas Swedenborg sees this only in the context of the human, Blake links it with the Godhead before the coming of Jesus. And we find in *Vala* the description of divine contraction thoroughly explored:

> The Eternal Mind bounded began to roll eddies of wrath ceaseless
> Round & round & the sulphureous foam surgeing thick
> Settled a Lake bright & shining clear. White as the snow
> Forgetfulness dumbness necessity in chains of the mind lock'd up
> In fetters of ice shrinking. disorganiz'd rent from Eternity.[7]

In the first of Blake's prophetic books, *The Book of Tiriel* (1789), we find foreshadowed the same seeds that will flourish in the mid-1790s when Blake began to work on his Job sequence. Following the Great Eastcheap conference of 1789, it should not be forgotten that the Job Illustrations were first created during a period when Blake was intensively studying Swedenborg's works. Also, let it not be overlooked that the idea for the Job series began in conversation with New Church associates, some of whom will be discussed further along.

The Book of Job was Blake's favorite book, and it is not surprising that he would have picked this book as the central text to import Swedenborg's redemptive cosmology, considering it was an act of rebellion. Swedenborg did not consider Job as a divine text, which Blake took as his opportunity to bring to it his own understanding of Swedenborg's theology. This consistent task of applying Swedenborg, I argue, became one of the primary artistic motivations for Blake's oeuvre. The Book of Job, for Blake, was a story of cosmic significance that aligned with his desire to restore the eternal vision to both his fellow brothers and sisters and also, fundamentally, to the godhead itself. In *Vala*, Blake merges with the prophet Ezekiel to cast down the forces of mystery and pain, and in his Job sequence, he shows the inward process by which the core of the divine had lost memory of itself and, in that blind state, became a mockery, a perpetuator of fundamental cruelty.[8]



"Tiriel Denouncing his Daughters" (Butlin 198.8), *The Book of Tiriel* 1789, Yale Center for British Art.

As the godhead retracted within itself, thus began a process of degradation that eventually led to the belief that matter was all that there was and that all beings were self-existent. This invalid fractured self which Blake called *the spectre,* or what Swedenborg would have called 'the proprium,' was then mistaken for the real being.

> It is the Reasoning Power
> An abstract objecting power that Negates every thing
>
> This is the Spectre of Man, the Holy Reasoning Power
>
> And in its holiness lies the Abomination of Desolation.[9]

Though the nuance is different in Blake, it is essentially a poetic rendering of Swedenborg's ideas, such as this example from *Arcana Coelestia* §210:

> The proprium of man is every evil and falsehood, flowing from the love of self and the world. It is to believe not in the Lord or the Word, but in oneself; to think that what cannot be grasped sensually or scientifically is nothing. From this arises nothing but evil and falsity. Thus, all things are perversely regarded: what is evil is seen as good, what is good as evil; what is false as true, and what is true as false. What truly is, they deem to be nothing; and what is nothing, they hold to be everything.

> Hatred they call love, darkness light, death life—and vice versa. In the Word, such people are called "the lame and the blind." This, then, is the proprium of man: in itself infernal and accursed. (My translation).[10]

The characters of Tiriel, Urizen, and Nobodaddy are each representative of this fractured spiritual state, which, ignorant of its former situation, believes itself to be self-sufficient and powerful. We will examine these characters in light of this process described here, as these are the same dynamics that are highlighted in Blake's reading of the Job story and form the major section of the secondary portion of the Job sequence beginning with plate 14.

This religion of coldness, which Blake critiques in the Book of Job is distinct from Blake's own 'religion of Jesus.' Blake distinguished institutional Christian churches as being cut off from the spiritual presence of Jesus, and he emphasized a deeply personal, imaginative spirituality over rigid dogma. For Blake, Jesus embodied divine humanity, not as a distant, doctrinal figure but as a revolutionary force against oppression and moral law. Blake famously declared, "All Religions are One", suggesting that true faith arises from visionary perception, not imposed creeds. His critique of moral law, particularly in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, aligns with his view of Jesus as a liberator from restrictive commandments. Blake's prophetic works assert that forgiveness and creative freedom are the essence of Jesus's religion, contrasting with legalistic theology that binds the spirit.[11] It is my contention that it was in this reparatory, prophetic mode that Blake read Swedenborg's writings, wanting to push them away from dogmatizing and into a radical commentary on human existence.

Job and Urizen: The Clouds of Selfhood[12]

What immediately stands out in viewing Blake's Job Sequence is the remarkable physical similarity that exists between Job and the divine figure.[13] Were it not for their physical separation denoted by the distance between the heavenly court and Job and his wife, seen in plate 2, you would be hard-pressed to tell them apart. In Blake's heretical conception of Swedenborg's divine-human, this is in fact because both the divine and human are not mutually exclusive realities but part of a singular whole. This is made all the more complicated by Swedenborg's belief that in the person of Jesus, both humanity and divinity were mutually refashioned after the incarnation and in the Lord's victory over death. Others have consistently misunderstood the subtleties of Blake's arguments. As Fisch, ham-handedly writes: "according to Blake's radical reading of the Gospel, Incarnation signifies nothing less than the abolishing of all distinction between man and God; God dissolves in man and no otherness is left to command us, to question us, or to affright us."[14]

Fisch, with his discussion of dissolution, misses a key point here: it is not that all distinctions magically disappear, *but in the divine and human interaction*



"Satan before the Throne of God" (Bentley 4
Illustrations to the Book of Job 8 March 1825, I
Essik collection.

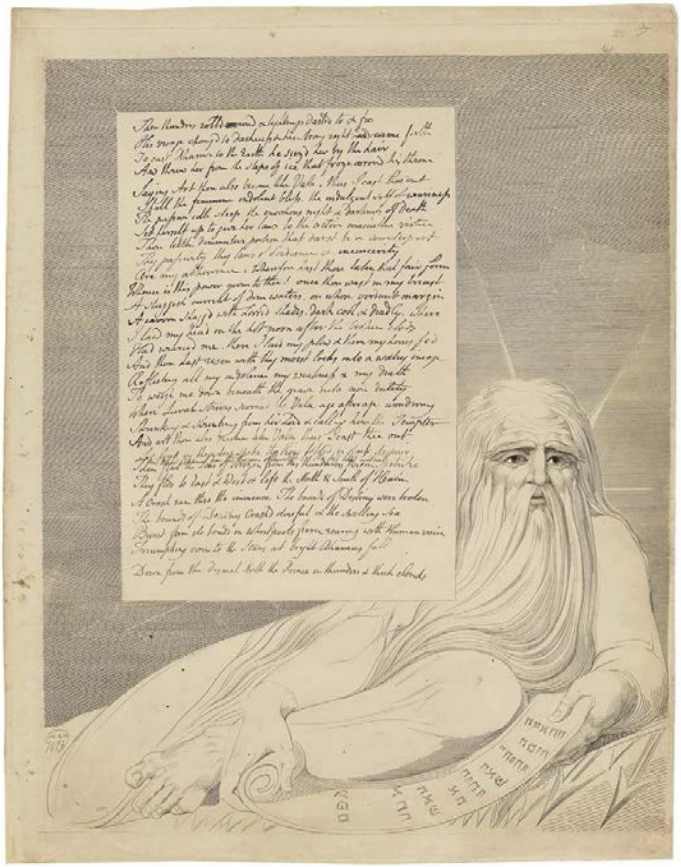
after the incarnation, these distinctions no longer make sense to discuss or to be burdened by, and Blake leans heavily onto more expansive, early-modern connotations of 'forgiveness' to make this point.[15] Not addressing a wrong perhaps, but rather a spirit of mutual acceptance. However, by noticing the physical similarities between Job and the divine figure and marking the distance between them, Blake is pointing to the spiritual and physical isolation that caused the fall in heaven. In plate 2, "Satan Standing before the Lord," where between two pillars of black smoke, the divine figure points down to the earth, with an open book, presumably of the law, which Blake often connects with the binding of the spirit.

In plate 2 we catch sight of Satan, going to challenge the human Job. Amid the feverish activity surrounding Satan, there are two faces featured in the smoke, male and female, with Satan standing between them. As this scene shows a contraction of the divine within itself, this tableau might illustrate the fall into sexual generation, which Blake bemoans, following Böhme, as the first expression of the loss of paradise.[16] It further shows how Blake understood Swedenborg's own theory of marriage love, that marriage is the rejoining in heaven of what was torn apart in the fall.

In the bottom right corner, we see the Job family sitting in front of three trees, and on the tree on

the furthest right, an unthreatening vine, but on the other, middle tree, we find a serpentine figure, which may indicate the passing of the Lord's favor and the process of internalization and judgment. However, there is also a promise that foreshadows the restitution made at the end of the work in the phrasing of the title, which reads, "We shall wake up in thy likeness." The incompleteness of the divine nature is also emphasized by what Blake chooses to call the divine figure in this engraving, 'The Angel of the Divine Presence.' Blake utilized this phrase many times as a way of speaking about a divine figure that was incomplete or fallen, which is why I have chosen to refer to it this way here instead of equating it completely with the Lord. As Rowland also notes, the connection to old Nobodaddy is easily inferred here: "Why darkness & obscurity / In all thy words & laws / That none dare eat the fruit but from / The wily serpent's jaws / Or is it because secrecy / Gains females' loud applause."[17]

This work's prominent Edenic imagery aligns well with the apocalyptic and ever-evolving retellings of the Fall that so captivated Blake's enthusiasm for the Job story. Furthermore, the image of the Angel of the Divine Presence recalls Urizen as he was portrayed in Vala, with his scroll of Hebrew letters. Urizen's forgetfulness and difficulty in accepting the spiritual value of things makes him a legalistic judge, without compassion, and mindless, many of the same characteristics of his understanding of Job. " To Blake, Job is a victim of habit and lack of awareness of the way in which the 'memory' of received wisdom has informed his life. He presents Job as a pious 'man of the book,' righteous in terms of the Law."[18] However, this designation, for Blake, also points to a kind of spiritual essentialism that engenders hypocrisy and self-righteousness. Thus, we have a dual image of the dangers of self-righteousness on display in the Divine figure and also with Job himself.



