STEMS OF GENERATION:
THE FIGURE OF THE VICTIM IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BLAKE

by

LAWRENCE MACKAY MATHEWS
B.A., Carleton University, 1969
M.A., Carleton University, 1971

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of English)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1976
© Lawrence Mackay Mathews, 1976
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date Oct. 1, 1976
ABSTRACT

In the major prophecies, Blake has much to say about human sacrifice ("Druidism") and about the figure of Jesus as Lamb of God. My purpose is to investigate Blake's use of the motif of victimhood in order to determine how its presence affects the meanings of individual poems, and how it evolved during the course of his poetic career. In the poems of the earlier period, from Poetical Sketches to the later minor prophecies, Blake explores the moral and psychological dimensions of the experience of victimhood -- though not in the context of ritual sacrifice -- and constantly questions its value. His presentation of the figure of the victim is characterized by an irony which illuminates two basic dramatic situations, which foreshadow his later preoccupation with Druidism and with Jesus. In one group of poems (some of the Songs of Innocence and earlier minor prophecies), the victim's suffering is associated in some significant way with a vision of an unfallen world, but this vision never becomes realized. In a second group (some of the Songs of Experience and later minor prophecies), Blake focuses on the relation of
the victim to the person or force responsible for causing him harm. In some of these poems, the victim is able to escape from his bondage, but finds that he can do this only by making some other character his victim. The central theme of the major prophecies is the bringing into existence of a world in which the role of victim need not exist.

Some of the lyrics of the Pickering Manuscript provide evidence that Blake's attitude towards victimhood undergoes a fundamental change after the period of the earlier poems: for the first time we find cryptic assertions about the efficacy of sacrificial suffering. In *The Four Zoas*, Jesus, in Night VIII, is revealed as the efficacious sacrificial victim par excellence. But Blake does not make any facile repudiation of his earlier presentation of the figure of the victim. Luvah undergoes a number of ironic experiences of victimhood which establish him as a parody of a Christ-figure; but in the apocalypse of Night IX, he escapes from his role as perennial victim only to become the torturer of the "Human Grapes" in his wine-press. In this way, his story is consistent with the ironic vision of victimhood presented in the earlier poems. Yet Blake has clearly discovered a positive meaning for victimhood in the Crucifixion, as Jesus descends "to Give his vegetated body / To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Revealed." But he does not attempt to reconcile this new vision with the earlier one, and Luvah's story provides an ironic counterpoint to the Lamb of God's,
despite the poem's optimistic conclusion.

In Milton and Jerusalem, Blake presents his mature vision of Jesus as sacrificial victim. He also clarifies the relation of the Crucifixion to the multitudinous examples of Druid sacrifice which have parodied it throughout fallen history. In both Milton and Jerusalem, Jesus is the Lamb of God who voluntarily assumes the role of victim in a unique sacrificial act. The act is unique because it has the effect of bringing to an end the need for Druid sacrifice, understood not merely in terms of ritual slaughter but rather in terms of the psychology which prevents men from relating to each other in ways other than those of victim and tormentor. In both poems, the Crucifixion implies the restoration of the unfallen world for those men who respond to Jesus by acknowledging him as Saviour and Lord, and acting accordingly. The appropriate way of acting is demonstrated by Milton, and Ololon in Milton, and by Los and, ultimately, Albion in Jerusalem. Blake's Jesus and the Jesus of the New Testament are precise counterparts. They transform their respective worlds by participating as victims in a ritual sacrifice. In so doing, they resolve the major thematic issue in the wider literary context in which they appear (the whole Bible, Blake's total oeuvre).
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Near the end of Blake's greatest prophecy, there is a dialogue between Albion and Jesus. Albion asks a question which Blake himself has, throughout his poetic career, been asking and trying to answer: "Cannot Man exist without Mysterious / Offering of Self for Another, is this Friendship & Brotherhood." Jesus replies at some length, in language quite free from the perplexing vocabulary of Blake's later myth:

Jesus said. Wouldest thou love one who never died
For thee or ever die for one who had not died for thee
And if God dieth not for Man & giveth not himself
Eternally for Man Man could not exist: for Man is Love:
As God is Love: every kindness to another is a little Death
In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood.

In a sense, the purpose of this dissertation will be to provide a context for this speech, to describe the mental landscape through which Blake had to travel before he could arrive at the complete simplicity of the words of Jesus.

The dialogue ushers in Jerusalem's apocalyptic conclusion. Albion, fearing that Jesus is in danger, demonstrates his readiness to die for his Friend by throwing himself "into the Furnaces of affliction," where he discovers that
All was a Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became
Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine
And all the Cities of Albion rose from their Slumbers . . .
(96:36-8, E253)

In bringing Jerusalem to a close with an apocalypse prefaced by
a gesture of self-sacrifice which is itself a response to the
greater self-sacrifice of Jesus, Blake is following a pattern established
in his earlier major prophecies, Milton and The Four Zoas.

In Milton, as in Jerusalem, there are "Laws of Eternity"
which dictate that "each shall mutually / Annihilate himself for
others good" (38:35-6, E138). Milton, the central character,
learns about these laws by listening to the Bard's Song, which
has for its climax a vision of Jesus as Saviour: "He died as
a Reprobate. he was Punish'd as a Transgressor! / Glory! Glory!
to this vision by descending to "Eternal Death," a process which
involves an act of self-sacrifice called "Annihilation of Selfhood,"
which he describes fully in his celebrated peroration:

The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power in Man
This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal
Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated alway
To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-examination.
(40:34-7, E141)

When Milton and his emanation, Ololon, have both performed this
act, the way for apocalypse has been made ready. The Jesus of the
parousia appears; at the poem's end, "All Animals upon the Earth,
are preard in all their strength / To go forth to the Great Harvest
& Vintage of the Nations" (42:39-43:1, E143).
The last pages of *The Four Zoas* describe this harvest in terms of a communion sacrifice. "Human Grapes" become "Human Wine" in "the wine presses of Luvah" (136:1-137:32, E389-90). Urizen and his sons reap "the wide Universe" (132:7, E385), whose "wondrous harvest" is later made into "the Bread of Ages" (138:17, E391). Northrop Frye has suggested that the production of the bread and wine is here symbolic of the "reuniting of all nature into the body and blood of a universal Man... the great communion feast in which human life is reintegrated into its real form." The Zoas who are engaged in this task -- with the exception of Luvah, whose case, as we shall see, is somewhat problematic -- are doing so as a demonstration of their commitment to Jesus, the "Divine Lamb" who, in Night VIII, has "died for all / And all in him died. & he put off all mortality" (107:37-8, E368). The result of the Zoas' labours, inspired by the Lamb's sacrifice, is a regenerated heaven and earth:

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 the midst of the fires the evil is all consumd His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night & day The stars consumd like a lamp blown out & in their stead behold The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds (138:20-5, E391)

The appearance of this pattern -- Crucifixion, gesture of self-sacrifice in response, apocalypse -- in each of the major prophecies can hardly be coincidence. The role enacted by Jesus as the divine victim who voluntarily suffers crucifixion and
death is clearly of central significance in all three. But Jesus is only one of many victims in Blake's poetry, although he is the most important. In this study I shall investigate the evolution of the figure of the victim during the course of Blake's poetic career, and the way the presence of victims affects the meanings of individual poems. The emphasis will be on the major prophecies because they are Blake's most important works, and it is there that the figure of the victim is more prominent. But victims of some kind are present almost everywhere in Blake's poetry from Poetical Sketches to The Ghost of Abel.

Their suffering and death does not always have redemptive connotations. Indeed, throughout most of Blake's writings -- including large portions of the major prophecies themselves -- the victim does not contribute to the restoration of an unfallen world; rather his presence is a sign that the world is fallen. In "A Descriptive Catalogue," Blake identifies the Fall itself with the slaying of a primordial victim:

The Strong Man represents the human sublime. The Beautiful man represents the human pathetic, which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was fourfold; he was ἴδου-đivided, and his real humanity slain upon the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos.

Blake's poetry is set in the world which came into existence as a consequence of this original crucifixion. The "stems of generation" occupy a central position in this world, whose inhabitants suffer
and die, and cause the suffering and death of others. Blake does not flinch from these facts. But neither does he accept them as final. In "A Vision of the Last Judgment," he describes his work as "Visionary or Imaginative ... an Endeavour to Restore ... the Golden Age" (A Vision of The Last Judgment, E545). Blake never loses sight of this goal, though he never underestimates the cost of achieving it. In those poems of his which present images of the victim, the tension between Golden Age and stems of generation is revealed in its full sublimity and pathos.

The Oxford English Dictionary provides two convenient definitions of "victim," one having to do with the technical vocabulary of ritual sacrifice, the other expressing the more common meaning of the word. Both are useful for our purposes. The first sense of "victim," according to the OED, is "A living creature killed and offered as a sacrifice to some deity or supernatural power"; specifically, the word is "applied to Christ as an offering for mankind." More generally, a victim is "A person who is put to death or subject to torture by another; one who suffers severely in body or property through cruel or oppressive treatment"; and "One who is reduced or destined to suffer under some oppressive or destructive agency." The second definition is the more important for discussion of Blake's poetry to the end of the period of the minor prophecies. By the time of The Four Zoas, however, Blake had begun to place his victims in the more rigorously delineated
context of the sacrificial rite.

This raises two questions which must be answered before we can proceed to examine the poems more closely. Some account must be given for the abrupt change in Blake's use of the victim-figure at the beginning of the period of the major prophecies. Some account, too, needs to be given of the traditions upon which Blake drew in order to present his new vision of the victim as participant in sacrificial ritual. The answers to the two questions are related in that both have to do with changes in Blake's attitude towards Christianity.

There seems little doubt that Blake, in his mid-forties, underwent an experience which may fairly be described as a conversion. Morton Paley has observed that "it [Blake's conversion experience] was both sudden and gradual, occurring in several visionary moments during a period of perhaps three years." Probably the single most important of these moments occurred in August, 1803. Blake has left this description of it in a letter to William Hayley, dated October 23, 1804:

For now! 0 Glory! and 0 Delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous Fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours for the last passed twenty years of my life. He is the enemy of conjugal love and is the Jupiter of the Greeks, an iron-hearted tyrant, the ruiner of ancient Greece. I speak with perfect confidence and certainty of the fact which has passed upon me. Nebuchadnezzar had seven times passed over him; I have had twenty; thank God I was not altogether a beast as he was; but I was a slave bound in a mill among beasts and devils; these beasts and these devils are now, together with myself, became children of light and liberty, and my feet and my wife's feet are free from fetters. 0 lovely
Felpham, parent of Immortal Friendship, to thee I am eternally indebted for my three years' rest from perturbation and the strength I now enjoy. Suddenly, on the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures, I was again enlightened with the light I enjoyed in my youth, and which has for exactly twenty years been closed from me as by a door and by window-shutters... -- he is become my servant who domineered over me, he is even as a brother who was my enemy.

(E702-3)

However we may interpret this experience, it undoubtedly points to a radical reorientation of Blake's spiritual life. We should not be surprised to see his new attitude expressed in the way he makes thematic use of material as central to Christianity as the Crucifixion. Precise dating of the different Nights of The Four Zoas is impossible; David Erdman tentatively suggests 1796-1807 as the period during which the poem was written (E737-8). G. E. Bentley, Jr. has demonstrated, however, that nearly all references to Jesus except those in Night VIII (probably the last to be composed) are additions to the manuscript. This would make it possible to hypothesize that Blake's experiences during the three-year period Paley suggests inspired him to attempt to revise his poem in accordance with his new, more "Christian" vision. The presentation of Jesus as sacrificial victim in Night VIII is congruent with that in Milton and Jerusalem, although Blake does make some significant modifications in the later poems. In this way, the facts of Blake's biography lend plausibility to the claim that his attitude towards the figure of the victim undergoes a profound change in the middle of his career.

Christianity provides much of the imagery through which
this changed attitude expresses itself. In passages already referred to in the opening pages of this Introduction, Jesus is the "God" who "dieth . . . for Man," the "Holy Lamb of God," the "Divine Lamb" who "put off all mortality." But the triumphant language of redemption is set against a language of fallenness which centres on Blake's notion of "Druidism." Northrop Frye explicates the significance of the Druids for Blake in terms which are convenient for our purposes. After giving a brief account of the work of the antiquaries Jacob Bryant and Edward Davies, both of whom had much to say about the Druids, Frye says this about Blake:

To Blake the essential point to which all this led was simple enough. There seemed to be evidence, preserved in Classical writers, that the British Druid culture is the oldest on record. To Blake's contemporaries, with a greater primitivism in their bias, that suggested an idealization of the Druid period in which the word "Druid" would be practically synonymous with "inspired bard." Thus Collins speaks of Thomson as a Druid in his elegy on that poet. In Collins' Ode to Liberty the episode corresponding to Blake's fall of Atlantis, the deluge which made Britain an island, is followed by a description of a temple of liberty hidden in Albion's forests and associated with Druids, an association which is impossible in Blake. For as there is equal evidence that Druid civilization was one of murderous human sacrifice, there seemed to Blake little point in idealizing it. Their civilization had evidently declined from a still earlier one, and a hint of what that earlier one was is contained in the Atlantis legend, and thence, by the process we have traced before, to the giant Albion, the Northern myth of Ymir which tells of his fall, and finally, a lost myth of a Golden Age of which even the Bible preserves only a reminiscence. This, then, is the key to all mythologies, or at least to the British and Biblical ones; and, armed with this, one may proceed to write an epic which will re-establish the unity of British and Biblical symbolism, lost since Spenser.
Druidism, then, is a British religion of human sacrifice which is intimately associated with both the Classical and Biblical myths of the Fall. This is Blake's rationale for making the outrageous-sounding assertion that "Adam was a Druid, and Noah; also Abraham was called to succeed the Druidical age, which began to turn allegoric and mental signification into corporeal command, whereby human sacrifice would have depopulated the earth" (A Descriptive Catalogue, E533). But Druidism was important to Blake chiefly because he found so much evidence that the spiritual attitude it embodied was the spiritual attitude which had characterized the so-called Christian era, and which continued to characterize the life of Blake's own time. Peter F. Fisher defines the primary meaning of the term, for Blake: "The name 'Druidism' comes to symbolize . . . the arrogant reduction of the inner sacrifice of man's natural self to the imitative rite of human sacrifice." When Jesus enters the action of the major prophecies in his role as Lamb of God, it is Druidism over which he must somehow triumph.

This tension between Druidism and Christianity, crucial to the meaning of the major prophecies, has no direct counterpart in the earlier poetry, nor does there appear to be any obvious progression in Blake's use of his victim-figures, such as would prepare his reader for the later works. This discontinuity is reflected in the organization of this dissertation. In the first chapter, I shall discuss the poems of the earlier period, from Poetical Sketches to the Book of Ahania (1795), one of the latest
of the minor prophecies. These works, in which neither Jesus nor Druidism plays any significant role, do contain many examples of characters who may be classed as victims in the second, broader definition provided by the OED. This discussion should prepare us for some of the manifestations of victimhood found in the works examined in the second chapter, The Four Zoas and the Pickering Manuscript poems, which are probably contemporaneous with the first major prophecy. These works bear witness to the impact of Blake's conversion experience; this is especially true of Night VIII of The Four Zoas, in which Jesus voluntarily becomes a victim in a Druid ritual sacrifice identified with the Crucifixion.

The third and fourth chapters will deal with Milton and Jerusalem respectively. Again the focus will be on Jesus in his role as Lamb of God, and on his relation to the many examples of Druid sacrifice found in these works. Here Blake refines and deepens the vision he presents in The Four Zoas. The brief conclusion will include a discussion of The Everlasting Gospel and The Ghost of Abel.

The organization of the first chapter is to be explained in some detail in its opening pages. Here I want only to indicate in a general way the approach I shall be taking. During the period represented by these poems, Blake explores the moral and psychological dimensions of the experience of victimhood, and constantly questions its value. His presentation of the figure of the victim is characterized by an irony which illuminates two basic dramatic situations.
These situations dimly foreshadow his later preoccupation with Jesus and with Druidism. In one group of poems, the victim's suffering is associated in some significant way with a vision of an unfallen world, but this vision never becomes realized. In a second group, Blake focuses on the relation of the victim to the person or force responsible for causing him harm. The first group (generally speaking, composed of the earlier poems, though I am not arguing for a rigid distinction on the basis of chronology) includes "How Sweet I Roamed" from Poetical Sketches, "The Chimney Sweeper" and "Holy Thursday" from Songs of Innocence, Tiriel, The Book of Thel, and Visions of the Daughters of Albion. In some of the poems of the second group -- a number of examples occur in Songs of Experience -- the victim is unable to free himself from his role largely because his victimhood has become an integral part of his identity, often without his realizing this. Plate 16 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell provides a convenient transition to the other poems in this group, poems in which the victim is able to escape from his bondage, but finds that he can do this only by making someone else his victim. In America and Europe, Orc is successful in freeing himself from his chains, but finds himself inevitably becoming an oppressor in his turn. In The Book of Urizen and The Book of Ahania, the victims are tormented by characters who are motivated by the fear that they might themselves become victims. It is apparently impossible for the victim and the person who causes his suffering to arrive at a state of concord or
even of mutual understanding. The poems in the first group, with their juxtaposition of suffering and vision, bring to mind -- in an ironic way -- the notion of Jesus as the suffering victim who makes possible a return to unfallenness. The poems in the second group, with their emphasis on the futility of the struggle for power in the fallen world, anticipate what Blake will later have to say about Druidism.

In the poems to be discussed in the first chapter, then, Blake takes a deeply pessimistic view of the phenomenon of victimhood. The pessimism finds expression in the irony with which the figure of the victim is invariably presented. The value of his experience is never affirmed. If there is a single line which summarizes the salient characteristics of his world, it is the one which embodies Urizen's perception: "he saw that life liv'd upon death" (The Book of Urizen 23: 27, E80). Some of the characters are capable of imagining a world in which the role of victim would be abolished, but they lack the power to act effectively. But the central theme of the major prophecies is the bringing into existence of just such a world. In all three, Jesus is presented as the person whose experience of victimhood does result in the restoration of unfallenness.

In the second chapter, I shall discuss the works which provide evidence that Blake's attitude towards victimhood undergoes a fundamental change in the middle of his career. In some of the Pickering Manuscript lyrics, "The Mental Traveller" for example,
Blake's treatment of the victim is congruent to that in the earlier poems. In others, however, he moves, for the first time, in the direction of explicit moral evaluation, in a non-ironic sense ("Mary," "Long John Brown"). In "The Grey Monk" and some of the "Auguries of Innocence," he makes some cryptic assertions about the efficacy of sacrificial suffering. The victim is, in some unexplained way, allied with a beneficent power much stronger than the one responsible for his suffering:

And the bitter groan of the Martyrs woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow
(E481)

Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh
(E482)

In The Four Zoas, Jesus, in Night VIII, is revealed as the efficacious sacrificial victim par excellence. He descends "to Give his vegetated body / To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Revealed" (104:37-8, E363). This is unquestionably a long step in the direction of New Testament Christology. But Blake does not make any facile repudiation of his earlier presentation of the figure of the victim in the fallen world. The poem contains a wealth -- if that is the word -- of sacrificial imagery, much of it centred on Luyah, who undergoes a number of ironic experiences of victimhood. Usually he is presented as a parody of a Christ-figure. In Night II, he is a misguided scapegoat whose goal is "to deliver all the Sons of God / From the bondage of the Human Form" (27:17-18, E311);
Night VII (b), he is crucified but his sacrifice has no redemptive power. In the apocalypse of Night IX, he presides over the cruelties of the wine-press, acting consistently with the ironic vision of victimhood Blake has presented in the poems discussed in the first chapter. Luvah has escaped his role as perennial victim only to become the priest who sacrifices the "Human Grapes": "They howl & writhe in shoals of torment in fierce flames consuming / In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fire" (136:22-3, E389) and so on. It seems inconsistent that this example of "Druid" sacrifice should be part of the same redemptive process which includes the sacrificial offering of Jesus (who is almost invariably referred to as "Lamb of God"). Blake has clearly discovered a positive meaning for victimhood in the Crucifixion, but he does not attempt to reconcile this new vision with the negative one which he had developed in the lyrics and minor prophecies. Although the poem ends as optimistically as possible, with a regenerated cosmos, the two types of sacrifice have coexisted uneasily with each other, Luvah's story providing an ironic counterpoint to the Lamb of God's. Blake did not, of course, complete a definitive revision of The Four Zoas; it is possible to speculate that his treatment of the relation between Jesus and Luvah would have been very different if he had.

In the third and fourth chapters, I shall examine Milton and Jerusalem, poems in which Blake presents his mature vision of Jesus as sacrificial victim. He also clarifies the relation of
the Crucifixion to the multitudinous examples of Druid sacrifice which have parodied it throughout fallen history. The central thesis of these chapters will be that Blake's Jesus is precisely parallel to the Jesus of the New Testament. In both Milton and Jerusalem, Jesus is the Lamb of God who voluntarily assumes the role of victim in a unique sacrificial act. The act is unique because it has the effect of bringing to an end the need for Druid sacrifice. In both Blake and the New Testament, the Crucifixion implies the restoration of the unfallen world for those men who respond to Jesus by acknowledging him as Saviour and Lord, and by acting accordingly. The appropriate way of acting is demonstrated by Milton, in the poem which bears his name, and by Los (and, ultimately, Albion) in Jerusalem. Milton and Los are Blakean versions of the primitive Christians whose lives are described in the New Testament, and the members of Blake's audience -- the artists or "Young Men of the New Age" in Milton and the Public, Jews, Deists, and Christians of the four chapters of Jerusalem -- are exhorted to imitate these exemplary figures. Blake's Jesus and the Jesus of the New Testament transform their respective worlds by participating as victims in a ritual sacrifice. In so doing, they resolve the major thematic issue in the wider literary context in which they appear (the whole Bible, Blake's total oeuvre).

This account of the significance of Jesus in the major prophecies is at variance with most contemporary Blake criticism. Northrop
Frye, the critic of genius who has made much of Blake accessible to us, is perhaps the most influential figure here. In examining Blake's presentation of Jesus, he claims to be able to distinguish "a Jesus of action and a Jesus of passion." The latter receives short shrift from Blake, according to Frye:

The Jesus of passion is a fordoomed victim who speaks of a coming 'hour,' who goes through a sacrificial ritual and who, after a conquest of death and hell, floats off elusively into the sky in a supreme anticlimax after a supreme victory. This Jesus of passion, then, is not so much a divine and human unity as a cloven 'nature,' a suffering man and an exhaled divinity. His sufferings do not reveal the character of a joyous Creator but the character of Pilate and Caiaphas, and the Jesus of passion, according to Blake, is the 'Satanic body of Holiness' which Jesus had to assume in order to consolidate error, and show what the opposite of Christianity is.12

This is brilliantly persuasive rhetoric; but it is not substantiated by detailed textual commentary. However, much post-Fearful Symmetry criticism which does purport to come to grips with the complexities of individual poems, seems to begin with the assumption that Frye's analysis of "the Jesus of passion" is valid.

Some examples taken from recent scholarship will illustrate my point. Mary Lynn Johnson explains the purpose of Blake's "Christology" in this way: "Blake evidently wanted to draw a parallel between the theological enigma of how Jesus' death benefits man and the human problem of how the imagination saves man, and to use this parallel to liberate mankind from a religion of blood-sacrifice by awakening the individual imagination of each reader."13

In order to achieve this purpose, Johnson continues, Blake transformed the "traditional" Atonement: "the Atonement becomes the rejection
of blood sacrifice in the enactment of mental sacrifice through
self-annihilation. Florence Sandler's account parallels Johnson's
in its insistence on the importance of Blake's transformation of
tradition:

But Blake would be equally critical of the Christian inter­
pretation by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who
explains the significance of the saying that at the time of
the Crucifixion the veil of the temple was rent in twain by the
thesis that, while previous sacrifices in Israel had been only
temporarily effective since they had to be repeated every
year on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest entered the
Holy of Holies, now the Sacrifice of Jesus as Victim, the one,
perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, is effective for Sin for
all time and all men; and that Jesus, a Priest after the order
of Melchizedek, having entered the veil of the Father's pres­
ence, continually offers that Sacrifice to the Father on our
behalf. Blake will have Jesus as neither Priest nor Victim. On
the contrary, the rending of the veil means for him, in the
spirit of Protestant iconoclasim, the exposing of the falsehood
of the very notion of Mystery, Priesthood and Sacrifice (any
sacrifice, that is, except the "sacrifice" of the contrite
heart).

Briefer illustrations are provided by David Wagenknecht's comments
on Milton and Mollyanne Marks's observations on Jerusalem. Wagen­
knecht, explicating some of the intricacies of the Bard's Song,
pauses to note that "we can see again that Blake is primarily
interested in the Crucifixion as an emblem of human suffering
carefully cultivated and maintained and perpetuated by our fallen
idea of goodness. For the Atonement Blake substitutes the epiphany
of God as breaker of the law of Jehovah's virtue. . .". Marks
argues that, in the concluding plates of Jerusalem, "Blake disposes
of the anomaly of a God who would demand the sacrifice of his only
son"; Blake does this, she continues, by presenting the Crucifixion
in a new light: "The sacrifice of self on the cross becomes literally the act which redeems the fall and precipitates the victim into Eternity."\textsuperscript{17}

These examples share two common denominators. First, "historical" or "traditional" Christianity is invariably characterized in pejorative terms, presumably because the critic believes that such descriptions furnish a fair account of Blake's attitude. Second, Blake is presented as the poet who corrects the false perception of Jesus embodied by the Christian faith; he does this by radically transforming traditional concepts of the Atonement. According to Henry Crabb Robinson, Blake did call the Atonement "a horrible doctrine" but only in reference to "the Atonement in its ordinary Calvinistic Sense."\textsuperscript{18} The "Calvinistic Sense" represents only one possibility; there are a number of other "traditional" accounts.\textsuperscript{19} (It is surely significant that Blake thought it necessary to make the qualification.) My own approach, then, proceeds from the assumption that it is possible Blake took traditional Christianity rather more seriously than the foregoing quotations would lead one to believe. I have also tried to approach each of his works on its own terms, neither hunting for "radical transformations" nor assuming that they do not exist.

Finally, I have tried to be mindful of the fact that Blake is a poet, not a theologian. In \textit{A Vision of the Last Judgment}, he writes:
If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy

(E550)

My purpose is not to abstract a theological system from Blake's work, but rather to show the reader how to enter into some of Blake's Images.
NOTES

1 Jerusalem 96:20-1, 23-8 (E253). All quotations from Blake are taken from The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (1965; fourth printing with revisions, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1970). This edition will be cited in the text as E.


3 S. Foster Damon, in A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (1965; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), defines "The World of Generation" as "the state of the Darwinian struggle for life . . . where 'Life lives upon death & by devouring appetite all things subsist on one another!" (p. 150). The quotation is from The Four Zoas 87:19-20, E354. For man to be "slain upon the stems of generation" is for him to be subject to the same principle of mortality as all other forms of life in the fallen world. The unnatural quality of the image of impalement suggests that this situation is radically at variance with man's proper destiny. More specifically, the phrase suggests the Crucifixion, the Cross itself being a "stem."


5 The dating of August, 1803 is made possible by the reference to "the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures." See Geoffrey Keynes' comment, in his edition of Blake's Complete Writings (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 852n.

7 Fearful Symmetry, p. 175. This passage also explains why Blake saw no incongruity in using such Classical terms as "Golden Age" interchangeably with biblical ones such as "Eden" and "Jerusalem."

8 The Valley of Vision: Blake as Prophet and Revolutionary, ed. Northrop Frye (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 34.

9 The word "Druid" and its derivatives -- "Druidical," "Druidism," "Druid's," and "Druids" -- appear a total of twice in The Four Zoas, eleven times in Milton, forty-two times in Jerusalem. See David V. Erdman, ed. A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967), I, 546-7. Although the word is not significant in The Four Zoas, the form of Druid sacrifice is nonetheless present there.

10 Actually Druidism does make an appearance in Europe (1794), although it is not named as such. However, an unmistakably Druid temple is described in a passage which relates its "serpent-form" to the concept of the Fall:

Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent; that which pitieth:
   To a devouring flame; and man fled from its face and hid
In forests of night; then all the eternal forests were divided
   Into earths rolling in circles of space, that like an ocean rush'd
And overwhelmed all except this finite wall of flesh.
Then was the serpent temple form'd, image of infinite
   Shut up in finite revolutions, and man became an Angel;
Heaven a mighty circle turning; God a tyrant crown'd.
(10:16-23, E62)

This account presents "man" as a victim, author of his own misfortune, in a sense parallel to that in which the "one man" is self-divided . . . his real humanity slain on the stems of generation."

11 Erdman tentatively dates the Pickering Manuscript poems as belonging to "the late Felpham period" (E777); this would place the dates of composition within the three-year span suggested by Paley as the one during which Blake underwent his conversion experience.

12 Fearful Symmetry, p. 387.


14 Johnson, 17.


CHAPTER ONE

Virgin Fancies and Bones from the Birth

The most famous poem in *Poetical Sketches*, the song which begins "How sweet I roam'd from field to field" (E404), constitutes Blake's first attempt to present the situation of the victim as a manifestation of the fallenness of the human condition. The "golden cage" is of course a mild substitute for the stems of generation, and the accents here are clearly pathetic rather than sublime. But if the tradition that Blake wrote it at the age of fourteen is true, the poem may record one of his earliest glimpses into the world in which one's "real humanity" is perpetually being slain.

The speaker has been seduced by "the prince of love," who first "led me through his gardens fair, / Where all his golden pleasures grow," but finally "caught me in his silken net, / And shut me in his golden cage." Why the prince of love has done this, remains a mystery:

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.
It is easy enough to interpret this poem as a statement about erotic love: the initial delight of infatuation is eventually superseded by a sense of bondage. But in the poem's dramatic context, the motivation of the prince of love is left unexplained. He has deliberately enacted a scheme of entrapment, and at the end of the poem the victim is helpless and bewildered, a source of amusement to his captor. Love has been implicitly defined in terms of cruelty and deceit. Since we do not know why the prince of love has captured the speaker, the effect is to raise questions about the nature of love which the poem does not answer. Is the implicit definition ironic or not? Blake leaves the question open.

In one significant respect, this poem provides a good introduction to the works to be discussed in this chapter. The poem presents a description of a situation involving a victim. The question of the meaning of the victim's experience is linked to the question of the value of a paradisal vision associated with it. F. W. Bateson asserts that the "moral" of the poem is that one should distrust "apparent kindness and flattery that disguise, under the aesthetic titillations they provide, the actual 'loss of liberty.'" The prince's deceitful artistry contrasts with the victim's naive belief that the "gardens fair" have been prepared for his enjoyment. The speaker finds that his perception of this paradise is ultimately inseparable from his experience as a victim. Blake would continue to be intrigued by situations in which a
vision of the Golden Age is experienced from the perspective of the stems of generation.

The phrases used in the title of this chapter are taken from the speeches of victims who have been inspired to give voice to their intuitions about an ideal mode of human existence. As Blake continues his investigation of the phenomenon of victimhood, it seems less and less likely that such visions can be made real. Oothoon, with her "virgin fancies" (Visions of the Daughters of Albion 6:21, E49), remains in bondage at the end of her poem. But it is possible to conclude that, if she were to be set free, she could set about changing the world to make it correspond to her notion of what it should be. By the time we have finished The Book of Ahania, however, we can no longer maintain this illusion. For Ahania, paradise exists only in the irrecoverable past. The burial of the "bones from the birth" (The Book of Ahania 5:46, E89) implies that Oothoon's miraculous "virgin fancies," if they see the light at all, will be stillborn. By the end of the period of the minor prophecies, it has become clear that one character's freedom is, of necessity, another's bondage, and that consequently there is no escape for anyone from the situation in which one may avoid the suffering of the victim only by inflicting pain upon others.

As I suggested in the Introduction, Blake's presentation of the victim in these poems can be considered under two major headings: those poems primarily concerned with the victim's
suffering in relation to an unrealized vision of paradise, and those primarily concerned with the victim's relation to his tormentor. To a certain extent, this distinction is artificial, since some treatment of both major aspects is evident in virtually every poem in which the figure of the victim appears. But in nearly all cases, one aspect is emphasized far more strongly than the other, and during the period which precedes the major prophecies, Blake's interest seems to shift gradually from the first to the second.

Because there are no clearly-delineated stages in Blake's use of the victim-figure in the period preceding The Pickering Manuscript and The Four Zoas, it is difficult to organize this chapter in a way which seems other than arbitrary. The constant factor is the irony which characterizes Blake's treatment of victimhood in these poems, and the irony becomes progressively darker. In an attempt to reflect this progression, I have chosen to divide the material into three main sections. In the first, I will discuss the Songs of Innocence, and the early minor prophecies, Tiriel, The Book of Thel and Visions of the Daughters of Albion; in the second, the Songs of Experience and Plate 16 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; in the third, the later minor prophecies, America, Europe, The Book of Urizen and The Book of Ahania. This three-division, roughly chronological pattern provides the most efficient means of analyzing Blake's presentation of the victim-figure in his earlier poetry.
While it is common for the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience to be discussed in direct conjunction with each other, I have chosen not to do this, not merely because the Songs of Innocence were engraved separately five years before Blake's combined edition of the Songs, but because his treatment of the victim-figures in Innocence is more congruent with his treatment of those figures in the earlier minor prophecies than of those in Experience. In the poems of this first section, Blake emphasizes the ironic disparity between the victim's role as sufferer and his role as visionary. The victim-figures in two of the Songs of Innocence, in Tiriel, in The Book of Thel, and in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, all possess, in some form, a vision of an unfallen world. Yet they cannot share this vision with other characters in these poems who do not know what it is to suffer as a victim. But the earlier minor prophecies also provide a convenient transition between the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience, because, in them, the victim-figures, Tiriel, Thel, and Oothoon, all make gestures of rebellion, although they are unable to free themselves from their roles.

In the Songs of Experience, Blake analyzes the causes of this inability, and finds them in the complex, at times symbiotic relationship which obtains between the victim and his tormentor. The fact that, in these poems, strong emphasis is placed upon this relationship, is what separates them from the works discussed in the first section of this chapter. But there is a significant
link between the two groups of poems, as well. Blake continues to reveal that the victim's experience is characterized by irony, in this case an irony flowing from the disparity between the victim's self-perception and the understanding of his situation which presents itself to the readers of the poem. Plate 16 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, with its myth of the interdependence of Prolific and Devouring, seems to codify the material presented dramatically in many of the Songs of Experience.

The final section of the chapter deals with the later minor prophecies. In America, Europe, The Book of Urizen and The Book of Ahania, Blake reveals, with increasing clarity, a vision of a world in which the victim may indeed escape from his role, but only by becoming someone else's tormentor. The irony of this situation is obvious, and it has been discussed by many critics in the broader context implied by the phrase "the Orc cycle." It is here that one may speak, more confidently than elsewhere in this chapter, of a progression. The irony subtly hinted at in America has come, in The Book of Ahania, to occupy the centre of the poem's meaning. It is a long and at times meandering journey from "How Sweet I Roam'd" to Ahania, but Blake's attitude towards his victim-figures does not change, as he continually questions the meaning and value of their suffering. He draws no explicit conclusions, but the landscape through which the journey proceeds becomes increasingly inhospitable to human desires and aspirations.
It has frequently been pointed out that the figure of the Lamb dominates the *Songs of Innocence*. Yet Christ's role as sacrificial lamb is never explicitly mentioned. However, in two poems, "The Chimney Sweeper" (E10) and "Holy Thursday" (E13), the central characters are lamblike victims (though they are not, of course, literally crucified). Both poems have clearly-defined oppressors: the men who are responsible for shaving Tom Dacre's hair in "The Chimney Sweeper," and the beadles and "wise guardians of the poor" in "Holy Thursday." Tom's status as a victim is so obvious that no elaboration is required. The children of "Holy Thursday" are not victims in the sense that they are physically harmed. But it is quite clear that the Ascension Day service exists primarily to serve the psychological needs of the adults, and in that sense, the children are being used. Like Tom, they are being deprived of nothing less than their freedom. In both poems, the victims are directly associated with the figure of the lamb. Tom's unshorn head "curl'd like a lambs back"; the charity children are compared to "multitudes of lambs." Thus the basic situation of sacrifice -- with particular reference to its supreme Christian manifestation, the crucifixion of Christ -- is present in both poems.

Yet the victims in both poems find that their role provides them with the occasion for alliberating imaginative experience: Tom's dream, and the children's song. But in both cases, the value of this experience is called into question by the speaker's commentary.
In particular, problems have been raised by the last line of each poem, which presents the speaker's interpretation of the significance of what he has described: "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm"; "Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door." Virtually every critic who has written about the poems has commented on the discontinuity between these precepts and the visions which have inspired them. But there is no agreement on the significance of the discontinuity.

In the case of "The Chimney Sweeper," the reason for the disagreement lies in Blake's careful characterization of Tom and the speaker. It is possible for the reader to accept either one as "Blake's spokesman," depending upon his own presuppositions and convictions. Thus if the critic is a "hard-headed realist," he will argue that the speaker's perception of the situation is superior to Tom's; if he espouses some doctrine of "imagination" or "vision," he will assert that Blake speaks through Tom. A third group of critics attempts to reconcile Tom's dream with the speaker's moral by assigning some relatively esoteric meaning to the word "duty" in the last line. It is possible, though, that what Blake is doing in the poem is raising questions rather than answering them. Neither character is his sole authentic spokesman, nor is it necessary to reconcile the very real differences in their respective points of view.

Blake systematically develops the two characters in terms of contrast. In the first stanza, we learn about the speaker.
Critics have been impressed by the absence of self-pity here, E. D. Hirsch's comment being the most extreme: "The speaker recounts his Christlike sufferings with an acceptance like Christ's own." Certainly the speaker shows no emotion as he tells of his mother's death, his betrayal by his father, and the squalor of his present condition. But it seems just as possible that this "acceptance" is that of the psychopath rather than the saint, that the speaker has lost or repressed his ability to feel strongly about matters which should stimulate intense emotional responses. Or, possibly, it is not a question of acceptance at all, but of rigidly controlling the expression of what one does feel.

In the second stanza, Tom, unlike the speaker, exhibits strong emotion about a relatively unimportant matter, the shaving of his hair. The speaker tries to console him: once Tom's hair has been shaved, the soot can no longer spoil it. Presumably, the speaker does feel for Tom; he seems to be motivated by something higher than self-interest. But the implicit argument here is identical to the one which underlies the first stanza: deny part of your humanity (your white hair or your capacity to express strong feelings about cruelty and injustice) and you will not be so vulnerable to the harm which the world may do to you (you may be the person who does not have to cry). It is ironic that the first stanza seems to indicate that the speaker has accepted this specious consolation in the context of his own misery.
This is not to deny that his intentions are good, that he genuinely wishes to alleviate Tom's suffering. But his consolatory remark is not only intellectually unsatisfying in itself, it seems to assume that the mental state which makes such consolation necessary is unalterable. The best one can hope for is that its inhabitants will "never mind it," and respond with stoic acceptance. However, this is not good enough for Tom. He becomes "quiet" after listening to the speaker, but it is his dream that expresses his real reaction to his initiation into the role of sweep.

The significance of the details of Tom's dream is obvious enough. The Angel helps the sweeps to escape from the death-in-life of their daily routine to a pastoral heaven where they enjoy the green fields, river and sunshine. Cleansed, reborn, "all their bags left behind," they are no longer subject to any oppression, even that of the law of gravity. At the dream's conclusion, the Angel gives Tom a message to take back to the world of his waking life: "if he'd be a good boy, / He'd have God for his father & never want joy." Tom returns from his dream with the firm conviction that there is a joyful transcendent reality beyond the degradation of his earthly existence, and that if he is "good" he will eventually be allowed to participate in it.

This contrasts sharply with the speaker's interpretation of the entire episode. He has nothing to say about God or joy. He can only report that Tom is "happy & warm" in the cold morning of the last stanza. Whether we consider the last line to be ironic
or not, it is clear from the speaker's earlier attempt to console Tom that, for him, duty lies at least partly in helping to reconcile others to existence in the wretched world of the sweeps. Absence of harm is the best he can hope for; and even this, as we have seen, is achieved only by abandoning part of his humanity.

Tom's way of coming to terms with his life is radically opposed to the speaker's. Tom expresses his emotions. He weeps at the outrage to his humanity when his hair has been cut; he does not try to control himself. The concomitant of his power to surrender himself to emotional impulse is his power to participate in the liberating vision of the dream, and later to allow the vision to influence his waking life. The speaker, on the other hand, successfully restrains the expression of his emotions but does not himself experience a vision, nor does he realize that Tom's dream has its roots in the capacity to weep. While Tom puts his faith in transcendence, the speaker sees hope only in resigning oneself to one's present misery, and in attempting to be "happy & warm" in the face of it.

Neither Tom's attitude nor the speaker's is presented unequivocally as "right," yet the question of which attitude is preferable seems an important one. If Tom's dream is no more than pathetic wish-fulfilment, the speaker's morality is evidence of a healthier, more mature response to the reality of their situation. In either case, the experience of one character comments ironically on the experience of the other. Thus we find strenuous
disagreement among the critics, one, for example, arguing that
the speaker is "stronger" than Tom while another argues that the
speaker is "unhappily corrupt." 

"Holy Thursday" presents a parallel critical problem. There
is only one central character, the speaker, but again there is a
discontinuity of vision and precept, between his report of the
children's song and the moralizing last line. Critical debate
has centred on this question of the significance of the conclusion.
When the speaker tells us to "cherish pity, lest you drive an angel
from your door," should we take it as Blake's own injunction, or
should we take it ironically, as a sign that the speaker has not
understood what he has witnessed? (Fortunately there is no debate
about the meaning of "pity." ) As in "The Chimney Sweeper," the
source of this discontinuity is a contrast, not this time between
the speaker and another character, but between the children and
the adults he describes. In the last line, the speaker seems
deliberately to adopt the adults' point of view, even though the
contrast has favoured the children.

The contrast is presented strikingly in the first stanza,
in which the adults are represented by the "Grey headed beadles,"
who order the children about with "wands as white as snow."
Grey and white are answered by the vivid "red & blue & green"
of the children's clothing. The wands suggest authority, regimentation,
and possibly even enchantment, but the children have retained their
spontaneity, flowing like the waters of the Thames. The second
stanza is given over entirely to a description of the children, who are compared to flowers and lambs, and praised for the "radiance all their own."

The last stanza begins with the description of the children's song: "Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song / Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among." Hirsch has noted the connection between these lines and the biblical accounts of Pentecost in Acts and of the seats around the heavenly throne in Revelation. Like the dream in "The Chimney Sweeper," the song is a vehicle which affords the victims access to a transcendent reality, here identified with the Christian heaven. The next line shifts our attention back to the adults: "Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor." Much has been made of the fact that the guardians sit beneath the children and that, on Ascension Day, it is only the children's voices that rise to heaven.

The poem's first ten and one-half lines have led us to a point at which we are ready to celebrate the children's release through their song, from a spiritual bondage presided over by the "Grey headed beadles" and "aged men." The children seem to cast off the world of the adults just as the sweeps in Tom's dream leave all their bags behind. It is only in the second half of the eleventh line, in which these aged men are described as "wise" that we become aware of an irony. If the guardians are wise, why are they "beneath" the children, and why do they not
participate in the heavenly song? The literal answers to those questions imply something more significant. The Ascension Day ritual requires that the children occupy makeshift galleries built especially for the occasion, and that they sing while the adults listen. The guardians are to be entertained, much as the prince of love is entertained by the speaker of "How sweet I roam'd." It is the adults who insist on the rigid separation of roles, yet they remain earthbound while the children's voices reach heaven. It seems, then, that the adjective "wise" is ironic here.

In this context the final line occurs, raising the question of whether the speaker is aware of the irony. Now the speaker appears to have modified his attitude toward the children. He seems to evaluate their song in the same way as the speaker of "The Chimney Sweeper" evaluated Tom's dream, as something whose significance is that it teaches us how life can be made bearable in a miserable world. He shows no interest in transforming that world. One of the implications of the last line is that some people will continue to have a "door" from which others may be driven. The divisions between guardians and children will remain; the poor will always be with us. Just as the speaker of "The Chimney Sweeper" speaks of happiness and warmth rather than "God" and "joy," the speaker of "Holy Thursday" does not consider realizing in his own life the pentecostal and apocalyptic dimensions of the children's song. Like the "aged
men," the speaker is (figuratively) sitting rather than singing. The poem does not tell us whether he is right to do so.

There is no authoritative answer to the question of whether the children's response to their condition is superior to their guardians'. The "heavenly" aspect of the song may be either illusory or prophetic. The speaker's advocacy of pity may be a sign either of his maturity (he does not need ecstatic experience) or his lack of perception (he does not understand that one must share the children's vision).

In both poems, then, we find Blake using the motif of victimhood to create an ambiguity left unresolved in the poem itself. The central meanings depend upon evaluation of a paradisal or heavenly vision experienced by victims who are implicitly compared to Jesus. But the victims do not effectively communicate their visions to the people who observe them. In this respect, Tom and the charity children seem to be failed (or ironic) Christ-figures. Yet the question of the validity of the perception afforded by their visions remains open. Appealing to the notion of Innocence as a state does not seem to help much here. If we hypothesize that the speakers are Innocent, what can we infer about the victims? Northrop Frye has suggested that the Songs of Innocence satirize Experience and the Songs of Experience satirize Innocence. Perhaps, in the poems we have just examined, two types of innocence satirize each other. One thing is certain, however. The existence of the institution of victimhood is
itself a sign of the world's apparently unalterable fallenness.

Next I want to consider a group of minor prophecies -- Tiriel, The Book of Thel, Visions of the Daughters of Albion -- in which the central characters are victims who attempt to reject their roles in a way that Tom and the charity children do not. Each victim's actual experience is juxtaposed with a visionary alternative which is apparently not realizable, and certainly not realized. Tiriel speaks of a paradise he has lost, Thel searches unsuccessfully for a human equivalent of the idyllic existence enjoyed by the Lilly, Worm and Clod of Clay, Oothoon does discover the vision Thel is looking for, but is unable to participate in the joyful life it promises. In these poems, victims rebel overtly against their fates, but their rebellion is unsuccessful.

It may seem odd to place Tiriel in the same category as Thel and Oothoon. But his last speech is both an attack on his father, Har, and an act of self-discovery in which he identifies himself -- and all men -- as victims of "the father." There is an obvious irony in the fact that Tiriel has himself been "the father" for most of the poem, cursing his sons and daughters out of a wrath which is not explained. Yet his final recognition that he, too, is a victim, appears to be a perception of the truth, not a further ironic twist in the presentation of his moral blindness.

Tiriel describes his spiritual situation without initially
identifying himself as a victim:

The child springs from the womb, the father ready stands to form
The infant head while the mother idle plays with her dog on her
  couch
The young bosom is cold for lack of mothers nourishment & milk
Is cut off from the weeping mouth with difficulty & pain
The little lids are lifted & the little nostrils opend
The father forms a whip to rouze the sluggish senses to act
And scourges off all youthful fancies from the new-born man
Then walks the weak infant in sorrow compell'd to number footsteps
  Upon the sand. &c
And when the drone has reach'd his crawling length
Black berries appear that poison all around him.

(8:12-22, E281-2)

To this point in the speech, Tiriel might well be referring to
his attempt to control the lives of his own children, and at
least one critic has taken the passage to mean that alone.¹⁵
However, the lines which follow make it clear that Tiriel sees
himself as a victim:

Such was Tiriel
  Compell'd to pray repugnant & to humble the immortal spirit
  Till I am subtil as a serpent in a paradise
  Consuming all both fruits & flowers insect's & warbling birds
  And now my paradise is fall'n & a drear sandy plain
  Returns my thirsty hissings in a curse on thee O Har
  Mistaken father of a lawless race my voice is past

(8:22-8, E282)

The repetition of the word "compell'd," and, especially, the
identification of both the child and Tiriel with the serpent
whose home is a paradise which has now fallen, are unequivocal
signs that Tiriel is here depicting himself as victim not "father,"
though some critics have not recognized this.¹⁶

It is not, of course, that Tiriel is simply attempting to
deny responsibility for his actions. Rather it is that in
"Consuming all," he is not acting as the father, whose function is to "form / The infant head," to "rouze the sluggish senses to act," and so on -- in short, to impose a certain mentality upon the child. Instead he is being like the child who resists this process of socialization. Forced to pray and to act with the appearance of humility, he has used guile to perform destructive acts in protest against his condition. He admits in this speech that the protest has been futile, and, indeed, self-destructive: "now my paradise is falln," he laments, having himself consumed its contents.

Even though he is responsible for many deaths, Tiriel has in one important sense remained a victim. The only death that could free him from this role would be that of his own father, Har, since he believes that Har's laws are the cause of his bondage. But Har does not die, and consequently Tiriel never experiences freedom. His only triumph is to see his condition for what it is. But his last gesture is as futile as all his other actions: "He ceast outstretched at Har & Hevas feet in awful death" (8:29).

Unlike Tiriel, Thel does not die, but she is like him in that she recognizes her need to stop being a victim. Her quest for identity is the central theme of The Book of Thel. Ultimately she must choose whether to define herself as a victim or as someone who rejects that role in order to live in accordance with her own vision. At the end of the poem, she makes a gesture of rejection. But she has not achieved an adequate perception
of an unfallen existence, and it does not seem possible, given
the conditions of her world, that such a gesture can be successful.

Thel's struggle is an ambiguous one. We can see this clearly
if we compare Thel with Oothoon, the principal victim in Visions
of the Daughters of Albion. Oothoon is unequivocally presented
as a sympathetic figure, one whose desire to escape from her
situation is entirely justified. Thel has been judged much more
harshly. There is a tradition in Blake criticism of condemning
Thel's return to the vales of Har (the act by which she attempts
to deny her role as victim) as a sign of spiritual failure.\(^{17}\)
But recently several critics have challenged this view.\(^{18}\) It is
now possible to take the position that Thel, though not of
Oothoon's stature, is nevertheless reacting to a parallel situation.

In terms of the poem's action, the main point at issue is
the extent to which Thel should imitate the non-human characters
with whom she converses: Lilly, Cloud, Worm and Clod of Clay.
These characters not only willingly accept their status as victims,
they celebrate it. Thel is at one point persuaded to adopt their
attitude, but finally rejects it. Blake prepares for this re-
jection by quietly developing a contrast between Thel and the
others during the series of dialogues which takes up most of the
poem.

The initial cause of Thel's dissatisfaction with her lot is
her sense that her life is without purpose. In the vales of Har,
all is evanescent, and this seems to rob experience of meaning:
O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water? Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile & fall. Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud, Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water.

(1:6-9, E3)

It is not that she fears death; rather, she longs for it: "Ah! gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head. / And gentle sleep the sleep of death" (1:12-13, E3). At this point, her conversation with the Lilly begins. The Lilly, too, is aware of her own transience but rejoices in it because she is "visited from heaven and he that smiles on all" (1:19) and has faith in an afterlife, believing she will "flourish in eternal vales" (1:25).

Thel suggests that the key factor distinguishing the Lilly's position from her own is that the Lilly benefits others:

Thy breath doth nourish the innocent lamb, he smells thy milky garments, He crops thy flowers. while thou sittest smiling in his face, Wiping his mild and meekin mouth from all contagious taints

(2:4-6, E4)

In a sense, the Lilly is the Lamb's victim here, although Thel does not allude to the Lilly's death. Thel herself has no useful function to perform, and consequently no one will notice her absence: "But Thel is like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun: / I vanish from my pearly throne, and who shall find my place"

(2:11-12). Thus she begins her identity quest by declaring her wish to confer value upon her experience by performing acts of self-sacrifice. That she is ultimately unable to do so does not necessarily imply that she has failed, however. It may mean
only that her goal has changed during the course of the poem.

Thel's casually disparaging reference to the "faint cloud" causes the Lilly to suggest that she converse with one of the clouds in the morning sky above them. Thel asks the Cloud, "Why thou complainest not when in one hour thou fade away: / Then we shall seek thee but not find" (3:2-3). The Cloud replies that his "passing away" is not in vain. Like the Lilly, he contributes to the life of others, and what appears to be his death is in fact his marriage to "the fair eyed dew":

The weeping virgin, trembling kneels before the risen sun, Till we arise link'd in a golden band, and never part; But walk united, bearing food to all our tender flowers (3:14-16, E4)

Again Thel recognizes that what separates her from the other denizens of the vales of Har is her inability to sacrifice herself for others:

Dost thou O little Cloud? I fear that I am not like thee; For I walk through the vales of Har. and smell the sweetest flowers; But I feed not the little flowers: I hear the warbling birds, But I feed not the warbling birds. they fly and seek their food; But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away, And all shall say, without a use this shining woman liv'd, Or did she only live. to be at death the food of worms. (3:16-23, E5)

The Cloud replies that to be the food of worms is a worthy destiny, and proof that Thel does have a "use," like the Lilly and Cloud. She is therefore no exception to the general rule that "every thing that lives, / Lives not alone, nor for itself" (3:26-7).

Thel's conversation with the Clod of Clay (who speaks for the
Worm) convinces her that the Cloud is right. The Clod of Clay reiterates the Cloud's position ("we live not for ourselves" -- 4:10) and goes on to elaborate a theology in which a benevolent God treasures and cares for all his creatures, even "the meanest thing." But she also stresses the limitations of her own understanding. Her participation in the world she has described is instinctive and emotional: "But how this is sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know, / I ponder, and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love" (5:5-6). Thel's response reveals her acceptance of her role in the ecology of the vales of Har. If God cherishes the worm, Thel decides, then she should have no qualms about providing food for it:

That God would love a Worm I knew, and punish the evil foot. That wilful, bruis'd its helpless form: but that he cherish'd it With milk and oil. I never knew; and therefore did I weep, And I complain'd in the mild air, because I fade away, And lay me down in thy cold bed, and leave my shining lot. (5:9-13, E5)

At this point, then, Thel appears ready to embrace her sacrificial role on the same terms as the Lilly and the Cloud, and to rejoice in it. If God cherishes the worm, he must also cherish her, and she need therefore feel no anxiety about the transience of her life.

What sets Thel apart from the other characters is precisely the fact that she has both the need and the capacity to make such a choice. She alone is human, a "shining woman" with the power to determine her own identity through a process of questioning, seeking and choosing. Her ability to experience alienation in the
world of the Lilly, Cloud and Clod of Clay is thus a sign of her superiority. There is no indication that these other characters were called upon to make the decision Thel finds herself moved to make. The opposite is implied by the Clod's statement that she knows not and cannot know how it is that she is cherished by God. Thel, in accepting an identity which, in one sense, makes her the "food of worms," is indicating her desire to live in the vales of Har on the same terms as the other characters. She has chosen to stop choosing, to end her quest by adopting the role of victim imposed automatically upon the Lilly and the Cloud. Thus she attempts to renounce her humanity.

The Clod of Clay invites Thel to enter her "house," and Thel learns at first hand what it means to be the food of worms:

She saw the couches of the dead, & where the fibrous roots Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless twists: A land of sorrows & of tears where never smile was seen.  
(6:3-5, E6)

This is obviously not the experience of death spoken of by the Lilly and the Cloud. Unless one adopts the unlikely hypothesis that they were lying, it seems certain that the fact of Thel's human nature will itself guarantee that she cannot share the felicity of the non-human characters. 19

This implies that her gesture of self-sacrifice is futile. It will not bring her the happiness enjoyed by the Lilly and the Cloud. This point is made in the speech delivered by a voice emanating from "her own grave plot." What the voice reveals,
among other things, is that Thel's attempt to renounce her humanity is vain, because she must continue to make judgments and choices:

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile;
Why are Eyelids stored with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold?
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

(6:11-20, E6)

Many critics have argued that the main thrust of this speech is to lament the power of the five senses. Thel's subsequent retreat to the vales of Har is thus taken to be evidence of her inability to embrace the sensual wisdom which could have saved her. But David Wagenknecht makes an interesting point when he comments, "the valedictory of this 'spiritual failure,' were we to hear it from the lips, say, of Oothoon, might be interpreted as at least on the threshold of vision." The comparison with Oothoon is worth pursuing. In her speech at the end of Visions of the Daughters of Albion, she articulates a vision of a world in which men and women enjoy the delights of sensory experience in a context free from the consciousness of evil and death, in which "trees. & birds. & beasts. & men. behold their eternal joy" and "every thing that lives is holy!" (8:8, 10, E49-50).

The voice from Thel's grave, with its knowledge of "fruits & coined gold" and "honey from every wind" has learned something of this paradise. What the voice laments is that such experiences
inexplicably co-exist with those infected by the smile's poison, the eyelids' arrows and the intimation that death will one day end the perception of the world made possible by the senses. Implicit in this speech is the vision of a world in which the senses retain their power, but are no longer vehicles for the perception of evil and decay.

It may seem that such a world is the one already enjoyed by the Cloud and the Lilly, but Blake's point here is that Thel, with her more complex consciousness, cannot share with them a simple existence rooted in innocent sensory experience. Paradoxically, her attempt to do this (by identifying herself as a sacrificial victim -- "food of worms" -- which leads to the invitation to enter the house of the Clod of Clay) has resulted in the raising of the question of her humanity in a more insistent form. In the "land unknown," her sense of alienation has intensified, not disappeared.

When Thel starts from her seat and "with a shriek" flees back to the vales of Har (6:21-2), she is acknowledging that her decision to accept the role of victim was wrong. It is not that the non-human characters have deliberately misled her, but rather that her spiritual needs differ from theirs. In particular, their experience (or, more precisely, innocence) has been ordered for them; they follow a pattern of behaviour which requires no imaginative activity on their part. Thel, on the other hand, will have to organize her own innocence in a way that does not
deny the claims of the senses but does deal satisfactorily with
the facts of death and evil, which so obsess the "voice of sorrow"
she hears at her grave. Her return to the vales of Har is thus
an attempt to reject the role of victim, which she had already
tacitly declared herself ready to accept. Like Tiriel, she has
at last seen her situation clearly. The question of whether she
succeeds (or can succeed) in changing it is left open.

Oothoon, in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, is definitely
unsuccessful in her attempt to escape the victim's role. The
first plate presents a variation of Thel's story. Oothoon, in
love with Theotormon, wanders disconsolately through "the vales of
Leutha," where she plucks a "bright Marygold" (at the flower's
request), a gesture signifying her willing participation in the
natural cycle represented by the Cloud and the Lilly in *The Book
of Thel*. This parallels Thel's decision to accept the fact that
her destiny is to be the food of worms. Oothoon then travels
to the equivalent of Thel's "land unknown," but, unlike Thel,
she does not have the opportunity to return to her former state.23

She is raped by Bromion, who promptly labels her a harlot
(1:18, E45) and claims dominion over her, using imagery which
associates her with both the American continent itself and with
the African slaves imported to work there: "Thy soft American
plains are mine, and mine thy north & south: / Stampt with my
signet are the swarthy children of the sun" (1:20-1). Bromion
is thus identified as an exploiter whose values may be defined
in terms of both material wealth and a morality which is puritanical and hypocritical. The third character, Theotormon, is more powerful than Bromion, and he immediately imprisons both Bromion and Oothoon:

Then storms rent Theotormons limbs; he rolld his waves around. And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair Bound back to back in Bromions caves terror & meekness dwell

(2:3-5, E45)

From this point on, Theotormon sits at the cave's entrance lamenting the sinfulness of the "adulterate pair," for it is evident that he shares Bromion's morality, although he is not a hypocrite.

Oothoon begins by adopting a moral posture similar to Theotormon's, although her heart is not in it. He believes that she should experience guilt because Bromion has raped her. Accordingly she offers herself as a victim to "Theotormons Eagles":

Oothoon weeps not: she cannot weep! her tears are locked up; But she can howl incessant writhing her soft snowy limbs. And calling Theotormons Eagles to prey upon her flesh.

(2:11-13, E45)

The absurdity of this situation quickly becomes apparent, as Theotormon presides approvingly while Oothoon allows herself to be tormented in order to expiate a sin she did not commit:

I call with holy voice! kings of the sounding air, Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect. The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast.

The Eagles at her call descend & rend their bleeding prey; Theotormon severely smiles. her soul reflects the smile; As the clear spring mudded with feet of beasts grows pure & smiles.

(2:14-19, E45)
It is as if Thel had voluntarily entered her own grave, and assumed the anguish expressed by the "voice of sorrow" although she had done nothing to deserve it. Thel reacts by fleeing; Oothoon cannot flee but she soon rebels.

Her first major speech (2:21-3:20) is an assertion of her own purity, the grounds for the assertion being perceptual rather than moral. Oothoon does not claim that Bromion has erred in calling her a harlot, but rather that Bromion's (and Theotormon's) standards of judgment are irrelevant even if applied honestly. Her attempt to reject the role of victim is rooted not in moral analysis of her situation but in a new vision of her world:

Arise my Theotormon I am pure. Because the night is gone that clos'd me in its deadly black. They told me that the night and day were all that I could see; They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up. And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle. And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning Till all from life I was obliterated and erased. (2:28-34, E46)

In terms of the poem's dramatic situation, Oothoon's insight causes her to reverse her previous attitude towards her moral status. Addressing Theotormon, she asks "How can I be defild when I reflect thy image pure?" (3:16), a question which indicates that she now considers her new intuitions about herself and her world to be valid, overriding Theotormon's authority.

Oothoon articulates her new vision in the long speech which takes up the entire second half of the poem. In practical terms, the speech is a failure, for she is unable to change Theotormon's
attitude, and is, physically, as much in bondage at its conclusion as she is at its beginning. But if she cannot free herself from the role of victim, she is able to see clearly what it is that prevents men from achieving the life of joy that is within their grasp.

In the first section of this speech, she describes the social structure of the fallen world in terms of exploitation:

Does he who contemnns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence From usury: feel the same passion or are they moved alike? How can the giver of gifts experience the delights of the merchant? How can the industrious citizen the pains of the husbandman. How different far the fat fed hireling with hollow drum; Who buys whole corn fields into wastes, and sings upon the heath: How different their eye and ear! how different the world to them! With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer? (5:10-17, E47)

Usurer, merchant, "industrious citizen," land speculator, parson: each one exists by taking advantage of others, the ones who are truly generous or productive. Oothoon goes on to describe a marriage in parallel terms. The bride, "she who burns with youth. and knows no fixed lot," is in Oothoon's own position, "bound / In spells of law to one she loaths" (5:21-2). In all of these cases, the victims are apparently powerless.

Oothoon's solution to the problem of oppression is not (as one might have expected) political revolution. Instead, she advocates that there should be a radical change in the way men perceive their world. After a passage in which she insists on the authenticity of individual perception (8:33-41), she asserts that the model for this new kind of vision is to be found in childhood:
Infancy, fearless, lustful, happy! nestling for delight
In laps of pleasure; Innocence! honest, open, seeking
The vigorous joys of morning light; open to virgin bliss . . .
(6:3-5, E48)

But the joyous life of childhood is destroyed when the child
learns "modesty, subtil modesty" (6:7), Oothoon argues. The
experience of victimhood is thus reproduced in the inner life
of the individual, as "desire" is mutilated for the sake of
"religion." The ritual through which this is accomplished is
masturbation:

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.
Are not these the places of religion? the rewards of continence?
The self enjoyings of self denial? Why dost thou seek religion?
(7:3-9, E49)

Oothoon concludes her speech with a vision of unrestrained sexuality,
which she presents as the possible alternative to the fallen
social and psychological reality she has just described. This
vision of "the heaven of generous love" (7:29) includes the well-
known passage in which Oothoon celebrates the "lovely copulation
bliss on bliss" (7:26) which Theotormon will enjoy with the
"girls of mild silver, or of furious gold" (7:24) she will have
generously procured for him. Her account culminates with an image
of apocalypse: "And trees. & birds. & beasts. & men behold their
eternal joy" (8:8) and a final injunction: "Arise and drink your
bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!" (8:10).
But Oothoon's rhetoric cannot, in itself, free her from her situation as a victim. At the end of the poem she has not been able to communicate her vision to Theotormon, and her analysis of social tyranny and sexual repression does not include an outline of any method by which these problems might be solved. Her perception of her own "purity" and of the holiness of all life is achieved spontaneously. It is one thing to assert that men must return to the innocence of childhood and another to explain how this is to be done.

Yet, in another sense, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is a profoundly optimistic poem. There is nothing to counter the implication that, in a world populated by men and women who share Oothoon's attitudes and values, the paradise she describes at the end of her speech could come into being. Oothoon is bound, but the potential for joy in a world of liberated Oothoons would seem to be unlimited. In poems such as *America* and *Europe*, however, Blake shows that the problem is considerably more complex than that. Victims who are successful in repudiating their roles do not, it turns out, preside over the birth of a millennial kingdom, but inevitably find themselves acting like the very characters who had oppressed them.

In the *Songs of Experience*, however, victims do not repudiate their roles. ("To Tirzah" is the one exception to this rule.) In these poems, Blake analyzes this failure and discovers its
origin in the psyche of the victim, although external, social reality is often an important secondary factor. The victims in Experience, unlike those in Innocence, are not consoled by visions of paradise; instead they are preoccupied with their own suffering and its sources. Within this general framework, Blake describes a wide variety of situations involving victims. In this section, I will deal with a representative selection of these poems. My intent is not to provide exhaustive analyses; I merely wish to identify the psychological characteristics common to victims in Experience.

In the poems about to be examined, the victim perceives himself to be at the mercy of a cruel oppressor who causes his suffering. Like Oothoon, he seems simply to lack the power to free himself from the bondage which has been imposed upon him. But the situation is more complex than at first appears. In "The Human Abstract" and "London" Blake asserts his belief that tyranny of all kinds depends for its power upon the mental state of those it oppresses. The victim in a number of the Songs of Experience is deluded about the nature of his situation. His inability to escape from his suffering is rooted in a psychological bondage which distorts his perception of the world, and prevents him from realizing the freedom which seems to be within his grasp.

"The Clod & the Pebble" (E19) provides a convenient starting point for our discussion. In this poem, Blake presents an ironic juxtaposition of self-sacrifice and selfishness in such a way
as to suggest that the two are mutually dependent. The self-sacrificial Clod interprets the meaning of love as the giving of self for others:

Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hells despair.

The Clod assumes that there is "another" who is in need of something which Love can give it, and that Love must sacrifice its own "ease" in order to do this. This suggests that the "other," willing to receive what Love gives it, is entirely selfish, depending for its happiness upon the suffering of someone else.

The Pebble, in its reply, reveals itself to be just such a being:

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight;
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heavens despite.

The Clod's sacrifice will be efficacious only if there is a Pebble to accept its benefits. If everyone sought to please another "not Itself," no selves would be pleased, since sacrifice inevitably involves giving up one's own "ease." If the Clod builds a Heaven for the Pebble, the Pebble must live there in the knowledge that it has built a Hell for the Clod, which has now lost its ease. Both Clod and Pebble accept this situation. Harold Bloom has explained what this implies: "Both Clod and Pebble are caught in the sinister moral dialectic that is a mark of Experience, for neither believes that any individuality can exist
except at the expense of another." 24

In terms of our study, this means that the Pebble becomes
the tyrannical oppressor we find elsewhere in the Songs of Experience
with the full co-operation of the Clod, who voluntarily adopts
the role of victim. This is not to say that there are characters
in these poems who consciously share the Clod's philosophy of
Love. Rather, some characters choose to define their identity
in terms of their victimhood, ironically depending upon their
oppressors to supply their lives with meaning. Such characters
do not believe in the value of self-sacrifice, but nevertheless
find themselves fulfilling the Clod's function. Inevitably, they
are dissatisfied with their lot, yet their poems suggest that their
suffering is the result of a mental tyranny they have imposed upon
themselves.

Both Pebble and Clod, for example, would agree to the propositions
advanced by the speaker of "The Human Abstract" (E27):

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

The Clods of this world must resign themselves to their poverty
and ill luck, which allows others to experience the delights
of feeling pity and acting mercifully. For the joy which comes
to the person who performs an act of mercy is as dependent upon
"anothers loss of ease" as any of the more obvious ways of "binding"
another for one's own delight. Characters in the Songs of Experience
who find themselves in the Clod's position will interpret their situation as one of bondage. But in both "The Human Abstract" and in "London" (E26), Blake is careful to indicate that this bondage has its source in the mind of the victim; social exploitation is merely a symptom of the psychological deficiencies of the people who suffer from it.

In "The Human Abstract," this power which binds man is symbolized by "The Tree of Mystery":

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

Similarly, in "London," it is the famous "mind-forg'd manacles" that bind Chimney-sweeper, Soldier, Harlot, "every Man" to the social roles that destroy them. It is true that these people are the victims of the institutions of Church and State; but if the Tree of Mystery were not growing in their brains, the institutions would have no power over them.

"Infant Sorrow" (E28) presents clearly the relation between social and psychological bondage. The speaker is representative of any consciousness which comes to realize that it is trapped in the Clod's position without being able to share the Clod's selflessness. As in "How sweet I roam'd," the speaker knows that he is a victim but he does not know why. Here the oppressive institution is neither the Church nor the State, but rather the family, composed of a groaning mother and weeping father. But
the speaker, despite the fact that he is both "helpless" and "naked," is still able to resist: "Struggling in my fathers hands: / Striving against my swaddling bands." Society has defined the infant's role in Clodlike terms. But while the "swaddling bands" are real enough, they do not necessarily portend life-long imprisonment. Children, after all, outgrow them in time.

Yet eventually the speaker decides to stop struggling. In the last lines of the poem, he reveals his decision to define himself as a victim: "Bound and weary I thought best / To sulk upon my mothers breast." Wolf Mankowitz brilliantly summarizes the main thrust of the poem: "This is the birth of a representative citizen of Blake's London. It is already in the process of forging its own mental manacles."25 No longer merely the victim of the father, the speaker has now become his accomplice. The Tree of Mystery has taken root in his brain.

A similar tree provides the central image for "A Poison Tree" (E28), another poem which emphasizes the victim's autonomy. The action unfolds with parable-like simplicity. The speaker is the oppressor, motivated solely by his desire to revenge himself on his "foe." The "poison tree" of the title is an image of his wrath, which he nurtures until it bears an "apple bright." The poem has been discussed as a parody of Genesis,26 and it is certainly possible to see the speaker as a Blakean caricature of God. But an even more remarkable characteristic of this speaker
is his passivity. He does not need to attack his foe directly.

The apple appears:

And my foe beheld it shine  
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,  
When the night had veiled the pole;  
In the morning glad I see;  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

Again it is the victim's own action that brings about his downfall, though this time the action involves the transgression of a moral code. The foe does not foresee the consequences of his theft, but he does know the act is wrong. Thus moral weakness in "A Poison Tree" is the counterpart of psychological weakness in "Infant Sorrow." None of this is to excuse the attitude of the vengeful speaker of "A Poison Tree," but his role in the foe's demise is secondary, like the role of the family in "Infant Sorrow." It is significant that several critics who have commented on "A Poison Tree" have been struck by the similarity between the speaker and his foe. The poem presents us with an unequivocal statement of the oppressor's dependence upon the co-operation -- conscious or otherwise -- of the victim.

The victims in "Infant Sorrow" and "A Poison Tree" have defined themselves as such by their own actions. The infant decides to sulk, the foe decides to steal the apple. "Earth's Answer" (E18) presents us with a different situation, one involving a speaker who wishes to escape from an experience of victimhood which has apparently been forced upon her. This poem is a response to the
"Introduction" (E18) to the *Songs of Experience*, an introduction in which the speaker, a "Bard," reports that he has heard "The Holy Word / . . . Called the lapsed Soul" (that is, Earth herself), and then, in the last two stanzas, delivers the Holy Word's speech himself. It is, of course, essential to read the two poems in conjunction with each other. The Bard, "Who Present, Past & Future sees," is invested with the highest possible authority. Northrop Frye has described him as being "in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, who derive their inspiration from Christ as Word of God, and whose life is a listening for and speaking with that Word." There can be no doubt that the Bard is a credible witness, and that we are meant to believe him when he says that the "lapsed Soul"

. . . might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew!

The Holy Word then calls for Earth to "return," to "Turn away no more." The night of the world's fallenness is about to be transformed into an apocalyptic morning. In the meantime, the fallen world itself is a gift which will sustain its inhabitants as long as necessary:

The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv'n thee till the break of day

In approaching "Earth's Answer," then, we can begin by assuming the correctness of several pieces of information: Earth is "lapsed," and therefore responsible for the fallenness of her
situation; she has the power to control her environment, to renew the fallen light; but in order to do this, she must heed the Holy Word, and learn to perceive her world in terms of a night which must soon give way to the dawn. In short, what she needs is the sort of visionary experience enjoyed by Tom Dacre and the children of "Holy Thursday."