"Page 43" (Bentley 209.43) Vala or The Four Zoas 1797, pen and ink on paper, British Library, London.

Of course, Blake's Job is far from an orthodox reading of the text (if there were one), as Blake interprets Job's continual cries of righteousness to be self-deceptive and self-isolating, reminiscent of the Urizen motif that is an ever-present touchstone in Blake's Job sequence. Blake's Angel of the Presence, with his book of law, is also a significant figure in his *Book of Urizen* (1794), and the dark pillars of cloud which mirror the pillars of plate 2, bespeak Urizen's withdrawal from the communal life of the 'ancients.'[19]

> From the depths of dark solitude.
> From The eternal abode in my holiness,
> Hidden set apart in my stern counsels
> Reserv'd for the days of futurity, I have sought
> for a joy without pain,
> For a solid without fluctuation
> Blake, William. *The Book of Urizen*, c. 1794

Even the messenger (Los/Satan?) figure also has an early appearance in *The Book of Urizen,* where he is caught in mid-stride as in the illustration from plate 2. Like the Ophites, Blake saw the potential disruptive transformation that was brought about through the rebellion of Satan, and Blake connects this image and his own character Los, who does his greatest to preserve the original vision of eternity in creation and stands in stark opposition to the cold and exacting Urizen, whom he wishes to free from his own 'mind forg'd manacles."



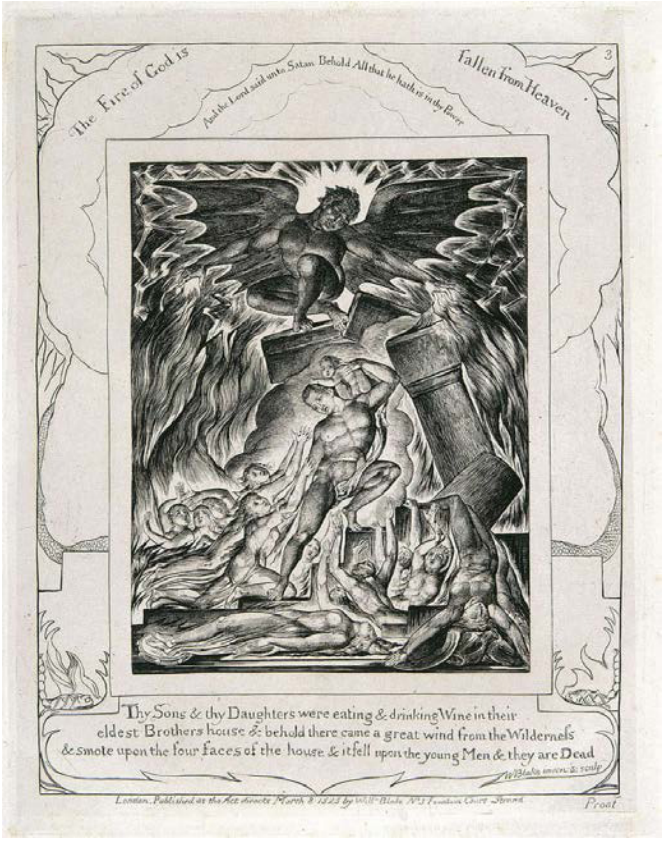
"Plate 5" (Bentley 5, Erdman 5, Keynes 5) *The First Book of Urizen* Copy G, 1794, The Library of Congress, Washington DC.



"Los?" (Bentley 3, Erdman 3, Keynes 3) *The First Book of Urizen* Copy G, 1794, The Library of Congress, Washington DC.

In plate 3 of the Job sequence, bearing what I have said earlier about the serpentine possibility seen in the middle tree of plate 2, we see the first presence of indisputable scales in plate 3.

Around the central image of a darkened angel with reptilian crosshatching, it is thrusting down the pillars of the house on the sons of Job, we also find two serpent's tails descending from the fire of heaven and going behind the central figure. These tails might even be thought of as descending from heaven, which is not accidental, nor is the enigmatic use of light and shadow of the bat-winged angel of destruction.[20] As can be seen in the Linnell version of 1821.



"The Fire of God" (Bentley 421.4), *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 8 March 1825, Robert N. Essik collection.



"The Fire of God", *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 8 March 1821, Linnell edition.

We see in this formulation the religion of Jesus, 'which is the forgiveness of sins,' competing with the harsh and inhumane spectre that haunts the earth and brings destruction and pain, represented by the bat-winged angel. Human figures entwined with serpents were a powerful symbol of the individual's relationship with their spectre, and this image appears several times in Blake's work.[21] Consider Blake's "Creation of Man by the Elohim" (1795).



"Elohim creating Adam" object 4, 1795, Tate Collection, London.

"Laocoön" (Bentley 1, Erdman 1, Keynes 1), c.1826-27, Fitzwilliam Collection, Oxford.

The arms of the bottom figure are positioned in the shape of the cross, which illustrates how far the Job story was for Blake, an inverted form of the revelation of Jesus. Throughout his life, Blake asserted the uniqueness of the Christian story and spoke of the all-embracing nature of the Divine Humanity, whom he sought to serve in mutual fellowship. The religion of Jesus could never be one of domination, but only of mutual embrace, as Blake writes: 'The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness.' Blake's flirtation with inverted, pseudo-Gnostic Biblical interpretation is also well attested to in his *Laocoön* (1826-7), where we read: 'Thinking as I do that the Creator of this world is a very cruel being, and being a worshipper of Christ, I cannot help saying: 'the Son, O how unlike the Father!'[22] The fact that this image was produced concurrently with the Job sequence also gives room to speculate about where Blake's head was during the creation of his final Job sequence.



The conflict between the religion of Jesus and that of Urizen forms the essential conflict in Blake's cosmos, and through the overcoming and recombining of these conflicting elements, the only way to return to Paradise.

For further evidence of the Urizen connection to Blake's Job sequence, I proffer this image from the *Book of Urizen* for contrast. As with the Job image, we find yet again an inverted cross to signify the inversion of true faith, combined with a serpentine image, which could signify both the spiritual state of the suffering Los and/or the restoration by Jesus.

There is also the famous story from the Hebrew Bible of the brazen serpent, which would provide healing if anyone was bitten by a snake. In Blake's illustration of this story, made for his friend the Swedenborgian artist Thomas Butts (1759-1845) who also commissioned his first Job engravings, Blake presents the central serpent as a hopeful image. It is not insignificant that this particular story was dealt with at length by Swedenborg, and both Blake and Butts discussed its symbolism at length.[23] Emanuel Swedenborg interpreted the Brazen Serpent as a symbol of divine wisdom and spiritual healing. In *Arcana Coelestia* (§4211, §6398), he explained that the serpent represented regeneration and enlightenment, emphasizing how the Israelites were saved by looking upon it as an act of faith and acknowledgment of divine power. The salvific power of sight will also be further elaborated on the final section of the article. In *True Christian Religion* (§200), Swedenborg connected the Brazen Serpent to Christ, arguing that just as the serpent was lifted in the wilderness, so was Christ elevated to offer spiritual healing. Swedenborg also framed the Brazen Serpent as a representation of divine perception, showing how individuals must turn toward spiritual truth to overcome temptations and falsehoods.[24]

The ambivalence of the serpentine image is part of what made it so attractive for Blake, providing both a symbol of a negative change and also of absolute redemption. The messianic promise provided in Isaiah 11:18 is implied: 'And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.' (King James Version), which Blake illustrated in his *Book of Thel.*



"Plate 7" (Bentley 7, Erdman 7, Keynes 7) *The First Book of Urizen* Copy G, 1794, The Library of Congress, Washington DC.

Though most of the serpentine elements in Blake's Job sequence point to the more nefarious elements of the story, the context is much more ambivalent in plate 5. In plate 5 we have a serpent resting under the central dais, with its eyes firmly locked with Job. The snake also borders the entire scene, creating the frame for the displayed action. Stretching from the divine realm in the upper-third portion of the image, we find its head resting below, observing Job in the process of giving alms, which will be discussed shortly. In this scene the serpent's gaze is the primary symbol to discuss. Fire, tree limbs, and the tail of the serpent intertwine, suggesting a space in which the driving notions of Job are contrasted, giving room for self-reflection.



"Moses erecting the Brazen Serpent" C. 1801-1803, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The observation of the serpent in plate 5, may be an externalization of Job's inward quest for understanding, perhaps implying that the only true redemption lies in learning to see anew, as Rowland suggests.[25] The text immediately above the serpent's head likewise plays with this ambiguity. The text reads: 'who maketh his angels spirits & Ministers a flaming Fire.' If the connection between serpent, spectre and Swedenborg's idea of the proprium holds, then it might be stating that the sense of selfhood is essential to the redemptive work, a point which Swedenborg emphasized several times in his writings; teaching that the proprium becomes a problem only if it is overemphasized or becomes dominant in the internal world. Blake's concept of the spectre completely embodies this notion as well, suggesting that it was only when the spectre became isolated that the real damage was done, and it is repeatedly centralized in both the poem *Jerusalem* and *Vala*.