"Earth's Answer," however, reveals that her own perception of her situation is utterly at variance with that of the Bard (and the Holy Word). She sees herself as a helpless victim, sacrificed by "the Father of the ancient men," the god of "Jealousy," who has imprisoned her with a "heavy chain." Taken by itself, this is a pathetic enough picture. But when Earth's account is compared with the Bard's, it becomes necessary to question the basis for Earth's response, especially her refusal or inability to see herself as a "lapsed Soul" whom the "Holy Word" wishes to save. As in the case of some of the poems we have previously examined, a double perspective has been set up. But here one version (the Bard's) is clearly intended to be the correct one, and the other (Earth's) to be false. 31

What traps Earth, finally, in the Clod's position is nothing other than her own failure to perceive her situation clearly. The language of the last stanza, in particular, reminds us of "The Clod & the Pebble":

Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain,
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.

The Clod's notion of self-sacrifice demanded the existence of a selfish Pebble to take advantage of another's "loss of ease." Earth, bound by the "heavy chain," begins with the fact that she has lost her own ease. Since she is unable to admit that she is a "lapsed Soul," and hence responsible for her own condition, she must postulate the existence of an oppressor who has bound her for his own delight. This is not to say that "the Father of the ancient men" is not "real," but that his true attitude towards Earth is much different from what she thinks it to be. No less than the speaker of "Infant Sorrow," she has made a deliberate choice to define her identity in terms of her victimhood.

A concomitant of this choice is that she must abdicate her power to renew the "fallen fallen light," and assume the absolute helplessness of the victim. The rhetorical questions of the third and fourth stanzas, which lament the "darkness" that permeates her experience of the fallen world, are heavily ironic because Earth has the capacity to change the situation she complains of. In failing to respond to the Holy Word, she is herself binding "free Love with bondage."

We find a psychology similar to Earth's in the speaker of "The Chimney Sweeper" (E22). This poem has been read (by Foster Damon, for instance) as Blake's straightforward attack on the social institutions which countenance the oppression of the sweeps:
"Blake accuses the Church directly for the depraving of these children. Because a child still carries some of his happiness with him wherever he goes is no justification for making him live by such terrible work." 33 Damon's statement is certainly correct, as far as it goes. But it ignores the subtlety of Blake's presentation of the sweep himself.

There are two possibilities for interpretation of the sweep's attitude: either he is naively telling the truth as he understands it, or he is deliberately adopting a pose designed to win the sympathy of the adult passerby who questions him. In either case, however, there are grounds for seeing him as something other than merely an innocent victim sacrificed by a society composed of cruel adults.

Of course the sweep's suffering is both real and unjust. But his speech reveals an obsession with that injustice that borders upon the self-indulgent:

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

If we assume that the sweep believes this is true, then he is subject to a self-delusion that parallels Earth's. He assigns fantastic motives to the actions of those who exploit him. According to him, his parents did not make him become a sweep for economic reasons, as one might expect, but rather out of some irrational desire to destroy his happiness. For the sweep
to hypothesize the more probable motive would require him to recognize that his suffering was not uniquely important but only the by-product of forces which act on everyone in his society.

The sweep is like Earth in that his primary interest is neither to transcend the fallen world nor to reconcile himself to it, but rather to justify himself and accuse his oppressors. He is infected with the spiritual malaise common to all men trapped in the state of Experience. Thus the last stanza moves to no positive resolution, but only an intensified consciousness of pain and injustice:

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

The attitude implicit in these lines may be compared with the attitudes of the sweeps in the Songs of Innocence version of "The Chimney Sweeper." Neither Tom Dacre nor the speaker of that poem shows any interest in indicting the men responsible for their degradation. But the sweep of Experience is interested solely in establishing his case against his parents, and beyond them, the trinity of "God & his Priest & King," which sustains their cruel despotism. While he is still able (at times) to be "happy, & dance & sing," such experiences have not resulted in anything resembling Tom's dream-vision or the charity children's pentecostal song.

The echo of "The Clod & the Pebble" in the last line again
reminds us of the reciprocal relation between the two characters in that poem. The "heaven" of "God & his Priest & King" depends upon the sweep's "misery." Like the Clod, the sweep has lost his "ease." But so have the children in the two *Songs of Innocence* we have examined, yet they have not allowed this to destroy their capacity to experience imaginative vision. By choosing to interpret his experience exclusively in terms of injustice and bondage, the sweep of Experience is, like the Clod, implicitly admitting the need for an oppressor to give his life meaning. The extent to which the sweep himself is conscious of this need remains an open question. But whether he sincerely believes what he is saying to his adult listener, or whether he is striving to create an effect, it is still the role of the victim that provides him with the means of coming to terms with the facts of his existence.

Victims appear in several other *Songs of Experience*, but two are particularly important from our point of view because they present significant variations on the victim-theme as we have so far seen it in the *Songs*. "A Little Boy Lost" (E28) and "To Tirzah" (E30) are also striking anticipations of later developments in Blake's use of the figure of the victim. The first poem foreshadows the Druid sacrifices of the major prophecies; the second (a late addition to the *Songs*) makes reference to the "Death of Jesus" as a means of liberating the speaker from his bondage to Tirzah, preparing us for the Lamb of God who is to become so important to the later Blake.
The title character of "A Little Boy Lost" does not choose to define himself as a victim. Unlike the characters who wander through the streets of "London," he is free of psychological bondage, of the "mind-forg'd manacles" which imprison them. The boy's utterance belongs to Innocence rather than Experience:

Nought loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so.
Nor is it possible to Thought
A greater than itself to know.

And Father, how can I love you,
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.

The boy apparently intends this speech to be a confession of his love for all God's creatures, but the Priest interprets it as simple defiance of his power. The Priest's response, obscenely excessive as it is, reveals the "most holy Mystery" which governs society. The boy is not merely executed but sacrificed, "burn'd . . . in a holy place, / Where many had been burn'd before."

His ancestry in Blake's canon may be traced back to the prisoners in the Bastille in The French Revolution (16-53, E283-5); his descendants, in the major prophecies, are legion.

The vision of "A Little Boy Lost" is one of unmitigated spiritual bleakness, as the role of sacrificial victim is forced upon the one person in the poem who has the imaginative potential to transform its world. "To Tirzah" -- written significantly later than the other Songs of Experience -- presents us with a mirror image of that vision. Originally in bondage to Tirzah,
"Mother of my Mortal Part," the speaker is a victim who has been liberated from his role not by his own struggle, but by "The Death of Jesus," a phrase whose meaning remains enigmatically undeveloped in the context of this poem. Nor is anything said about the way in which the speaker has come to realize that the Crucifixion has set him free. But "To Tirzah" is the only poem in *Songs of Experience* in which a victim successfully repudiates his role, and, from our perspective, it thereby provides a fitting conclusion to the work.

Plate 16 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* constitutes an appropriate companion-piece to the *Songs of Experience* in that it, too, features victims who experience a bondage which is something other than at first appears:

The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity, but the chains are, the cunning of weak and tame minds, which have the power to resist energy, according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning. Thus one portion of being, is the Prolific. the other, the Devouring: to the devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

(E39)

These paragraphs leave the reader wondering why the Prolific does not burst out of its illusory chains, but in the brief third paragraph, Blake explains further: "But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights." The Prolific depends for its identity upon the existence of the Devouring. Blake goes on to assert that "existence"
itself depends upon the simultaneous presence of Prolific and Devouring elements:

Some will say, Is not God alone the Prolific? I answer, God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men. These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries [PL 17] to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence. Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two. Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword.

(E39)

Blake uses this notion of Prolific and Devouring to add a dimension of irony to the later minor prophecies. In these poems, characters escape their roles as victims, only to discover a truth Oothoon was fortunate never to have to learn: that one ceases to be a victim only to become an exploiter of victims oneself. Of course, "Without Contraries is no progression" (E34), but whatever this means in the context of The Marriage, the "progression" we see in America, Europe, The Book of Urizen and The Book of Ahania invariably turns out to be ironic, the false progression of the Orc cycle.

Edward J. Rose makes a significant connection when he comments that "Orc and Urizen are the 'Prolific' and the "Devouring,' each demanding the other's presence." In the poems we are about to examine, Prolific and Devouring are not always represented by Orc and Urizen respectively, but in each can be found the struggle characteristic of the Orc cycle as Northrop Frye describes it: "Urizen must eventually gain the mastery over Orc, but such a Urizen cannot be another power but Orc himself, grown old."
In America, Orc escapes from his role as victim and overcomes a tyrannical oppressor. The same thematic elements are present as in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*: sexual (Orc's rape of the "shadowy daughter of Urthona"), social (the liberation of the Americans from British tyranny) and perceptual (the apocalyptic imagery indicates that men's sensory experience of the world is to be transformed). In each of these cases, Orc's victory entails the adoption of the role of tyrant. In order to accomplish his work of liberation, he must subjugate others. By the end of the poem, the fallen world in which Orc and the Americans struggle for freedom has not been replaced by the kind of world Ooothoon envisages at the end of her poem. There are still victims and tormentors, although the actors who play the parts of Prolific and Devouring have changed. The result is an irony which is understated, but present nonetheless.

In the Preludium, Orc's initial situation is similar to Ooothoon's: imprisoned in "tenfold chains," his spirit nevertheless soars "on high" (1:12, E50). It is not clear why Urthona has made Orc his victim in this way, since Urthona himself does not appear in the poem. In any event, Orc is able, unlike Ooothoon, to break free from his bonds through sheer physical strength, driven by his sexual desire for the daughter of Urthona:

Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy,
The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;
Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting struggling womb:
It joy'd: she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile;
As when a black cloud shews its light'nings to the silent deep
(2:1-5, E50-1)
At first this seems to herald the triumph of sexuality which Oothoon called for in her last speech. But in fact, Orc's act of self-liberation is also the act by which the daughter becomes his victim. Initially, of course, the rape appears to liberate her, as well: it gives her the power of speech, which she uses to hail Orc as her saviour:

I know thee, I have found thee, & I will not let thee go; 
Thou art the image of God who dwells in darkness of Africa; 
And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions of dark death

(2:7-9, E51)

But after a passage in which she identifies herself with regions of the new world, thus introducing the political theme, she is stricken with pain:

O what limb rending pains I feel. they fire & my frost
Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent;
This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold

(2:15-17, E51)

Thus Orc has freed himself from his own bondage only to plunge the daughter of Urthona into torment. The Preludium ends with an episode illustrating the disillusionment of the "stern Bard" who has been narrating the poem: "Asham'd of his own song," he breaks his harp in rage (2:18-21, E51). The Preludium is hardly a song of liberty: as one character sets himself free, another is enslaved.  

At the beginning of the main part of the poem, which Blake calls "A Prophecy," it is the American people who are in bondage, as Washington declares in his opening speech:
A bended bow is lifted in heaven, & a heavy iron chain
Descends link by link from Albions cliffs across the sea to bind
Brothers & sons of America, till our faces are pale and yellow;
Heads deprest, voices weak, eyes downcast, hands work-bruis'd,
Feet bleeding on the sultry sands ... 

(3:7-11, E51)

On the next plate Orc rises out of the Atlantic to help the
colonists rend their chain. In so doing, he must oppose "Albions
wrathful Prince," a "dragon form" also known as "Albions Angel,"
the tyrant responsible for the oppression of the Americans.

This confrontation begins on Plate 7, with Albion's Angel's
accusation that Orc is "serpent-form'd" (7:3). At first this
accusation seems misguided, since to this point Orc has been
identified only as "a Human fire fierce glowing" (4:8), a personi-
fication of the Americans' rebellious energy. Yet Orc, in his
reply, clearly acknowledges his serpentine nature: "The terror
answerd: I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree" (8:1).^  

In terms of theme, the two characters are of course diametrically
opposed. Orc's credo ("every thing that lives is holy, life
delights in life; / Because the soul of sweet delight can never
be defil'd" -- 8:13-14) contrasts with the negative stance of
Albion's Angel, who laments that his "punishing demons" are unable
to destroy the Americans (9:3-8). But the fact that the serpent
imagery is common to both Orc and Albion's Angel suggests that an
ironic similarity underlies the thematic opposition. 

When Albion's Angel, with his millions of troops, causes the
plagues to be sent to destroy the Americans, Orc, whose "red
flames" are identified with the fighting spirit of the colonists, causes the plagues to recoil upon their source. This action precisely parallels Orc's rape of the daughter of Urthona in the Preludium (except for the fact that she was not responsible for Orc's binding). Orc, in freeing the Americans from their bondage, creates a new class of victims, composed of the Americans' former oppressors. He thereby becomes an oppressor himself, and the institution of victimhood is perpetuated:

    then the Pestilence began in streaks of red
    Across the limbs of Albions Guardian, the spotted plague smote
    Bristols
    And the Leprosy Londons Spirit, sickening all their bands . . .

    (15:1-3, E55)

    David Erdman has argued convincingly that Blake presents the revolution as a harvest sacrifice. The plagues are the "diseases of the earth" (13:15), aimed at the colonists' crops. For Erdman, the key to the poem is that "every declaration of the rights of man is a declaration by hungry people that they shall have bread even if they must become warlike"; thus "the revolutionary war . . . is a harvest sacrifice made by people with opened eyes and an enlightened social program for cultivating the earth as a garden paradise." 43 This account emphasizes the revolution's positive aspect (as, indeed, the poem itself does). But sacrifices, however "enlightened" those who conduct them may be, require victims.

    It is true that Orc, in selecting his victims, acts with a certain justice not characteristic of Albion's Angel. The recoiling
plagues are, as one critic has noted, "plagues only to the orthodox" -- the various "Guardians" and "Spirits" of Britain's political, commercial and religious establishment (London, Bristol, and "ancient miter'd York" respectively), and the "Bard of Albion" (who represents the corruption of art in the service of empire).

The millions of soldiers in the army of Albion's Angel suffer, too -- but only until they divest themselves of their armour: "The millions sent up a howl of anguish and threw off their hammerd mail, / And cast their swords & spears to earth, & stood a naked multitude" (15:4-5, E55). There is also a beneficial side-effect of Orc's counter-attack: "the female spirits of the dead pining in bonds of religion" (15:23) are set free by Orc's fires and respond joyfully to their sexual rejuvenation, no longer oppressed by "the Priests in rustling scales" (15:19), the agents of moral tyranny who function at the grassroots level.

In thematic terms, it is easy enough to evaluate the reversal of the plagues and its aftermath. It signifies the triumph of the forces of political and sexual liberty. Obviously the fate of Albion's Angel and his immediate followers is a matter of relatively minor concern for the reader. If there must be suffering, they are doubtlessly the characters who should experience it. But in a world in which liberty has triumphed, why should there be any suffering at all? Why should the figure of the victim reappear in any guise?

The poem does not answer these questions, but its closing lines
indicate that Blake is aware of the tension between Orc's activities as liberator and as oppressor, and chooses not to resolve it. Orc struggles to extend liberty to the realm of perception itself by attacking the "law-built heaven" occupied by the "Heav'nly thrones" of "France Spain & Italy" (16:16). These "thrones," the colleagues of Albion's Angél and his underlings, are representative of that mentality which is in bondage to the tyranny of the five senses. It is they who have been unable to share Orc's imaginative perception that "every thing that lives is holy." Like Oothoon, Orc cannot communicate his vision to those in need of it; unlike Oothoon, he has the power to harm his enemies, and he does not hesitate to use it. The imperial powers, now Orc's victims, make an ineffectual attempt to defend themselves:

They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of despair With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the fires of Orc; But the five gates were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men

(16:19-23, E56)

In terms of the imagery, Orc has become the Devourer, his enemies the Prolific (though they have built their heaven, paradoxically, with laws). The critics who hail this passage as a proclamation of Orc's ultimate triumph miss this point; they also fail to notice that Orc's fires have not completed their task by the end of the poem. Here a comparison with Orc's visionary speech of Plate 6 may be useful. There he articulates his revolutionary goal by means of imagery in which liberation of the oppressed is not vitiated by the enslavement of their former oppressors,
a world in which it is possible to sing:
The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning
And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night;
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease.
(6:13-15, E52)

There is an obvious ironic gap between Plate 6 and the passage
which ends the poem, and the gap exists because Orc has failed
to transcend the tyrant's role which the fact of his own liberation
has imposed upon him.

_Europe_, as some critics have noted, is closely related to
_America_, but is expressive of a bleaker vision. In _America_,
Orc's attempt to free the Americans from political tyranny was
successful, even if the success was undercut by the fact that it
occurred at the expense of others. In _Europe_, however, it is not
clear that anyone is truly liberated from anything. It appears
that, at the end of the poem, Orc is about to overthrow Enitharmon.
However, this exchange of power, should it take place, would not
bring with it even the limited moral triumph implied by Orc's
victory over Albion's Angel in _America_.

A comparison of the two Preludiums will indicate the difference
in emphasis. In _America_, Orc liberates himself from bondage
at the expense of the "shadowy daughter of Urthona." The Preludium
to _Europe_ features the same female figure, now identified as the
"nameless shadowy female" (1:1, E59). Like Orc, she sees herself
initially as a victim. Unable to free herself, she calls for a
saviour to deliver her. The rest of the poem, "A Prophecy,"
provides an ironic answer to her request.

The burden of her lament is that her life has been rendered meaningless by the fact that she is identified with the Prolific, whose works are constantly being destroyed by the Devouring:

My roots are brandish'd in the heavens. my fruits in earth beneath Surge, foam, and labour into life, first born & first consum'd! Consumed and consuming!
Then why shouldst thou accursed mother bring me into life? (1:8-11, E59)

The "nameless shadowy female" is aware of the irony of her situation. Her fruits are not only "consumed" but also "consuming," themselves identified with the forces of the Devouring. Even acts of creation are intimately associated with destruction. She seizes the "burning power" of the stars and from it creates "howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings" (2:3-4, E59). But she has retained a vision of a higher state, since she has experienced "visionary joy" as well as "shady woe" (2:12), and in the last lines of the Preludium she calls for someone to impose a human order upon the flux of experience:

And who shall bind the infinite with an eternal band? To compass it with swaddling bands? and who shall cherish it With milk and honey? (2:13-15, E60)

The rest of the poem, "A Prophecy," constitutes a kind of ironic commentary on her questions.

"A Prophecy" is divided into three main sections. The first (3:1-9:5) is concerned with the birth of Christ and Enitharmon's subsequent corruption of the Christian mentality. (Enitharmon
is the "accursed mother" of the Preludium.) The second section (9:16-13:8) describes the American Revolution and its aftermath from a different perspective than the one taken in America. The third (13:9-15:11) centres on Enitharmon's response to the events described in the second. In each section, Orc and Enitharmon appear in a situation of conflict with each other. Although this conflict never expresses itself in terms of one character's direct aggression against the other, it does become more intense as the poem progresses. But from the point of view of the shadowy female, it hardly matters who the ultimate victor (if any) will be, for neither Orc nor Enitharmon can help bring her "visionary joy" to fruition.

The potential for real liberation in Europe is represented by Jesus, the "secret child" of the opening lines of the Prophecy, a passage patterned after the opening of Milton's Nativity Ode. But Jesus disappears from the action immediately, and nothing is heard of him again. The reason for this is that Enitharmon perverts the message of Christianity, her goal being "That Woman, lovely Woman! may have dominion" (6:3). Instead of Jesus, it is Orc who arrives on the scene to stay, rising up at the call of either Los or Enitharmon:

49

Arise 0 Orc from thy deep den,
First born of Enitharmon rise!
And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy vine;
For now thou art bound;
And I may see thee in the hour of bliss, my eldest born.

The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire,
Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.

(4:10-16, E60-1)
Orc is bound, as he was in the Preludium of America. Though he takes no direct part in the action of the first part of the Prophecy, he is established as the representative of the thematic opposite to Enitharmon. The "garlands of the ruddy vine" identify him as a god of drunkenness and excess, in obvious contrast to Enitharmon's puritanism. But, as in the case of Orc's relation to Albion's Angel in America, there is an ironic link between them. Enitharmon apparently needs to make use of his energy, for it is only after he has risen that she descends "down . . . into his red light" (4:17), and begins to give orders to institute her repressive mental regime. Her reign is undisputed for the eighteen hundred years of the Christian era. At the end of the first section of the Prophecy, Orc remains bounds, and human history is "a female dream" (9:5) fashioned by the sleeping Enitharmon.

The second section begins in medias res with a scene borrowed from America, Orc's victory over Albion's Angel when the plagues "recoil!" In Europe, however, we hear nothing of the liberation of the American colonists, or of the regeneration of the British "female spirits of the dead." Instead, the emphasis is on Orc's destructive power, as he burns his victim, Albion's Angel, in a ritual fire:

They saw his boney feet on the rock, the flesh consum'd in flames:
They saw the Serpent temple lifted above, shadowing the Island white:
They heard the voice of Albions Angel howling in flames of Orc, Seeking the trump of the last doom

(12:10-13, E63)
Presumably the sacrifice does set free the "youth of England" who have been "hid in gloom" emanating from Albion's Angel (12:5). But Blake does not celebrate Orc's role as liberator here. The common people provide the focus for the conflict between Orc and Enitharmon, but there is no passage in which images of freedom dominate. Instead, Blake chooses to emphasize the "howl" of Orc's defeated enemies (12:14, 21).

Enitharmon's response to the situation is puzzling:

Enitharmon laugh'd in her sleep to see (0 womans triumph)
Every house a den, every man bound; the shadows are fille'd
With spectres, and the windows wove over with curses of iron:
Over the doors Thou shalt not; & over the chimneys Fear is written:
With bands of iron round their necks fasten'd into the walls
The citizens: in leaden gyves the inhabitants of suburbs
Walk heavy: soft and bent are the bones of the villagers (12:25-31, E63)

Apparently these people are the same ones being set free by Orc's execution of Albion's Angel. Michael Tolley has made one plausible suggestion for the reason for Enitharmon's odd response: delusion. Whatever the explanation, the passage serves to develop the ironic parallel between Orc and Enitharmon already introduced in the first section. Although their attitudes to the people are in opposition to each other, Orc's work of liberation is accomplished through the sacrifice of Albion's Angel, while Enitharmon's role as oppressor is clearly indicated by the quoted passage.

In the third section of the Prophecy, Enitharmon awakes to discover that Orc poses a real threat to her sovereignty. The context of human suffering is virtually forgotten, as the
action shifts back to Enitharmon's "crystal house" (13:14). She orders her children about in "the sports of night" (13:13) as she did at the beginning of the Prophecy; but when the night is over Enitharmon weeps as Orc returns to earth and begins to establish his kingdom by violence:

But terrible Orc, when he beheld the morning in the east, Shot from the heights of Enitharmon; And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his fury. (14:37-15:2, E65)

At last Enitharmon sees clearly how powerful Orc is; she can no longer ignore the fact of his active presence in human history. Her response indicates that she sees his action as a direct threat to her: "Enitharmon groans & cries in anguish and dismay" (15:8). Apparently she fears Orc is about to usurp her power, although this does not happen in the poem itself. The fact that the conflict is left unresolved has led one critic to complain that Blake has here produced "the most inconclusive of his conclusions." But in a sense this judgment is unfair because Europe's last words ("the strife of blood") provide an adequate indication of the goal to which the action has led. Whether Orc defeats Enitharmon or not, the two characters can be related to each other only as victim and tormentor. The nameless shadowy female's desire for "visionary joy" is to remain unsatiated.

As in America and Europe, Blake in The Book of Urizen uses the victim-figure to establish an ironic link between two characters representing thematic opposites. In this poem the two characters are Urizen, who is responsible for the Fall, and Los, who seeks
to reverse its effects. Urizen creates the fallen world by destroying the original unity of the Eternals, but the theme of victimhood does not appear until after the birth of Orc, the son of Los and Enitharmon, more than halfway through the poem. The birth so shocks the unfallen Eternals that they close the tent with which they have enveloped the "Void" (19:6, E77) of the fallen world. This action deprives Los of his ability to perceive Eternity:

10. The Eternals, closed the tent
    They beat down the stakes the cords
    Stretch'd for a work of eternity;
    No more Los beheld Eternity.

11. In his hands he siez'd the infant
    He bathed him in springs of sorrow
    He gave him to Enitharmon.

(19:43-20:5, E78-9)

Los responds to this situation by experiencing an emotion Blake identifies as "Jealousy," and this leads directly to his sacrifice of Orc:

4. They took Orc to the top of a mountain.  
   0 how Enitharmon wept!  
    They chain'd his young limbs to the rock 
    With the Chain of Jealousy 
    Beneath Urizens deathful shadow

(20:21-5, E79)

Los's motive is never explained. Some critics have suggested that his jealousy is inspired by Orc's relationship with Enitharmon, but there is no indication in the text that the mother's love for her child is particularly intense. All we learn about it is that Orc is "Fed with milk of Enitharmon" (20:7); no reference is made to emotional attachment. On the other hand, there is no
explicit statement that the sacrifice is Los's revenge for having been cut off from Eternity, though critics have suggested that this, too, is a possibility.55 Nor does it help much to relate Orc's sacrifice to a particular source or model, because there are too many possibilities. (Orc has been plausibly identified with Isaac, Oedipus, Prometheus, Christ, Adonis and Orpheus.)56

It may be that Blake deliberately leaves Los's motive vague in order to indicate that the psychology of victimization inevitably holds sway in the fallen world. If even Los, who has earlier been identified as the "Eternal Prophet" (10:7, 10:15, 14:34, 15:1) is not immune to it, this psychology must be all-pervading.57 But Los has accomplished nothing by his action, which, far from providing him with a satisfying sense of his identity, has served only to demonstrate that he is a representative fallen being.

Orc's cries awaken Urizen, who, "craving with hunger" (20:30), begins to explore his "dens."58 This activity leads him to a perception of his situation which parallels that of Los at Orc's birth. At that point, Los is no longer able to behold Eternity. While Urizen has no interest in Eternity as such,59 he does wish to impose order upon the fallen world. His children prevent him from doing this, just as Orc (indirectly) is responsible for cutting Los off from Eternity:

4. He in darkness clos' d, view' d all his race
   And his soul sicken' d! he curs' d
   Both sons & daughters; for he saw
   That no flesh nor spirit could keep
   His iron laws one moment.
5. For he saw that life liv'd upon death
   (23:22-7, E80)

Los experiences "Jealousy"; for Urizen, the emotion aroused is "Pity" (25:4), which seems more positive. But, as several critics have pointed out, Urizen's Pity is hypocritical. His insight that life lives upon death applies to himself as well as to his children, for we soon learn that his life depends upon their deaths. Urizen has been identified as "the primeval Priest" in the poem's first line (2:1, E69); now he fabricates "The Net of Religion" (25:22), the instrument by which his victims are to be sacrificed, paralleling Los's Chain of Jealousy. The form of torment Urizen chooses is the slow death through physical and mental destruction which characterizes "life" in the fallen world. Disease, a reduction in the capacity of the senses, even a shrinkage in physical size prepare Urizen's victims to accept the fact of their own deaths. Their weakness causes them to worship Urizen as God, thus ensuring that his own "life" will continue:

No more could they rise at will
In the infinite void, but bound down
To earth by their narrowing perceptions

They lived a period of years
Then left a noisom body
To the jaws of devouring darkness

5. And their children wept, & built
Tombs in the desolate places,
And form'd laws of prudence, and call'd them
The eternal laws of God
   (27:45-28:7, E82)

An irony here is that Urizen is imitating Los, the prophet-artist,
whose proper role is to help restore the world to its unfallen state. The most significant of Los's inventions, it appears, has been the institution of victimhood itself. In The Book of Urizen, the victim-theme again performs the function of establishing an ironic linkage between two characters whose thematic significances are opposed. This time, however, the irony is closer to the centre of the poem's meaning than in either America or Europe. The parallels between Los and Urizen are more overt than the ones between Orc and Albion's Angel and between Orc and Enitharmon in the earlier poems.

The Book of Urizen ends with the revolt of Fuzon, which is further described in The Book of Ahania. Again the situation involves two characters — in this case Fuzon and Urizen — who represent opposing thematic values. Fuzon, like Orc in America and Europe, is associated with fire and passion; he characterizes Urizen as a "Demon of Smoke," an "abstract non-entity" (2:10-11, E83). But unlike Los and Urizen in the preceding poem, they confront each other directly. Each one sees his own role as that of the oppressor, and the other's as that of the victim. Each, in turn, emancipates himself from his situation as victim at the expense of the other.  

At the beginning of the poem, Fuzon has broken free from the Net of Religion, and he attacks Urizen directly. He hurls a globe of flame which becomes a "hungry beam" dividing "the cold loins of Urizen" (2:29). Fuzon believes erroneously that Urizen is
now dead. In this situation we might expect Oothoon or the Orc of America to attempt in some way to restore the world to its unfallen state. But Fuzon has no vision to parallel those of Oothoon's last speech or of Orc's speech on Plate 6 of America. His response is simply to usurp Urizen's former role and declare himself the "primeval Priest" of The Book of Urizen:

8. While Fuzon his tygers unloosing
   Though Urizen slain by his wrath.
   I am God. said he, eldest of things!
   (3:36-8, E85)

Fuzon has accepted Urizen's maxim: life lives upon death. His slaying (as he thinks) of Urizen has, he believes, elevated him to Godhead.

It is precisely at this point that Urizen begins to retaliate. He launches a poisoned rock with a bow made from an "enormous dread Serpent" (3:13), which strikes Fuzon and kills him. Urizen, having thus released himself from victimhood, reassumes his earlier role:

6. The corse of his first begotten
   On the accursed Tree of MYSTERY:
   On the topmost stem of this Tree
   Urizen nail'd Fuzon's corse.
   (4:5-8, E86)

Fuzon is not simply dead, however, but a "pale living Corse" whose suffering on the Tree associates him primarily with Christ -- in an ironic sense, since Fuzon's suffering is not redemptive -- but also with a number of other historical and literary figures. As in the case of Orc in The Book of Urizen, it may be that Blake
associates Fuzon with the widest possible range of victims in order to make a general statement about the significance of the victim-figure.

The best commentary here is perhaps Ahania's lament "round the Tree of Fuzon" (4:48), which takes up the second half of the poem. Her speech has been compared to Oothoon's, although her vision of paradise is set in the actual past rather than the hypothetical future. She recalls the time before the Fall, when her relationship with Urizen was the idyllic one that Oothoon longed to share with Theotormon, and her potential for creativity was fulfilled:

10. When I found babes of bliss on my beds,  
And bosoms of milk in my chambers  
Fill'd with eternal seed  
O! eternal births sung round Ahania,  
In interchange sweet of their joys.  
(5:19-23, E88)

Ahania is also like Oothoon in that her speech accomplishes nothing. She too is a victim, one for whose plight Fuzon and Urizen are jointly responsible, since Urizen rejects Ahania at the moment Fuzon's beam enters his loins (2:30-7). In the passage which concludes her speech, she uses language which echoes Earth's in "Earth's Answer" as she addresses Urizen:

Cruel jealousy! selfish fear!  
Self-destroying: how can delight,  
Renew in these chains of darkness  
Where bones of beasts are strown  
On the bleak and snowy mountains  
Where bones from the birth are buried  
Before they see the light.  
(5:41-7, E89)
This last image inevitably reminds the twentieth-century reader of Samuel Beckett: "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." But Ahania's vision of desolation is more radical than Pozzo's in Waiting for Godot: in her account, even the instant of light is denied.

With The Book of Ahania, Blake's ironic vision of victimhood has been presented in its most extreme form. For Ahania, the tragedy is not that the wrong character has won the struggle (for example, Urizen as representative of "reason" instead of Fuzon as representative of "energy"). Rather it is that the struggle has taken place at all. Urizen's ultimate victory over Fuzon has done nothing to restore her original joy. Her lament for her broken relationship with Urizen is by implication a polemic against the institution of victimhood itself. In that sense, it also constitutes an appropriate choric response to virtually all of the poems examined in this chapter.
NOTES


3 In "A Cradle Song" (E11) and "On Anothers Sorrow" (E17), mention is made of Christ's suffering ("Thy maker lay and wept for me / Wept for me for thee for all"; "He becomes a man of woe / He doth feel the sorrow too"). However, there is no direct reference to the Crucifixion. In "The Lamb" (E8), Christ's identity as Lamb of God is not explicitly alluded to.

4 In "The Little Black Boy" (E9), the speaker declares his readiness to perform an act of Christlike self-sacrifice ("Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear, / To lean in joy upon our fathers knee"). But the occasion to perform this act does not arise in the poem itself.

5 For the "realist" approach, see Joseph H. Wicksteed, Blake's Innocence and Experience: A Study of the Songs and Manuscripts (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1928), pp. 109-10 and D. G. Gillham, Blake's Contrary States: The 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience' as Dramatic Poems (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 38-44. Both critics express ideological allegiance to the reality principle. After discussing the dream, Wicksteed continues, "but now as always we return to earth where the test of vision lies"; duty lies not in "the dreaming of dreams" but is rather "so to comfort one another with visionary thought that our dreams shall undo the harshness of rising in the dark and cold" (pp. 109-10). For Gillham, too, the question of whether Tom's dream is "true" is a side issue; the important point is that Tom is aware of the possibility of "a world which sympathy may give order to" and the experience may
affect his future conduct. Like Wicksteed, Gillham interprets "duty" in terms of comfort, in this case the speaker's attempt to console Tom: "One's duty lies in doing what must be done, and it happens that this is, for him [the speaker], an exercise of fellow-feeling" (p. 42). Thus both Wicksteed and Gillham embrace the values and outlook of the speaker.

For the approach which emphasizes the validity of imaginative perception, see Donald Dike, "The Difficult Innocence: Blake's Songs and Pastoral," ELH, 28 (1961), 371; Bloom, p. 37; Wallace Jackson, "William Blake in 1789: Unorganized Innocence," Modern Language Quarterly, 33 (1972), 399. Dike, after admitting that "Tom's vision is an answer to wishes," asserts that "wishing is one necessary means to the apprehension of reality"; Bloom argues that the dream is flawed because it does not get far enough away from the fallen world: the Angel's promise is not only "the loving fatherhood of God," but also "the direct projection . . . of the Church's disciplinary promise to its exploited charges"; Jackson writes enthusiastically of "the vision of innocence that lives within the child, which sustains itself if only one is faithful to its terms." These critics all regard the last line as ironic, proof that the speaker is deluded. For Dike, "The irony of the conclusion is almost brutal. Discreetly irrelevant to the most significant content of the dream, the moral drawn from it cautions that obedience is the safest policy" (372). Bloom argues that the entire last stanza is ironic, Blake's protest "against the confining and now self-deceiving trust of Innocence" (p. 37). Jackson believes that the moral is "hypocritical," spoken with "the rationalizing voice of experience," and that "Tom's vision has nothing to do with duty" (399). These critics implicitly opt for Tom for the role of Blake's spokesman.

For examples of the third approach, which involves the invention of some unusual meaning for "duty," see Robert F. Gleckner, The Piper & The Bard: A Study of William Blake (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1959), p. 110; Hazard Univ. of Washington Press, 1963), p. 262; E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 26, 186; and Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 13. Gleckner argues that "there is no duty on earth except to attain the power of vision"; Adams asserts that the duty is to wage "mental war," as Los does against Urizen in the myth Blake later developed; Hirsch considers the last line to be "the one flaw in the poem," but suggests nonetheless that "duty" should be interpreted as broadly as possible: "It is the Duty of Mercy, Pity, and Love"; Mellor, rather more fulsomely, says that "duty" means "one's loyalty or commitment to one's capacity for divinity; one's obedience to that inner desire or command which urges us to fulfill, in our individual actions and characters, God's holy will and love." All four of these accounts are unsatisfactory, and for the same reason. It is possible that the speaker is referring to Tom's "duty" to get up and go to work, though his earlier conduct towards Tom indicates that he has a higher concept of his own duty to others. But the poem contains no internal
evidence that he means by "duty" anything so extraordinary as these critics suggest.

6 Hirsch, p. 184.

7 Gillham, p. 40; Jackson, 398.

8 Wicksteed, Hirsch, Dike and Gillham all find the last line to be an appropriate non-ironic conclusion. Wicksteed says of the speaker: "His vision has told him that the children whom our gifts of pity go to help are seen by the visionary as angels round the throne of God" (p. 103). Dike concludes that the last line provides evidence that the vision is "over but not forgotten . . . It invokes compassion by its demonstration that the children are not only wretched but also humanly excellent: however degraded, still angelic presences who cannot be rebuffed with impunity" (374). See also Hirsch, p. 196 and Gillham, p. 196.

S. F. Bolt, Bloom, Adams and Jackson take the opposing view. Bolt speaks of the last line with "its implication that the exercise of pity is a prudent precaution against the wrath of a God of thunder." See "William Blake (1) The 'Songs of Innocence,'" Politics and Letters, 1 (1947), rpt. as "The 'Songs of Innocence'" in William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience, ed. Margaret Bottrall (London: MacMillan, 1970), p. 122. (The quotation appears in an "Author's Postscript" not included in the article as originally published.) Jackson argues that the line reveals the inadequacy of the speaker, who "preaches the moral of his own corrupted vision in which 'pity' is the rigorous and stony-eyed truth of an abstract morality" (399). See also Bloom, p. 39 and Adams, p. 259.

9 Hirsch, p. 196. The biblical references are to Acts 2.1-2 and Revelation 4.4-5.


13 Also relevant here is the long speech of the Abbe de Siéyès in The French Revolution (206-40, E292-3). De Siéyès is not himself a victim, but he envisages a time when the oppressed people of France (the peasants and soldiers) will rebel against nobles and clergy, whose subsequent repentance will make possible the advent of a golden age in which the regenerate Priest's prayer.
will be answered: "... and the happy earth sing in its course, "/'The mild peaceable nations be opened to heav'n, and men walk
with their fathers in bliss'" (236-7, E293). But de Sièyes' vision
is like Oothoon's in that it remains at the level of unrealized
prophecy (at least, in that part of the poem which is extant).

14 This point about the unexplained wrath has been made by

15 G. E. Bentley, Jr., in the introduction to his edition of
the poem -- William Blake, Tiriel: Facsimile and Transcript of
the Manuscript, Reproduction of the Drawings, and a Commentary
quotation of the passage by saying "Tiriel has tried to form man-
kind in the image he conceives, but he finds that he must curb
and destroy part of the child to make this possible" (p. 17).

16 Bentley, for example, suggests that "In the process of
curbing the 'youthful fancies' Tiriel himself degenerates" (p. 17).
Bentley supplies a period after the words "Such was Tiriel,"
though none appears in the manuscript and the following lines
do not make grammatical sense unless "Such was Tiriel" is the
principal clause of a new sentence. The word "Such" should
therefore be taken to refer to the status of the child in the
first part of the speech, not of the father. For a view parallel
to Bentley's, see Nancy Bogen, "A New Look at Blake's Tiriel,"
Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 74 (1970), 162. She
calls Tiriel's last speech "essentially a denunciation of Har but
actually of himself." She does not recognize that he sees himself
as a victim: "He alone is to blame for his outcast state and
his kingdom's decline, he realizes." Anne Mellor argues that
while Tiriel does not, in fact, realize this, it is something
he should realize: "Although Tiriel attributes his downfall to
Har... we know that he has only himself to blame" (p. 29).
William Halloran, however, asserts that Tiriel does present himself
as a victim, "a serpent forced by the laws of Har to crawl on the
ground." See "Blake's Tiriel: Snakes, Curses and a Blessing,"
South Atlantic Quarterly, 70 (1971), 176.

17 See S. Foster Damon, William Blake: His Philosophy and
Symbols (1924; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 75;
Stanley Gardner, Infinity on the Anvil: A Critical Study of
Blake's Poetry (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. 40; Gleckner,
The Piper & The Bard, p. 166; Bloom, p. 58; Michael J. Tolley,
Public Library, 69 (1965), 380; Morton D. Paley, Energy and the
Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 35; Roland A. Duerksen,
"The Life-in-Death Theme in The Book of Thel," Blake Studies


19 Beer makes this point: "The promise of the blend of innocence and experience that characterizes the creatures of nature has not been fulfilled in man" (p. 72).


21 This may be the place to mention the sexual dimension of the theme. I believe Johnson is right to see Thel's sexuality as an image of her psyche: "Her virginity is a physical sign of her psychological self-enclosure . . ." (266). See Mellor, pp. 34-7, for an argument that Thel, at the end of the poem, is no longer shackled by sexual inhibition.

22 Wagenknecht, p. 149.


24 Bloom, p. 142. Most critics take the position that the Clod's account is the "right" one, or at least that it is preferable to the Pebble's. See Damon, William Blake, p. 285; Schorer, p. 239; Frye, pp. 72-3; Gleckner, The Piper & The Bard, p. 75; and Beer, Blake's Humanism, p. 72. Others argue on behalf of the Pebble. See Wolf Mankowitz, "William Blake (2) The Songs of Experience," Politics and Letters, 1 (1947), rpt. as "The 'Songs of Experience'" in William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience, ed. Margaret Bottrall (London: MacMillan, 1970), pp. 128-9; and


27 This point has been made by Damon, William Blake, p. 280.

28 See Adams, p. 244; Hirsch, p. 275; Gillham, Blake's Contrary States, p. 177.


30 "Blake's Introduction to Experience," p. 25.

31 Frye ("Blake's Introduction to Experience," pp. 30-1), Adams, (p. 25) and Gillham (Blake's Contrary States, pp. 158-60) all take the position that Earth is in error here. Gleckner, Bloom and Hirsch disagree. Gleckner argues that "Earth does answer the voice of the Bard to some extent, for in her protest against the bonds of 'free Love,' she echoes the complaint of Oothoon in the Visions" (The Piper & The Bard, p. 237). But this begs the question of whether the dramatic context of "Earth's Answer" differs significantly from that of Visions of The Daughters of Albion.

Bloom thinks it is the responsibility of "the Bard, and all men," to "act to break the freezing weight of Jealousy's chain" which, Earth believes, binds her (p. 142). Bloom's position is based on the assumption that Frye is wrong to argue that the Bard speaks with absolute authority, but his own counter-argument is feeble: "The Bard of Experience sees what is, what was, and what is to come, but does not necessarily see them all as a single mental form, which is the clue to his tragic mental error throughout the Introduction" (p. 138). But the wording of line two does not make it clear he necessarily does not see them all as a "single mental form" either, so Bloom is hardly justified in assuming the presence of "tragic mental error." In fact, the evidence suggests the opposite: according to the line itself
"Who Present, Past, & Future sees"), the Bard is able to violate the sequence of clock time, and impose an imaginative form upon his temporal material, giving the present precedence over the other two tenses; and the fact that there is one verb ("sees") and that it is in the present tense, suggests, if anything, that he does see all three as "a single mental form." Later, Bloom argues that "The Bard . . . thinks of man as a 'lapsed Soul,' and Blake of course does not, as the Marriage has shown us" (p. 138). Bloom is here repeating Gleckner's fallacy, assuming that a proposition which may be implicit in one poem can be imported, without regard for context, to another.

Hirsch argues that Earth's speech parodies the "Introduction." He points out many elements of "Earth's Answer" which contain ironic echoes of corresponding elements in the poem which precedes it (pp. 213-15). For example: "The Bard had seen Earth actually arising; Earth quite properly answers: 'Look, does this grey despair appear to be a resurrection?'" (p. 214). The problem with this approach is that it begs the question of the target of the irony. Hirsch simply assumes that the Bard is the target, when in fact it is Earth herself.

32 Earth's attitude might be compared with that of the speaker of "Mad Song" (E407) in Poetical Sketches: "I turn my back to the east, / From whence comforts have increas'd." Since her poem is an "Answer," she has heard the Bard speaking, but she does not heed his call to "Turn away no more."

33 William Blake, p. 283. Adams (pp. 262-3) and Hirsch (pp. 229-31) also interpret the poem primarily as social comment. However, Gleckner (The Piper & The Bard, pp. 247-50) and Gillham (Blake's Contrary States, pp. 44-8) are both critical of the sweep.

34 "The Fly" (E23) is the most important of these, not because the fly is a victim but because the poem's speaker shares the psychology of the victims in the Songs of Experience we have examined so far. See Warren Stevenson, "Artful Irony in Blake's 'The Fly,'" Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 10:1 (1968), 77-82, especially this description of the speaker's mentality: "Since he does not care whether he lives or dies, so long as his limited and limiting assumptions about the nature of reality are correct, the speaker is indeed like a fly, mindlessly content to be buffeted about by fate like the shuttlecock being struck by the girl's battledore in the poem's illustration" (81). Although the speaker does not perceive himself to be at the mercy of any particular person, he needs the "blind hand" of fate to define his identity. For the sake of completeness, one might also refer to the "Babes reduced to misery" in "Holy Thursday" (E19) and to the speaker of "The Garden of Love" (E26), whose "joys & desires" are bound by the briars of the "Priests in black gowns." Harold Bloom's
interpretation of "The Tyger" (E24) is also relevant here. See Blake's Apocalyp
e, pp. 146-8, in which Bloom argues that the
speaker "desires to delude himself" (p. 146) and that by the end
of the poem he is "prostrate before a mystery entirely of his
own creation" (p. 147). This does not make the speaker a victim,
but it does illustrate the psychology I have been finding in the
other Songs. Finally there is "The Sick Rose" (E23), with its
ambiguous relationship between rose and worm.

35 For commentary, see Damon, William Blake, p. 282; Wicksteed,
pp. 178-9; Gleckner, The Piper & The Bard, pp. 252-3; Adams,
pp. 204-5; Bloom, p. 154; Hirsch, pp. 277-8; Beer, Blake's Humanism,
p. 73; Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition, Bollingen Series, No. 35
(Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), I, 343; Mellor,
p. 54. Only Gillham criticizes the boy, but this approach is
predicated upon the baseless assumption that the boy "is paraphrasing,
parrot-wise, something he has heard, without being aware of the
implications of his words" (Blake's Contrary States, p. 86).

36 For commentary, see Damon, William Blake, p. 281; Wicksteed,
pp. 183-6; Gleckner, The Piper & The Bard, pp. 269-71; Adams,
pp. 273-4; Bloom, pp. 155-6; Gilham, pp. 231-6; Hirsch, pp. 281-91;
Kathryn R. Kremen, The Imagination of the Resurrection: The Poetic
Continuity of a Religious Motif in Donne, Blake, and Yeats (Lewisburg,
Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1972), p. 150; Mellor, p. 189. For
a discussion of the dating, see Erdman, E722.

37 "Good-bye to Orc and All That," Blake Studies, 4:2 (1972),
142.

exposition of the Orc cycle.

39 There has been a tendency to ignore or to gloss over the
negative aspect of the shadowy daughter's experience. Thus Damon
asserts that "She yields herself completely to him" (William
Blake, p. 112); Schorer says that the Preludium ends with her
recognition of salvation (p. 286); and Erdman suggests that the
context is that of a "Behmenesque Genesis," although his quotations
from "Behmen" do not furnish particularly close parallels to
Blake's text: see "America: New Expanses," in Blake's Visionary
Forms Dramatic, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton,
"her sexual pleasure does not overcome the inhibiting effect of the
instruction she had long received" (p. 126), although there is no
reference in the poem to any such instruction. Beer suggests that
her last words do no more than "strike the necessary warning not"
that "The energies of revolution ... in themselves produce only
destruction and pain" (Blake's Humanism, p. 113).
The parallelism with the Preludium has been noted by Gardner, p. 58 and by Beer, Blake's Humanism, p. 114.

Bloom, in his commentary in Erdman's edition, appears to miss the point when he comments that Albion's Angel's speech on Plate 7 is "ironic," because "it is the Angel who is actually 'serpent-form'd'" (E815). Elsewhere he argues that Orc only appears as a serpent to Albion's Angel: "Orc ascribes his serpent-appearance in Angelic eyes as being due to his attempt to pull down nature, the accursed tree of Mystery" (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 130). But this does not explain why Orc should identify himself as a serpent; his reply to Albion's Angel includes nothing that indicates "Angelic eyes" have not seen clearly. The result, for the reader, is well described by David Wagenknecht: "while the conflict is raging, it is absolutely impossible, on the basis of the imagery, to distinguish between the antagonists" (p. 190).

There is also the fact that both are, from the outset, associated with the colour red. Albion's Angel "flam'd red meteors round the land of Albion" (3:16); the first appearance of Orc is described in this way:

As human blood shooting its veings all round the orbed heaven
Red rose the clouds from the Atlantic in vast wheels of blood
And in the red clouds rose a Wonder o'er the Atlantic sea

This association continues throughout the poem.


Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 134.

Most commentators are unrestrained in their enthusiasm for Orc's achievement, or for what they think Orc is about to achieve. Damon, for example, asserts that "everything created is consumed, revealing Eternity" (William Blake, p. 112); Frye admits the process of consummation has not been completed but seems optimistic: "The poem ends with a vision of the imagination bursting through the sense until the chaos of earth and water that we see begins to dissolve in fire" (Fearful Symmetry, p. 206); Gardner speaks of "the triumph of innocent desire" (p. 63); Beer has no doubts about the outcome: "This final attempt at defence is doomed to failure" (Blake's Humanism, pp. 118-19); Mellor celebrates the passage as a "triumphant prophecy of freedom" (p. 67). But Bloom (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 136) and Kremen (p. 160) admit that the question of Orc's victory is left open at the end of the poem. See also


47 Bloom suggests that the action of the Preludium takes place after she has "mated with Orc in the America Preludium" (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 157). See also Damon, William Blake, p. 342.

48 See Wagenknecht, pp. 195-6, for some of the implications of the questions.

49 Many critics have taken the position that Orc and Jesus are to be identified in Europe, or that the "secret child" is really Orc and not Jesus. Thus Damon asserts that the secret child "brings Jesus irresistibly to mind, though the Child is really Orc" (William Blake, p. 115); Frye speaks of "Orc's appearance as Jesus" (Fearful Symmetry, p. 216); Erdman describes the secret child as "Orc-Christ" (Prophet Against Empire, p. 265); Bloom asserts that the secret child is both Orc and Jesus (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 158), and Kremen, too, makes this identification (p. 161). Tolley's discussion of this question is the most thorough. He takes the position that the secret child is Jesus and that Jesus is not Orc: "it seems an over-simplification to identify Orc with Christ. The two are clearly differentiated at the beginning of the Prophecy" ("Europe," p. 144). See also pp. 119-22. Although Tolley does not make the point explicitly, it might be added that one way Blake clearly distinguishes between the two is simply by having the secret child descend at his birth (3:3), while Orc rises from his "deep den" (4:10).

50 There is some disagreement on this point. Damon (William Blake, p. 343), Bloom (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 160) and Beer (Blake's Humanism, p. 123) all identify the speaker as Los. Erdman (Prophet Against Empire, p. 266) and Tolley ("Europe," pp. 126-7) are more convincing in arguing that it is Enitharmon who speaks here. In any case, the matter does not affect my argument.

51 Beer identifies Orc here as "the lost Dionysus, source of energy in man" (Blake's Humanism, p. 123).
Blake's use of the "Serpent temple" in Europe, although it is not specifically identified as "Druidic," certainly anticipates his use of the motif of human sacrifice in the major prophecies.

"Although Orc's flames are consuming the flesh of Albion's Angel, a paragraph interrupts to remind us that, meanwhile, all appears to Enitharmon to be under rigid control" ("Europe," p. 141).

Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 173.

Damon admits that "The reason for Los's action is not made plain in Urizen" (William Blake, p. 119), though he also asserts that Orc's relationship with Enitharmon is the cause (William Blake, pp. 118-19; Blake Dictionary, p. 54). Margoliouth (p. 106) and Bloom (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 185) echo this latter view, Bloom adding that the fact that "the child has cost him Eternity" is also relevant. W. J. T. Mitchell argues that Los adopts "the role of jealous father-figure" when he "finds that his creation exceeds his control"; see "Poetic and Pictorial Imagination in Blake's The Book of Urizen," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 3 (1969), 94. See also Paley's discussion of "Jealousy" (pp. 74-6).

See, among others, Margoliouth, p. 106; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 185; Paley, p. 75; Wagenknecht, p. 169.

One critic, Leslie Tannenbaum, has gone so far as to suggest that this is the defining characteristic of the poem's world: "the world of Generation is built upon human sacrifice, Los's chaining of Orc." See "Blake's Art of Crypsis: The Book of Urizen and Genesis," Blake Studies, 5:1 (1972), 153.

Tannenbaum suggests that "Urizen as Abel-Elohim-Satan thrives on human sacrifice and thus awakens from his sleep only when the sacrificed Orc cries out" (154).

Although there is one reference to his "eternal creations" (23:9) and another to his "eternal sons" (23:19), it is his perception of them in the world of "Nature" that concerns him.

Damon, William Blake, p. 119; Margoliouth, p. 107; Gardner, p. 97; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 187; Wagenknecht, p. 95.

Morton Paley has described the significance of this cyclical action: "The outcome is ironical: the energy principle triumphs only to become similar to what it rebelled against, so that repressive reason achieves the final victory" (p. 81).
Paley lists and discusses nine such figures (pp. 81-5). Others are mentioned by Frye (Fearful Symmetry, pp. 214-15) and Bloom (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 190).

By Margoliouth, p. 111 and Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 193.

CHAPTER TWO

The Mantle of Luvah and the Lamb of God

The critic who sets out to approach The Four Zoas by way of its sacrificial imagery is immediately impressed by the extent to which the Crucifixion has come to dominate Blake's imagination. Jesus is of course himself a central figure in the poem, and his death upon the "tree of Mystery" (106:3, E365) in the crucial Eighth Night is the most important single event in the poem. But many of those sacrificial situations in which Jesus is not directly involved are certainly presented with the Crucifixion as an ironic point of reference. In fact, although the name of Jesus is invoked constantly, it is not until Night VII (a) that he descends in order to participate in the poem's action. Throughout most of the poem, the role of sacrificial victim has been performed by Orc and Luvah, in situations which correspond to those examined in the last chapter: their victimhood is a sign of fallenness, the "freedom" of one character depends upon another's bondage, life lives upon death. But Orc and Luvah are finally revealed,
ironically, as mirror images of Jesus, the Lamb of God whose sacrifice somehow has the effect of transforming the world. In The Four Zoas, then, Blake struggles with the problem of discovering redemptive meaning in a sacrificial situation which is itself identified with fallenness.

The fact that Blake introduces the figure of Jesus in this context may suggest that he is reaching for easy solutions. But this is not the case. Blake does not merely re-create situations he has previously used as vehicles for irony, and assert that these situations now have redemptive potential because of the participation of a character named Jesus. The presence of Jesus, on the contrary, raises the question of how victimhood can be the source of redemption. Ronald Grimes has put the issue concisely: "Two things Blake is sure of: that Jesus is savior and that Jesus died. The question is how these roles can be reconciled."¹ In this chapter I will attempt to show how Blake, in The Four Zoas, does attempt to reconcile the two.²

But before discussing that poem in detail, I should like to consider some of the lyrics from the Pickering Manuscript, and one related poem from the Notebook. The Pickering Manuscript -- dated by Erdman as belonging to "the late Felpham period" (E777) -- reveals that Blake's treatment of the victim was becoming quite different from what it had been during the period of the minor prophecies. Jesus is not explicitly mentioned in these poems, but in them Blake does begin to come to terms with the problem
of relating the dimension of sacrifice represented by Orc and Luvah in *The Four Zoas* to the one represented by Jesus.

The Notebook poem "My Spectre around me night & day" (E467) does make direct reference to Jesus (in his role as "Dear Redeemer"). It is also a good introduction to the Pickering Manuscript because it anticipates two new developments in Blake's treatment of victimhood which become centrally important there. It is a difficult poem to deal with because there are certainly two speakers, but Blake does not clearly indicate which speeches belong to which character. It will not be necessary to attempt to unravel that question here, since the answer would not affect the meaning of the sacrificial imagery itself.

Like several of the Pickering Manuscript poems, "My Spectre around me" is concerned with relations between the sexes. Set in "A Fathomless & boundless deep," the poem describes, in dialogue form, the male's pursuit of the female. The exotic setting is complemented by the violence of the sacrificial imagery and the crudity of the characterization:

```
Seven of my sweet loves thy knife
Has bereaved of their life
Their marble tombs I built with tears
And with cold & shuddering fears
and so on, until a total of twenty-eight of the speaker's loves
has fallen prey to the sacrificial knife. But it may well be
this same speaker who, several stanzas later, threatens

... to end thy cruel mocks
Annihilate thee on the rocks
And another form create
To be subservient to my Fate
```
It seems pointless to discuss these characters in terms of moral responsibility; they are possessed by emotions which have the intensity of madness:

Never Never I return  
Still for Victory I burn  
Living thee alone I'll have  
And when dead I'll be thy Grave

Yet it is also in this poem that, for the first time, an alternative to the unending suffering of the victims is suggested:

Throughout all Eternity  
I forgive you you forgive me  
As our Dear Redeemer said  
This the Wine & this the Bread

Unfortunately, the characters do not put this suggestion into practice. But the notion that the sort of relation between the victim and his tormentor which we have found in the Songs and minor prophecies can be radically transformed into a communion ritual representative of mutual forgiveness, is a startling new departure for Blake. It is equally unusual that the poem's explicitly stated moral should be free of irony; but here there is no hint that the suggestion about mutual forgiveness is anything other than a straightforward solution to the problem which the poem raises.

These two apparently contradictory tendencies find expression in separate groups of poems in the Pickering Manuscript. In one group, which includes "The Golden Net," "The Crystal Cabinet," and "The Mental Traveller," there is no overt moralizing at all. As in the narrative part of "My Spectre around me," ethical
norms have no relevance to the action. The characters cannot foresee the consequences of their decisions: they are driven, their lives governed by powerful forces they neither understand nor control. As characterization becomes less important, setting leaps into new prominence. The strangeness of the world of these poems seems to emphasize the unnatural quality of the institution of victimhood itself. The victim's situation is presented as the symptom of the falleness of human experience, absurd in the cruelty and injustice with which it is inevitably associated.

The second group includes "Mary," "The Grey Monk," "Long John Brown & Little Mary Bell," "William Bond," and some of the "Auguries of Innocence." In these poems, Blake moves in the opposite direction, having his speaker make explicit moral evaluations of the actions of his characters. Of course he has done this before, in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. However when one of the *Songs* concludes with a moral -- "If all do their duty they need not fear harm" -- it can invariably be construed as ironic in some sense. But there is no irony implicit in these judgments:

```
All Faces have Envy sweet Mary but thine
The Hermits Prayer & the Widows tear
Alone can free the World from fear
And there goes Miss Bell with her fusty old Nut
Seek Love in the Pity of others Woe
```

What these two new developments in the presentation of the victim-figure have in common is that both indicate Blake's dissatisfaction
with his earlier approach of probing for moral and psychological irony. In the Pickering Manuscript poems, he has begun to search for positive answers to the questions raised by the Songs and minor prophecies.4

"The Golden Net" (E474) is the first of the poems in which Blake defines the pitilessly irrational nature of the institution of victimhood. Characterization is minimal. The speaker, a young man, becomes the victim of "Three Virgins" bearing "a Net of Golden Twine." The encounter is described with an emphasis on surrealistic detail:

The one was Clothd in flames of fire
The other Clothd in iron wire
The other Clothd in tears & sighs
Dazling bright before my Eyes

They call out to the speaker, weeping in distress. He is moved, and begins to weep in sympathy. The net is borne aloft; the speaker strays under it and is trapped.

This seems to follow the pattern established in the Songs of Experience: the victim in some way contributes to his own downfall. If the young man had passed the Virgins by, he would not have lost his freedom. The closest parallel is "A Poison Tree," but there is a crucial difference. The "foe" steals the apple as a deliberate act of aggression against the speaker. In "The Golden Net," the victim's response to the apparent suffering of the Virgins is generous and warm-hearted. It is clearly unjust that he should suffer for it.5 In this respect, the poem more closely resembles "How sweet I roam'd," in which the speaker
is deceived by the prince of love. However the poem's parable is interpreted, account must be taken of the moral absurdity of the speaker's fate.

A similar point can be made about "The Crystal Cabinet" (E479), in which the speaker is not seduced, but, like the chimney sweeper of Experience, is captured as he dances upon the heath:

The Maiden caught me in the Wild
Where I was dancing merrily
She put me into her Cabinet
And Lockd me up with a golden Key

Virtually all commentators on the poem have seen the primary meaning of its parable as sexual. If this is so, its meaning seems to be that sexuality resists all human attempts to impose order upon it.

In the opening stanza, the victimizer is of course the inscrutable Maiden. The speaker is overcome by the visionary landscape he finds within the Cabinet ("Another England there I saw / Another London with its Tower"). Finally he attempts to possess the Maiden -- or at least "Another Maiden like herself" -- but the attempt fails:

I strove to sieze the inmost Form
With ardor fierce & hands of flame
But burst the Crystal Cabinet
And like a Weeping Babe became

Again, it seems inappropriate to say that the speaker is morally at fault here. In striving "to sieze the inmost Form," he is attempting to give the fullest possible expression to the "ardor fierce" that possesses him. There is no indication that he is
conscious of committing a sin or crime. Nothing in his previous experience of the Cabinet would lead him to believe that his act will have the unhappy consequences it does have:

A weeping Babe upon the wild
And Weeping Woman pale reclind
And in the outward air again
I filld with woes the passing wind

The speaker's attempt to exchange roles has failed, as victim and seductress share the same fate. There is no indication that either one should be judged guilty, since the speaker has acted in ignorance and the Maiden's motive is left unexplained. The motif of victimhood has been used to invite the reader to contemplate the anarchic power of the force which animates sexual experience.

"The Mental Traveller" (E475) is of course by far the most complex poem in the Pickering Manuscript, and a full analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter. But no discussion of victimhood can ignore the rite described in the third through the seventh stanzas. It involves, initially, a male child and an old woman in a situation resembling that of "To Tirzah":

And if the Babe is born a Boy
He's given to a Woman Old
Who nails him down upon a rock
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold

She binds iron thorns around his head
She pierces both his hands & feet
She cuts his heart out at his side
To make it feel both cold & heat

But the speaker here makes no attempt to explicate his striking image of sacrifice, unlike the speaker of "To Tirzah," who allegorizes his experience in terms of mortality and the fallen senses. Yet the image is extraordinarily rich in meaning, as critics have discovered.
The male child, like the speaker of the earlier poem, is finally able to reject his role as victim and become an oppressor in his turn, although here his victim is not Jesus but the female figure herself:

Till he becomes a bleeding youth
And she becomes a Virgin bright
Then he rends up his Manacles
And binds her down for his delight

If the language is from "The Clod & the Pebble" and the dramatic situation from "To Tirzah," the moral and psychological dimension of the SongsofExperience is nevertheless absent. The gruesome visual detail, the way in which the child is associated with such figures as Jesus and Prometheus, the fantastic nature of the poem's world ("she grows young as he grows old"), all serve to distance the characters, to make it impossible for the reader to judge them as he might judge Tirzah and the speaker of "To Tirzah." As in the case of "The Golden Net" and "The Crystal Cabinet," the motif of victimhood is used to characterize a world in which ethical values seem to have no meaning.

The poems in the second group, on the other hand, act almost as paradigms for some of Blake's concepts of value. "Mary" (E478) is perhaps the simplest example. In this poem, the life of a beautiful woman is poisoned by the envy of people who are inferior to her. The opening stanzas describe a village ball at which Mary impresses everyone with her beauty and grace. The next day, however, the villagers' envy begins to express itself: "Some said she was proud some called her a whore / And some when she passed by shut to the door." Mary responds by
making herself "plain & neat," hoping to become acceptable to
the villagers, but she fails: "Proud Marys gone Mad said the
Child in the Street." The poem ends with Mary in dejection,
facing a life of unhappiness because of her superiority, moral
as well as physical, to the people she lives among.

The innovative feature of the poem, when we compare it
to the Songs, is that the moral issue is presented without irony.
Mary, the victim, is unequivocally right; the villagers, her
tormentors, are wrong. Smallness of mind and meanness of spirit
destroy the natural aristocrat, the person "born with a different
Face." In this situation, victimhood is as symptomatic of the
fallenness of human experience as it is in those Pickering Manu­
script poems we have just discussed. But in "Mary," the moral
perspective is invoked by the speaker, and left unshaded with
irony by the poet. There is left the implicit suggestion that
the problem the poem raises can be solved in moral terms.

A parallel point may be made about "Long John Brown & Little
Mary Bell" (E487). Like the characters in "The Crystal Cabinet"
and "The Mental Traveller," John and Mary are "driven." The forces
which drive them are personified by Mary's Fairy and John's
Devil. But here moral judgment is again relevant, in Mary's case
if not in John's.

Mary's Fairy is the tormentor, that aspect of her sexuality
that has been corrupted by a moral code which teaches that "Love
is a Sin." John's frustrated Devil forces him to eat himself
to death. John is thus presented as an innocent victim, apparently not responsible for his fate. But Mary's case is different. After John's death the Fairy deserts her, and is replaced by John's Devil. Mary, like the Maiden of "The Crystal Cabinet," becomes a victim in her turn. But in this poem it is clear that the reader is expected to make an adverse judgment upon Mary. The devastating last line emphasizes that she has acted wrongly. The speaker's tone precludes irony here: we are meant to see Mary, with her "fusty old Nut" as the author of her own misfortune.13

"William Bond" (E488) has a happier ending. It is the only one of Blake's lyrics in which the notion of mutual forgiveness, advanced tentatively at the end of "My Spectre around me," is presented as fully realized in the action of the poem. William, apparently betrothed to Mary Green, falls in love with another woman. He is then subject to attacks of conscience, symbolized by the "Angels of Providence," which drive away the Fairies of sexuality and cause him to fall sick. Bedridden, he resembles the crucified Christ:14 "And on his Right hand was Mary Green / And on his left hand was his sister Jane." But in this poem the woman ends the victim's suffering with an act of self-sacrifice, as she refuses to insist on her right to act as a moral oppressor. She asks William if he loves someone else, and offers to release him from his commitment if he wishes it. He replies:

Yes Mary I do another Love  
Another I love far better than thee
And Another I will have for my Wife
Then what have I to do with thee

This last line reminds us of the attitude of the speaker of "To Tirzah." It indicates that he has understood his own situation to be that of a victim, exploited by Mary. He sees this as his opportunity to escape from bondage. Yet the grounds for his rejection of her indicate that he has now become an exploiter, and she his victim. But this sacrifice has nothing to do with morality as such:

For thou are Melancholy Pale
And on thy Head is the cold Moons shine
But she is ruddy & bright as day
And the sun beams dazzle from her eyne

Here William is the priest of a religion of beauty which decrees that the "Melancholy Pale" must be cast out in favour of the "ruddy & bright."

Mary faints at the declaration, and is placed beside William in bed. When she awakens,

The Fairies that fled from William Bond
Danced around her Shining Head
They danced over the Pillow white
And the Angels of Providence left the Bed

The Fairies of sexuality replace the Angels of repression: this represents William's parallel act of "forgiveness," though it is not a moral decision but a spontaneous emotive response. Freed from his moral obligation to Mary, he is able to pardon her spurious aesthetic sin of omission (she does not have sun-beams dazzling from her eyes). So William refuses to make the rejection of "the cold Moons shine." The moral is explicit:
Seek Love in the Pity of others Woe
In the gentle relief of another's care
In the darkness of night & the winter's snow
In the naked & outcast Seek Love there

This speech could well have been delivered by the speakers of "The Chimney Sweeper" and "Holy Thursday" in the Songs of Innocence. The speaker accepts the fallenness of the world; people will continue to experience "Woe" and "care." Here, however, there is no vision placed in apposition to the concluding precept, such as we find in the Songs of Innocence. There is no dream of paradise, no pentecostal song. The closest thing to it is perhaps William's vision of the beautiful woman for whom he wanted to leave Mary. But she, like the Three Virgins of "The Golden Net," and the Maiden of "The Crystal Cabinet" proves to be less desirable than she at first appeared.

So far we have considered six of the Pickering Manuscript poems which make use of the figure of the victim. Three have presented situations in which Blake's irony is no longer directed at the characters, but at the unnaturalness of the institution of victimhood itself. The other three have presented similar situations as vehicles for the working out of ethical problems. "The Grey Monk" (E480) belongs to the second group, but is also the poem which perhaps best allows us to see that these approaches are complementary rather than contradictory.

In this poem, the suffering is political rather than sexual. The Monk himself is a martyr, identified with the crucified
Christ: "The blood red ran from the Grey Monks side / His hands & feet were wounded wide." But he is not the only victim: there is also a mother with starving children, a whole society in bondage to a "merciless Tyrant." Although a rebellion is in progress, the Monk recognizes that its result can only be the replacement of one "Tyrant" with another with no alleviation of human suffering. Events prove him right:

The hand of Vengeance found the Bed
To which the Purple Tyrant fled
The iron hand crushd the Tyrants head
And became a Tyrant in his stead

Within this grim scenario of apparently endless tyranny, the Monk utters a prophetic speech, for which he claims divine inspiration. The framework of misery in the external, political reality does not cast the prophecy in an ironic light, however, for the Monk accurately predicts the outcome of the rebellion.

But he also suggests that alternative courses of action are open. His speech is remarkable for its fusion of the moral with the visionary:

But vain the Sword & vain the Bow
They never can work Wars overthrow
The Hermits Prayer & the Widows tear
Alone can free the World from fear

For a Tear is an Intellectual Thing
And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King
And the bitter groan of the Martyrs woe
Is an Arrow from the Almighties Bow

Forgiveness, even if it is the supreme moral act, is, as "William Bond" has taught us, not enough to bring about the Golden Age; by itself, it gives access to the "Comforter of Night," without
causing the sun to rise. But neither does analysis of the fallenness of human experience (for which victimhood is the image in "The Golden Net," "The Crystal Cabinet," and "The Mental Traveller") provide a means for changing the world. It is as if Blake's problem as an artist parallels the problem the Grey Monk faces in his role of prophet in a society which is perpetually destroying itself: how can one move from the world of the stems of generation to the Golden Age? (That such movement is possible does not occur to the other characters in the Pickering Manuscript.) Blake's answer, ultimately, was to write the major prophecies. The Grey Monk, in his own prophecy, suggests what is necessary for an answer: to achieve a perspective from which it can be seen that human desire creates the world we live in. The martyr suffering on the stems of generation can, with his own tears and sighs, be contributing to the building up of Jerusalem.

The Monk's prophecy is related to a number of the "Auguries of Innocence" (E481), in which the suffering of animals is said to have a supernatural dimension:

A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage

A Horse misusd upon the Road
Calls to Heaven for Human blood

A Skylark wounded in the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing

In such situations, the human tormentors are to be subject to some mysterious retribution:
He who shall hurt the little Wren
Shall never be beloved by Men
He who the Ox to wrath has movd
Shall never be by Woman lovd
The wanton Boy that kills the Fly
Shall feel the Spiders enmity

Closest in spirit to the Monk's utterance, however, is the couplet which raises the possibility of something beyond retribution:

The Lamb misusd breeds Public strife
And yet forgives the Butchers Knife

The appropriate response to the Butcher's knife is forgiveness; the appropriate response to the sword and bow is the intellectual tear and the angelic sigh.

In "The Grey Monk," the Hermit, the Widow and the Martyr somehow have the power to transform the world, though the way this power works is not revealed. Certainly these victims differ from others we have met in Blake's poetry -- Tom Dacre, Oothoon, and Ahania, for example. Blake's notion of victimhood has obviously changed. It has moved in the direction of Christian orthodoxy, whose centre is the sacrificial victim whose suffering and death redeems the world.

But Blake has not repudiated his earlier analysis of victimhood, either. The context in which the Monk utters his prophecy is significant: while it is possible for Hermit and Widow to free the world from fear, the liberation does not occur in the poem itself. The Monk's assertions about the redemptive power of sacrificial suffering do not become achieved reality. Blake seems to be suggesting that the Christian concept of redemptive
sacrifice provides an alternative to the kind of sacrifice which has appeared in his previous poetry. But in "The Grey Monk" these alternatives are simply juxtaposed against each other. No attempt is made to explain how the two are related, how one may be transformed into the other.

Blake does make this attempt in The Four Zoas. He begins by presenting the Fall in terms of victimhood in a way characteristic of some of the Pickering Manuscript poems. He explores the sacrificial situation chiefly through Orc and Luvah, figures whose sacrifices provide many ironic echoes of the Crucifixion. At the same time, however, he makes frequent reference to Jesus in a way which suggests that his sacrifice, like those of the Hermit, Widow, and Martyr in "The Grey Monk," provides a means of redeeming the world. Finally, Jesus enters the poem's action, and the tension between the two types of sacrifice is realized dramatically:

When Urizen saw the Lamb of God clothd in Luvahs robes Perplexd & terrifid he Stood tho well he knew that Orc Was Luvah But he now beheld a new Luvah
(101:1-3, E358)

The reader who has paid careful attention to Blake's use of the figure of the victim in the earlier Nights need not share Urizen's perplexity about the meaning of this event, which occurs at the beginning of Night VIII. Instead, he will be in a position to understand how Blake uses this figure as a vehicle for the presentation of the poem's climax in the Eighth Night and apocalyptic denouement in the Ninth.
Night I of The Four Zoas establishes the context of fallenness in a number of ways, and it is significant that Blake makes frequent use of the concept of victimhood in order to do this. Victimhood appears in several different forms. The story of Tharmas and Enion at the outset, the story of Luvah and Vala as narrated by Los and Enitharmon, the song sung at the wedding feast, and Enion's lament all possess characteristics made familiar to us through our examination of the motif in Blake's earlier poetry. At the same time Jesus is present, and even identified as the saviour, but he takes no redemptive action. As in "The Grey Monk," Blake juxtaposes the sacrificial alternatives without, as yet, attempting to integrate them.