Given the way Blake read the Job story, the serpent also witnesses the false charity that Job is undertaking. As Rowland points out, the divine figure who doles out punishment likewise bears the same resentful expression as Job.[26] Job's wife, furthermore, looks with admiration at her husband doing this charitable act: 'The impulse to do good to others in the new life that Job leads after his conversion, when he is also open to acts of charity, replaces the sense of external obligation depicted here.'[27] Blake was

especially critical of this form of self-interested and condescending charity, both in his personal life with his patron Tulk and in his imaginative work, most evidently in his poem 'Holy Thursday,' from *Songs of Innocence* (1789), where we read of "Grey-headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as snow,/ Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow." And Blake provides a warning:

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song

Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among

Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor

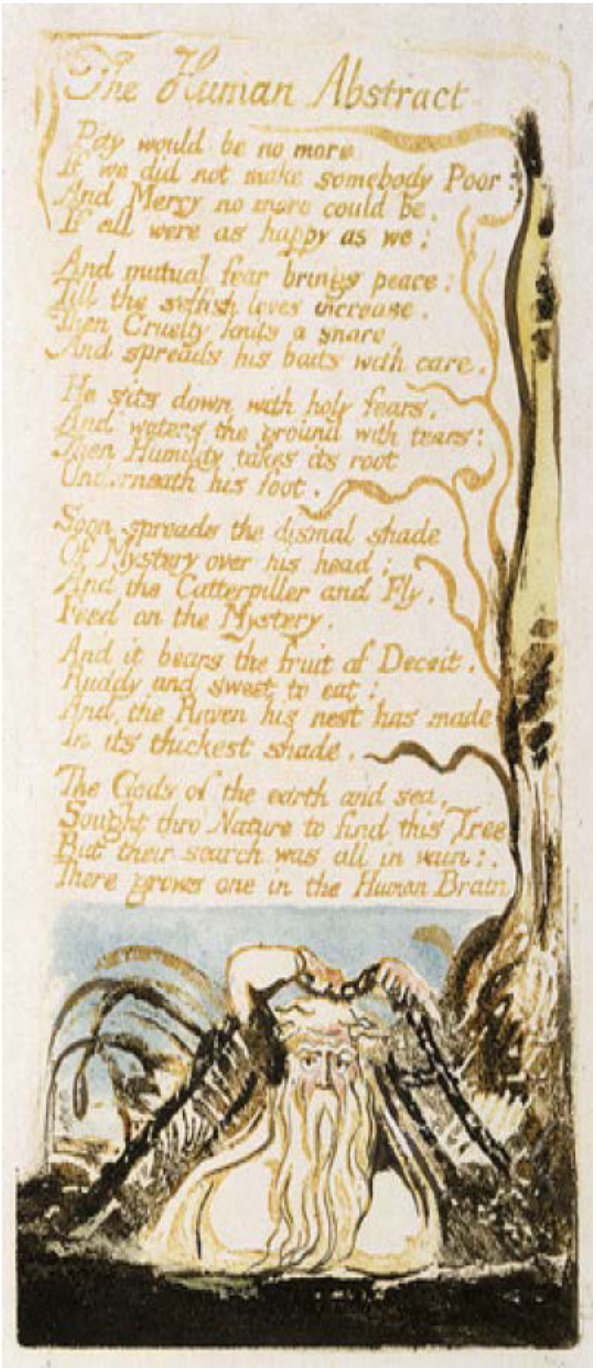
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door [28]



Of course, 'the Human Abstract' in *Songs of Experience* (1789) is even more acute, as it involves so many of the symbols we have present in plate 5: the image of false charity, which reduces the spiritual value of the individual, removing their unique spiritual gifts, and they become sacrifices in the realm of Urizen.[29] Find both the text and the engraving:

The Human Abstract

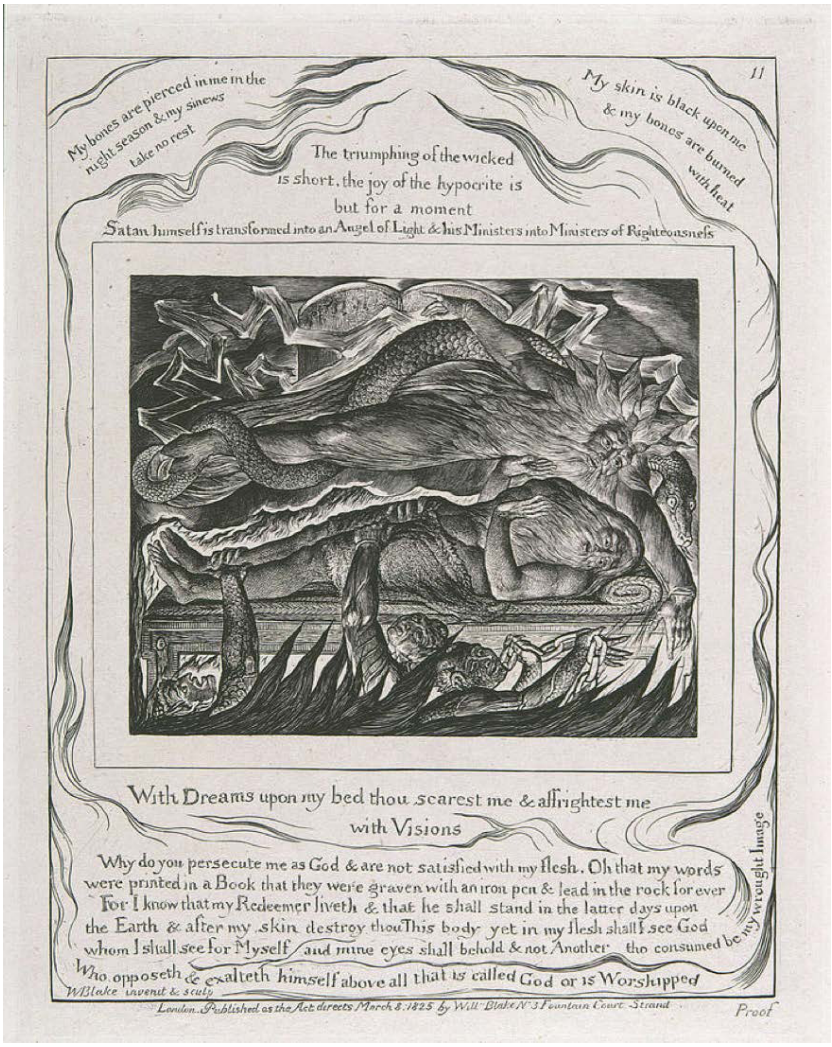
Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor:
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;
And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish loves increase.
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.
He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears:
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.
Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Caterpillar and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.
And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.
The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this
Tree But their search was all in
vain:
There grows one in the Human
Brain



"The Human Abstract" (Bentley 47, Erdman 47, Keynes 47), *Songs of Innocence and Experience* 1794, The British Museum, London.

"In Fear did the work of redemption Commence:" Job's Encounter with the Divine Actor

Plate 11 is one of the most terrifying works in all of Blake's corpus and perhaps one of the most significant. To return to 'The Creation of Adam by the Elohim,' a piece from roughly the same time as Blake's 1826 Job engravings, some interesting alterations may be observed. In the former piece, it is the nascent Adam who is enraptured by the serpent, his spectre, and here it is the divine figure itself. This gives us a clue again to the power of vision within Blake's retelling; however, unlike Rowland, who understands the Job story to be one of personal change through a self-righteous man meeting God face to face, what we have here is the exact opposite. It is the divine figure who is consumed by the wrath of his isolation, and his sadistic, smirking gaze betrays the primal hunger and anger within himself, which Blake expounded on in his *The First Book of Urizen.*[30] The divine figure comes face-to-face with himself, with the outer expression of his creative drive. Job is the reflection of the divine figure's inner turmoil and the fetters and limitations he has put upon himself in his elevation of the spectre/proprium. The serpentine nature of his boastful self-righteousness entwines him, just as the forces of the earth take from within it the manacles forged from the fires of Hell. The snake, which surrounds the divine figure, has its eyes hungrily on Job, as though it is filling itself with satisfaction at Job's suffering. (Refer back to Plate 5.) Furthermore, with its cloven hoofs, the divine image is connected with Satanic imagery, and I also wish to draw attention to the scaliness of the figures seeking to hold Job down in the dream.



With Dreams upon my bed" (Bentley 421.12), *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 8 March 1825, Robert N. Essik collection.



"The Ancient of Days" (Copy K), *Europe: A Prophecy*, 1798.

Like Urizen, the isolation of his moral power creates a vacuum that likewise wishes to imprison all life that is uncontrolled and organic. This isolation paradoxically builds a desire to expand, to build, and to conquer. In *Urizen,* the first thing that the emerging terror does is to busy himself with measuring the abyss and bringing it all under the terrors of his single objective reality, and in the famous image of the 'Ancient of Days,' From *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794) we find the same demiurgic[31] desire to bind and measure.

> Dark revolving in silent activity:
> Unseen in tormenting passions;
> An activity unknown and horrible;
> A self-contemplating shadow, In enormous labours occupied [32]

In his isolation, Urizen hungers for total power and the recognition that he alone is the only sovereign from eternity, a point that, for Blake, betrays a certain uncertainty. Much of the vacuous nature of Urizen, Blake borrows from Böhme's conception of God the Father. Böhme's Trinity begins in the absolute turbid[33] hunger of aloneness, which wishes above all else to manifest itself in love and in diversity, a consuming fire that can only be approached through the mediation of God the Son, the spirit of life.[34] Without the mediation of the son, the entire cosmos would be consumed by God's absolute justice and burn away, but Blake reinterprets this, seeing the divine isolation as being one of self-imposed exile and the obliteration of otherness, not a primal reality. Hence Blake calls the God of Genesis a "braggart, and a boaster." When the divine encounters the other, in Job, it becomes mediated within itself, and as Job grows in awareness of his nature and loses the spectres of his self-righteousness, both he and the Divine figure expand, and give each other the space to be, as is reflected in plate 13, 'God answered Job in a Whirlwind.'

A Cosmos Reorganized:

Understanding Plates 13, 14, and 20.