The Fall begins with Tharmas, "Parent power darkning in the West," and he immediately perceives his fallenness in terms of victimhood: he and Enion, his emanation, have become "a Victim to the Living" (4:6-8, E297). More important, the two characters relate to each other as torturer and victim in accordance with the pattern of male-female behaviour established in some of the Pickering Manuscript poems, especially "The Mental Traveller." But there is a difference. Each presides over the other's death, but unwillingly. The mere fact that they exist in the fallen world guarantees that they must become executioners.

Enion's first speech reveals that she sees herself as Tharmas's victim:

Thy fear has made me tremble thy terrors have surrounded me
All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love
And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty.
Once thou wast to Me the loveliest son of heaven--But now
Why art thou Terrible and yet I love thee in thy terror till
I am almost Extinct & soon shall be a Shadow in Oblivion
Unless some way can be found that I may look upon thee & live
(4:17-23, E297-8)

The irony here is that Tharmas is a most reluctant torturer.
The "terror" to which Enion refers is not terror that Tharmas
has deliberately inspired in her. Apparently he experiences
something akin to terror himself: "Trembling & pale sat Tharmas
weeping in his clouds" (4:28, E298). Yet the result is the same
as if he had consciously set out to make her his victim: "Enion
said Farewell I die I hide from thy searching eyes" (5:5, E298).

As soon as this occurs, their roles reverse. Tharmas's
death is identified with a process by which Enion weaves his
Spectre from his original body, although she too is unhappy
in her role:

So saying he sunk down into the sea a pale corse
In torment he sunk down & flowed among her filmy Woof
His Spectre issuing from his feet in flames of fire
In gnawing pain drawn out by her lovd fingers every nerve
She counted, every vein & lacteal threading them among
Her woof of terror. Terrified & drinking tears of woe
Shuddring she wove--nine days & nights Sleepless her food was

(5:13-19, E298-9)

Her task completed, Enion feels "Repentance & Contrition" (5:28,
E299).

Thus the story of the fall of Tharmas and Enion serves,
at the beginning of the poem, to identify victimhood with fallenness.
Pathos is evoked on behalf of each character in his role as
mentor as well as in his plight as victim. Already it is clear that any redemptive action will have to free the character from any situation involving victims, rather than merely from the role of victim. At the same time Blake indicates that there is a type of sacrifice characteristic of the unfallen world of Eden, one whose purpose is the renewal of life:

In Eden Females sleep the winter in soft silken veils
Woven by their own hands to hide them in the darksom grave
But Males immortal live renewed by Female deaths. in soft Delight they die & they revive in spring with music & songs

(5:1-4, E298)

The "sacrifice" in which Tharmas and Enion are forced to participate is obviously a parody of this Edenic ritual, but Blake as yet gives no hint as to how the fallen version can be redeemed.

The notion of victimhood next appears in the story of Luvah and Vala. Enitharmon narrates the first part of this tale in the form of a "Song of Vala" which tells how Luvah and Vala left the "Human Heart" to usurp Urizen's role as ruler of the Brain: another version of the Fall. Her primary purpose in singing the song is apparently to arouse Los's jealousy, a goal she achieves. From our point of view, the most significant thing about Los's reply is that he evokes an image of Luvah as sacrificial victim:

I see, invisible descend into the Gardens of Vala
Luvah walking on the winds, I see the invisible knife I see the shower of blood

(11:12-14, E302)

At one point Blake added a nine-line passage which he later decided to delete. In this passage, which was to precede the
lines quoted above, Los speaks of the time when the "Lamb of God" will be "drawn . . . into a mortal form."¹⁷ This suggests that there is a direct connection between Jesus as Lamb of God and Luvah as sacrificial victim in the Gardens of Vala.¹⁸ However, it is important to note that Blake did decide to delete the passage, and that he therefore did not wish to identify Jesus with Luvah at this point in the poem.

Shortly after this there is another passage in which Luvah and Jesus are related directly, but it is again made clear that they are not to be identified. The scene in question occurs at the wedding feast of Los and Enitharmon:

But Luvah & Vala standing in the bloody sky
On high remaind alone forsaken in fierce jealousy
They stood above the heavens forsaken desolated suspended in blood
Descend they could not. nor from each other avert their eyes
Eternity appeard above them as One Man infolded
In Luvah[s] robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions
As the sun shines down on the misty earth Such was the Vision
(13:4-10, E303)

Harold Bloom does not hesitate to refer to this passage as "the vision of Luvah as the Christ" (E867), but the issue is not quite so clear-cut. The One Man is definitely Jesus, for he is explicitly identified as such later in Night I (see 21:4-5, E306). However it does not follow that Jesus is being presented as Luvah. Luvah, with Vala, remains powerless, "alone," "forsaken," "desolate," for the duration of the vision. The One Man appears above them, associated with Luvah's "robes of blood" and "afflictions," but not the totality of his character.
What, then, is the meaning of the vision? One might almost reverse Bloom's formulation and suggest that its aim is to establish the distance between Luvah and Jesus by presenting an image of Christ as Luvah and contrasting this image with the reality of Luvah as he is. There is, of course, some difficulty with Luvah's "robes of blood" because, as Grimes complains, "Blake is not explicit as to the meaning of the phrase but simply repeats the phrase again and again." Morton Paley brings together the two major associations the phrase evokes when he suggests that "'Luvahs robes of blood,' emblematic of the Incarnation, are no doubt derived from the scarlet robe which Jesus was forced to wear while he was mocked and beaten." The robes of blood have to do not only with the Incarnation in a general way, but, more specifically, with the Crucifixion itself. Blake stresses this point by adding that the One Man bears Luvah's afflictions, as well. But a distinction must be made between a passage such as this and the one in Night VII (a) in which Los has a vision of "the Lamb of God / Clothed in Luvahs robes of blood descending to redeem" (87:44-5, E355). Here the One Man does not descend, and hence does not redeem.

The purpose of the vision then seems to be to show that Jesus has the potential to take redemptive action but that, at this point in the poem, he does not take it. There remains a separation between the One Man who appears in Luvah's robes of blood, and Luvah and Vala themselves. Los's vision of "the
invisible knife" and "the shower of blood" provides the correct account of the nature of sacrifice in the fallen world. The vision of the One Man is like the Monk's assertion about the value of sacrificial suffering, and like the vision of the sacrificial deaths of the Females in Eden presented in connection with the Tharmas-Enion narrative. It indicates that the situation in the fallen world is not hopeless, but it also reveals that there is a vast gulf to be crossed before redemption can occur.

The other references to Jesus in Night I are consistent with this pattern. In one passage he is identified as the "Eternal Saviour":

Now Man was come to the Palm tree & to the Oak of Weeping Which stand upon the Edge of Beulah & he sunk down From the Supporting arms of the Eternal Saviour; who disposd The pale limbs of his Eternal Individuality Upon the Rock of Ages. Watching over him with Love & Care

(18:11-15, E306)

But Jesus, in this scene, does not perform the sacrificial act which brings about salvation; instead he watches over the fallen Man without taking direct action to redeem him. Similarly, another passage contains a vision of the "Council of God" in "Great Eternity"; its members perceive

As One Man all the Universal family & that one Man They call Jesus the Christ & they in him & he in them Live in Perfect harmony in Eden the land of life Consulting as One Man above the Mountain of Snowdon Sublime

(21:47, E306)

Again the point about Jesus is that he does not yet descend to redeem the fallen world. He is, however, concerned about its
fallen condition. After listening to the appeal from the "Messengers of Beulah," the members of the Council of God elect the "Seven Eyes of God":

The Seven are one within the other the Seventh is named Jesus
The Lamb of God blessed for ever & he followed the Man
Who wandered in mount Ephraim seeking a Sepulcher
His inward eyes closing from the Divine vision & all
His children wandering outside from his bosom fleeing away
(19:11-15, E308)

Jesus' main function in Night I, then, is to "follow" the fallen Man, to watch over him with "Love & Care." It is not yet a matter of intervening directly in that portion of the poem's action which is set in the fallen world, and this possibility is not even mentioned explicitly in the passages we have just examined. 21

The other manifestations of victimhood in Night I are the song sung at the wedding feast of Los and Enitharmon, and Enion's lament, which follows it. The banquet itself includes a communion sacrifice which commentators unanimously identify as a parody of true communion. 22 Blake does not make much of this aspect of the wedding, dismissing it in a single line: "They eat the fleshly bread, they drink the nervous wine" (12:44, E303).

However the song which celebrates the marriage of Los and Enitharmon depicts at some length a world governed by the institution of human sacrifice, in the specific form of war:

Ephraim called out to Zion: Awake O Brother Mountain
Let us refuse the Plow & Spade, the heavy Roller & spiked Harrow. burn all these Corn fields. throw down all these fences Fattend on Human blood & drunk with wine of life is better far Than all these labours of the harvest & the vintage. See the river
Red with the blood of men. swells lustful round my rocky knees
My clouds are not the clouds of verdant fields & groves of fruit
But Clouds of Human Souls my nostrils drink the lives of Men
(14:7-14, E304)

Luvah and Vala are the deities who preside over this carnage --
they "ride / Triumphant in the bloody sky" (15:7-8, E304) --
but they eventually become victims in their turn as "the hammers
of Los / . . . melt the bones of Vala, & the bones of Luvah into
wedges" (15:20-16:1, E305), and Luvah is reborn, no longer
triumphant in the sky but "Bursting forth from the loins of
Enitharmon" (16:9, E305), himself subject to the torment of
life in the fallen world.23

Enion's lament, which follows the Song, provides a different
perspective on the same situation. Her use of animal imagery
to describe the inevitable cruelty of life in the world of Los
and Enitharmon creates a pathos which is absent from the Song.
All beings in this world, the world of fallen human history,
must at different times be both exploiter and victim, but there
is nothing redemptive about either role:

The Spider sits in his labourd Web, eager watching for the Fly
Presently comes a famished Bird & takes away the Spider
His Web is left all desolate, that his little anxious heart
So careful wove; & spread it out with sighs and weariness
(18:4-7, E306)

Thus both the Song and the lament present visions of a world
governed by the psychology of victimhood. These visions have
the same pessimistic force as the presentations of the figure
of the victim in The Book of Urizen and The Book of Ahania.
The principal effect of the presence of the sacrifice motif in Night I, then, is to identify the presence of victimhood with the fallenness of humanity. The pessimism which this situation inevitably generates is mitigated somewhat by the appearance of Jesus as a potential redeemer. Thus Blake has defined the problem of redemption but not presented a solution, even implicitly. For it is not yet clear to the reader how Jesus could redeem the world, even if he were to descend "In Luvah[s] robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions" (13:9, E303). The question of how the "Eternal Saviour" can act effectively in the context of the world of The Four Zoas is left unanswered until much later in the poem.

Night II contains the first of the parodies of the Crucifixion to appear in the poem, Luvah's period of torment in "the Furnaces of affliction." Luvah sees himself as a Christ-figure; his goal has been "to deliver all the sons of God / From bondage of the Human form" (27:17-18, E311). But his suffering is not redemptive (in fact, Luvah himself sees it as no more than a punishment), and his original aim is mistaken, as several critics have pointed out.

Although the furnaces are Urizen's, it is Vala who assumes the role of torturer, while Urizen watches in horror, realizing that he is himself a potential victim:

Luvah was cast into the Furnaces of affliction & sealed
And Vala fed in cruel delight, the furnaces with fire
Stern Urizen beheld urg'd by necessity to keep
The evil day afar, & if perchance with iron power
He might avert his own despair; in woe & fear he saw
Vala incircle round the furnaces where Luvah was clos'd
In joy she heard his howlings, & forgot he was her Luvah
With whom she walked in bliss, in time of innocence & youth
(25:40-26:3, E310-11)

Bloom comments that "Luvah has become a Tammuz or Adonis, and
Vala the goddess to whom he is sacrificed" (E869). It might
also be pointed out that this example of victimhood in the fallen
world is consistent with its various manifestations in Night I.
However Luvah's speech from the furnaces introduces a new dimension.

Luvah speaks of himself in a way that invites the reader
to compare him with the crucified Christ. In the opening lines
of his speech he refers to himself as the Creator of men: "If
I indeed am Valas King & ye 0 sons of Men / The workmanship of
Luvahs hands" (26:5-6, E311). Later he makes other remarks
which seem designed to remind us of Jesus. He claims that "I
suffer affliction / Because I love" (27:13-14, E311); he speaks
of his mission "to deliver all the sons of God/ From bondage"
(27:17-18, E311); he feels sorrow for the sins of the world:
"0 Urizen my enemy I weep for thy stern ambition" (27:19, E311).

Luvah knows that he is not Jesus. He also knows that he
has failed to achieve his goal, but he is unable to connect these
two pieces of information, as he presumes to lecture the Lamb
of God on the efficacy of sacrifice:

They have surrounded me with walls of iron & brass, 0 Lamb
Of God clothed in Luvahs garments.I little knowest thou
Of death Eternal that we all go to Eternal Death
To our Primeval Chaos in fortuitous concourse of incoherent
Discordant principles of Love & Hate
(27:9-13, E311)
The function of this passage is to establish an ironic distance between Luvah and Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus offers himself as a sacrificial victim so that men may enjoy eternal life. Here, Luvah proclaims that his own sacrifice cannot be a means of avoiding "Eternal Death," and that the Lamb of God himself could not be more effective.

This arrogance combines with other facets of Luvah's character to make it clear that Blake intends him to be a parody of a Christ-figure. Luvah is both unable to control his own emotional state -- "for I was love but hatred awakes in me" (27:14, E311) -- and ignorant of the direction in which salvation lies, for the bondage from which he wishes to liberate men is, as we have already noted, the "bondage of the Human form" (27:18, E311). Further, Luvah's act of self-sacrifice is hardly disinterested. He spends most of his speech in reminiscence about Vala, and concludes with a pathetic appeal -- "O when will you return Vala the Wanderer" (27:20, E311) -- which would be more moving if it were not for the fact that Luvah is unable to recognize her as his torturer.

Thus Blake uses the Christian notion of the Crucifixion for a familiar thematic purpose: to reveal the extent of the world's fallenness. The only character willing to assume the role of saviour is woefully ill-equipped for the task: selfish, myopic, misguided, in desperate need of redemption himself.27 Luvah's participation in the sacrificial rite of the "Furnaces of
affliction" results only in his own immolation, and Vala's as well:

And when Luvah age after age was quite melted with woe
The fires of Vala faded like a shadow cold & pale
An evanescent shadow. Last she fell a heap of Ashes
Beneath the furnaces a woful heap in living death

The whole episode illustrates the fact that it is impossible for a character who is himself fallen to perform a redemptive act. If he attempts to do so, he will fail; and only his need to delude himself will prevent him from seeing the true nature of the sacrifice in which he is involved.

This point is made again later in Night II by Enitharmon's Song, which parallels the Song sung at the wedding feast in Night I as a gloss on the action which has preceded it. Enitharmon celebrates a sacrificial situation which is similar to the one involving Luvah and Vala, in that the female figure adopts the role of priestly torturer:

The joy of woman is the Death of her most best beloved
Who dies for Love of her
In torments of fierce jealousy & songs of adoration

The Song is itself the vehicle by which she makes Los her victim:

Thus sang the Lovely one in Rapturous delusive trance
Los heard reviving he siezd her in his arms delusive hopes
Kindling She led him into Shadows & thence fled outstretched
Upon the immense like a bright rainbow weeping & smiling & fading

Los's infatuation does not lead to his death, but the situation is clearly similar to the one presented in the Song. It is also
related in a significant way to the Luvah-Vala situation, though here the perspective is different, for the irony is directed primarily at the female figure. Enitharmon's trance is as "delusive" as Los's hopes. Her song is one of triumph, but she is subject to the same laws as Vala, who at Luvah's death herself becomes "a heap of Ashes." (Enitharmon's use of the word "Kindling" clearly has ironic resonance here.) The situation of victimhood in the fallen world is inevitably destructive for both victim and tormentor.

As in Night I, the presence of Jesus serves to provide a distancing perspective on the action in the fallen world. Besides the reference to the Lamb of God in Luvah's speech from the furnaces, there are two direct references to Jesus in Night II. One of these follows one of the patterns established in Night I, as Jesus appears above the action but does not enter it: "And the Divine Vision appeard in Luvahs robes of blood" (32:14, E315).

A second, more elaborate passage shows Jesus in his role as one who watches with love and care over the fallen Luvah, but, again, takes no redemptive action:

For the Divine Lamb Even Jesus who is the Divine Vision Permitted all lest Man should fall into Eternal Death For when Luvah sunk down himself put on the robes of blood Lest the state calld Luvah should cease. & the Divine Vision Walked in robes of blood till he who slept should awake (33:11-15, E315)

It is important to note that what Jesus does here is not to raise Luvah from his position as one who has "sunk down"; at this point, his function is to prevent the fallen Man from lapsing
into "Eternal Death" rather than to accomplish the work which will bring Eternal Life. Although Jesus dons Luvah's robes of blood, he does not descend after he has done so. As in the original vision of the One Man in Night I (13:8-9, E303), a significant gap remains between the fallen Luvah and Jesus.

In Night II, then, Blake's use of the figure of the victim again emphasizes the fallenness of the world. In particular, Luvah's parody-crucifixion reveals the impossibility of atonement by the sacrifice of a fallen would-be saviour. But by counterpointing the image of a failed Christ-figure with a merciful Jesus who has not yet descended, Blake raises the reader's expectation that somehow the solution to the problem of sacrifice lies in an act of divine self-sacrifice which is not a parody of the Crucifixion.

There is nothing in Nights III and IV to correspond to Luvah's sufferings in the furnaces of affliction. In Night III, the only direct reference to victimhood was never integrated into the text; it survives only as a marginal note which contains the image of "an altar of victims to Sin / & Repentance" (E751). In Night IV, however, there is an episode in which Jesus for the first time takes part in action set in the fallen world. While this marks a new departure in Blake's presentation of Jesus in The Four Zoas, it does not involve the use of the victim-figure. The daughters of Beulah ask Jesus to resurrect the fallen Albion, in language calculated to remind the reader of
the New Testament story of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus declines to do what they ask but promises, "If ye will Believe your Brother shall rise again" (56:18, E331); he then proceeds to take action which sets boundaries to the Fall: "Limit / Was put to Eternal Death" (56:23-4, E331). This prepares for his redemptive work. The fact that he appears "clothed in Luvahs garments" (56:5, E330) and is identified as the "Saviour mild & gentle" (56:17, E331) provides a hint of the way he is to accomplish that work.

From our point of view, one of the most remarkable features of Nights V, VI and VII (b) is that there is no mention of Jesus in them. There are, however, two further parodies of the Crucifixion, the binding of Orc in Night V and the literal crucifixion of Luvah in VII (b). Both of these accounts follow the pattern established by Luvah’s suffering in the furnaces of affliction, in that Blake indicates clearly by his treatment of the incident that the victim is to be compared with Jesus in certain respects, but is essentially an ironic figure whose sacrifice does not bring redemption.

The story of the binding of Orc in Night V is a retelling of the same incident in The Book of Urizen, but there are important differences. For example, Blake's presentation of Orc's birth invites direct (and ironic) comparison with the Nativity: "The Enormous Demons woke & howld around the new born king / Crying Luvah King of Love thou art the King of rage & death" (58:21-2, E333). W. H. Stevenson has noted the significance of the phrase
"new born king" and of the presence of a demonic, instead of angelic choir. A king of love who is also a king of rage and death does not seem a promising candidate for saviour. Further, in the account of the events leading up to his sacrifice, there is a strong suggestion that Orc is a direct threat to Los, rather than an innocent victim, as in *The Book of Urizen*:

But when fourteen summers & winters had revolved over Their solemn habitation Los beheld the ruddy boy Embracing his bright mother & beheld malignant fires In his young eyes discerning plain that Orc plotted his death (60:6-9, E334)

Los is thus to some extent justified -- in terms of the ethics of the fallen world, at any rate -- in his decision to sacrifice Orc. But the result of his action is, ironically, to intensify the misery of the fallen condition.

The description of the physical process of the sacrifice contrasts with the parallel account in *The Book of Urizen*, in which Los and Enitharmon bind Orc when "They chain'd his young limbs to the rock / With the Chain of Jealousy" (20:23-4, E79). In *The Four Zoas*, a much more precise echo of the Crucifixion is included: "Los naild him down binding around his limbs / The accursed chain" (60:28-9, E334). But the most remarkable innovation in Blake's treatment of Orc's sacrifice lies in his description of the victim's mental state:

His limbs bound down mock at his chains for over them a flame Of circling fire unceasing plays to feed them with life & bring The virtues of the Eternal worlds ten thousand thousand spirits Of life lament around the Demon going forth & returning At his enormous call they flee into the heavens of heavens
And back return with wine & food. Or dive into the deeps
To bring the thrilling joys of sense to quell his ceaseless rage
(61:11-17, E334)

At one level, this may be a continuation of the parody of the
Crucifixion: the spirits bring "wine & food" to the victim
instead of the vinegar-filled sponge. But the main thrust of the
passage suggests a more startling inversion. Orc does not die
in order to redeem the fallen world. Instead he continues to
live, sustained by the fire which feeds his limbs with life.
He becomes the source, not of the salvation of mankind, but of
the renewal of life in the fallen world:

His bosom is like starry heaven expanded all the stars
Sing round. there waves the harvest & the vintage rejoices. the
Springs
Flow into rivers of delight. there the spontaneous flowers
Drink laugh & sing. the grasshopper the Emmet & the Fly
The golden Moth builds there a house & spreads her silken bed
(61:27-31, E335)

This paradisal vision of the earth is identified with Orc's
bosom. Blake in fact organizes his description of the cruci­
fied Orc by considering different parts of the body in turn --
limbs, eyes, nostrils, locks, bosom, loins, knees -- and the
passage is held together by the recurrent imagery of fire and
flames.

So far Orc's crucifixion might be understood in terms of
a fulfillment of the prophecy of Plate 14, The Marriage of Heaven
and Hell. Orc certainly experiences "an improvement of sensual
enjoyment" and his fire may at first seem to be that by which
"the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. and
holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt" (E38). But the
last item in the descriptive catalogue undercuts this interpretation: "Spirits of strength in Palaces rejoice in golden armour / Armed with spear & shield they drink & rejoice over the slain" (62:6-7, E335). At this point the reader is reminded that Orc's intense involvement with "the thrilling joys of sense" is no more than a palliative "to quell his ceaseless rage" (61:17, E334). His suffering is rooted in something other than love, and that which may express itself in terms of "rivers of delight" and flowers that "Drink laugh & sing" may equally well manifest itself as "the forests / Of wild beasts" where "the lion glares the tyger & wolf howl" (61:24-5, E335). Orc's creative power, expressed in the imagery of vintage and harvest, is apparently inseparable from the destructive force of his rage.

But the meaning of Orc's crucifixion is not made fully clear until Los and Enitharmon return to the mountaintop and attempt to free their son. They find that they cannot do this, for the Chain of Jealousy

had taken root
Into the iron rock & grew a chain beneath the Earth
Even to the Centre wrapping round the Centre & the limbs
Of Orc entering with fibres. became one with him a Living Chain
Sustained by the Demons life

(62:32-63:4, E335-6)

Orc's crucifixion has, as it were, itself become a Fall within the Fall. The sensual apocalypse that he has experienced is a sign, not that the creation has become infinite and holy but that it has sunk to a new depth. Like Luvah in Night II, Orc
is a parody of Christ; he is king, not only of love, but also of rage and death. The energy released by his crucifixion is without moral direction. Los, the priest-figure of this sacrifice, has not made the world safer for himself but has unleashed forces which bring misery both to him and to Enitharmon: "Despair & Terror & Woe & Rage / Inwrap the Parents" (63:4-5, E336) and the narrator adds "all the lamentations / I write not here but all their after life was lamentation" (63:8-9, E336). The fact that the Chain has taken root indicates that the crucified Orc will continue to preside over the fallen world. Such a world will resist Los's attempts to impose a humanizing order upon it.

As in The Book of Urizen, Orc's cries awake Urizen from his sleep, and Night VI of The Four Zoas describes Urizen's exploration of his dens. However, no attempt is made to develop Urizen's Web into an image of sacrifice parallel to the Chain of Jealousy. In the earlier poem, the Web is identified as the Net of Religion, and Urizen uses it in order to enslave his sons and daughters. In The Four Zoas, it is never clear that the Web has this function. The passage in which it is described is extraordinarily obscure, even by Blakean standards:

And the Web of Urizen stre [t]ch'd direful shivering in clouds
And uttering such woes such bursts such thunderings
The eyelids expansive as morning & the Ears
As a golden ascent winding round to the heavens of heavens
Within the dark horrors of the Abysses lion or tyger or scorpion
For every one open'd within into Eternity at will
(73:35-74:1, E343)

One commentator has suggested that the difficulty with these
lines stems from a manuscript omission. The Web seems to be an instrument of torture, but its precise function is not indicated clearly enough for the reader to interpret the passage with any certainty.

Later in Night VI, however, Urizen uses the Web in a way which has no parallel with anything that happens in The Book of Urizen. He enters the Web himself as a protection against the Spectre of Urthona:

Then Urizen arose upon the wind back many a mile
Retiring into his dire Web scattering fleecy snows
As he ascended howling loud the Web vibrated strong
From heaven to heaven from globe to globe.

(75:25-8, E345)

Whatever the meaning of this gesture, it has nothing to do with victimhood. The reason for this may again be found in Blake’s developing preoccupation with the Crucifixion. Instead of using the Net of Religion as an ironic contrast to the Chain of Jealousy in connection with the figure of the victim, Blake avoids sacrifice imagery in Night VI, but presents a new version of the Crucifixion in Night VII (b), which bears an ironic relation to Orc’s crucifixion in Night V.

In Night VII (b), as in the Preludium to America, Orc breaks free from his chains, inspired by his possessive love for the “nameless shadowy female”:

Silent as despairing love & strong as Jealousy
Jealous that she was Vala now become Urizens harlot
And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth
His soul was gnawn in sunder
The hairy shoulders rend the links free are the wrists of fire
Red rage redounds he rouzd his lions from his forests black
They howl around the flaming youth rending the nameless shadow
And running their immortal course thro solid darkness borne

(91:13-20, E395)

In the context of The Four Zoas, the most striking thing about
Orc's conduct is that, once he is free, he makes no attempt
to fulfill the positive potential implicit in the description
of his crucifixion in Night V. Imagery of harvest and vintage
is completely out of place here; instead, it is Orc's "Red rage"
that finds expression in his freedom.

The result is yet another version of a pattern already long
familiar to us: the sacrificial victim escapes from that role
only to force others to become his victim. Orc's assumption
of that role is not, as in America, signified by his rape of
the shadowy female (which is described briefly as "the flaming
youth rending the nameless shadow"). Instead, his liberation
allows him to preside over the outbreak of war:

Loud sounds the war song round red Orc in his [triumphant] fury
And round the nameless shadowy Female in her howling terror
When all the Elemental Gods joind in the wondrous Song
Sound the War trumpet terrific souls clad in attractive steel
Sound the shrill fife serpents of war

(91:21-5, E395)

Orc's triumphs is at first described (in the Song of the Elemental
Gods) in terms of generalized carnage:

The arrows flew from cloudy bow all day. till blood
From east to west flowd like the human veins in rivers
Of life upon the plains of death & valleys of despair

(92:6-8, E396)

But the victims whose blood flows so freely are soon identified
with Luvah, as Luvah is crucified in a passage whose language contains obvious echoes of the Gospel crucifixion narratives:

they give the Oath of blood They cast the lots into the helmet, They vote the death of Luvah & they nailed him to the tree They pierced him with a spear & laid him in a sepulcher To die a death of Six thousand years bound round with desolation The sun was black & the moon rolled a useless globe through heaven

(92:11-16, E396)

In terms of narrative sequence, this passage poses a problem, since it is not clear whether it should be part of the Song of the Elemental Gods, or whether it occurs after the end of the Song. Considered as imagery, however, the transition from Orc as victorious god of war to Luvah as helpless victim makes perfect sense. To say that Orc's military forces have been defeated by Urizen is somewhat beside the point. It would be more correct to say that Orc has defeated himself, for the energy wasted when the blood flows: "like human veins in rivers / Of life" is his own energy. Although the description of Orc's crucifixion in Night V seems to indicate that this energy has a positive potential for transforming the world, the "rivers of delight" which then flowed in Orc's bosom (61:29, E335) have for their counterparts only the bloody rivers in "the plains of death & valleys of despair," once he has achieved liberation. Sacrifice leads only to further sacrifice, not to redemption.

The point of the biblical language used in the description of Luvah's crucifixion is not to identify Luvah with Jesus, but to distinguish them. The crucifixion which results from the
liberation of Orc does not redeem the world but merely confirms it in its fallenness. It is significant that Blake here avoids speaking of Jesus as the wearer of Luvah's robes of blood but speaks simply of "the death of Luvah." Luvah's death has no redemptive power. Although the details of casting lots, nailing the victim to the tree, piercing him with a spear, and laying him in a sepulcher are obvious allusions to the Crucifixion of Christ, the fact that Luvah does not experience resurrection on the third day indicates that Blake is again evoking the image of the central Christian sacrifice only to ring an ironic change upon it. Instead Luvah dies the death of six thousand years of fallen history, and the moment of unnatural darkness which occurred when Jesus was crucified is extended to embrace the entire period. Luvah's sacrifice, like Orc's in Night V, thus constitutes a parody of the Crucifixion. Orc has freed himself only to become a priest-figure; the history of the fallen human condition is apparently one of an endless series of crucifixions. Life lives upon death. Thus far in The Four Zoas, then, Blake has used the motif of sacrifice to articulate a pessimism as dark as that of the later minor prophecies.

In Night VII (a), which was probably written to replace VII (b), there is at last a definite movement towards redemption. After yet another parody of the Crucifixion in which Orc is again the victim, Blake makes a dramatic innovation in his presentation to the sacrifice motif. Both Los and the Spectre of Urthona
recognize the need for self-sacrifice, and this recognition is followed by a vision of "the Lamb of God" descending to enter the poem's action for the first time. Night VII (a) ends with Los and Enitharmon creating works of art which prepare the way for the real Incarnation which occurs in Night VIII.

Night VII (a) begins with the confrontation of Urizen, completing the process of exploring his dens, and Orc, crucified as in Night V. Urizen recognizes the "thrilling joys of sense" which Orc experiences but he does not understand them, for the joy he knows is either illusory, or made possible only by the suffering of others:

Sure thou art bathd in rivers of delight on verdant fields Walking in joy in bright Expanses sleeping on bright clouds With visions of delight so lovely that they urge thy rage Tenfold with fierce desire to rend thy chain & howl in fury And dim oblivion of all woe & desperate repose Or is thy joy founded on torment which others bear for thee

(78:36-41, E347)

This last question, as Harold Bloom points out, indirectly reveals Urizen's fear that "Orc's torment should prove vicarious, a suffering for the salvation of others." For Urizen, as the "God / Of all this dreadful ruin" (79:23-4, E348), has a vested interest in preventing others from achieving salvation through Orc's sacrifice, since this would mean the loss of his hegemony.

The facts that Urizen identifies himself as God and that Orc is described in terms appropriate to the crucified Christ -- "Lo my feet & hands are naild to the burning rock" (79:1, E347; repeated in 79:17) -- indicates that Blake is here presenting
yet another parody of Christ's crucifixion, one in which a priestly
depth sacrifices his victim to perpetuate the world's fallen
condition. Urizen's anxiety about the situation is intensified
when he realizes that Orc is Luvah, for Luvah (another Eternal)
represents a real threat to him. To the notion of a Christ-
figure who is crucified for a selfish father is then added that
of a rebellious Christ who even adopts a Satanic appearance:

And Orc began to Organize a Serpent body
Despising Urizen's light & turning it into flaming fire
Recieving as a poison'd Cup Recieves the heavenly wine
And turning affection into fury & thought into abstraction
A Self consuming dark devourer rising into the heavens

Orc's response to Urizen here, expressed mainly through the
parody of the communion sacrifice, makes it impossible for the
reader to view his crucifixion as redemptive or exemplary in
any way. Orc's energy is "Self consuming," aimed at destruction
rather than regeneration.

On the other hand, Urizen's own action is equally futile
and selfish:

he made Orc
In Serpent form compell'd stretch out & up the mysterious tree
He suffered him to Climb that he might draw all human forms
Into submission to his will nor knew the dread result

Taking advantage of Orc's self-delusion, Urizen is able to control
his victim's response in such a way that Orc, in drawing "all
human forms into submission to his will, does not know the "dread
result": that Urizen is using the crucifixion situation to main-
tain control of the "dreadful ruin" which is the fallen world.
W. H. Stevenson has pointed out that the passage contains references to two verses in John's Gospel: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (3.14) and "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (12.32). The context of Night VII (a) makes both allusions extremely ironic. Urizen lifts up Orc not, as in John, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (3.15), but rather so that life may continue to live upon death. Similarly, Orc draws all men to him not in order to save them but so that they may suffer the "dread result" of living under Urizen's domination.

In this, the last parody of the Crucifixion in *The Four Zoas*, then, Urizen and Orc appear as caricatures of the Father and Jesus in the New Testament, each selfishly concerned to express his own will to power, neither interested in redeeming the world.

The movement towards redemption begins later in Night VII (a), with an incident involving a different group of characters, Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre of Urthona. The movement begins when the characters acknowledge their own need for redemption; however, redemption cannot occur through their own power. What is possible for them is the making of gestures of self-sacrifice:

Los embracd the Spectre first as a brother
Then as another Self; astonishd humanizing & in tears
In Self absement Giving up his Domineering lust
(85:29-31, E353)

Such a gesture cannot in itself make it possible for the characters
involved to transcend their fallenness, but it does bring to a halt the process that moves in the opposite direction. No longer does it seem necessary for the endless chain of sacrifice to continue. The exploiter's life need not depend upon his victim's death, as Los proclaims the visionary alternative: "I will quell my fury & teach / Peace to the Soul of dark revenge & repentance to Cruelty" (86:11-12, E354).

But Los is unable to convince Enitharmon that this is a feasible course of action, for her sense of her own fallenness runs much deeper. She has eaten the "ruddy fruit" of the Tree of Mystery:

> It was by that I knew that I had Sinnd & then I knew That without a ransom I could not be saved from Eternal death That Life lives upon Death & by devouring appetite All things subsist on one another thenceforth in Despair

(87:17-20, E354)

Enitharmon knows that she is incapable of saving herself, and knows too that the fallen world is governed by the psychology of sacrifice; as in *The Book of Urizen*, life lives upon death. She therefore cannot envisage the "ransom" which might save her from "Eternal death," and invites Los, "Eat thou also of / The fruit & give me proof of life Eternal or I die" (87:22-3, E354).

Los does as she asks, and he too experiences despair. His desire to replace revenge and cruelty with peace and repentance has been thwarted; in himself, he lacks the power to break the chain of sacrifice.

But it is at this point that Jesus, the Lamb of God, reappears.
Los sees him in a vision, and calls out to Enitharmon: "Turn inwardly thine Eyes & there behold the Lamb of God / Clothed in Luvahs robes of blood descending to redeem" (87:44-5, E355). For the first time, Jesus prepares to enter the poem's action, although the way in which he is to redeem the fallen world is not made clear at this point. Enitharmon then sees the vision, but disagrees that the Lamb of God's mission involves redemption:

Enitharmon answered I behold the Lamb of God descending
To Meet these Spectres of the Dead I therefore fear that he
Will give us to Eternal Death

(87:53-5, E355)

This debate between Los and Enitharmon is not immediately resolved, for Jesus has not completed his descent by the end of Night VII (a).