The windswept hair of both Job and the divine figure (and their hair alone was windswept—odd given that we can see the still hair of the others) in plate 13 implies that the wind was figurative not only of Job's change but also of the divine figure.[35] Shorn from its own isolation, the divine figure may now perhaps be called the Father of Jesus, as he seeks to reorder the world, as is confirmed by the following plate 14. However, in true Swedenborgian fashion, though the image of the Lord answering Job out of a whirlwind might be one of the most infamous in the history of literature, as Blake depicts it, it conveys little in terms of symbolic importance. This follows Blake's consistent thinking, and it echoes Swedenborg's teachings that it is not in the elaborate or dramatic that truth is found, but in the incidental, in the hidden, and in the small.

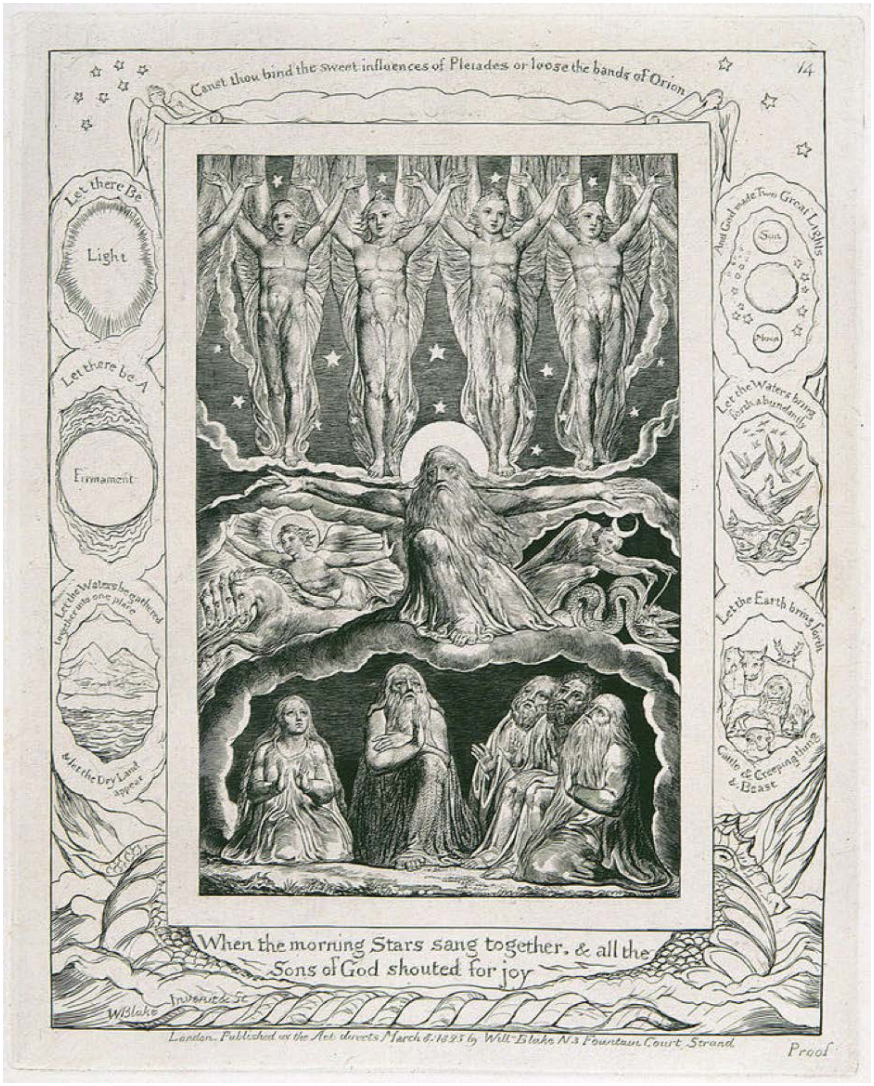
After Job has been answered by the divine figure out of the whirlwind, and the two beings are put face-to-face with one another, a mutual identification takes place, which leads to the re-approximation of both Job and the divine figure and their place in the universe. This is the moment depicted in plate 14: the "Morning Stars sang together & all the sons of God shouted together (See footnote 19)." Though this plate is not a complete vision of redemption, rather it shows the beginning of a new redemptive process.



"The Lord Answered Job out of the Whirlwind" (Bentley 421.14), *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 8 March 1825, Robert N. Essik collection.

For the first time the divine itself seeks to know the other, and thus begins the process of renewing both the material creation and the Godhead itself. This plate is a microcosmic illustration of how Blake understood the physical, not as a prison of darkness, but rather as the endpoint for a feat of cosmic redemption. Blake's unique take on Swedenborg's incarnational theory, as well as Swedenborg's theory of soteriology, is activated here as redemption is only possible through humanization, and thus the incarnation of the Lord.[36] On plate 14, we start with the motto at the top of the figure: 'Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or lose the bands of Orion?' Job 38:31. This quote comes from Job's encounter with the Lord in the whirlwind, depicted in Plate 13, but what appears at first to be a show of power becomes a moment of self-reflection. In the encounter with the other, the divine figure recognizes the generative capacities of its energies and the value of cooperation. On the margins of the engraving, we have a recounting of the seven-day creation of the world, seen not as the work of a solitary creator but shared amongst the 'Sons of God.' Swedenborg's images of heaven are also invoked here, as paradise is a collective continual work of different individual souls united in a common goal. This also reintegrates the Godhead from its isolated, egotistic moralizing into a creative community, as it was in the 'ancient days.' Expressed in *Vala* (Night VII) we see Blake's communal understanding of the divine work and the value of the material world:

> Then those in Great Eternity met in the Council of God
> As one Man, for contracting their Exaltedness
> Into the limits of opacity, they called it benevolence [37]



"When the Morning Stars sang together" (Bentley 421.15) *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 8 March 1825, Robert N. Essik collection.

As with Swedenborg, the physical world is not, in any intrinsic way, evil. The physical creation, rather, is a place of divine healing and revelation, which was divinized through the appearance of the Lord in creation. This theme repeatedly appears in Blake's corpus, and in the *Book of Thel*, we find one of the most touching expressions of hope for the material existence. In the story, Matron Clay, a symbol of physicality, recalls her great work in the process of redemption:

> The Clod of Clay heard the Worm's voice & rais'd her pitying head:
> She bow'd over the weeping infant, and her life exhal'd
> In milky fondness: then on Thel she fix'd her humble eyes.
> 'O beauty of the vales of Har! we live not for ourselves.
> Thou seest me the meanest thing, and so I am indeed.
> But he that loves the lowly pours his oil upon my head
> And kisses me and binds his nuptial bands around my breasts.
> And says: "Thou mother of my Children, I have loved thee.
> And I have given thee a crown that none can take away."
> But how this is, Sweet Maid, I know not, and I cannot know,
> I ponder and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love.[38]

The material world, far from being cast out by Blake, was the only true starting point for understanding the total vision of the Lord's great work; and only then in the contemplation of these 'minute particulars.' Though Swedenborg was the main formulator of this spiritual process for Blake, he was not the only one.

As both Aubrey and Raine have argued, there is more than a little of the radical physical redemption of Paracelsian alchemy and Böhme's understanding of the 'purpose' of the physical world.[39] However, as Bloom suggested, Blake presents an idiosyncratic and autodidactic interpretation of ideas at the center of German Romantic philosophy, and thus Bloom's suggestion that had Blake been born in Germany, he would have been regarded as a major philosopher. [40] Just to contextualize Blake's articulation with Böhme's celebrated protege, G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831), they would have had a great deal to discuss, and Hegel's summary of the divine work, 'Die Welt wurde erschaffen, damit Gott sich selbst

erkennt' (The world was created for God to understand himself), would have met hearty agreement with Blake.[41] The world required a certain degree of awe and wonder to be understood correctly, and this is what Blake sought to inspire through his poetic works and through his microscopic attention.

Though Job and the divine figure are both separated into distinct spheres in plate 14, the work of incorporation has already begun. Job and his companions are separated from the life of heaven in a dark cave (perhaps looking through a microscope?), yet their gaze is cast upward in 'eternal' contemplation. The required initial stage in comprehending the divine's great work of artistic creation. Yet, aside from the jubilatory title of the engraving, there is little happiness in either the divine figure or that of Job himself; though light has struck, there is still separation and division. When we look behind the divine figure, we see a halo illustrating this illumination, with positive and negative emanations extending from him. This reminds of Isaiah 48:7: 'I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.' Blake rejects any milquetoast understanding of the Lord as entirely 'good' in any conventional sense, something he chides Swedenborg for doing.[42] What Blake condemns, however, in both the divine figure and Job, is their rejection of their common humanity for some conventional depiction of righteousness, which Blake understood to have been universally condemned by the religion of Jesus.



"plate 3" (Bentley 3, Erdman 3, Keynes 3), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 1790, Houghton Library, Harvard.

Given the jubilant title of plate 14, the only evidence of celebration takes place in the upper section of the plate, where we have the angelic figures extending their arms in thanksgiving. However, what are they celebrating? What do they know that neither Job nor the divine figure realizes? I contend that the cause for celebration was the awakening of self-understanding within the godhead. In the light of Blake's Swedenborgian-inflected understanding of the 'human,' if that is what is being celebrated, then the anthropomorphism of the figures should also be highlighted.

As Blake understood Swedenborg, everything in the universe is a reflection of the complete union between humanity and divinity accomplished by the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Thus, at its core, *all things are intrinsically human.* Thus it is the reclamation of this humanity in the realm of the physical that both the poet and the artist achieve in their highest works, and this was what Blake understood to be his primary artistic and theological motivation. In Raine's analysis of Blake's *Thel,* she makes the argument that Blake drew from Swedenborg's universal humanness, particularly *True Christian Religion,* where he discusses the relatability of human processes to minute things such as mold.