However, Los and Enitharmon prepare for his coming by creating works of art. The salient feature of these visionary works is that they present images of a world in which acts of self-sacrifice have replaced the exploitation of the victim by his tormentor. Thus Los describes his work as a "comfort" to those in the fallen world, not the agency by which that world is to be transformed:

Stern desire
I feel to fabricate embodied semblances in which the dead
May live before us in our palaces & in our gardens of labour
Which now open within the Center we behold spread abroad
To form a world of Sacrifice of brothers & sons & daughters
To comfort Orc in his dire sufferings

(90:8-13, E356)

"Sacrifice" here means self-sacrifice. (Erdman notes -- E757 -- that Blake originally wrote "life & love" instead of "Sacrifice.")
In the world Los creates in his art, then, acts such as his own gesture of "Self abasement" in uniting with the Spectre will be presented as central to a truly humanized existence. The audience for these works of art -- the "Spectres of the Dead" who "ravin / Without the food of life" (87:37-8, E355) -- will at last see an alternative to the institution of victimhood. They are now devourers, exploiters, as Los points out: "They feed upon our life we are their victims" (90:8, E358); however, Enitharmon agrees that change is possible:

\[
\text{fabricate forms sublime} \\
\text{Such as the piteous spectres may assimilate themselves into} \\
\text{They shall be ransoms for our Souls that we may live} \tag{90:22-4, E356}
\]

This last line seems to suggest that Los and Enitharmon are merely to assume the role of exploiters themselves. Certainly their motive is essentially selfish, since the goal of their artistic endeavours is self-preservation. There is considerable irony in the fact that Los creates works of art whose theme is self-sacrifice, but does it out of self-interest.

However, Los and Enitharmon soon become committed to their creations and are unwilling to regard them as merely a "ransom," a means by which their own lives are to be preserved:

\[
\text{But Los loved them & refusd to Sacrifice their infant limbs} \\
\text{And Enitharmons smiles & tears prevaild over self protection} \\
\text{They rather chose to meet Eternal death than to destroy} \\
\text{The offspring of their Care & Pity} \tag{90:50-3, E357}
\]

Ironically, artistic creation has become an act of self-sacrifice,
despite the original intentions of the creators.

The Spectre of Urthona and the Spectres of the Dead have thus both been given new life through Los's self-sacrifice. But Los has acted spontaneously in both cases, and the consequences of his acts have come as a surprise to him. When he embraces the Spectre of Urthona, it is "astonishd humanizing & in tears" (85:30, E353); when he creates his works of art, the result is equally unexpected: "Startled was Los he found his Enemy Urizen now / In his hands. he wonderd that he felt love & not hate" (90:64-5, E357). Although both acts point the way to redemption, Los has not had a clear sense of direction, nor has redemption been achieved by the end of the Night. For Los to embrace the Spectre, and to feel love for his creations does not alter the fact that he exists in a world in which acts of self-sacrifice are happy accidents.  

By the end of Night VII (a), then, redemption has not yet arrived. Los's accomplishments have been real but limited. It remains for the Lamb of God to complete his descent and perform the act of self-sacrifice which will make it possible for men to enjoy an unfallen existence once again.

In Night VIII, Jesus, the Lamb of God, descends to earth and dies as the victim in a sacrificial rite much like the crucifixions of Orc and Luvah earlier in the poem. In fact, the priest-figures who preside over this sacrifice are unable to discern any difference at all. But the Lamb of God is unique
among the various sacrificial victims in *The Four Zoas* in that
his suffering and death has redemptive power. Blake defines the
nature of this power when he describes the purpose of the Lamb's
incarnation:

```
to awake up into Eden
The fallen Man but first to Give his vegetated body
To be cut off & separated that his Spiritual body may be Reveald
(104:36-8, E363)
```

To restore "fallen Man" to his unfallen state (Eden) is the
ultimate goal. Blake explains the efficacy of the Lamb's sacrifice
in terms of two related ideas, gift and revelation.

Only Jesus, of all the victims in *The Four Zoas*, freely
gives his body to be crucified. This is obvious enough in the
cases of Orc and Luvah, but the Lamb of God's act of self-sacrifice
is unique even in comparison to those of Los in Night VII (a).
For Los's act in embracing the Spectre "as another Self" is
something he does spontaneously in an attempt to overcome his
own fallenness; similarly, his motivation in creating works of
art is rooted in self-interest, as he wishes to protect himself
and Enitharmon from the ravages of the "piteous spectres."
But the Lamb of God has no fallenness of his own to overcome, and
no need to free himself from the role of victim. The act by which
he accepts the limitations of the "vegetated body" and then
gives that body to be "cut off & separated" is a gift to those
who are bound by their roles as priests and victims.

In performing this act, the Lamb of God causes the "Spiritual
body" to be revealed. It is precisely by the death of his "vegetated body" that this occurs. The "revelation" of the Spiritual body is thus, in a sense, simply the revelation that the vegetated body of Jesus is a gift, with all that this implies: namely that there exists an unfallen world in which self-sacrifice is the governing ethical principle. Therefore the sacrifice of the Lamb of God reveals both the corruption of the fallen world and the glory of the unfallen, because the one can at last be measured against the other. The death of Jesus, who voluntarily bears Luvah's sorrows and receives his cruel wounds (105:55-6, E364), reveals by contrast the selfishness which informs the psychology of sacrifice in the fallen world: "the Temple & the Synagogue of Satan & Mystery" (106:40, E365).

The Lamb of God's sacrifice is redemptive because those who understand its significance can choose to perform similar acts of self-sacrifice in their own lives. By willingly accepting one's role as victim, one transforms the situation in which victimhood occurs. The transformation occurs because such acceptance demonstrates the existence of principles other than those which govern the struggles of the spectres who inhabit "vegetated bodies." To die such a death is to put off mortality by identifying oneself with the Divine Lamb who remains immortal and unfallen despite his death in the fallen world, for "All mortal things" are made permanent that they may be put off Time after time by the Divine Lamb who died for all And all in him died. & he put off all mortality (107:36-8, E368)
The difficulty with this plan of salvation is that it is open to misinterpretation. Urizen, Tirzah and Rahab, the major priest-figures in Night VIII, are all unable to grasp the significance of the Lamb of God's sacrifice. Jerusalem herself, a figure Bloom identifies as "the spiritual liberty of mankind," and Stevenson as "the sum of all lost souls seeking redemption," is deluded by Rahab at the end of the Night. This prepares for the apocalyptic conclusion to the poem in Night IX.

Night VIII begins with another vision of Jesus perceived by Los and Enitharmon. Jesus is again identified as the saviour, and the fallen Man begins to revive as he lies "In the saviours arms, in the arms of tender mercy & loving kindness" (99:14, E357). However, as at the end of Night VII (a), Jesus has not yet descended to the fallen world. Los and Enitharmon produce works of art which allow the Daughters of Beulah to experience their own vision of "the Saviour Even Jesus" (100:10, E358), appearing "beyond the Pit of death & destruction" (100:13, E358). The purpose of this introductory section seems to be to indicate that the prophet-artist has a valid but limited role in the redemptive process. He is inspired by a vision of eternal truth -- "Then All in Great Eternity Met in the Council of God / as one Man Even Jesus" (99:1-2, E357) -- and can communicate that vision to others, in this case the Daughters of Beulah. But in the context of The Four Zoas, the artist is not the saviour. The Lamb of God becomes incarnate through the works of Los and
Enitharmon, but he is not their creation. Their works are the means by which Jesus manifests himself, much as the biblical God spoke through his prophets. Los and Enitharmon maintain an attitude of humility as they continue with their task: "Wondring with love & Awe they felt the divine hand upon them" (99:18, E357).

The central section of Night VIII consists of a series of three pairs of contrasting visions of sacrifice. The first member of each pair emphasizes the failure of the priest-figure (Urizen, Tirzah, Rahab) to understand the nature of the Lamb's redemptive act of self-sacrifice. The second member presents a contrasting vision which reveals the Lamb's paradoxical triumph. In the last of these visions, Jesus is crucified, and his work of salvation is at last accomplished for all to see. In the first, Urizen perceives the presence of the Lamb of God but is unable to comprehend its significance. The sequence of events which connects the two allows the reader to see clearly how Jesus differs from the other sacrificial victims in Blake's poetry to this point.

Urizen's response to his initial vision of "the Lamb of God clothed in Luvahs robes" (101:1, E358) is to perform an act which is the mirror image of the Lamb's act of self-sacrifice. His insight into the relation between the Lamb of God and Luvah inspires him to adopt the role of priest again, and make Los and Enitharmon his victims, "To undermine the World of Los & tear bright Enitharmon / To the four winds" (100:34-101:30, E359).
The sacrifice takes the form of war. Urizen, as usual, is concerned primarily with self-preservation, his goal being to "avert / His own despair even at the cost of every thing that breathes" (101:21-2, E360).

However, he fails to do this, because he is influenced by Vala's lament for Luvah. Vala incorrectly identifies Jesus as Luvah's murderer: "I see the murderer of my Luvah clothed in robes of blood / He who assumed my Luvahs throne in times of Everlasting" (103:3-4, E360). Her "tears of sorrow incessant" (103:25, E361) cause Urizen's Web of Religion to fall upon himself, with the result that his struggle to destroy the world of Los and Enitharmon ends in a parody of self-sacrifice: "Himself tangled in his own net in sorrow lust repentance" (103:31, E361). He has been unable either to avert his own despair or to harm Los and Enitharmon; neither he nor Vala has understood the vision of the Lamb of God clothed in Luvah's robes.

The counterpart to this story of futility and confusion is provided by the vision of Jesus which appears in the "inmost deep recess / Of fair Jerusalems bosom" (104:3-4, E361):

Then sang the Sons of Eden round the Lamb of God & said
Glory Glory Glory to the holy Lamb of God
Who now beginneth to put off the dark Satanic body
Now we behold redemption Now we know that life Eternal
Depends alone upon the Universal hand & not in us
(104:5-9, E361-2)

Redemption consists in putting off "the dark Satanic body."

In this context, the word "Satanic" refers primarily to the
warfare which Urizen had initiated:

Terrified & astonishd Urizen beheld the battle take a form
Which he intended not a Shadowy hermaphrodite black & opake
The Soldiers namd it Satan but he was yet unformd & vast
(101:33-5, E359)

The "dark Satanic body" is thus the battle, which is, as we
have seen, a form of the institution of sacrifice: the means
by which Urizen wishes to make victims of Los and Enitharmon.
To put off this body is, therefore, to reject the institution of
sacrifice as such, not merely to move from the role of victim
to priest. But it is not clear, at this point in Night VIII,
exactly how the Lamb of God is to accomplish this.

In the next vision of sacrifice, Rahab makes her first
appearance as a priest-figure. She is a torturer much like the
Vala of Night II, who presides over the afflictions of Luvah in
the furnaces. Here, however, the Lamb of God is the victim,
and the emphasis is placed upon Rahab's inability both to achieve
her goal and to understand what is in fact occurring:

But thou 0 Universal Humanity who is One Man blessed for Ever
Recievost the Integuments woven Rahab beholds the Lamb of God
She smites with her knife of flint She destroys her own work
Times upon times thinking to destroy the Lamb blessed for Ever
He puts off the clothing of blood he redeems the spectres from
their bonds
He awakes the sleepers in Ulro the Daughters of Beulah praise him
They anoint his feet with ointment they wipe them with the hair of
their head
(113:31-7, E362)

Rahab's intention is to "destroy the Lamb blessed for Ever,"
but she is unable to grasp the truth that the act by which she
does this is the act by which Jesus performs his redemptive work.
Just as Urizen, earlier in the Night, becomes entangled in his own Web, so Rahab "destroys her own work." Again Blake makes the point that the presence of the Lamb of God powerfully transforms the institution of sacrifice, in such a way that the victim, even in death, triumphs over the priest. Again, however, the way in which the Lamb does this is left unexplained. The victory of Jesus is proclaimed, but its essence has not yet been revealed.

It is in the vision which contrasts with Rahab's sacrifice of the Lamb that we finally learn what the essential features of the Lamb's sacrifice are. As Los describes to Enitharmon the vision he has experienced, we discover that Rahab with her knife of flint (or whoever else may be responsible for the Lamb's death) is merely an unwitting instrument of the divine purpose. In the key passage discussed earlier in this section, we find that the Lamb's sacrifice may best be understood in terms of the concepts of gift and revelation:

Los said to Enitharmon Pitying I saw Pitying the Lamb of God Descended thro Jerusalems gates To put off Mystery time after time & as a Man Is born on Earth so was he born of Fair Jerusalem In mysteries woven mantle & in the Robes of Luvah He stood in fair Jerusalem to awake up into Eden The fallen Man but first to Give his vegetated body To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Reveald (104:31-8, E363)

What is emphasized here is the Lamb's free choice in allowing himself to be born "as a Man / Is born on Earth" and thereby assuming the role of victim. The function of the priest is relatively unimportant; Rahab (or Urizen) is not even mentioned.
The distinction between "vegetated body" and "Spiritual body" indicates that there is a dimension of reality involved in the Lamb's sacrifice which is not perceived by Rahab. What is, for the priest-figure, another expression of the psychology of victimhood at work in the fallen world, is, for the person able to share Los's vision, the redemptive act which makes that psychology obsolete.

The last pair of visions clarifies the distinction between the vegetated and spiritual bodies, by means of the Crucifixion story. Rahab with her knife of flint can destroy only the vegetated body. In this part of Night VIII, this notion is elaborated both in terms of the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion of Jesus -- "Urizen calld together the Synagogue of Satan in dire Sanhedrin / To Judge the Lamb of God to Death as a murderer & robber" (105: 5-6, E363) -- and in terms of the destruction of the physical body in a ritual conducted by Rahab, Tirzah and the "Daughters of Amalek":

Go Noah fetch the girdle of strong brass heat it red hot
Press it around the loins of this expanding cruelty
Shriek not so my only love
Bind him down Sisters bind him down on Ebal mount of Cursing
Malah come forth from Lebanon & Hoglah from Mount Sinai
Come circumscribe this tongue of sweets & with a Screw of iron
Fasten this Ear into the Rock Milcah the task is thine
Weep not so sisters weep not so our life depends on this
Or mercy & truth are fled away from Shechem & Mount Gilead
Unless my beloved is bound upon the Stems of Vegetation

(105:44-53, E364)

Again we see the delusion of the priest-figures ("our life depends on this"); but this time the physical suffering of the victim is
described with greater intensity and in more detail. Of the three visions which present the attempts of the priests to maintain their dominion over the fallen world by sacrificing a victim, this one seems most strongly to stress the fact that they have appeared to triumph. The "song of the Females of Amalek" (from which the above quotation is excerpted) presents the victim himself as entirely quiescent and passive.

If the victim were only Luvah, appearance would no doubt be in correspondence with reality. But this victim is the Lamb of God himself, although he has taken on the role which has to this point in the poem been Luvah's. This final vision of the Lamb as redeemer contrasts with the two earlier ones. The song of the Sons of Eden (104:5-9, E361-2) and Los's vision of the Lamb descending (104:31-8, E363) both emphasize the victory of Jesus but omit mention of his sufferings. Now, however, Blake presents the two as inseparable. The Lamb's triumph occurs in the midst of his sufferings, at precisely the point at which his defeat, in the eyes of the world, is most ignominious:

The Lamb of God descended thro the twelve portions of Luvah Bearing his sorrows and receiv[ing] all his cruel wounds Thus was the Lamb of God condemned to Death They nailed him upon the tree of Mystery weeping over him And then mocking & then worshipping calling him Lord & King (105:55-106:3, E364-5)

It is most significant that the Lamb freely accepts the role of Luvah in this situation; and it is clear that Rahab and the other priest-figures do not recognize his true nature. After his death,
Rahab smites him with her knife of flint, and the real meaning of the earlier description of her action ("She destroys her own work") becomes clear:

But when Rahab had cut off the Mantle of Luvah from The Lamb of God it rolld apart, revealing to all in heaven And all on Earth the Temple & the Synagogue of Satan & Mystery Even Rahab in all her turpitude

(113:38-41, E365)

This revelation of the nature of the Lamb differs from the earlier visions granted to the Sons of Eden and to Los and Enitharmon in that it is public, revealed to "all in heaven / And all on earth."

Ironically, Rahab's own action results in the unveiling of the truth that Luvah and the Lamb of God are not identical, and that it is the Lamb who has been crucified in Luvah's place. Contrary to what she had believed, his death was an act of self-sacrifice, redemptive because it reveals the extent of the Lamb's love for fallen man, and the limited nature of the power of Satan and Rahab (that is, the power animating the institution of sacrifice) in the fallen world. It remains only for the other major characters in the poem to perceive this truth and apply it to their own lives for the apocalypse to occur.

Jerusalem, however, fails to perceive the significance of the Lamb's sacrifice:

Jerusalem saw the Body dead upon the Cross She fled away Saying Is this Eternal Death Where shall I hide from Death Pity me Los pity me Urizen & let us build A Sepulcher & worship Death in fear while yet we live Death ! God of All from whom we rise to whom we all return

(106:7-11, E365)
Even after Rahab's true nature has been revealed, Jerusalem is unable to free herself from this new bondage. By the end of Night VIII, she has become completely subject to Rahab's domination:

Rahab triumphs over all she took Jerusalem Captive A Willing Captive by delusive arts impelled To worship Urizens Dragon from to offer her own Children Upon the bloody Altar.

(111:1-4, E371)

Jerusalem, in whose bosom the Lamb of God has appeared "in a gently beaming fire" (104:4, E361), has degenerated into a priest-figure, and this, for Blake, is a powerful image of the spiritual degeneration which has characterized the Christian era. In historical terms, Jerusalem's error is responsible for the unnecessarily lengthy period between the Crucifixion and the apocalypse, a period during which she has "wept over the Sepulcher two thousand Years" (110:33, E371). Only in the Ninth Night does the true nature of the relation between these two events become apparent.

Neither Jerusalem nor Jesus plays a central role in the Ninth Night, but, in the opening lines, Blake does provide an explanation of the connection between the poem's last two Nights. Jerusalem is now to be understood primarily in her role as city rather than woman, and dramatic attention is focused on Los and Enitharmon as builders:

And Los & Enitharmon builded Jerusalem weeping Over the Sepulcher & over the Crucified body Which to their Phantom Eyes appear'd still in the Sepulcher But Jesus stood beside them in the Spirit Separating Their Spirit from their body.

(117:1-5, E371)
Jesus' sacrifice has enabled him to inspire them to perform the same work in themselves as individuals that he had accomplished during his incarnation in Night VIII, when

He stood in fair Jerusalem to awake up into Eden
The fallen Man but first to Give his vegetated body
To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Reveald

(104:36-8, E363)

Further evidence that there is a direct connection between Jesus' act of self-sacrifice and the destinies of the individual Zoas is provided by a deleted line originally intended to follow 104:37: "And then call Urizen & Luvah & Tharmas & Urthona" (E759). In Night IX, then, Jesus has already performed the act of self-sacrifice essential for the redemption of the world; his new role is to inspire the Zoas to give their own vegetated bodies that their spiritual bodies may be revealed. This act of giving does not involve the forfeiture of their lives; no repetition of the Crucifixion is necessary. What is required from the Zoas is, rather, a gesture of allegiance to the Lamb, a dedication of their lives.

However, only three of the four Zoas do, in fact, make such a gesture. In Night IX, Los, Urizen and Tharmas all help to bring Jesus' work to its final fruition by rejecting the psychology of fallen sacrifice and embracing the new, redemptive pattern established in Night VIII. But Luvah fails to respond to the Lamb's work of salvation. When he has at last been liberated from the role of victim (in which he has been imprisoned for most
of the poem), he adopts the role of priestly torturer. His function in Night IX parallels Rahab's in the preceding Night: he unwittingly assists in the process that leads to redemption for others. But his rebelliousness results in his separation from the other Zoas. There is no place for him in the poem's final vision of a regenerated world, although, as we shall see, provision is made for his eventual return.

As noted in the discussion of Night VIII, the essential characteristics of Jesus' sacrifice are that it is a gift to the inhabitants of the fallen world, and that it provides them with revelation. Jesus "Came & Died willing beneath Tirzah & Rahab" (115:50, E366) and his death reveals both the fallenness of the world of the vegetated body and (by contrast) the glory of the spiritual body. In Night IX, Los, Urizen and Tharmas all imitate Jesus by performing an act of self-sacrifice which is accompanied by an apocalyptic vision. The common source of these visions is the Book of Revelation, and their theme is liberation from the bondage of the fallen world.

The Ninth Night opens with Los and Enitharmon weeping over Jesus' corpse, unaware that he is standing beside them "in the Spirit":

 Terrified at Non Existence
For such they deemed the death of the body. Los his vegetable hands
Outstretched his right hand branching out in fibrous Strength
Siezd the Sun. His left hand like dark roots coverd the Moon
And tore them down cracking the heavens across from immense to immense

(117:5-9, E371-2)
Los's attempt to destroy the physical universe is a gesture of self-sacrifice because he believes it will lead to his own destruction. The gesture is rooted in despair, but is a genuine act of self-giving since he does not attempt to gain anything for himself by it. Because he believes that Jesus has entered the state of "Non Existence," and because life without Jesus (that is, without hope of redemption) would be worthless, Los begins to dismantle the vegetable cosmos with his own "vegetable hands." This has an unexpected result:

Then fell the fires of Eternity with loud & shrill
Sound of Loud Trumpet thundering along from heaven to heaven
A mighty sound articulate Awake ye dead & come
To Judgment

(117:10-13, E372)

There follows a vision based on the Revelation motif of the millennial kingdom, as humanity shakes off the chains of political and spiritual oppression. Just as the Lamb's sacrifice in Night VIII revealed both "the Synagogue of Satan & Mystery" and (by implication) the glory of his own spiritual body, Los's vision reveals the extent of the fallen world's degradation, and provides a glimpse of the world which is to replace it. Unlike the case of the vision in Night VIII, however, fallenness is revealed only as it is in the process of destruction. Fallenness is here again epitomized by the "Synagogue of Satan & Mystery," though it is expressed in other types of imagery (especially that of political tyranny) as well:
In the fierce flames the limbs of Mystery lay consuming with howling
And deep despair. Rattling go up the flames around the Synagogue
Of Satan Loud the Serpent Orc ragd thro his twenty Seven
Folds. The tree of Mystery went up in folding flames (119:1-4, E373)

The consuming fires make it possible for a redeemed humanity to enjoy the glory of the millennium:

From the clotted gore & from the hollow den
Start forth the trembling millions into flames of mental fire Bathing their Limbs in the bright visions of Eternity (119:21-3, E373)

Urizen's experience follows the pattern established by Los. By this point in the poem, he has degenerated into a "dragon of the Deeps" (120:51, E375). But when the Eternal Man calls on him to repent, he does so, renouncing his selfish plans to organize the world according to "futurity." Futurity is the notion that joy must always be postponed until the advent of some nebulous utopian era, and that, in the meantime, we must labour in misery in order to prepare for it. Since Urizen has ordered his own life according to this myth, his decision to reject it constitutes an act of self-sacrifice which parallels Los's attempt to destroy the universe:

Then Go O dark futurity I will cast thee forth from these Heavens of my brain nor will I look upon futurity more I cast futurity away & turn my back upon that void Which I have made for lo futurity is in this moment (121:19-22, E375-6)

The immediate result of this declaration is the resurrection of Ahania, Urizen's emanation. Although she dies again almost instantly -- through "Excess of Joy" (121:36, E376) -- even this
is a hopeful sign, as the Eternal Man prophesies that

bright Ahania shall awake from death
A glorious Vision to thine Eyes . . .
. . . Regenerate She & all the lovely Sex
From her shall learn obedience & prepare for a wintry grave
That spring may see them rise in tenfold joy & sweet delight

(122:6-7, 12-14, E376)

Ahania's death is thus a sign of the restoration of the unfallen
world of Eden, in which the emanations engage in continual self-
sacrifice. 45

The episode of Ahania's resurrection and death is followed
by an apocalyptic vision which, like that of Los, is based on a
motif taken from the Book of Revelation. Urizen's vision is
centred, appropriately, on the resurrection of the dead. Again
the desolation of man's fallen state is juxtaposed with the glory
of the coming of the Kingdom. Tyrants, priests, merchants and
warriors are attacked by their victims. In a particularly startling
image, "the children of six thousand years / Who died in infancy"
enjoy their revenge as they "Rend limb from limb the Warrior &
the tyrant" who, since death is no more, keep "reuniting in pain"
(123:7-8, 10, E377). There is, of course, irony in the fact that
the earthly victims have now become torturers in their turn, not
having learned to forgive. Jesus arrives in the midst of a
confrontation between an unjust judge and his former prisoner:

And after the flames appears the Cloud of the Son of Man
Descending from Jerusalem with power and great Glory
All nations look up to the Cloud & behold him who was Crucified

The Prisoner answers you scourgd my father to death before my
face
While I stood bound with cords & heavy chains. your hypocrisy
Shall now avail you nought. So speaking he dashd him with his
foot

(123:27-32, E378)

But the vision concludes with a powerful image of glory, as the
four living creatures around the heavenly throne are described:
"Fourfold each in the other reflected they are named Life's
in Eternity / Four Starry Universes going forward from Eternity
to Eternity" (123:38-9, E378).

Tharmas, too, imitates the Lamb's pattern of self-giving,
although in his case there is a longer period between the initial
gesture of sacrifice and the vision which that gesture inspires.
Desiring reunion with Enion, his emanation, he renounces his
power over the seas of the fallen world, an act which parallels
Urizen's rejection of futurity: "Arise O Enion arise for Lo I
have calmd my seas" (129:27, E383). Tharmas has since Night I
identified himself with the chaotic energy of the oceans; his
rejection of that identity here signifies his willingness to enter
into a harmonious relationship with his fellow living creatures.
It also prepares the way for his apocalyptic vision, one based
on the motif of the overthrow of Mystery:

Lo how the Pomp of Mystery goes down into the Caves
Her great men howl & throw the dust & rend their hoary hair
Her delicate women & children shriek upon the bitter wind
Spoild of their beauty their hair rent & their skin shriveld up

(134:10-14, E387)

Again the destruction of one aspect of the fallen world is presented
simultaneously with a vision of the liberation of the oppressed,
who now enter a redeemed existence:
Are these the Slaves that groan along the streets of Mystery
Where are your bonds & task masters are these the prisoners
Where are your chains where are your tears why do you look around
If you are thirsty there is the river go bathe your parched limbs
The good of all the Land is before you for Mystery is no more
(134:25-9, E387)

The last of the four apocalyptic visions in Night IX is
associated with Luvah. However, it is quite different from the
others. Luvah performs no act of self-sacrifice in imitation of
Jesus. Instead, the Eternal Man simply assigns him the task of
winemaking. Luvah's acceptance is described in a passage which
has not received the attention it deserves:

Attempting to become more than Man We become less said Luvah
As he arose from the bright feast drunk with the wine of ages
His crown of thorns fell from his head he hung his living Lyre
Behind the seat of the Eternal Man
(135:21-4, E388)

The first line has been interpreted as a sign that Luvah has
recognized his error, that he can now act in accordance with
the teachings of Jesus. But Jesus, as we have seen, proclaims
the gospel of self-sacrifice. When Luvah allows his crown of
thorns to fall from his head, he is refusing to make the gesture
of allegiance to Jesus which the other three Zoas have already
made. "Attempting to be more than man" is a fair description
of the way Luvah is about to act. In a sequence based on the
Revelation motif of the winepress of the wrath of God, he assumes
the role of a priest who indulges his passions to such an extent
that he is led beyond the bounds of the human. It is interesting
to note that he finally does become less than human, "put for
dung on the ground by the Sons of Tharmas & Urthona" (137:24, E390).

Unlike Los, Urizen and Tharmas, then, Luvah refuses to respond positively to the Lamb's work of salvation. The apocalyptic vision with which his experience is associated is presented as a parody of the visions of the other Zoas. While theirs all centre on the image of a liberated humanity, Luvah's presents an image of humanity enslaved and in torment:

But in the Wine Presses the Human Grapes Sing not nor dance They howl & writhe in shoals of torment in fierce flames consuming In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fires In pits & dens & shades of death in shapes of torment & woe The Plates the Screws and Racks & Saws & cords & fires & floods The cruel joy of Luvahs daughters lacerating with knives And whip[s]. their Victims & the deadly sports of Luvahs sons

Luvah and Vala together preside over this scene of carnage. Their victims, the "Human Grapes," are ultimately transformed:

"But the Human Wine stood wondering in all their delightful Expanses / The Elements subside the heavens rolld on with vocal harmony" (137:32-3, E390). There is a parallel here with Rahab's sacrifice of the Lamb of God:

She smites with her knife of flint She destroys her own work Times upon times thinking to destroy the Lamb blessed for Ever He puts off the clothing of blood he redeems the spectres from their bonds

Luvah and Vala (together with their sons and daughters) find a "cruel joy" in tormenting and murdering their victims, yet the very acts by which they do this are the acts which change the Human Grapes into Human Wine. Like the "Lamb blessed for Ever,"
the Grapes are not destroyed; in both cases, their torturer ironically performs the act which makes redemption possible.

In the final pages of *The Four Zoas*, Blake carefully describes a situation in which Luvah is isolated from the other Zoas. First of all, the Eternal Man banishes Luvah and Vala to a "world of shadows" which is probably to be identified with the Gardens of Vala, a place which has been called a "land of doubts & shadows" (126:22, E380) and a "world of shadowy forms" (131:22, E385):

Luvah & Vala woke & all the sons & daughters of Luvah
Awake they wept to one another & they reascended
To the Eternal Man in woe he cast them wailing into
The world of shadows thro the air till winter is over & gone
(137:28-31, E390)

The last phrase seems to indicate that the banishment is to be only a temporary one, although neither Luvah nor Vala reappears before the end of the poem.

Luvah's isolation is a theme integrated into Blake's description of the communion sacrifice which marks the end of the fallen world. The Zoas produce from that world the bread and wine for a ritual described by Frye as "the reuniting of all nature into the body and blood of a universal Man." Luvah has sole responsibility for the production of the wine (the sons of Tharmas and Urthona arrive to separate the wine from the lees only after Luvah and his family have been cast out; the other three Zoas work cooperatively to bake the bread. Finally, Luvah is absent from the vision of a redeemed cosmos with which the poem closes, although Tharmas and Urthona are mentioned by name (138:33,
139:4-7, E391-2) and Urizen is present as the "Plowman" (138:29, E391).49

But Luvah's isolation need not be considered irrevocable. Earlier in the Ninth Night, Luvah and Vala have received this warning from Urizen, who has been delegated authority by the "Regenerate Man" (126:3):

Luvah & Vala henceforth you are Servants obey & live
You shall forget your former state return 0 love in peace
Into your place the place of seed not in the brain or heart
If Gods combine against Man Setting their Dominion above
The Human form Divine. Thrown down from their high Station
In the Eternal heavens of Human Imagination: buried beneath
In dark oblivion with incessant pangs ages on ages
In Enmity & war first weekend then in stern repentance
They must renew their brightness & their disorganized functions
Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human
Cooperating in the bliss of Man obeying his Will
Servants to the infinite & Eternal of the Human form
(126:6-17, E380)

The wine-press sequence has shown Luvah and Vala attempting to set their dominion "above / The Human form Divine." The attempt has failed, just as Rahab's attempt to destroy the Lamb of God has failed. But Luvah and Vala are redeemable: their "stern repentance" will lead to their resumption of "the image of the human." Like the other Zoas, Luvah must make a gesture of self-sacrifice; he must renounce his own will and become obedient to the will of the Regenerate Man. When he has done this, he will presumably rise to rejoin the other Zoas in their experience of the reign of "sweet Science" (139:10, E392).

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that Blake's problem as an artist paralleled that of the Grey Monk as a prophet.
Both have visions of a Golden Age, a world free from fear; both realize that the world is fallen, the men who live there impaled upon the stems of generation. How can a world characterized by fallen sacrifice be transformed into the Golden Age? The Grey Monk's impassioned but laconic proclamation of the power of widows and hermits foreshadows the more elaborate Christology of The Four Zoas. Men in the fallen world are slain on the stems of generation, but it is in such situations that the power to restore that world to its unfallen state manifests itself. More specifically, Blake, during the course of the poem's composition, discovered a positive meaning for sacrifice in the Crucifixion of Jesus.

Support for this interpretation may be found in the textual criticism of G. E. Bentley, Jr. Bentley has established that all the references to Jesus except those in Night VIII and those on two pages of Night IX are additions to the original manuscript. It seems, then, that Blake's first intention was to use the figure of the victim for ironic purposes only (as in the case of the various parodies of the Crucifixion discussed above). However the impact of the notion of self-sacrifice incarnate in the figure of Jesus caused him to transform his original vision in a dramatic way. The Mantle of Luvah, the garb of the perennial victim of the ironic crucifixion, is also the garment in which the Lamb of God has chosen to dress himself.
NOTES


2 Grimes's discussion of the role of sacrifice in the major prophecies (pp. 113-20) is valuable and stimulating, but his own attempt to answer the question he poses is disappointing. This is due largely to the fact that he misinterprets Blake's attitude to the Crucifixion: "Jesus is the Christ not because of, but in spite of his crucifixion" (p. 116).


4 In discussing the poems of the Pickering Manuscript, one is frequently tempted to explicate by means of Blake's mythic system. But Harold Bloom's fine comment is worth keeping in mind: "A critic who translates a poem like The Mental Traveller or The Crystal Cabinet back into the more technical vocabulary of The Four Zoas does Blake the disservice of concealing the kind of popular art or higher simplicity that Blake labored to attain" (Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 316-17).

5 A contrary view is maintained by Adams, who argues that "Central to the poem is the problem of misplaced pity or erroneous action resulting from that emotion. . . . Our speaker should have been wary of those images we have learned to associate with
delusion and enclosure -- the triple form, the tree, and the net -- but he is consumed with pity for the women, who are putting on quite a show of grief" (p. 130). It is certainly a pity that the speaker had not read Adams' book, though it is difficult to see how he can be blamed for this. Adams goes on to speculate: "His interest, however, is undoubtedly sexual, for his own distress is that he imagines what woes love and beauty undergo when held in a state of repression, which may well be a reflection of his own condition" (p. 130). But the poem does not contain evidence to support such a conclusion, and Adams' use of the verb "may" indicates that he is aware of this.

6 H. M. Margoliouth has noted the connection between these poems. See William Blake (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 63.


8 Again a contrary view has been advanced, this time by Alvin Greenberg, who argues that "the failure of the protagonist here is that of self-delusion. . . . he is deluded into seeing the world in which he has been locked as an Edenic vision: 'a little lovely Moony Night.'" See "The Real World of Blake's Manuscript Lyrics," Bucknell Review, 13:2 (1965), 42. Certainly the speaker is deluded about the nature of the Cabinet-world. But the difficulty with Greenberg's argument is that there is no evidence of self-delusion here: that is, the speaker is provided with no clue that the world of the Cabinet is illusory, until it is too late. He has no basis for making the judgment Greenberg thinks he should make. Greenberg's subsequent comment about the speaker's culpability ("Seeking to possess a maiden precisely as a maiden had possessed him, he has been trapped into exercising the selfish ways of the world . . .") ignores the fact that at this point the speaker is acting in accordance with his uncontrollable passion inspired by the "threefold Smile" that "Filled me that like a flame I burned."

9 This connection has been pointed out by Adams, pp. 84-5.

Adams again disagrees. He believes that Mary is wrong to humble herself, and wrong to fall into despair when this gambit fails: "... in humbling her beauty she rejects everything and turns back into the selfhood. As a result, the world in its spectral form consumes her with despair, eating from within in the form of a memory she cannot erase" (p. 140). But this ignores the fact that, in the world of the poem, Mary has no viable alternative. Adams seems to admit this himself when he says that "she seems redeemable" and goes on to lament the absence of a male character "who has the power to rise above the spectral condition and 'forgive' his emanation" (p. 141). In the absence of such a character, Mary can hardly be blamed for turning "back into the selfhood."

Damon identifies the Devil as "the Puritan conscience," the Fairy as "the joy of life" (p. 300). This requires him to interpret the sixth line to mean that the Devil, not the Fairy, says that "Love is a Sin." Adams interprets the Devil as John's "energy," the Fairy as Mary's "seductive Rahab power" (pp. 135-6).

See also Adams' discussion of tone in the poem (pp. 136-7) which he prefaces with the remark that "Blake strikes a tone... which shows that he is not merely describing a state of affairs but savagely condemning that state and those affairs."

This point has been made by Adams, p. 145.

Bloom identifies the "Living" as the other Zoas, who have not yet fallen (E865).


The passage is reproduced on E745.

Harold Bloom treats the passage as an integral part of the poem, and asserts that "Los is prophesying that the fallen Luvah
or man of passion will reappear in the generative world as a redeeming Lamb of God" (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 219).

19 Grimes, p. 113. He concludes that the thrust of the phrase is to distinguish Jesus from Luvah rather than to identify the two: "In the major Prophecies Jesus only appears to be Orcian. He is not Luvah; he only wears Luvah's robes" (p. 114).