> The Internal of a Particle of mould, whereby its External is impelled, is its Tendency to make the Seeds of Plants vegetate, exhaling somewhat from its little Bosom, which insinuates itself into the inmost [Parts] of the Seeds, and produceth this wonderful Effect.[43]

In the minutiae of the world, Blake sees the fullness of the divine expression and presents even the most base elements as being capable of expressing the divine vision. In *Vala,* we have animals which were typically thought of in Blake's day as being 'vermin,' being caught up in rapture close to the forges of Luvah; as well as even the possibility of specs of dust ringing in the millennium: 'The cloud that roves in the valley shall bring forth a Son,/ And every grain of dust shall shine forth in joy.'[44] The angelic figures seen celebrating above the central divine figure seem to celebrate the forthcoming return of humanity to the godhead, and perhaps they remember the primal unity.

Though serpentine imagery is not as pronounced here and will be even more diminished in plate 20, it is still an important element in this piece. In the central dais, we have the counterpoint between the angels of dawn, being opposite the serpents of the evening, the steeds of a moon goddess figure. There is nothing particularly menacing here, it being merely another form of preferred transportation, and the serpents' expression is almost jovial. Snakes are not evil figures; for Blake, they are symbols of divine difference and the ambiguity of good and evil. The coiled serpent envelopes the bottom section of the figure and likewise plays with the ambiguity of serpentine symbolism, being possibly a reference to the serpent of Eden or a symbol of the world-serpent Jörmungandr, who holds the world sea in order by biting its tail. Considering that Blake was reading Norse mythology while he was working on the Job sequence, this is a serious possibility. Furthermore, it keeps with the cosmological tone of the Job engravings, as Jörmungandr helps connect the viewer to this mythological time and mind-space. It also helps to introduce the figures of the next image, the primordial beings of Behemoth and Leviathan.



Behemoth and Leviathan," *Illustrations to the Book of Job* 1825, Tate Britain, London.

Plate 15 shows the divine figure tracing out the grandness of his creation, with a distinctly Jörmungandr-like serpent flouncing about in the water. The entire community around Job is there to witness the hand of the divine trace its original designs in awe and wonder with a somber reflexivity. Blake's image seems to argue that the retracing and deep consideration of the material world is the only way possible to understand the mind and presence of divinity. Yet in the somber awe, the scene stages a deliberate ambiguity: the serpent's expression and cataclysmic motion recall Blake's use of serpentine forms as markers of the difference of the godhead's mental states. The vibrant movements of the serpent, its writhing, may reflect the inner turmoil of the divine as it comes to awareness of the pain of others. The mythic associations summon the older cosmologies Blake was reading so that the engraving simultaneously points toward Edenic memory and the terrors of nature without the mediation of the incarnated Lord, symbolized by the Norse world-serpent. This layered symbolism deepens the Job sequence's cosmological register and prepares the viewer for the next plate's primordial presences, Behemoth and Leviathan, by turning the serpent into a hinge between creation's tenderness and its brute, elemental order. In plate 16, the humanization of the divine figure is underscored, as he does not appear as a single entity but is surrounded in the highest heaven by a court of divine beings. It is important because only because of their unity are they able to cast out from the divine presence Satan, the enemy of humanity.



"The fall of Satan" (Bentley 421.17), *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 1825, Tate Britain, London.

> And the Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man & when separated /
>
> From Imagination and closing itself as in steel, /
>
> In a Ratio of the Things of Memory, it thence frames Laws & Moralities.[45]



"My Eye seeth thee" (Bentley 421.18), *Illustrations to the Book of Job* 1825, Tate Britain, London.

This is both a rejection of the rational spectre and its propensity for self-righteousness and blind moralism, and it is a reclamation of the power of divine communities and the acceptance of the other as the other. This is in complete accord with Blake's own reading of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*, where he highlights that paradise is only possible *with the presence of others.*

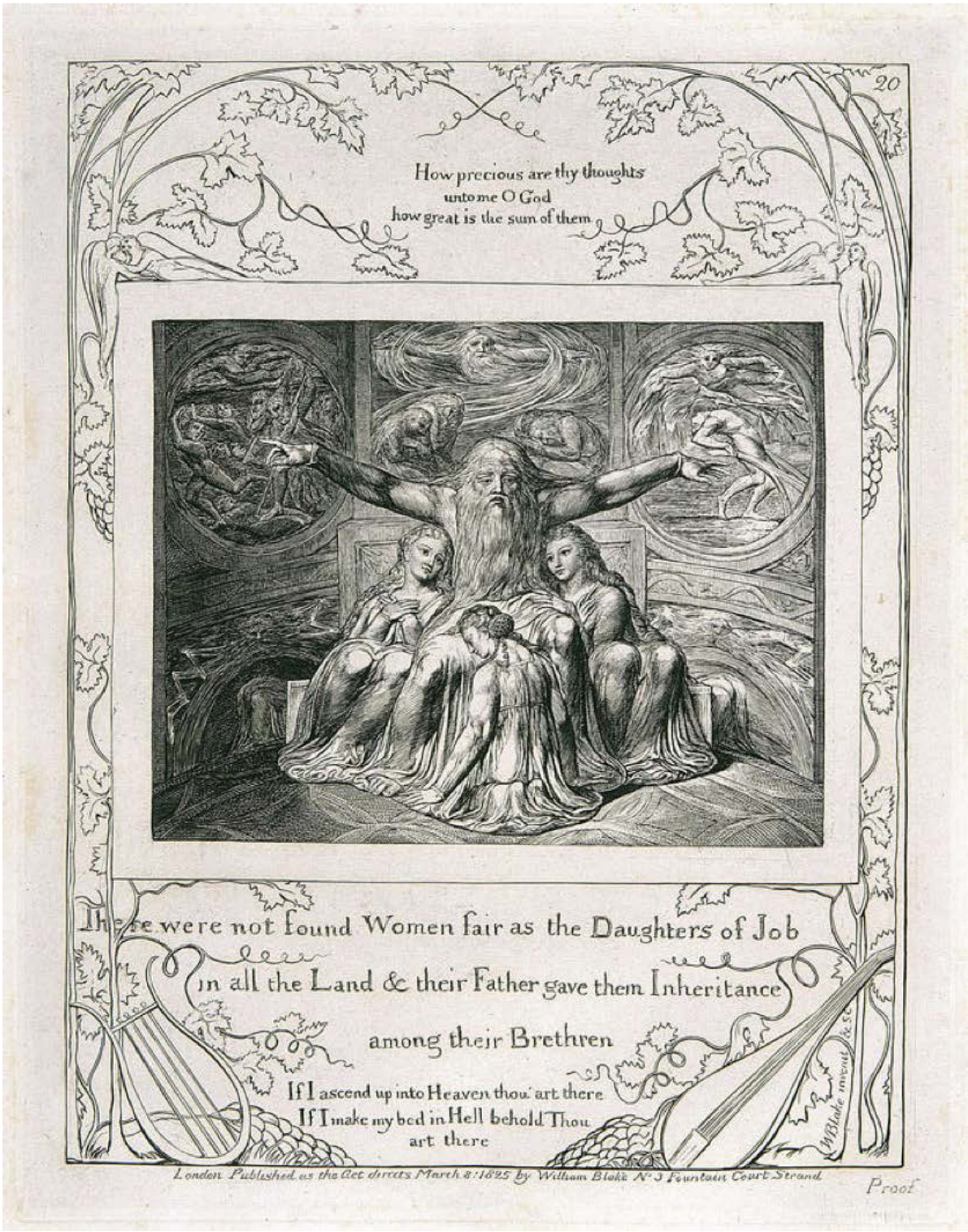
This point is also re-emphasized in plate 17, where the wife of Job is seen receiving the blessing of the divine figure.

The wife of Job is often taken to be the very embodiment of crass and unspiritual. Victor Sassoon has pointed out her rhetorical importance to the Job story, being the voice of what might be the rational, commonsense approach to Job's afflictions.[46] She is also one of the only characters in the story who also brings in any degree of levity, though the humor has been lost over time, though Edward L. Greenstein tried to re-engage it in his own masterful translation of the story.[47]

Without his hardened self-righteousness, the divine can converse with and bless humankind in the most direct way. In seeing not only with the eyes but also with the shared vision of human relations, Job and the divine are finally able to understand one another and join in a union that promises redemption. In many ways this is one of the most transcendent images in the sequence, and it does a magnificent job in showing the highest possibilities of the type of compassionate redemption that Blake takes as the religion of Jesus. Take note of how both the divine figure and the Job figure have the same countenance, which establishes this mutual identification. The three friends of Job, who used rational argumentation and conventional truisms to prove a trite moralism, are each turned against the light in which Job and his wife stand.



"Job's Sacrifice" (Bentley 421.19), *Illustrations to the Book of Job* 1825, Tate Britain, London.



Job and his Daughters" (Bentley 421.21), *Illustrations to the Book of Job* 1825, Tate Britain, London.

In plate 18, Blake makes full use of the redefining power of the redemptive story, where it is Job who is required to make sacrifices for his friends, lest they be stricken by the Divine. The topsy-turvy, unexpected ways in which divine revelation occurred were something to be celebrated in its utmost for Blake. The text that Blake is depicting here is from Job 42:7-9, which, in Blake's King James Version, reads:

> 7 And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.[48]

Blake's depiction of Job as intercessor reverses customary sacrificial logic, making the survivor the mediator whose willing penance averts divine retribution. The scene condenses Blake's conviction that revelation operates through unexpected reversals and moral crucibles, preparing the viewer for the image of restored unity that follows. Plate 18 therefore functions as the hinge between suffering and restoration, prefiguring Plate 20's vision of reintegration and wholeness.