21 There is only one other mention of Jesus in Night I, Urizen's question addressed to Los: "Art thou a visionary of Jesus the soft delusion of Eternity" (12:25, E303).


23 Bloom points out that Luvah is reborn in the form of Orc, though he is not so identified in the Song (Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 220-1).

24 "The hand of Urizen is upon me because I blotted out / That Human delusion" (27:16-17, E311).


26 Wagenknecht has made this point (p. 167).

27 One critic, Thomas J. J. Altizer, has completely missed Blake's irony here. He quotes from the passage just discussed and comments: "With these words, Blake is struggling to create a new vision of the Crucifixion, a vision that will unveil Calvary as a sacrifice of God to God, the sacrifice of a broken and even castrated divine Humanity to a transcendent and sovereign God
who is the Spectre of the 'Great Humanity Divine.'" See The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (n.p.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 77-8. For an effective criticism of Altizer's general approach, see Grimes, pp. 154-6. For a detailed discussion of the passage which is sensitive to the distinction between Luvah's point of view and Blake's, see Wagenknecht, pp. 166-8. Wagenknecht argues that Luvah is best understood as a Blakean transformation of Milton's Satan.

28 There are two other incidental references to victims in Night II, both of them images of the fallen nature of the world Urizen creates: the "Druid Temples" (25:8, E310) and the sons of Urizen's "Shadowy Feminine Semblance" who sacrifice victims on a brass altar (30:35-6, E313).

29 For a more detailed account of this episode, see Johnson and Wilkie, p. 222.

30 Stevenson, p. 352n. He goes on to suggest that there is a "general similarity" between the Demons' song and Milton's Nativity Ode.

31 Stevenson, p. 368n.

32 Anne Mellor has noted that this act constitutes a parody of the Crucifixion. See Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 184.

33 See Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 264-5 and E876.

34 H. M. Margoliouth and John Beer both assert that the crucifixion scene is part of the song. See William Blake's Vala (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 141 and Blake's Visionary Universe (London and New York: Manchester Univ. Press and Barnes & Noble, 1969), p. 121. David Erdman takes the opposite view. See Blake: Prophet Against Empire. A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his own Times (1954; rev. ed. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 327n. W. H. Stevenson suggests that the crucifixion sequence, while not part of the song, is nonetheless "intrusive," because "Luvah is Orc, but Orc is not now destroyed" (p. 397n.). Most critics tend to assume, without arguing the point, that the passage is part of the narrative sequence. See, for example, Schorer, p. 329; Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse. p. 267; Mellor, p. 188.

35 David Wagenknecht, who speaks of "the identification of Luvah and Christ in Night VII (b)" (p. 254), misses this point. As we have seen, Blake does not hesitate to link Luvah and Jesus by name when it suits his purpose. There must be a reason for his refraining from doing so here.
36 Blake's Apocalypse, p. 271.

37 This has been noted by Bloom, E877.

38 Stevenson, p. 377n.

39 For the definitive discussion of the Spectre of Urthona, see Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp. 292-9.

40 Anne Mellor argues that in Night VII (a), "psychic integration" and artistic creation are "two modes of salvation on earth which the corrupted human form can achieve" (p. 207). Although her subsequent discussion reveals that she realizes this salvation is not achieved in Night VII (a), she is apparently unaware that such salvation can be achieved in The Four Zoas only with the direct participation of Jesus. (She ignores the reference to Los's vision of the "Lamb of God ... descending to redeem.") Mellor's "two modes of salvation" are two kinds of acts of self-sacrifice. But the agent who performs these acts cannot bring about salvation if he is himself a part of the fallen world, as Los is. The "corrupted human form" can make gestures but not transform reality.

41 This contrast is made more explicit in a deleted passage reproduced by Erdman (E760):

And Rahab stripd off Luvahs robes from off the lamb of God
Then first she saw his glory & her harlot form appeard
In all its turpitude beneath the divine light ...

42 Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 283 and Stevenson, p. 411n.

43 See Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse, p. 283 and Stevenson, p. 410n. Bloom appears to contradict himself (E880) when he says that Vala "identifies Orc as Luvah's slayer." The "robes of blood" image surely identifies the murderer as the Lamb of God, who has just been described as "clothed in Luvahs robes" (101:1, E358). Nowhere in the poem is Orc described as wearing robes of blood or Luvah's robes.

44 Jesus and Jerusalem make only two further appearances in Night IX: in the prophetic words spoken by the Eternal man to the fallen Urizen (122:1-20, E376, especially 122:1 and 16-20) and in Urizen's apocalyptic vision (123:27-9, E378).

45 See 5:1-4, E298 (discussed above). Bloom notes the connection (E882).
Grimes, for example, says of Luvah that "only at the eschatological dawn of vision does he learn from Jesus that 'Attempting to be more than Man We become less'" (p. 90).

Fearful Symmetry, p. 290.

Los (in his regenerate form of Urthona), Urizen and Tharmas are all explicitly mentioned in the passage which describes the baking of the bread (138:1-15, E391), while Luvah is conspicuously absent.

Jean H. Hagstrum overlooks this point when he writes that "in the majestic coda of Night IX . . . there is a place for Tharmas and Urthona, but none for Urizen and Luvah." See "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala" in Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on The Four Zoas, Milton, Jerusalem, ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison, Wis. and London: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973), p. 115. Urizen's role as Plowman has been described earlier in Night IX (123:23-125:2, E378-9).

See Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, a Transcript of the Poem, and a Study of Its Growth and Significance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 171, where Bentley points out that "the only New Testament names in the poem . . . are found in the added sections or in Night VIII or pages 122 and 123 of Night IX, seems to suggest that both those Nights were written considerably after the Nights preceding them were completed. This is particularly striking when we observe that Blake was at some pains to insert references to Jerusalem, Jesus, the Lamb of God, and the Saviour in the earlier Nights in added passages, especially in Nights I and II."

The account of the self-sacrifice of the emanations in Eden in Night I is also a later addition to the text. See Erdman's comment, E740.

Bentley is the critic who has most clearly seen the role of the figure of the victim in the development of Blake's notions of falleness and redemption. He writes that "The earlier Prophecies are, in a sense, bitter analyses of the cause and nature of man's fallen state. The error is identified, but there is little cause for hope. In The Four Zoas is accomplished the Prophecy of the Marriage of Heaven and Hell: 'the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.' This purification is at least partly caused by the crucifixion of 'the Body of the Lamb' (page 110) and the intervention of 'those in Eden' (115). In The Four Zoas Blake describes the redemption of fallen nature. This redemption is based upon his earlier vision, but its nature grew and changed as the Prophecy was being written" (p. 190).
CHAPTER THREE

Milton: The Value of the Saviour's Blood

Milton, no less than The Four Zoas, is a highly Christocentric poem. In The Four Zoas, Jesus is the Lamb of God who descends from an unfallen heavenly realm to the fallen world, in order to communicate a vision of his glory to mankind. Jesus transforms the ritual of Druid sacrifice by his participation in it as a victim, and thereby awakens the fallen Man "up into Eden." Only through the sacrifice of his "vegetated body" can his "Spiritual body" be revealed, and only after the "Spiritual body" has been revealed can the "fallen Man" be awakened. The emphasis on awakening and revelation in connection with the Lamb's sacrifice suggests that Blake understands the Fall primarily in terms of perception rather than morality. But the Crucifixion makes it possible for men to experience the salvation of restored vision in a way which parallels the New Testament experience of salvation as forgiven sin. In Milton, Jesus is again the Lamb of God; but Blake's exposition of the meaning of his sacrifice is modelled more closely on its New Testament source.
The most extensive discussion of sacrifice in the New Testament appears in the Epistle to the Hebrews. One of the central themes of this discussion is that Christ's sacrifice puts an end to the need for all further sacrifices. The writer contrasts Christ with the high priest who must each year repeat the ritual of atonement:

24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
26. For then he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appears the second time without sin unto salvation.

(Hebrews 9.24-8)

Christ's sacrifice is sufficient "to put away sin"; no longer is it necessary for the high priest to make his annual visit to the sanctuary with "blood of others." The Crucifixion, itself a sacrifice involving bloodshed, has made obsolete the institution of ritual sacrifice in the fallen world. The writer of Hebrews has already reminded his audience that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (9.22), but Christ's blood is enough to effect that remission. Christ has borne "the sins of many." Christians should not expect this act to be repeated, nor should they maintain the system of sacrifice which was valid under the Old Covenant: instead they should look for Jesus to "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
In *The Four Zoas*, Blake does not follow this pattern, even though Christ's sacrifice is of central importance in that poem. The descent of Jesus in Night VIII does not bring the need for Druid sacrifice to an end. The event which ushers in the golden age is the sacrifice of the Human Grapes in Luvah's winepress at the end of Night IX. This sacrifice is presented as an essential link in the chain of events which leads to the restoration of the unfallen world. The sacrifice of Jesus has not, in itself, been sufficient to eradicate the need for Luvah's Druid cult of ritual sacrifice.²

In *Milton*, however, Blake moves closer to the New Testament view of the Crucifixion. Milton is a follower of Jesus who learns that the meaning of the Crucifixion is that it has indeed made further sacrifice unnecessary. There need be no more victims. Men have ignored this truth, and the Christian era has been characterized by the continuation of Druid sacrifice. Priests continue to offer the "blood of others" to their gods as though Jesus had never lived, even though such priests often identify themselves as Christians. Milton must first recognize that he has himself been such a priest, and then he must act on that recognition. But this does not imply that Milton should attempt to re-enact the sacrifice of Jesus. Blake's point is not that men will enter Eden because they have been crucified. Blake's equivalent of salvation occurs only for those men who reject the intellectual and psychological system which requires them to be either crucifier or crucified. But here *Milton* presents a paradox which parallels
the New Testament interpretations of the Crucifixion. It is only Jesus who makes it possible for Milton to reject the institution of Druid sacrifice, and Jesus only in his role as crucified saviour.

The relation of Blake's poems to Christian tradition is of course a perennially controversial subject. It is also one which many critics have been reluctant to discuss. Mary Lynn Johnson's comment that discussion of Milton involves "a Christology, whether we like it or not" strikes a characteristic note of exasperation. Central to any Christology is a theory of the Crucifixion, and Johnson at once acknowledges the difficulty: "It is not enough to say that in some illogical, inexplicable way Jesus, who is man's own imagination, saves man. Blake evidently wanted to draw a parallel between the theological enigma of how Jesus' death benefits man and the human problem of how the imagination saves man, and to use this parallel to liberate mankind from a religion of blood-sacrifice by awakening the imagination in each reader." Johnson does not attempt to work out this "parallel" in detail. The conclusion to her brief discussion, however, illustrates a weakness common to many critical analyses of Blake's use of New Testament language. In the same paragraph, she writes of Jesus that "his sacrifice is not a payment for sin but a self-annihilating process of liberating the human spirit from its obsession with sin and death, a process in which every human being participates as -- for whatever reason -- he breaks out of his selfhood." The
assumption underlying this passage is that the burden of Blake's argument is expressed by means of the psychological vocabulary he invented himself -- "Self-annihilating," in this case -- and that he employs New Testament terminology only to indicate the more clearly what a vast gulf separates him from the New Testament writers.

The central thesis of this chapter will involve the position that such assumptions are wrong, that the Jesus of Milton is closer to the Jesus of the New Testament than most critics have been willing to recognize. When Blake invents new terms, such as "annihilation of selfhood," their meanings must be established by their context in language which is drawn directly from the New Testament. In particular, when he writes of the Crucifixion in Milton, Blake takes care to present it in a way which corresponds to the New Testament notion of a sacrifice designed to bring sacrifice to an end. This has been overlooked. When Mary Lynn Johnson writes of the "significant new forms" of the traditional Christian concepts of Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection which Blake creates in Milton, she asserts that "the Atonement becomes the rejection of blood sacrifice in the enactment of mental sacrifice through self-annihilation." The writer of Hebrews could agree with Johnson's Blake that the Crucifixion involves "the rejection of blood sacrifice" in that it makes all further blood sacrifice unnecessary. But it is clear from the context that Johnson would say that Blake interprets the Crucifixion itself
as an example of "blood sacrifice" which is also to be rejected. I believe that she is mistaken. Examination of the poem will show that "the enactment of mental sacrifice" is an option open only to those who have understood the Crucifixion as a "blood sacrifice." The relation between the two forms of sacrifice is complementary, not antithetical.

This point has also been missed by the authors of the only two discussions of Milton which deal in detail with its presentation of the sacrifice of Jesus. Both Florence Sandler and David Wagenknecht misrepresent Blake's relation to the New Testament. Sandler invokes the context of the Epistle to the Hebrews and then argues that "Blake will have Jesus as neither Priest nor Victim" and that "the rending of the veil means for him . . . the exposing of the falsehood of the very notion of Mystery, Priesthood and Sacrifice (any sacrifice, that is, except the 'sacrifice' of the contrite heart)." Wagenknecht asserts that "For the Atonement Blake substitutes the epiphany of God as the breaker of the law of Jehovah's virtue." But in Milton, Jesus is the person who makes false the notion of Mystery, Priesthood and Sacrifice, not by breaking the law but by making obsolete the psychology which divides the world into law-breakers and law-keepers -- the psychology which animates Druid sacrifice.

That men have been deceived about the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice is one of the central assertions of the invocation
on Plate 2. Blake asks his Muses to reveal the source of this deceit, and outlines briefly the false doctrine which this mysterious source has inspired:

Tell also of the False Tongue: vegetated
Beneath your land of shadows: of its sacrifices, and
Its offerings; even till Jesus, the image of the Invisible God
Became its prey; a curse, an offering, and an atonement
For Death Eternal in the heavens of Albion, & before the Gates
Of Jerusalem his Emanation, in the heavens beneath Beulah
(2:10-15, E95)

Northrop Frye has identified the biblical source of the False Tongue as James 3.6: 8 "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Such a tongue is false both because it tells lies and because it counterfeits the fiery tongues of Pentecost.

But the association with fire is also relevant to the context provided by Hebrews. The sacrifices of the False Tongue would inevitably be burnt offerings, and the writer contrasts these with Christ's:

5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
6. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.
7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.
8. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;
9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
10. By the which will we are sanctified through the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(Hebrews 10.5-10)

Here a careful distinction is made between the "burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin" and "the body of Jesus Christ," the first kind of sacrifice and the second. In the invocation to Milton, Blake implicitly makes a parallel distinction between the sacrifices of the False Tongue and the sacrifice of Jesus. However, this distinction will be overlooked by the reader who does not take seriously the New Testament nuances in the language. Most critics have simply assumed, with Florence Sandler, that Blake means to condemn the notion of sacrifice itself.

The invocation might seem to provide some justification for Sandler's approach. Blake emphasizes that the False Tongue has made Jesus "its prey." But it is important to remember that the False Tongue has done this only insofar as it has deceived men about the significance of the Crucifixion. Most critics identify the False Tongue with some aspect of Satan. The father of lies has convinced men that the Crucifixion is to be regarded as merely one more example of the "sacrifices and offerings" which have been performed incessantly throughout human history. The context of the whole poem makes it clear that it is only in this limited sense that the False Tongue has made Jesus its prey. (Otherwise -- for example -- Milton would hardly conclude with the triumphant appearance of the Jesus of the parousia.)

The False Tongue, then, has blinded men to the unique character
of the Crucifixion. In this sense, Milton himself is a representative "Christian" who has inherited a false Eternity in which he is identified with his role as priest-figure. As a result, he is "Unhappy tho in heav'n," like Satan in *Paradise Lost*:

Say first! what mov'd Milton, who walkd about in Eternity One hundred years, pondring the intricate mazes of Providence Unhappy tho in heav'n, he obey'd, he murmur'd not. he was silent Viewing his Sixfold Emanation scatter'd thro' the deep In torment! To go into the deep her to redeem & himself perish? (2:16-20, E95)

Milton's situation can be analyzed in terms familiar to us from the preceding chapters of this study: his identity as the victorious priest depends upon the sacrifice of a tormented victim. Although he is unhappy with this situation, the only alternative he can conceive of -- since he, too, has been deluded by the False Tongue -- is to exchange places with his suffering Emanation, "redeeming" her by "perishing" himself.

As always with Blake, we should be alert to the possibility of irony. Having established the context of New Testament language in the invocation, Blake has now alluded to the most famous verses in the Gospels: "For God.so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3.16-17). Obviously, anyone who sees himself as the redeemer of another does not truly "believe" in Jesus. Only Jesus has power to redeem. If Milton thinks that he
can, in the Christian sense, redeem his Emanation himself, and that he can accomplish his mission by voluntarily perishing for her, he is mistaken. Yet Blake's language here suggests that this is the way he wants his reader to interpret Milton's adventure. This irony is compounded by the next line, "What cause at length mov'd Milton to this unexampled deed?" (2:21, E95). The deed, rather obviously, is "exampled" in the sense that Jesus has descended to redeem the world by dying on the Cross. It is "unexampled" in that no one who follows Jesus need imitate his sacrifice in the way Milton apparently intends.

Yet these lines do provide a real foreshadowing of the poem's action, for Milton does "perish" in another sense, the sense in which Paul speaks of the death of the old man (in Romans 6, for example) and the putting on of "newness of life" (6.4) through the power of Jesus. To "perish" in this sense is to perform the "mental sacrifice" or the "sacrifice of a contrite heart" mentioned by Johnson and Sandler. But Milton is able to do this only because of the physical sacrifice of Jesus, which involves the shedding of real blood and the experience of real death. Similarly, Milton participates in Oloion's redemption when he speaks to her the "Words of the Inspired Man" (41:29, E141) at the poem's conclusion. But Milton is not her saviour, for the power of his Words depends upon the power of the "Truth" he has heard in the Song of the Bard, who has sung "According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius / Who is the eternal
all-protecting Divine Humanity" (14:1-2, E107). The content of both the Bard's Song and Milton's speech on Plate 41 has much to do with the notion of Jesus as saviour.

None of this becomes clear in Plate 2 itself, except for the fact that Milton's situation is that of the priest in the ritual of Druid sacrifice. While Blake's use of biblical language is obscure, and perhaps even deliberately misleading, the Plate does raise the issue of the interpretation of the Crucifixion, an issue central to the meaning of the Bard's Song. From the perspective of the False Tongue, Jesus is one more in a series of "its sacrifices. and / Its offerings." (The use of the plural is significant here; the False Tongue would deny the uniqueness of Jesus' sacrifice.) The other perspective is evoked by the phrase "redeem & . . . perish" which reminds the reader of John 3.16, and its vision of a loving God who sends his only begotten Son to die a sacrificial death that sacrifice might cease. By listening to the Bard's Song, Milton learns which of these is the correct one.

The Bard's Song presents the fallen world as governed by Druid sacrifice. The Song's central myth concerns the three classes of men, the Elect, the Redeemed, and the Reprobate. The Elect are the priest-figures, and in the Redeemed and the Reprobate we can discern two types of victims, distinguishable by their differing attitudes towards their roles. Satan, Palamabron and Rintrah
are the characters who (respectively) represent each of the three classes in the dramatic events described by the Bard.

Blake prepares us for this myth by describing a contemporary London scene in terms of ritual sacrifice: "Between South Molton Street & Stratford Place: Calvarys foot / Where the Victims were preparing for Sacrifice . . ." (4:21-2, E97). The Crucifixion is not over, the Victims being the young soldiers training for battle near the gallows at Tyburn. This is clearly a world under the dominion of the False Tongue, the world in which men continually re-enact the ritual of the high priest who enters the sanctuary with the blood of others. (For the Druid priest, of course, the blood is human: Blake is sensitive to the distinction between Hebraic and Druidic sacrifice.) But Blake immediately reminds his reader of the truth that "Christ took on Sin in the Virgins Womb, & put it off on the Cross" (5:3, E97). Again the context of Hebrews is evoked: "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9.26). Sin has been "put away" or "put off," but the world has not realized it and the agony of Calvary has been needlessly prolonged.

Blake also makes us aware that, historically, Milton did participate in such a ritual in his role as priest: "Charles calls on Milton for Atonement. Cromwell is ready" (5:39, E98). Milton and Cromwell both believed that the execution of Charles would benefit the English nation. Florence Sandler has pointed
out that Charles certainly understood his own death to be Christ-like, and Milton understood his own role in that death to be priestly. The Bard's Song is set in Eternity, but what it has to say about sacrifice is to be related directly to the historical reality of Milton's time and of Blake's.

Milton's identity as a member of the Elect is established early in the Song: "For the Elect cannot be Redeemed, but Created continually / By Offering & Atonement in the cru[el]ties of Moral Law" (5:11-12, E98). David Wagenknecht relates this concept of the Elect to the Christian doctrine of the Crucifixion in a way that is relevant to our purpose: "the Elect are the audience for and demanders of the Crucifixion of Christ, understood in terms of legal exaction rather than in terms of love." Wagenknecht's statement is particularly important because, almost alone in recent Milton criticism, it implies that positive value may be ascribed to some aspect of the Crucifixion. The Elect's interpretation is obviously inspired by the False Tongue, a fact Blake drives home by making Satan the representative of the Elect in the story the Bard tells (7:1-4, E99). What the Bard's Song does for Milton is to reveal the Crucifixion's positive value, and cause him to repudiate his priestly role.

From our point of view, the details of Satan's quarrel with Palamabron are unimportant. Rather its significance lies in the way it presents the main characters in terms of their sacrificial roles. Redeemed and Reprobate (Palamabron and Rintrah) are both
victims of the Elect. The difference between them is that the Redeemed are anxious to escape their fate, while the Reprobate, "form'd / To destruction from the mother's womb" (7:2-3, E99), take pride in their stance as transgressors and outlaws. Rintrah intervenes in the quarrel on Palamabron's side (8:34-6, E101), even though the matter does not concern him directly; he thereby establishes his identity as one who will defy the Elect even if he must suffer for it. (His most obvious ancestor here is the Orc of The Four Zoas.) But it is Satan who occupies most of the Bard's attention.

Satan reveals his Elect nature in the Great Solemn Assembly in Palamabron's tent:

He created Seven deadly Sins drawing out his infernal scroll, Of Moral laws and cruel punishments upon the clouds of Jehovah To pervert the Divine voice in its entrance to the earth With thunder of war & trumpets sound, with armies of disease Punishments & deaths musterd & number'd; Saying I am God alone There is no other! let all obey my principles of moral individuality I have brought them from the uppermost innermost recesses Of my Eternal Mind, transgressors I will rend off for ever, As now I rend this accursed Family from my covering. (9:21-9, E102)

In this particular situation, the victim is Palamabron, whom Satan accuses of "ingratitude" and "malice" (9:20). Again Rintrah tries to intervene on Palamabron's behalf, but "Satan not having the Science of Wrath, but only of Pity / Rent them asunder, and wrath was left to wrath, & pity to pity" (9:46-7, E103). Thus the priest-figure attempts to "rend off for ever" Rintrah and Palamabron, both of whom have transgressed his "Moral Laws."
But all of this has revealed to those in the Great Solemn Assembly that Satan is himself a transgressor. Ironically, he has been possessed by Rintrah's reprobate fury (9:19) and the revelation of his true nature, of the "vast unfathomable Abyss" in his bosom (9:35) has made it impossible for the Eternals to take seriously his accusations against Palamabron. For Satan has in effect condemned himself by his own act of rage — "it became a proverb in Eden. Satan is among the Reprobate" (9:11) — and after causing the separation of Rintrah and Palamabron, "He sunk down a dreadful Death" (9:48). But Satan is not "among the Reprobate" in the sense that he has become a victim. He has merely descended to the fallen world, where he presides over the religion of human sacrifice, Druidism:

And the Mills of Satan were separated into a moony Space
Among the rocks of Albions Temples, and Satans Druid sons
Offer the Human Victims throughout all the Earth . . .
(11:6-8, E104)

Satan's act of self-revelation has confused the situation in the Eternal world. The judgment of the Great Assembly had already fallen "on Rintrah and his rage" (9:10), a decision which now seems clearly unjust. Now the Eternals are faced with the question, "Why in a Great Solemn Assembly / The Innocent should be condemn'd for the Guilty?" (11:15-16, E104). One of the members of the Assembly responds to this question: "Saying. If the Guilty should be condemn'd, he must be an Eternal Death / And one must die for another throughout all Eternity" (11:17-18,
An "Eternal Death" requires an executioner -- who by that act of wrath would himself become "Guilty." The person who condemns Satan becomes, by his act, a Satanic figure himself, and must, according to the principles of justice in the fallen world, be condemned by someone else. This is essentially the same situation as the one examined in the minor prophecies, in which the victim who is successful in freeing himself from that role can only become an oppressor himself, if he is to retain his "freedom."

The unidentified Eternal goes on to apply this general principle to the particular situation in which the Assembly finds itself:

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

Palamabron is "redeemed" from Satan's Law only in the ironic sense in which this is possible in the fallen world: he has himself become an oppressor, cunningly arranging for the wrath to fall upon Rintrah. But the problem of guilt is one of some complexity. Rintrah has replaced Palamabron as scapegoat, but this has occurred as a result of the mistaken judgment of the solemn Assembly, so that the responsibility must be shared among its members. It is now obvious that Satan, the original "Guilty" party, should be condemned to assume the victim's role, provided one accepts the premises of Satan's Law. But the Eternal seems
to be approving of Palamabron's decision to postpone the Assembly until the innocent Rintrah could be condemned instead of Satan. The potentially endless chain of guilt and punishment has been broken. Satan, having "fall'n from his station," has removed himself neatly from the picture. He can "never be redeem'd" because he has refused to become a victim and hence has, in effect, repudiated his own system of "Moral laws and cruel punishments." (His transgression against himself, of course, has been to identify himself with the Reprobate Rintrah.) Ironically, then, Satan himself has struck the first blow against "Satans Law." The Eternal who describes the situation appears not to appreciate this; he is interested rather in the fact that "Satans Law" can function without Satan. Palamabron's ingenious invention of the innocent victim makes it unnecessary for the otherwise endless search for transgressors to continue. Satan, the real transgressor, is no longer available; it is expedient that one Eternal should assume the victim's role so that the others need not die for one another throughout all Eternity.16

But the delicate moral equilibrium which the Eternals have created here is soon disrupted by the intervention of Leutha, who interprets the situation in terms of "Satans condemnation," and offers to take her sin upon herself:

But when Leutha (a Daughter of Beulah) beheld Satans condemnation She down descended into the midst of the Great Solemn Assembly Offering herself a Ransom for Satan, taking on her, his Sin. (11:28-30, E104)
The fact that Leutha can make such a gesture reveals that the Eternals' patchwork solution to their moral dilemma has grave deficiencies. If it is understood that it is only through some sort of legal fiction that judgment has "justly" fallen upon Rintrah, then the problem of real guilt remains. The Assembly has decided that judgment should have fallen upon the absent Satan, and has in that sense condemned him. Leutha implicitly uncovers the hypocritical aspect of the Assembly's approach. The Eternals pretend that Rintrah's sacrifice has brought an end to the need for one to die for another throughout all Eternity, yet they wish to retain the Satanic legal system which divides the world into guilty and innocent, a system which clearly embodies the psychology of Druid sacrifice. Rintrah's "sacrifice," and its acceptance by the Assembly, does nothing to wipe away sin and guilt.

At first Leutha's act appears to be an attempt at a Christ-like gesture of atonement, as she descends, like Jesus, to bear the burden of someone else's sin. But her speech reveals that she does not consider herself innocent, but rather ultimately responsible for Satan's wrong-doing: "I am the Author of this Sin! by my suggestion / My Parent power Satan has committed this transgression" (11:35-6, E104). Leutha wants to return to the old system of guilt and punishment, and in so doing provides an illustration of the Eternal's point that the pattern of condemnation, once established, cannot be ended by further condemnation.
For Leutha, by her own account, was driven to "suggest" the sin to Satan because Elynittria refused to allow her to approach the tent of Palamabron, with whom she was in love (11:37-8, E104). If Leutha is to be a ransom for Satan, then it is only just that Elynittria should be a ransom for Leutha. And no doubt Elynittria would have her story to tell, too. If Rintrah was an innocent but unwilling victim, Leutha is potentially a willing but guilty one. Neither sacrifice could effectively alter conditions in the realm of the Eternals. The use of the word "Offering" reminds the reader of the False Tongue's language. Leutha may be sincere in her desire to redeem Satan from condemnation, but the method she proposes is self-defeating.¹⁷

Fortunately Leutha does not have to make good on her promise. Instead, Enitharmon has already created "a New space to protect Satan from punishment" (13:11, E106), and this New Space turns out to be the fallen world, the place to which Satan has descended and in which he has established his religion of human sacrifice. The Assembly sends various "Guards" to protect this world -- Lucifer, Molech, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, Jehovah -- but they all fail at their task. A sacrificial victim is apparently needed.

Ultimately it is neither Rintrah nor Leutha who becomes the effective victim, but rather Jesus, the Lamb of God:

For the Body of Death was perfected in hypocritic holiness, Around the Lamb, a Female Tabernacle woven in Cathedrons Looms He died as a Reprobate, he was Bunish'd as a Transgressor! Glory! Glory! Glory! to the Holy Lamb of God I touch the heavens as an instrument to glorify the Lord!

(13:25-9, E106)
Blake is careful to distinguish the "Holy Lamb of God" from the "Body of Death" which has been perfected "Around the Lamb."
The False Tongue, in its "Hypocritic holiness," has tried to convince the world that the Crucifixion is a sacrifice to the god of death, Satan. But the Body of Death is not the real Lamb, whose mission is explained in the second part of the passage:

The Elect shall meet the Redeem'd. on Albions rocks they shall meet
Astonish'd at the Transgressor, in him beholding the Saviour.
And the Elect shall say to the Redeem'd. We behold it is of Divine Mercy alone! of Free Gift and Election that we live.
Our Virtues & Cruel Goodnesses, have deserv'd Eternal Death.
Thus they weep upon the fatal Brook of Albions River.
(13:30-5, E106)

Unlike Leutha, the Lamb is innocent. Unlike Rintrah, he gives himself willingly. When the Elect see plainly, they will recognize that there is a Law superior to Satan's. They will understand that, like Satan, they have been protected from punishment by the victim they have been punishing in accordance with their law of "Virtues & Cruel Goodnesses." They will be able to perceive the situation of sacrifice as a revelation of "Divine Mercy" rather than an expression of Satan's legalistic system of guilt and punishment. The Lamb has given the "Free Gift" of his own life that the Elect might continue to live. When the Elect realize this, salvation is possible for them. The Bard does not explain what the Elect will do when they have experienced the astonishment of seeing that the Transgressor is the Saviour. Milton, however, is able to draw his own conclusion.18
Milton learns from the Bard's Song that the key to his unhappiness is the psychology of Druid sacrifice itself. In the speech in which he announces his intention to descend to "Eternal Death," he uses the phrase "self annihilation" for the first time, although it is not immediately clear what he means by it. What is clear, though, is that annihilating the selfhood means a radical change in Milton's concept of his own identity, an identity he now defines principally in terms of his relation to Satan and to Jesus:

And Milton said, I go to Eternal Death! The Nations still Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam; in pomp Of warlike selfhood, contradicting and blaspheming. When will the Resurrection come; to deliver the sleeping body From corruptibility: O when Lord Jesus wilt thou come? Tarry no longer; for my soul lies at the gates of death. (14:14-19, E107)

In a fallen world, Milton realizes, the only hope is the Second Coming of Jesus. The "warlike selfhood" obviously represents the spiritual force which opposes Jesus; Milton fears that his own "Selfhood" will ultimately be the only reality for him. This fear provides the motive for his descent:

I will arise and look forth for the morning of the grave. I will go down to the sepulcher to see if morning breaks! I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death, Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilate, And I be siez'd & giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood. (14:20-4, E107)

Milton then experiences a vision of "The Lamb of God" -- "seen thro' mists & shadows, hov'ring / Over the sepulchers" (14:25-6) -- and recognizes that he, Milton, is, in certain respects at least,
to be identified with the Satan of the Bard's Song:

I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One!
He is my Spectre! in my obedience to loose him from my Hells
To claim the Hells, my furnaces, I go to Eternal Death.

(14:30-2, E107)

Insofar as he has defined his identity in terms of "Virtues &
Cruel Goodnesses," the "Moral laws and cruel punishments" of
Satan, Milton has been a member of the Elect, a priest-figure
who can live in his "heav'n" only because others are "scatter'd
thro' the deep / In torment." But he knows that Satan is only
a part of him, his Spectre. He views his descent to Eternal Death
as a way of freeing himself from Satan. But he cannot liberate
himself by making Satan his victim. If he attempted to do so,
the part of himself which is not Satan would be acting in a
Satanic way. Instead, Milton will "loose" Satan from his "Hells";
that is, he will expel whatever it is in himself that has provided
an hospitable climate for the psychology of Druid sacrifice. 19

How he is to do this is another lesson he has learned from
the Bard's Song. If he is not to be the priest who sacrifices
Satan, it may seem obvious that he should willingly accept the
role of victim, as Jesus does in the vision of the Elect at the
end of the Bard's Song. But that, too, would be a mistake, as
Leutha's experience has shown. For Milton to offer himself as
a Ransom would unnecessarily perpetuate the institution of Druid
sacrifice. For much of the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus lies
in its powerful revelation that it is by Divine Mercy alone that
we live. The Elect's recognition of this fact is simultaneous
with their recognition that Jesus is Saviour, and that their own
sacrificial "Virtues & Cruel Goodnesses" are worthless. Milton
shares the perception of the Elect. He acknowledges Jesus as both
Saviour ("Lamb of God" -- 14:25) and Lord (14:18), and the "obedience"
to which he refers at the end of his speech can only be obedience
to Jesus.

Annihilating the selfhood, then, means becoming neither a
priest nor a victim. First one must recognize that Jesus is the
victim whose crucifixion has brought to an end men's need for the
institution of Druid sacrifice. Then one must act in obedience
to the vision of Divine Mercy which accompanies this recognition.
The implications of such obedient action are not spelled out
at this point, though the references to Resurrection and Last
Judgment provide broad hints. When Milton -- and all men --
have understood the true value of Jesus' sacrifice, the fallenness
which characterizes human experience will come to an end.

The main temptation Milton faces on his descent is the one
posed by Tirzah and Rahab, whose chief work is to pervert the
meaning of the Lamb's sacrifice. They try to entice Milton to
join them in presiding over a cult of Natural Religion; they promise
to make him "King / Of Canaan" (20:506, E113). What this entails
is made clear in their song:

Come bring with thee Jerusalem with songs on the Grecian Lyre!
In Natural Religion! in experiments on Men,
Let her be Offerd up to Holiness! Tirzah numbers her;
She numbers with her fingers every fibre ere it grow;  
Where is the Lamb of God? where is the promise of his coming?  
Her shadowy Sisters form the bones, even the bones of Horeb:  
Around the marrow! and the orbed scull around the brain!  
His Images are born for War! for Sacrifice to Tirzah!  
To Natural Religion! to Tirzah the Daughter of Rahab the Holy!  
(19:46-54, El12)

Tirzah and Rahab offer up Jerusalem as a sacrifice, and distort  
the "Images" of the Lamb of God in a way which corresponds to  
the perfection of the "Body of Death . . . in hypocritic holiness  
/ Around the Lamb" (13:25-6, E106) in the Bard's Song. In this  
passage the images of "the bones of Horeb" which surround the  
marrow and "the orbed scull" which encloses the brain suggest  
that a false body has been created to conceal the true one.  
But Milton, having now understood the meaning of the Lamb's  
sacrifice, ignores the opportunity to become King of Canaan.  
From the perspective of the fallen world, however, Natural Religion  
appears to have triumphed with Tirzah "in her cruel sports among  
the Victims" (19:44). This world, soon to be characterized in  
terms of the minute particulars of recent and contemporary Western  
history, has not understood the Crucifixion as anything other  
than one more example of Canaanite sacrifice.  

Images of Canaanite-Druid sacrifice dominate the rest of  
Book I, as Milton continues his journey. Los immediately recognizes  
the significance of Milton's mission:

He recollected an old Prophecy in Eden recorded,  
And often sung to the loud harp at the immortal feasts  
That Milton of the Land of Albion should up ascend  
Forward from Ulro from the Vale of Felpham; and set free  
Orc from his Chain of Jealousy . . .  
(20:57-61, E114)
To set Orôc free from the Chain of Jealousy is to bring the institution of Druid sacrifice to an end, but it can also be interpreted as the event which could unleash the forces of chaos, and is later so interpreted by Rintrah and Palamabron (see 22:31-4, E116). Los, later identified as "the Spirit of Prophecy the ever apparent Elias" (25:61, E120), is alone able to perceive that Milton is no longer the Milton of history. Milton and Los unite in Blake in order to carry out Milton's mission, which from this point on is definable in terms of the consciousness experienced by the inhabitants of the fallen world generally, as well as in terms of Milton's own psychology.