Though plate 20 is not the final image in Blake's Job sequence, it is the fullest representation of divine and human reintegration. In the presence of his loving daughters, Blake's Job takes on the symbolic cross-like posture of the divine figure seen in earlier plates. As he looks down with love upon his daughters, he presents his life as a journey contending with God. In the vignettes behind him, scenes taken from other events from the Job story are conveyed in paneled images, showing perhaps the distance of artistic reflection. At the end of Job's encounter with the Angel of the Presence, Job stands as the representative of a primal revelation of the godhead; one that has been completely reintegrated his human totality. He has humanized the divine and emerged from his encounter with God more thoroughly human than ever before, more than would be possible in any other event.

From Thomas Butt's recollection, Blake in 1796 compared the figure of Job with the Biblical patriarch Jacob, who was later called 'Israel'—one who had contended with God.[49] Though it leans more into speculation, this connection would also make sense within a very unique interpretation of the Israel figure by Swedenborg. In *Arcana Coelestia §*4295 we have an extended discussion about the Jacob story, which sheds light on Blake's depiction:

> This being so, in order that the Lord might bring the whole of heaven into proper heavenly order, He even allowed angels into Himself to tempt Him, who, insofar as they acted from their proprium, did not do so from good and truth. These temptations are the inmost of all, for they go to work solely on the ends one has in view and with a subtlety such as can by no means be detected. But insofar as angels do not act from their proprium they act from good and truth and are unable to tempt anyone. What is more, angels are being perfected constantly by the Lord, and yet their perfection cannot ever reach the point when their wisdom and intelligence can be compared with the Lord's Divine wisdom and intelligence, since they are finite whereas the Lord is Infinite, and no comparison of finite with Infinite is possible. From all this one may now see what 'God with whom Jacob contended as a prince' is used to mean and also why he was unwilling to reveal his name. (Potts)

The spectral images behind Job, and the lack of a divine figure present as an actor, point to a mutual absorption between the divine image and Job, and as the motto for this text suggests a mutual spiritual alacrity between Job and the mind of God: 'How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them.' (Psalm 139:17) The notion of being tempted, awakened, and unified was the function of the Job story in Blake's retelling.

The infinite variety of differences that are part of the experience of the human and the divine are the things that even God must celebrate. Mandating that one see things in only one way is the road of tyranny and despotic jealousy and the empty moralizing that destroyed the religion of Jesus. Throughout Blake's entire opus, there remains a continual concern for the oppression of singularity, as he wrote to Butts, 'May God us keep / From Single vision & Newton's sleep!'[50]

Though there are many quotations from Blake which convey this fear, I can think of no better one than that of the 'proverbs of hell' where Blake says: 'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.'[51] This ability to learn and see as others see is the ability to merge and connect with other souls, as we see of the ancients in the prophetic books; in our mental realm we can merge even with the Lord himself, 'as he is not a God afar off' but is the mighty friend of sinners.

Belted between the two rows of images, we come again to a group of encircling serpents, each with a slight smile. These may be the 'wise serpents' referenced in the Bible, which convey that at this moment Job sees with the divine eye and is a living and fruitful image of one who has known and wrestled with God. Perhaps Blake is saying that the difference between heaven and hell is a difference in the state of seeing, and it is the purpose of both life and art to inspire this focus. The motto at the bottom of the plate reads: 'If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there, If I make my bed in Hell, behold, thou art there.' Psalm 139:8. Or in the words of St. Augustine

(354-430), a quotation used by Swedenborg, Caelum est ubi Dominus est; infernum ubi Dominus non est.[52]

8. Conclusion: 'We are led to believe a lie/ when we see with not through the eye:' the soteriology of 'vision' in Blake's cosmology. [53]

> What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it.[54]

Like the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, Blake believed that truth was often obscured by sight rather than enlightened by it.[55] This is a curious, some might say ironic, idea for a visual artist, and yet it introduces us to one of Blake's most revolutionary paradigms: the soteriology of 'true vision.' Blake spends a great deal of time wrestling with the quicksand between what is seen and what is to be understood by sight, constrained as it is by the limitations of our physical reality. "For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."[56] But, by breaking through this self-inflicted limitation, by "cleansing the doors of perception," a person can reverse this alienation and see the world for what it is—in Blake's terminology, "infinity." [57] This salvific approach to 'seeing' goes to the heart of Blake's entire opus, and his desire that image and text be joined together in his prophetic works invites the reader to engage with the writings more holistically, in what Carla Douglas has called the "third text," and has been addressed by W.J.T. Mitchell's famous treatment of the subject.[58] However, I think Susanne Sklar and her conception of 'visionary theatre' come closest to epitomizing the transformative event that Blake wishes his reader to experience. As she writes:

> It seeks to change us and the world around us; it has what might be called a moral imperative. Because visionary theatre invites imaginative participation, it is an appropriate way of regarding a text that explicitly seeks to create transformation. Jerusalem's audience is implicated in the action of the poem. Blake addresses his audience directly, both in each chapter's preface, as well as in the body of the text. He wants us to 'build Jerusalem', to create societies in which forgiveness is a social structuring principle.[59]

Blake inherits Swedenborg's interior-exterior epistemology and the idea that spiritual sight depends on an inner reformation, but he radicalizes it: he aestheticizes and dramatizes regeneration so that visionary perception becomes a public, performative task that demands social reformation (forgiveness, communal building) rather than only individual

salvation. By genuine visions are meant visions or sights of those things which have real existence in the next life, and which are nothing else than real things that may be seen with the eyes of the spirit but not with those of the body. They are visible to man when his interior sight is opened by the Lord, that is, the sight his spirit possesses and into which he also enters when, separated from the body, he passes into the next life; for man is a spirit clothed with a body. Such were the visions of the prophets. When this sight is opened the things which have actual existence among spirits are seen in light brighter than midday light of the world; not only are representatives seen but also the spirits

themselves. This is accompanied by a perception as to who those spirits are, and also what they are like, where they are, where they have come from, where they are going to, and what affection, conviction, and indeed faith exists with them. *Arcana Coelestia* § 1970. (Elliott)

Susanne Sklar's "visionary theatre" names precisely what Blake wants: perception reworked into an imaginative, moral, and participatory event that transforms both spectator and society. Swedenborg's account that genuine visions appear when a person's "interior sight is opened by the Lord" supplies the metaphysical logic Blake inherits and then dramatizes through his plates and prophetic voice. Blake radicalizes that inward opening by making it public and performative: visionary sight becomes the means to build Jerusalem and to reorient communal life around forgiveness rather than secluded mysticism.

However, if *Jerusalem* is a means to attain a union of opposites and transform the world by 'entering into the bosom of God, the human imagination' (J4 18-20), Blake's Job illustrations serve as a warning of the limitations of the selfhood. The proprium is symbolized by the arrogant state of Urizen and that distant mockery of the false deity, "old Nobodaddy." Nobodaddy is also a possible actor who plays the deity with whom Job contends in the illustrations, and as Folsom has suggested, Nobodaddy might be an anagram of 'Abbadon,' the demon of the pit mentioned in the book of Job.[60] Nobodaddy enjoys obscurity and often declaims himself as 'the eternal,' 'the all-powerful,' and highlights above everything else that he is not a human being of flesh and blood, which Blake connects with the murderous potential of religions of mystery. [61]

Another essential element that presages Blake's engagement with biblical texts involves the eternal dispute between those beings truly of light and those who merely give such an appearance, a point to which we will return with the imagery of the Job sequence. In *Vala,* we also come across this conflict, as has been so nicely summarized in Herrstrom's article on Blake and the symbolism of Ezekiel.

This fundamental conflict between the true and false Cherubim and its ultimate resolution are explored in the intervening transformations of the chapter. The second and third (7:9-50, 7:51-9:31) clarify the conflict by introducing its literal context and showing, respectively, how the isolated wheel or female aspect of the psyche becomes a tyrant, weaving the veil of mystery, and how the furnace or male aspect in separation becomes a sacrificial altar of guilt. In the fourth, fifth, and sixth transformations (9:32-12:24, 12:25-15:5, 15:6-16:69), respectively, Los realizes that Hand can be defeated and Albion saved by reuniting the furnace and wheel, forging the true body of the Cherubim; Los becomes Ezekiel in order to appropriate the Cherubim vision; and Los reveals himself as Blake, who from Ezekiel's perspective reasserts the necessity of wholeness and his prophetic-poetic method of achieving this by meditation on the Cherubim vision. [62]

In both *Vala* and in the *Urizen,* Blake goes through the process of revealing how the contraction and alienation of the godhead itself was the cause of human suffering and isolation, but that its traces in the material world offer us a pathway toward reclaiming that connection, and recognizing what is the 'Religion of Jesus' from the false religions spawned of the harsh and cold delusions of the mind was the only way to reclaim one's place in eternity. Though it has been pointed out by both Kathleen Raine and Bryan Aubrey, this is essentially a highly idiosyncratic rendering of Böhme's soteriology as inflected as it was with Paracelsian physicalism and the restitutional sacramental theology of Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561).[63] The image, *par excellence,* of this is the frontispiece of *Jerusalem,* "Los Enters the Gates of Death."

> The lines associated with the image are found on plate 77 of *Jerusalem*, titled 'to the Christians,' where we read:
>
> I give you the end of a golden string,
> Only wind it into a ball
> It will lead you in at Heavens gate
> Built in Jerusalems wall

juxtaposed next to the phrase, 'Devils are False Religions,' and the verse 'Saul Saul why persecutest thou me' (Acts 9:4). Though this might at first seem to be some strange hodgepodge, the Blake's point is exceptionally clear: only in the narrow way, with the entirety of one's being, can you return to live in the kingdom of Heaven. You must embrace eternity now, in order to live in it later. This is, to my mind, the most perfect summary of all of Swedenborg's teachings.

Salvation in this world is possible only by looking through the world in a new way, one that transforms what is seen to what is signified, and Swedenborg's imprint is also found here as well, and it was his task as a true artist to bring these things into reality. In his 1799 response to Dr. Trusler Blake expounds upon the power of true intellectual vision:

> I feel that a Man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision…The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, & by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & Some Scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, So he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You certainly Mistake, when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not be found in This World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination, & I feel Flatter'd when I am told So.[64]



"Los Enters the Gates of Death," *Jerusalem The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (Copy E; Bentley 3; Erdman 3; Keynes 3).

Though there are other valid ways of understanding Blake's job sequence, I think the compelling part of my analysis is that I enter the work as a puzzle of ultimate significance; it begs the viewer to play subtle games between image and word to arrive at a synthesis; another word might be transformation. Blake was always one to hide his greatest thoughts in the forests of his symbols, and at the very least, I feel they beg us for continual engagement.

Dramatis Personae

Though I have paraphrased the different characters in my own way, I have drawn from Foster Damon's work *A Blake Dictionary* (1988) and invite the reader to make their own comparisons.

Damon, S. Foster. *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake.* Revised edition, edited by Morris Eaves, University Press of New England, 1988.

Angel of the Presence, or Divine Figure, unlike the true deity, who is the Human/Divine Jesus, the divine figure is Blake's name for the Biblical deity invoked in the Job story. Though appearing in many of the same attributes as "God" this figure is in fact a deceived and elevated image of the Proprium of the godhead. He is described in terms like "alone," "cold," and "judgmental," and is in many ways simply a reformulation of Urizen and Nobodaddy.

Los is the prophetic artisan and embodiment of Creative Imagination in William Blake's mythos, the shaping force of Poetry within the fallen world. As the manifestation in time and space of Urthona, the deepest of the Four Zoas and the spiritual core of every individual, Los labors at the threshold of "the billows of Eternal Death" (J 39:8), forging form and meaning amid fragmentation. He is "the Vehicular Form of strong Urthona" (J 53:1), a temporal vessel through which eternal creativity struggles to redeem the divided world. Though burdened by suffering and error, Los remains a figure of visionary resistance—his fiery furnaces and poetic insight counteract the mechanistic forces of abstraction and tyranny. At the end of his journey, Los is reabsorbed into Urthona, completing the cycle of imaginative descent and return.

Luvah is the Zoa of passion, emotion, and embodied love in William Blake's mythic cosmos—a figure both radiant and tragic, whose descent marks the fall of divine affection into the realm of conflict and suffering. Originally the archetype of divine desire and poetic energy, Luvah becomes entangled in the drama of the fallen world, assuming the role of Orc, the spirit of revolutionary fire and wrath. His story traces the distortion of love into rage, and the struggle to reclaim feeling from vengeance and tyranny. Paired with Vala, the feminine principle of nature and beauty, Luvah's arc reflects the human heart's exile from unity and its yearning for reconciliation. In Blake's vision, Luvah is not merely a character but a force within each individual—the emotional core that, when redeemed, restores the harmony of the Zoas and the divine image within.

Matron Clay is the voice of maternal earth and embodied wisdom in "The Book of Thel," William Blake's poetic meditation on innocence, mortality, and spiritual awakening. She speaks from the depths of the material world, offering Thel a vision of life not as sterile purity but as fertile participation in the cycle of birth, death, and renewal. As a figure of grounded femininity, Matron Clay counters Thel's ethereal retreat with a challenge: to embrace incarnation, suffering, and generative love. Her speech is rich with paradox—clay as both grave and womb, burden and blessing. In Blake's symbolic register, Matron Clay is not merely a character but a threshold guardian, inviting the soul to descend from abstract innocence into embodied experience, where meaning is forged through compassion and creative labor.

Nobodaddy is one of William Blake's most enigmatic and satirical figures—a spectral parody of the paternal God, embodying tyranny, hypocrisy, and moral law divorced from imagination and love. The name itself is a mocking compound: Nobody and Daddy, suggesting an absent or hollow father figure, revered yet void of true presence.
In Blake's symbolic universe, Nobodaddy represents the oppressive forces of conventional religion and rationalism that demand obedience but offer no genuine vision. He is the false deity who "lives upon the sacrifices of men," a projection of fear and guilt rather than divine creativity. Unlike the imaginative and redemptive figures such as Los or the Eternal Man, Nobodaddy is a shadow—an idol of authority that stifles the soul's freedom.
Blake invokes him most famously in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and Songs of Experience," where he is ridiculed as a god who "must be worshipped," yet is fundamentally alien to the human heart. In this sense, Nobodaddy is not just a character but a critique—a symbol of the spiritual emptiness at the core of institutional power.

The Spectre is the shadow-self—the rational, self-centered aspect of the human psyche that resists imagination, love, and spiritual unity. It is the voice of doubt, division, and moral calculation, often appearing as a cold, accusatory presence that isolates the individual from divine vision and communal life.

The Spectre is not a demon or external force, but a part of the human soul estranged from its imaginative core. It emerges when reason becomes tyrannical, when the self seeks control rather than communion. In Jerusalem, Blake writes: "The Spectre is the Reasoning Power in Man, and when separated from Imagination, it becomes a Demon" (J 91:1). This separation is the root of spiritual death.

Often paired with the Emanation—the soul's feminine, emotional counterpart—the Spectre tries to dominate or suppress her, reflecting the inner conflict between control and vulnerability, logic and love. Yet Blake does not advocate annihilating the Spectre; rather, it must be redeemed through reintegration with the Imagination, becoming a servant of vision rather than its enemy.

Tiriel is the fallen patriarch and tragic anti-prophet in William Blake's early prophetic poem Tiriel (c. 1789), a figure of decayed authority, spiritual blindness, and the collapse of generational wisdom. Once a king, Tiriel becomes a wandering, embittered old man—cursing his children, lamenting his fate, and railing against the divine order he no longer understands. He embodies the tyranny of reason severed from imagination, a precursor to Blake's later figures like Urizen and Nobodaddy.

Tiriel's journey is one of reversal: from ruler to exile, from father to accuser, from voice of law to voice of madness. His blindness is both literal and symbolic, marking the loss of visionary insight and the descent into self-righteous despair. In Blake's mythic register, Tiriel represents the collapse of inherited structures that fail to renew themselves through love and creative vision. His death, alone and raving, is not redemptive but cautionary—a warning against the ossification of power and the refusal to evolve.

Urizen is the Zoa of reason, law, and abstraction in William Blake's visionary cosmology—a towering figure of intellect severed from imagination, whose fall marks the rise of oppressive systems and spiritual exile. His name evokes "Your Reason," and he embodies the cold, calculating force that seeks to measure, divide, and control the infinite through rigid categories and moral codes.

Originally one of the four primal aspects of the Divine Humanity, Urizen becomes the architect of the fallen world, constructing vast books of laws and binding the cosmos in chains of necessity. His descent is marked by isolation and despair, as he separates himself from the other Zoas—especially from Los, the imaginative artisan—and becomes a tyrant of the mind. In "The Book of Urizen," he is depicted as a blind creator, forging a sterile universe of suffering and repression.

Yet Blake's vision is not static: Urizen is not evil per se, but fallen—his redemption lies in reuniting with the imaginative and emotional faculties he once rejected. When reintegrated, Urizen becomes a necessary part of the whole, a disciplined clarity in service of vision rather than its jailer.

Endnotes

1. I drew heavily from the work of Andrew Weeks in the treatment of Böhme and of his relationship with Paracelsus. Please see: Weeks, Andrew, *Jacob Böhme's Aurora (Morgen Röte im aufgang, 1612) and A Fundamental Report (Gründlicher Bericht, Mysterium Pansophicum,* 1620): Translation, Introduction, and Commentary (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Weeks, Andrew, *Paracelsus: Essential Theoretical Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Weeks, Andrew, *Paracelsus: Speculative Theory and the Crisis of the Early Reformation (*Albany: SUNY Press, 1997); Weeks, Andrew, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991.)
2. Painted in three differing sets from 1805-6, 1821-23, and finally 1825-26.
3. See, Dramatis personae at the end of the article. Later in the article we will find a variety of phrases to define the divine actor in the Job sequence, and that is to underscore the complexity of the godhead for*126* Blake, and the potential for various personalities to rise to dominance, as exemplified in his Urizen character, see: G. A. Rosso, *The Religion of Empire: Political Theology in Blake's Prophetic Symbolism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).
4. Swedenborg did not believe that the entirety of the Protestant Bible was valid for containing the inward Word, but believed only the following works were divine: (Hebrew Bible)Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. (New Testament) The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and the Book of Revelation.
5. The book Blake most likely knew which conveyed this was a pamphlet on sacred scripture, which he was given by Charles Augustus Tulk in 1788 .Swedenborg, Emanuel, T*he Doctrine of the New Jerusalem Concerning the Sacred Scripture* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1763). For more on the Swedenborgian connection, see Paley, Morton D., "A New Heaven is Begun": William Blake and Swedenborgianism." *Blake*, 13. 2 (Fall 1979): 64–90.
6. I am currently in the process of drafting an interpretation of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* from a Swedenborgian perspective based on material from my (Redacted).
7. Blake, William, *Vala, or The Four Zoas* [page 54]; in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982): 336
8. This return to unity was one of the fundamental beliefs of Lurianic Kabbalah, and inspired the Sabbatean heretical movement, which held that all the strange acts of Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676) was to bring unity to the godhead itself. It is however highly unlikely that Blake would have known anything about this idea, but it is interesting in general. For Scholem's classic study, see: Scholem, Gershom, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626–1676* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). As well as the more modern consideration provided by Maciejko, see: Maciejko, Paweł, *Sabbatian Heresy: Writings on Mysticism, Messianism, and the Origins of Jewish Modernity* (Brandeis University Press, 2017).
9. William Blake, *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 629 (plate 10:13–16). 10. Original Text: Ut sciatur quid proprium: est proprium hominis omne malum et falsum, scaturiens ex amore sui et mundi; et quod non Domino aut Verbo sed sibimet credant; putentque quod non capiunt sensualiter et scientifice, hoc nihil esse: inde fiunt non nisi quam malum et falsum; et sic perverse spectant omnia; quae mala sunt, vident ut bona, quae bona ut mala; quae falsa ut vera, et quae vera ut falsa: quae sunt, putant esse nihil, et quae nihil sunt, putant esse omne: odium vocant amorem, caliginemlucem, mortem vitam, ac vicissim: in Verbo vocantur tales 'claudi et caeci'. Hoc nunc est proprium

hominis, quod in se est infernale et damnatum.
11. Damon, S. Foster, "Jesus," in *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, (Boston:UP of New England, 1988.): 187.
12. It should be noted that I used the 1825 edition owned by the Chicago Art institute for my own photographs.
13. I say 'divine figure' because it is clear that whomever the being called 'God' who engages with Job, it is not the type of being that Blake would identify as the true God, or divine human whom he was so rapturously in love with.
14. Fisch, Harold, *The Biblical Presence in Shakespeare, Milton, and Blake: A Comparative Study* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
15. Rix, Robert, *William Blake and the Cultures of Radical Christianity* (London: Ashgate, 2007): 1-50.
16. Rose, Dell, "Durch Die Physik: Franz von Baader's 'New' Physicalism," *Arcana Naturae* (2022): 9-30.
17. Blake, William, 'To Nobodaddy*'* in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake,* p. 471. See also; Rowland, Christopher, *"Wheels Within Wheels": William Blake and Ezekiel's Merkhaba in Text and Image* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007): 12-16.
18. Rowland, Christopher, *"Wheels Within Wheels": William Blake and Ezekiel's Merkhaba in Text and Image* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007): 16.
19. I think that Blake's discussion of the ancients also echo Swedenborg's discussions of the angels as 'gods,' in the *Arcana Coelestia: "*God stands in the assembly of God, in the midst of the gods will He judge. I said, You are gods, and sons of the Most High, all of you. Psalms 82:1, 6. *Here it is quite plain that 'the assembly of God' and 'the gods' are the angelic heaven.* In the same author, Who in the sky will be compared to Jehovah? Who will be likened to Jehovah among the sons of gods? Psalms 89:6.
20. There may be some elements drawn from Swedenborg here. Swedenborg diametrically opposed the idea that angels were winged beings but insisted that they looked like human beings and were in fact formerly human souls. In fact, the Swedish visionary often criticized those who portrayed angels in such a manner and wrote of the deception of dark spirits who would at times feign the appearance of holiness. To learn more about Swedenborg's angelology, see Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Heaven and Hell*, Translated by George F. Dole, New Century Edition (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000): §§ 53, 74, 183. Swedenborg, Emanuel, *True Christianity,* Translated by Jonathan S. Rose, New Century Edition (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2011): §§ 69, 162, 628.
21. Spectre is also a very similar concept to Swedenborg's notion of the 'proprium' which I have defined elsewhere as the false sense of ego-independence. See; Swedenborg, Emanuel,. *The Proprium or What of Man Is Not His Own,* Translated by John Bigelow (New York:The New Church Board of Publication, 1907).
22. Blake, William, *Laocoön* c.1826.
23. Auction record, 1978, Misc. Held in private collection (Westminster, UK).
24. Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Arcana Coelestia*, Translated by John Faulkner Potts (West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1905): § 4211, § 6398; Swedenborg, Emanuel, *True Christian Religion,* translated by Jonathan S. Rose, New Century Edition (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2011): § 200.
25. Rowland, Christopher, *"Wheels Within Wheels": William Blake and Ezekiel's Merkhaba in*

Text and Image (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007): 21

26. Ibid.

27. Rowland, Christopher, *"Wheels Within Wheels": William Blake and Ezekiel's Merkhaba in Text and Image* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007): 33-34.

28. Blake, William, "Holy Thursday,"C. 1789 [plate 19]; in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*: 13.

29. Blake, William, "The Human Abstract," C. 1789 [plate 48. R copy]; in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 27.

30. Blake, William, *The First Book of Urizen,* C. 1794 [plate 3, Copy G] in: *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake: 71.*

31. Relating to a demiurge: a creative, shaping, or organizing power that fashions and orders the material world. The term often connotes an artisanlike generative force and can imply a limited or fallible divinity in Platonic and Gnostic usages.

32. Ibid.

33. (of a liquid) cloudy, opaque, or thick with suspended matter; confused or obscure in meaning or effect.

34. Böhme, Jacob, *Aurora, That Is, The Day-Spring or Dawning of the Day in the Orient or Morning-Redness in the Rising of the Sun*, Translated by John Sparrow (London: Humphrey Blunden, 1656).

35. I am grateful for a student who pointed this out to me, when she said, 'If god is the one speaking from the whirlwind and is all powerful and secure, why is his hair blowing wild like that.' Thanks, Anna.

36. Swedenborg, Emanuel, *True Christian Religion*, Translated by Jonathan S. Rose, New Century Edition, (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2011).

37. Blake, William, *Vala, or The Four Zoas* [page 21] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 310-311.

38. Blake, William, *The Book of Thel* [plates 4 and 5] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 5-6. Two works were very instructive in this: Johnson, S., "Earth and Spirit: The Symbolism of Clay in Blake's Prophetic Books," *Blake,* 58. 2(2022): 112–115. : Doe, A.,"Between the Divine and the Mundane: Reconsidering the Elements in Blake's Thel," *Blake* 59. 1 (2023): 84–87.

39. Aubrey, Bryan, *Watchmen of Eternity: Blake's Debt to Jacob Boehme* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1986): 1-68.

40. Harold Bloom, *Blake's Dual Identity: Poet and Philosopher*, *Blake* 60. 3 (2023): 88–91.

41. Hegel, G. W. F., *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983), 47–60.

42. "Good is the passive that obeys reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy." Blake, William, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [plate 3] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 34.

43. Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion* Vol. II, § 785, p. 417. Quoted in Raine, Kathleen, *Blake and Tradition,* Vol. 1 (Princeton University Press, 1968): 14.

44. Blake, William, *Jerusalem* [plate. 77] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 232-233.

45. Blake, William, *Milton* [plate 6] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 99-100.

46. Sasson, Victor. "The Literary and Theological Function of Job's Wife in the Book of Job." *Biblica*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1998, pp. 86–90.

47. Greenstein, Edward L. *Job: A New Translation.* Yale University Press, 2019.

48. Greenstein translates it thusly: I am angry at you and your two companions, for you did not speak about me in honesty as did my servant Job. Now then, take yourselves seven bulls and seven rams and go toJournal of L.C. H. T. 1854. March. Private collection. Rose 1.6. Accessed 2 January 2022.

49. Journal of L.C. H. T. 1854. March. Private collection. Rose 1.6. Accessed 2 January 2022.
50. Blake, William, *Letter to Thomas Butts, 22 November 1802*, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 817.
51. Blake, William, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [plate 7] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 3
52. Heaven is where the Lord is; hell is where He is not.
53. *The Pickering Manuscript*. William Blake, c. 1807, p. 18. Morgan Library and Museum, Literary and Historical Manuscripts, Accession No. MA 2879. Strikethrough in original.
54. Blake, William. 'A Vision of the Last Judgement.' *Catalogue 1810*, p. 95.
55. The quote which is being referred to here, is Heraclitus's famous dictum: *Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ*, or 'Nature loves to hide.'
56. Blake, William, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* [plate 14] in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 39.
57. Rahaman, Moshiur. *Philosophical Approaches to William Blake's Revolutionary Vision*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 29, Issue 10, Series 1, October 2024, pp. 53-62.
58. Mitchell, W. J. T, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).
59. Sklar, Susanne M, *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre: Entering the Divine Body* (Oxford University Press, 2011): 41.
60. Folsom, L. Edwin, "Nobodaddy: Through the Bottomless Pit, Darkly," *Blake* 9.2 (1975): 45-46.
61. Herrstrom, David Sten, *Blake's Transformations of Ezekiel's Cherubim Vision in Jerusalem*. *Blake* 15.2 (1981): 64-77.
62. Ibid, 70.
63. Though it might be a bit passé now in this moment of hostility to intellectual history, to understand Blake's opus some understanding of his theological influences must still be given, and though not perfect, Raine and Aubrey's work should remain essential reading. Please see; Raine, Kathleen, *Blake and Tradition*, Vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). And *Blake and Tradition,* Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). Also; Aubrey, Bryan, *Watchmen of Eternity: Blake's Debt to Jacob Boehme* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1986). For more on the influence of Schwenckfeld on Blake see my forthcoming article: "Glorify the Flesh:" Paracelsian Physicalism and Schwenckfeld's Influence on Böhme's Theosophy." *Intellectual History Review* (Forthcoming).
64. Blake, William, *Letter to Dr. Trusler*, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake:* 702.

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Swedenborgian Summer:Almont Memories

Drew Siebert

I, Drew Siebert, revisited Almont Summer School Camp after a 23-year hiatus. Along with other campers, I think we figured out that 2002 was my last visit when I was 19 years old and served as a Littles/Middles Dorm Dad. It was easy to not attend Almont after some of the memories of the people, experiences, and spiritual growth had faded over the 20+ year absence. However, coming back to camp after such a long time, it was amazing how it felt, in some ways, like I hadn't missed any time at all. In fact, I in many ways, I felt like I was still a teenaged camper and that I hadn't missed a beat. It was amazing to reconnect with so many Swedenborgians, most of whom I hadn't had contact in decades. The friendships picked up where they'd left off and several new friendships were established as well. My guess was that nearly 40 campers were folks that I already knew from previous experiences at camp & convention within probably another 40 campers being their adult, teenage, or young kids. I don't believe that there is any way to put in words the love and acceptance that I believe nearly every camper experiences when visiting camp.

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