Los is opposed by his two sons, Rintrah and Palamabron, who have not heard the Prophecy and are consequently able to recognize Milton only as the member of the Elect class who had lived in the seventeenth century, the priestly executioner of Charles. Although Milton's religion of ritual sacrifice is no longer, in Blake's time, identified with the institutional church, the spirit which animated that religion manifests itself more powerfully than ever. Milton, Los's sons argue, must bear his share of the responsibility for the spiritual desolation of the age:

Milton's Religion is the cause: there is no end to destruction!
See the Churches at their Period in terror & despair:
Rahab created Voltaire; Tirzah created Rousseau;
Asserting the Self-righteousness against the Universal Saviour,
Mocking the Confessors & Martyrs, claiming Self-righteousness;
With cruel Virtue: making War upon the Lambs Redeemed;
To perpetuate War & Glory, to perpetuate the Laws of Sin:
They perverted Swedenborgs Visions in Beulah & in Ulro . . .
(22:39-46, E116)
Ironically, Voltaire and Rousseau are Milton's spiritual heirs, perpetuating the Laws of Sin by dividing mankind into priests (the Self-righteous rationalists, believers in Natural Religion) and victims (the Confessors & Martyrs, whose "sin" is their belief in Jesus). In the same way, Rahab and Tirzah have perverted whatever is imaginative in Swedenborg's vision by causing him to show "the Transgressors in Hell, the proud Warriors in Heaven: / Heaven as a Punisher & Hell as One under punishment" (22:51-2, E117). To do this, Rintrah continues, is "to deny the value of the Saviours blood" (22:54). The very explicit reference to the sacrificial blood of Jesus can hardly be accidental. As in the Bard's Song, the Crucifixion is presented as the sacrifice which should have brought sacrifice to an end.²⁴ For Rahab and Tirzah to order society by dividing men into priests and victims, punishers and punished, is to deny the central truth of Christianity.

The men who attempt to bring this truth to the attention of their society become victims themselves:

But then I rais'd up Whitefield, Palamabron raisd up Westley, And these are the cries of the Churches before the two Witnesses['] Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men: Becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross The Witnesses lie dead in the Street of the Great City No Faith is in all the Earth . . .

(22:55-60, E117)

Whitefield and Wesley are of course not literally murdered, but like the other "Confessors & Martyrs," they are mocked by the spirit of self-righteousness symbolized by Voltaire and Rousseau.
The skepticism which greets their proclamation of visionary truth has the effect of deadening their potentially redemptive message, and ensuring that the psychology of Druid sacrifice continues to hold sway over the world. That Milton (historically) should have contributed to the creation of this situation seems, to Rintrah and Palamabron, reason enough to condemn him now.

There is, of course, irony in the way Blake presents their point of view. Rintrah and Palamabron believe that Druid sacrifice must be overthrown but they are themselves the dupes of its psychology. Fearing that Milton "will utterly consume us," they decide the solution is to capture and imprison him in much the same way as Orc has been imprisoned: "let us descend & bring him chained / To Bowlahoola 0 father most beloved!" (23:17-18, E117). Bowlahoola, we later learn, "is namd Law. by mortals" (24:48, E119). In their readiness to assume the oppressor's role, Rintrah and Palamabron are in their own way unwittingly denying the value of the Saviour's blood. Fortunately, Los is not impressed by their arguments. He tells them of the prophecy about Milton's return, and reminds them (and the reader) of the lesson learned by the Elect at the end of the Bard's Song: "O Sons we live not by wrath. by mercy alone we live!" (23:34, E118).

Los is also in charge of Luvah's winepress, which is described in terms virtually identical to those of Night IX of The Four Zoas. At first this may seem to undercut the image of Los as Milton's ally, but Blake makes it clear that Los is not responsible for
the construction of the winepress -- "Luvah laid the foundation & Urizen finish'd it in howling woe" (27:2, E123) -- and, more important, that he attempts to use it for purposes more positive than its builders intended.

This Wine-press is call'd War on Earth, it is the Printing-Press Of Los; and here he lays his words in order above the mortal brain As cogs are formed in a wheel to turn the cog of the adverse wheel. (27:8-10, E123)

War on Earth need not be only an image of meaningless ritual slaughter; it may also be a sign of the end. In converting the Wine-press to a Printing-Press, Los is using the brutal minute particulars of existence in the fallen world in the service of prophetic vision.25

However Los cannot transform the world in accordance with his vision. At best he can create conditions which reveal the alternatives clearly. In lines taken directly from *The Four Zoas*, we see "War on Earth" as a manifestation of Druid sacrifice:

But in the Wine-presses the Human grapes sing not, nor dance They howl & writhe in shoals of torment; in fierce flames consuming, In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fires. In pits & dens & shades of death: in shapes of torment & woe. The plates & screws & wracks & saws & cords & fires & cisterns The cruel joys of Luvah's Daughters lacerating with knives And whips their Victims & the deadly sport of Luvah's Sons (27:30-6, E123)

It is in this context that Los achieves his great creative triumph, in the moment in which "the Poets Work is Done" (29:1, E126). His ability to impose an imaginative order upon the fallen world is real but limited. He may make prophetic use of Luvah's Wine-press of War on Earth, but he cannot eradicate or alter the impulse
which causes men to conduct such sacrificial rites. One of the last glimpses we get of the World of Los reveals this fact clearly. After the magnificent description of Los's imaginative enterprise, we are presented with the image of "The stamping feet of Zelophehads Daughters . . . coverd with Human gore" (29:58, E127). At the end of Book I there is an obvious (and unresolved) tension between Los's creative power, and the destructive power of Rahab and Tirzah (two of the five daughters). Los's union with Milton (and with Blake) appears to offer the possibility of a positive resolution. Thus Milton's descent is crucial not only in his own quest for salvation, but also for the fate of the fallen world itself.

Milton's descent is paralleled by that of Ololon, his "Sixfold Emanation," who, as a sixfold being with one personality, can be described as both singular and plural, depending on the context. When Ololon first appears, her (or their) situation is an ironic counterpart to Milton's at the beginning of the poem. Milton saw his Emanation "scatter'd thro' the deep / In torment" and this inspires him to "go into the deep her to redeem & himself perish" (2:19-20, E95). But Ololon, it turns out, perceives herself as a resident of Eternity who has driven Milton into "the deep." This perception has its roots in an incident described in Book I:

But many of the Eternals rose up from eternal tables Drunk with the Spirit, burning round the Couch of death they stood
Looking down into Beulah: wrathful, fill'd with rage!
They rend the heavens round the Watchers in a fiery circle:
And round the Shadowy Eighth: the Eight close up the Couch
Into a tabernacle, and flee with cries down to the Deeps.

(20:43-8, E114)

It has already been explained that Milton appears to those in Eternity as one sleeping upon a golden couch (15:1-16, E108). The Eternals who "rend the heavens" around the Watchers are so closely associated with Ololon as to be identified with her. Ololon is at first described as a river, and the wrathful Eternals as those who dwell on her "mild banks" (21:15-17, E114), but it soon becomes evident that these are merely different aspects of a single entity. Ololon, then, sees herself as a priest-figure who has sacrificed Milton by driving him into the "Deeps" (Ulro) in order to satisfy her wrath. Like the Milton of Plate 2, she is "Unhappy tho' in heav'n," and unable, of her own strength, to alter the situation.

Milton, of course, discovers the solution to his problem in listening to the Bard's Song; but Ololon does not have the benefit of this experience:

And they lamented that they had in wrath & fury & fire
Driven Milton into the Ulro; for now they knew too late
That it was Milton the Awakener: they had not heard the Bard
Whose song call'd Milton to the attempt...

(21:31-4, E115)

This implies both that Ololon is unaware that it is Milton's intention to descend to the Ulro, and (more important) that she is unaware that the psychology of Druid sacrifice has been made obsolete by the Lamb of God's sacrifice. As a result, she can
think of only one way to express her impulse towards repentance. She offers herself as a ransom for Milton, just as Leutha offered to take Satan's sin upon herself: "And Ololon said, Let us descend also, and let us give / Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors" (21:45-6, E115). Like Leutha, Ololon believes that the possibility for change is limited by the notion that the roles of priest and victim are permanent ones, though individuals may leave one role and assume another.27

Then the Divine Family said. Six Thousand Years are now Accomplish'd in this World of Sorrow; Milton's Angel knew The Universal Dictate; and you also feel this Dictate. And now you know this World of Sorrow, and feel Pity. Obey The Dictate! Watch over this World, and with your brooding wings, Renew it to Eternal Life: Lo! I am with you always But you cannot renew Milton he goes to Eternal Death

So spake the Family Divine as One Man even Jesus Uniting in One with Ololon & the appearance of One Man. Jesus the Saviour appeared coming in the Clouds of Ololon! (21:51-60, E115)

Jesus, explicitly identified as "the Saviour," reveals himself directly to Ololon. He unites with her in a way which parallels the Bard's union with Milton at the end of the Song (14:9, E107), though here it is clearly Jesus who is the dominant partner in the union.

But there are other parallels which are more important. First, Ololon learns, as Milton does from the Bard's Song, that the psychology of Druid sacrifice is obsolete. As Milton had to learn that he should not try to make Satan his victim, so Ololon learns that she should not try to "renew Milton" by making herself
a victim. Instead she must recognize that "Jesus the Saviour," the victim par excellence, has made such sacrifice superfluous. She must then act on this perception, not by becoming either a priest or a victim, but by obeying the "Universal Dictate." Obedience, for Ololon as for Milton, involves maintaining an intimate relationship with Jesus. From this point on, her appearance tends to be coincidental with the manifestation of the Jesus of the parousia. Thus Ololon embarks on the process of "self annihilation," though Blake does not use the phrase in this passage.

Like Milton, Ololon must experience one major temptation during the course of her descent. Both temptations have to do with the choice between two conflicting responses to the sacrifice of Jesus. Milton rejects Rahab and Tirzah's offer to make him "King of Canaan," the priest who presides over the ritual by which the Lamb of God is sacrificed to the gods of "Natural Religion." He refuses to cross the "river Jordan" to join them. Ololon's temptation is to stay in one place, beside "Luvahs empty Tomb" (35:59, E135), outside the Mundane Shell. In so doing, she would be acknowledging that Luvah's sacrifice is equivalent to that of Jesus. This would imply that she would no longer be obligated to obey the "Universal Dictate," and could safely abandon her mission.

The siren song in this case is heard, ironically, in "the Divine Voice . . . in the Songs of Beulah" (33:1, E131). The Divine Voice, addressing the "Daughter of Babylon," presents an
account of Milton's descent which omits all mention of Jesus, and which asserts the necessity of \textit{repeated} sacrifice:

Behold Milton descended to Redeem the Female Shade From Death Eternal; such your lot, to be continually Redeem'd By death & misery of those you love & by Annihilation (33:11-13, E131)

In these lines the Divine Voice implicitly rejects the possibility that the Crucifixion (or any particular sacrifice) could eliminate the need for further "death & misery." Thus Blake establishes the fact that the Divine Voice is to be interpreted ironically.

The passage continues with a wildly inaccurate prediction:

When the Sixfold Female perceives that Milton annihilates Himself: that seeing all his loves by her cut off: he leaves Her also: entirely abstracting himself from Female loves She shall relent in fear of death: She shall begin to give Her maidens to her husband: delighting in his delight And then & then alone begins the happy Female joy As it is done in Beulah . . . (33:14-20, E132)

But Ololon is not, in her subsequent actions, motivated by "fear of death," nor is there a scene in which she gives her maidens to her husband. (She does give her own maidenhead to her husband, but if it is that to which the Divine Voice is referring, the use of the plural is inexplicable.) The passage also presents a false account of Milton's perception. At the beginning of his descent he realizes that he has cut off his Emanation, and far from "entirely abstracting himself from Female loves," he realizes the peril of being found at the Judgment without his Emanation (14:28, E107).

In the Songs of Beulah, then, the Divine Voice seems to
be advocating a Druid soteriology by which redemption of one character is made possible only by the continual "death & misery" of others. His account of the redemption of Milton and Ololon, besides being inaccurate with respect to what actually happens later in the poem, is phrased oddly, too: Milton retaliates for Ololon's initial gesture of rejection by sulking; Ololon's fear inspires her to bribe him to return, as she acts as a procuress for him, in effect playing the Clod to his Pebble ("delighting in his delight"). Yet the Divine Voice says that this process, characterized as it is by Milton's selfishness and Ololon's desperate insecurity, is the prelude to "the happy Female joy."

At least, that is how the Divine Voice sounds, inevitably distorted as it enters the state of Beulah. From Ololon's perspective, the Divine Voice must appear to be playing the role of the False Tongue, indirectly inviting her to interpret her situation in accordance with the psychology of Druidic sacrifice. When this account is set against the Divine Family's commission to Ololon -- "Watch over this World, and with your brooding wings, / Renew it to Eternal Life" (21:55-6, El15) -- we can see that the Divine Voice is presenting her with a completely different interpretation of her experience, a way diametrically opposed to that presented by Jesus.

Ololon, looking down "into the heavens of Ulro," does experience fear (34:49, El33). She does not immediately enter the "vast Polypus / Of living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space growing"
(34:25, E133); instead she descends to Luvah's Tomb, situated at a point somewhere "beyond the Mundane Shell" (35:47, E135). Here she faces in a direct way the temptation to act in accordance with the false wisdom of the Divine Voice:

The Wild Thyme is Los's Messenger to Eden, a mighty Demon Terrible deadly & poisonous his presence in Ulro dark Therefore he appears only a small Root creeping in grass Hovering over the Rock of Odours his bright purple mantle Beside the Fount above the Larks nest in Golgonooza Luvah slept here in death & here is Luvahs empty Tomb Ololon sat beside this Fountain on the Rock of Odours. (35:54-60, E135)

Peter Taylor has noted that "Etymologically, the word thyme is derived from a Greek verb meaning 'to offer a sacrifice'" and Harold Bloom has suggested that "As a purple flower on Luvah's rock of sacrifice, the Wild Thyme recalls the traditional pastoral emblem for the death of a young man or god." The presence of the Wild Thyme, then, evokes the notion of a sacrifice which must be repeated annually, the pagan equivalent of the high priest entering the sanctuary with the blood of others: in short, the whole system of Druid sacrifice which Jesus came to end. This is the kind of sacrifice of which the Divine Voice has spoken to the Daughter of Babylon: the kind which involves the need for the Daughter to be "continually Redeem'd / By death & misery of those you love" (33:12-13, E131).

On the other hand, the passage contains an obvious allusion to Christ's death and resurrection, although reference is made to Luvah rather than to Jesus. From this point of view, Ololon is
like the women at the Tomb in the Gospel Crucifixion narratives. In John's Gospel, Mary Magdalene is so intent on mourning for her dead Lord that she is unable to recognize the risen Jesus standing beside her (John 20.15). In Ololon's case, the temptation is to see Jesus and Luvah as identical: that is, to see Jesus as merely another example of the god whose death and resurrection is repeated annually. If she were to come to this conclusion, she would be, in effect, denying the value of the Saviour's blood. She would also be providing herself with a good excuse for staying outside the Polypus and abandoning her quest for Milton. If Jesus is no more than a Luvah-figure, there can be no escape from the psychology of Druid sacrifice. In that case, the Beulah version of "redemption" described by the Divine Voice on Plate 33 would seem very desirable indeed.

There is no doubt, of course, that Jesus has died as a Luvah-figure. The question is whether Luvah is Jesus or whether Luvah has been redeemed by Jesus, who has freely accepted Luvah's suffering and death.\(^\text{31}\) The fact that the Wild Thyme is Los's Messenger provides one obvious clue. Los, previously identified as "the Spirit of Prophecy the ever apparent Elias" (24:71, E120), would hardly send messages designed to undercut Ololon's faith in Jesus as Saviour. The thyme must therefore be an emblem of Christ's sacrifice and no other. Further light is shed on this passage when we compare it with the description of death which appears at the end of Plate 32:
For God himself enters Death's Door always with those that enter
And lays down in the Grave with them, in Visions of Eternity
Till they awake & see Jesus & the Linen Clothes lying
That the Females had Woven for them, & the Gates of their Fathers
House

(32:40-3, E131)

The experience of the individual in death is compared to, but
not identified with, the death and resurrection of Jesus. In
fact the person who enters Death's Door can, apparently, be
resurrected only because Jesus has been there before him. This
passage provides a convenient gloss for the description of Luvah's
Tomb on Plate 35. Luvah has entered Death's Door and God himself --
represented by the thyme, the sign of Jesus' sacrifice -- has
(quite literally) lain down on the grave with Luvah. Ololon
has arrived to find that Luvah has awakened and left, presumably
having seen Jesus and the Gates of his Father's House. Jesus'
sacrifice has made it unnecessary for Luvah's to be repeated;
Luvah's empty tomb should therefore encourage Ololon to continue
on her journey. If Luvah's experience of death ends in resurrection,
Ololon has no reason to fear the living death of the Polypus.

Consequently Ololon's entry "into the Polypus in the Mundane
Shell" (36:13, E135) demonstrates her obedience to the Divine
Family's command and her rejection of the temptation implicit in
the song of the Divine Voice. As Milton refused to cross Jordan
to become King of Canaan, so Ololon refuses to remain beside an
empty tomb to mourn for a death which has been swallowed up in
victory. Instead she chooses to continue to seek the annihilation
of her own selfhood. In descending to Blake's garden where she appears as "a Virgin of twelve years" (36:17, E136), she prepares the way for the poem's apocalyptic denouement.

In the final plates, Milton casts Satan, his Spectre or Selfhood, into the fiery "Lake / Of Los" (39:11-12, E139) and then exhorts Ololon to perform a similar act by separating herself from "the Virgin" (42:3, E142), after which the Jesus of the parousia appears and preparations for "the Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations" are made (43:1, E143). The individual quests of Milton and Ololon are identified with the struggle of fallen humanity to free itself from "Natural Religion," the institution created by the psychology of Druidic sacrifice which Jesus came to destroy. Milton and Ololon are also the agents through whom Jesus returns to the fallen world to complete the task of restoring it to an unfallen state.

What is of most significance to us in this account is the way Blake presents the marriage of Milton and Ololon: as the institution which replaces Druid sacrifice. The Crucifixion has freed men from the necessity of performing the roles of priest and victim. However, since the False Tongue has convinced them that the sacrifice of Jesus has made no change in their spiritual condition, they are unable to make use of their freedom. Milton and Ololon are exceptions, because they have understood who Jesus is, and have been obedient to his commandments. It seems odd to
suggest that Blake is adapting the paradoxical Christian theme of freedom in obedience, but obedience is a motive for both Milton and Ololon when they begin their respective descents. The ultimate effect of these acts of obedience is to purge both characters of the need to relate to each other as priest and victim. What each character perceives as his exploitation of the other gives way to the creative act which is the vehicle for Jesus’ return. But this single act -- whose nature will be examined below -- is sufficient to set in motion the series of events which will eradicate the world's fallenness, ending the waste sad time which separates Crucifixion from Apocalypse.

At the beginning of Plate 37, Milton's Shadow overhears Ololon speaking to Blake, and manifests himself (or itself) in the garden. The shadow is identified with the other priest-figures prominent in the poem:

I saw he was the Covering Cherub & within him Satan
And Rahajb], in an outside which is fallacious; within
Beyond the outline of Identity, in the Selfhood deadly
And he appeard the Wicker Man of Scandinavia in whom
Jerusalems children consume in flames among the Stars

(37:8-12, E136)

(The Wicker Man, probably derived from Caesar's Commentaries, provides yet another image of sacrifice. The Druids were supposed to have imprisoned captives in wicker cages built in the shape of a man, and then set the cages on fire.)

After a lengthy catalogue of the false gods identified with Satan, Milton confronts his Spectre directly, and declares his independence from the institution of Druidic sacrifice. He will
adopt the role of neither priest nor victim:

Satan! my Spectre! I know my power thee to annihilate
And be a greater in thy place, & be thy Tabernacle
A covering for thee to do thy will, till one greater comes
And smites me as I smote thee & becomes my covering.

(38:29-32, E138)

Milton here proclaims his power to make Satan his victim; but
he recognizes that to do this would be to assume Satan's nature himself. This, in turn, would make Milton vulnerable to the next ambitious priest-figure he encountered. (Such a priest-figure could, of course, only be Satan in another disguise.)

But Milton's status as a follower of Jesus has provided him with a radically different perspective on the situation:

Such are the Laws of thy false Heavns! but Laws of Eternity
Are not such: know thou: I come to Self Annihilation
Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually
Annihilate himself for others good, as I for thee[.]
Thy purpose & 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
Mine is to teach Men to despise death & to go on
In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
Thy Laws & terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs

(38:33-42, E138)

If Milton refuses to become a priest, it is clear that "Self Annihilation" means something other than acknowledging Satan as "Priest" and accepting the role of victim. Yet Milton insists that he acts for Satan's "good" in performing this act. The point is, presumably, that Satan does not know what is good for him. Milton's purpose, to destroy Satan's religion in himself, will result in the loosing of Satan from his (Milton's) "Hells" (14:31, E107) and thereby ultimately "free" Satan from the bondage
of his own religious system -- although there is no indication that Satan will ever be able to make constructive use of his freedom. 35

More important, Milton's act of destroying Satan's religion will constitute the final step in his process of liberation from the psychology of Druid sacrifice. It will also provide other men with an example, so that they, too, may liberate themselves from the "abject selfishness" to which they are subject. Satan's religion, the doctrine of the False Tongue, has convinced men that they are the helpless victims of a God whose ultimate instrument of torture is death. If men are to be set free, it is not Satan himself who must be destroyed, but the power of his "Laws" and "Synagogues." Milton promises to "teach men to despise death" by demonstrating that they need be neither murderers nor victims. He will do this by putting off "In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone"(38:48, E138).

Satan makes a final attempt to intimidate Milton, calling himself "God the judge of all, the living & the dead" and demanding that Milton "Fall therefore down & worship me" (38:51-2, E138). But Milton refuses to become Satan's victim, just as he had refused to make Satan his victim. When Satan blasphemously invokes the name of "the Divine Delusion Jesus" (39:2, E139), the Seven Angels of the Presence intervene. Satan's final metamorphosis in Milton reveals him as an impotent priest-figure whose only available victim is his own body:
Howling in his Spectre round his Body hungring to devour
But fearing for the pain for if he touches a Vital,
His torment is unendurable: therefore he cannot devour:
But howls round it as a lion round his prey continually.
(39:18-21, E139)

Milton has now decisively separated himself from his Selfhood.
In obedience to the commands of Jesus, he has descended to Eternal
Death and loosed Satan from his Hells. Refusing to adopt the
posture of either victim or priest, he has successfully defied
his adversary. He has become independent of the psychology of
Druid sacrifice. (Satan, ironically, can only make a futile attempt
to assume both roles, that of the Spectre-priest and that of the
Body-victim; but the ritual cannot, of course, be carried out.)

To say that Milton has become independent of the psychology
of Druid sacrifice is to say that he has responded fully to the
implications of the Crucifixion; he is therefore ready for the
parousia. According to the writers of the New Testament, the
gap between Christ's redemptive work and his glorious return
could be accounted for in such terms as these: "The Lord is not
slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is
longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but
that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3.9). At the climax
of Milton, both Milton and Ololon have come to repentance, and
the promise begins to be fulfilled.

First, however, Ololon must perform an act parallel to the
one by which Milton separates himself irrevocably from Satan.
As Milton first recognized himself as a member of the Elect, so
Ololon perceives directly that she is responsible for Natural Religion:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{this Newtonian Phantasm} \\
\text{This Voltaire & Rousseau: this Hume & Gibbon & Bolingbroke} \\
\text{This Natural Religion: this impossible absurdity} \\
\text{Is Ololon the cause of this?}
\end{align*}
\]

(40:11-14, El40)

Earlier, Ololon had erred in believing she was responsible for driving Milton into the Ulro; now her true sin has been revealed. "Rahab Babylon," Ololon's counterpart to Milton's Shadow, appears immediately.

At this point Milton delivers his magnificent speech about the annihilation of Selfhood (40:29-41:28, El41). This speech has borne the weight of so much critical commentary that it would be unwise to attempt to say anything new about it. For our purposes, one need note only that Milton now speaks with the Bard's authority "the Words of the Inspired Man" (40:29), and that the theme of these words is the theme of the Bard's Song. Milton identifies the "murderers / Of Jesus" (41:21-2) as those who espouse any intellectual system -- religious, philosophical, political, aesthetic -- which finds its essence in legalism. Such men are priest-figures who use "the Reasoning Power in Man" (40:34) -- whether as "Rational Demonstration" (41:3) or "doubt" (41:15) -- to keep their victims imprisoned in the psychology of Druid sacrifice. It is only by "Faith in the Saviour," "Inspiration" and "Imagination" (41:3-6) that this psychology can be overthrown.

At the beginning of the speech, Milton challenges Ololon
to obey his Words, and she responds by separating herself from that part of her personality which is capable of murdering Jesus, the part Blake identifies as "the Virgin" (42:3-6, E142). No longer "led to War the Wars of Death" (41:36, E142), Milton and Ololon need no longer relate to each other as priest and victim. Unlike Leutha, Ololon does not offer herself as a ransom; she chooses the alternative: to offer herself as a bride. But the (undescribed) lovemaking of Milton and Ololon is so closely associated with the return of Jesus that Blake cannot merely be arguing that sexuality provides the basis for an institution to replace Druid sacrifice.\textsuperscript{37}

Then as a Moony Ark Ololon descended to Felphams Vale
In clouds of blood, instreams of gore, with dreadful thunderings
Into the Fires of Intellect that rejoic'd in Felphams Vale
Around the starry Eight: with one accord the Starry Eight became
One Man Jesus the Saviour. wonderful!

\textsuperscript{(42:7-11, E142)}

David Wagenknecht has opted for a naively antinomian interpretation of this passage: "the implication \ldots is that the blood of Christ comes from Ololon's maidenhead when she breaks the law."\textsuperscript{38}

Actually she is of course obeying the Words of the Inspired Man who has explained the Laws of Eternity to her. But the passage contains further implications.

The theme of obedience suggests an approach radically different from Wagenknecht's: in the dialogue of Milton and Ololon it is possible to see elements of the intercourse between the creative Word and the Virgin Mary. The fact that it is only after Ololon has descended to "Felphams Vale" that Jesus manifests himself
hints at a causal connection between that event and the dialogue. If Jesus' return is not literally a rebirth, at least it depends upon human actions, and this perhaps points towards Blake's deeper meaning here. The imagery of sexuality and rebirth seems to imply that, once human beings have been liberated from the psychology of Druid sacrifice, their creative power will be such that the divine may be revealed through their own actions.

By the end of this profoundly Christocentric poem, then, we can see that, despite the advance billing, Milton has not "perished" in order to "redeem" Ololon — although his selfhood has perished and both he and Ololon have been redeemed. Instead, the central characters and the reader have all learned that the perception of reality which makes it seem necessary that one person must perish for another to be redeemed has become obsolete. Jesus has brought about this change, and brought it about through the Crucifixion, the sacrifice which has made further sacrifice unnecessary. Milton and Ololon, inhabitants of the fallen world, are free to discard their sacrificial roles and put on those of bridegroom and bride, whose union provides the occasion for the return of Jesus. As Jesus weeps and walks forth "From Felphams Vale clothed in Clouds of blood" (42:19, El.42), we know that the six thousand years of fallen history is drawing to a close. Because Milton and Ololon have at last affirmed the value of the Saviour's blood, the Word has once again been made flesh, and dwells among us.
NOTES

1 See also Hebrews 10, passim.

2 This statement involves the assumption -- perhaps unwarranted -- that Blake would not have made any important changes in his treatment of Luvah had he definitively revised The Four Zoas. My use of the word "Druid" in this context derives from Peter Fisher's assertion that, for Blake, "the last 'church' of each era represents the final perversion of self-sacrifice into the sacrifice of others in the 'Druidical' rite of atonement." See The Valley of Vision: Blake as Prophet and Revolutionary, ed. Northrop Frye (1961; rpt. Toronto and Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 33.


4 Johnson, 17.


6 Sandler, 27.


9 Damon, for example, identifies the False Tongue as "the voice of Satan, the Accuser." See William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (1924; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958),
p. 404. Harold Bloom says it is "the fallen Tharmas, the human
taste of Innocence that turned into the poisonous tongue of the
Serpent of Satan." See Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic
Argument (1963; rpt. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1965),
p. 338. Bloom's suggestion fits nicely with Frye's, as James says
the tongue is "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (3.9).

10 See David Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire (1954;
and Bloom, E825. Sandler has interpreted this scene in language
which anticipates my approach: "There are those who are sacrificed
and those who sacrifice, the latter being the class of the elect"
(26).

11 Druid trilithons figure prominently in the design for this
plate. David Erdman makes their sacrificial significance clear
when he writes of "three trilithons that loom on the hill, potentially
the three crosses on Calvary -- place of the skull -- mentioned
in line 21." See The Illuminated Blake: All of William Blake's
Illuminated Works with a Plate-by-Plate Commentary (Garden City,
also appears in the design for Plage 6.

12 See A Descriptive Catalogue: "Adam was a Druid, and Noah;
also Abraham was called to succeed the Druidical age, which began
to turn allegoric and mental signification into corporeal command,
whereby human sacrifice would have depopulated the earth" (E533).
See also his presentation of Abraham on Plate 15 of Jerusalem,
to be discussed in Chapter Four below.

13 Mary Lynn Johnson identifies this line (in the passage
quoted near the beginning of this chapter) as descriptive of the
"self annihilating process" (14). But there is no hint that
Blake intends the line to be related to the concept of annihilation
of selfhood. At no point in the poem is Jesus said to undergo
such an experience. Blake's New Testament source for the notion
of annihilation of selfhood would seem rather to be Paul's concept
of the death of the "old man," a death made possible by the Crucifixion.
See note 19 below.

14 Sandler, 26. She goes on to say: "But it was the very
notion that blood-letting sacrifice was efficacious that had
led to the false parade of Victim and Executioner -- as gross a
parody in the case of Charles, as in the case of Jesus, of the
authentic act that Blake calls 'Self Annihilation.'" Sandler is
wrong, however, to see the sacrifice of Jesus as inauthentic
because it involves blood-letting. In the fictional world of
Milton, as we shall see, Self Annihilation is made possible only
by Jesus' sacrifice. For a different, but not so convincing
commentary on 5:39, see Bloom, E825.
Wagenknecht, p. 238.


Mitchell's comment is relevant here: "Leutha's offer of herself has redemptive potential insofar as it is an act of love, but is misguided in that it still operates as a 'Ransom' to tyrannical justice" (p. 294).

Wagenknecht argues that "For the Atonement Blake substitutes the epiphany of God as breaker of the law of Jehovah's virtue" (pp. 248-9). In the context of the whole passage, however, the Lamb alone is obedient to the Assembly's instructions to be the "Guard" of the fallen world. Lucifer's disobedience is rooted in his refusal to die (13:18); the other Guards fail in various ways. In dying as a Reprobate, the Lamb is not breaking "the law of Jehovah's virtue" so much as he is acting on "The kind decision of Enitharmon" (13:16).

Blake appears to derive his notion of "annihilation of selfhood" from Paul's doctrine that the Christian attains "newness of life" through the death of the "old man," a spiritual crucifixion and resurrection which both echoes and is made possible by the literal crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus:

3. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
7. For he that is dead is freed from sin.
8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
10. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6.3-11)

20 The design for Plate 14 depicts the story of Cain and Abel. Erdman notes that Cain, holding a knife, has just slain Abel; he also notes that "The altar of blood sacrifice behind the two brothers is a wall of human skulls . . . and stones" (The Illuminated Blake, p. 231). Apparently Blake wanted to confront his reader in the most dramatic way possible with the alternative to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God described in the text.

21 In the context of human sacrifice, there is no significant distinction to be made between the Canaanites and the Druids. See S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (1965; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971): "For the Canaanites still belong to that primitive religion which Blake called Druidism" (p. 68).


23 Milton has already united with Blake (15:47-50, E109 and 21:4-14, E114); Los unites with Blake at 22:4-14 (E116). But both events occur at the moment Blake binds his sandals "to walk forward thro' Eternity" (21:14, 22:5).

24 See Sandler's comment: "The assimilation into the Christian tradition of the Canaanite cult of Sacrifice (to which Milton has contributed) and the consequent sacrificial doctrine of Atonement have resulted in destruction everywhere, and in the persecution of the two earthly Witnesses, Whitefield and Wesley, the counterparts of Rintrah and Palamabron . . ." (20). Sandler's account here blurs the distinction between Canaanite sacrifice and the Crucifixion of Jesus. The latter reveals that it is by
Divine Mercy alone that we live (13:32-3, E106). It is meaningless to speak of a "Christian tradition" which does not find its centre in this revelation. The Canaanite sacrifice precludes the possibility of real Atonement, if only because it must be repeated endlessly. It would have been more correct for Sandler to have said that the Canaanite cult of sacrifice has, in effect, replaced the Christian sacrificial doctrine of Atonement with a sacrificial system which makes final Atonement impossible. Hence the senseless bloodshed of the so-called Christian era.

Bloom comments that these lines present Los's attempt to "turn the image of warfare against itself, so as to turn the wheel of Revelation against the wheel of natural bloodletting" (E835).

It is important to note the distinction between the "Eternals" and the "Watchers." The Eternals drive (or believe they have driven) Milton into the Ulro. The eight "Watchers" (the Seven Angels of the Presence plus Jesus, the "Shadowy Eighth") follow Milton, as they "flee with cries down to the Deeps." It is the Eternals, not the Watchers, who are identified with Ololon.

Mitchell makes an attempt to distinguish between Ololon and Leutha on the basis of their differing responses to guilt: "Oolon ... personifies a kind of regenerative guilt and sorrow, in contrast to Leutha, who expresses a similar remorse but with a self-accusing sense of sin that stymies her regenerative possibilities. Oolon's guilt does not seek an accuser whose justice must be satisfied, but a course of action which will redeem the error itself. Their first impulse is to imitate the descent of Milton: 'Let us descend also, and let us give / Ourselves to death in Ulro among the Transgressors'" ("Blake's Radical Comedy," p. 301).

This distinction is unconvincing. Since Oolon has at this point not fully understood the meaning of Milton's descent, she cannot imitate it except according to the principles of Druid sacrifice. If Oolon goes to death, Milton may be released from death; if Leutha assumes Satan's guilt, Satan will no longer be condemned. It is only after her encounter with Jesus that Oolon's attitude towards her situation begins to differ from Leutha's -- and that encounter occurs after 21:45-6.

Perhaps I should indicate my awareness of the problem of using words such as "before" and "after" to relate events described in Milton. I agree with Paley's position that the poem "takes place in a moment of time and ... there is therefore no real sequence of events" (Energy and the Imagination, p. 238). But I also agree with Wittreich when he responds to Paley by alluding
to Milton 29:2-3 (E126) -- "Events of Time start forth & are concievd . . . / Within a Moment" -- and commenting that "The poet who anatomizes such a moment, as Blake does in Milton, must . . . take the moment and draw it out in time" (Angel of Apocalypse, p. 267).

28 It is only in Milton's concluding speech (40:29-41:28, E141) that the concept of self-annihilation is directly related to Ololon's experience.

29 The quality of the irony here is well characterized by Harold Bloom in his account of "The Lamentation of Beulah" on Plate 31:

The subtle paradox, on which the entire chant depends, is that it is a lamentation which we, men of Generation, hear as a rejoicing Song of Spring. The inhabitants of Beulah are lamenting the descent of Ololon from Eden through Beulah to Generation; they see this as a fall. But their weeping is as Spring rain to us, for any song of the Earthly Paradise must seem happy whenheard from the experiential world. (E838)

Similarly, when the Divine Voice sings of redemption, on whatever terms, it must appeal to an Ololon who is about to enter Ulro; but she must compare that vision with the one she has already received at her encounter with the Divine Family and Jesus (21: 51-22:2, E115).


31 Bloom considers Jesus and Luvah to be identical here (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 388 and E840). Wagenknecht (p. 254) warns against "a simple equation between Luvah and Christ" but thinks Ololon somehow responsible for Luvah's resurrection and argues erroneously that Luvah and Christ are identified in Night VII (b) of The Four Zoas. See my discussion in Chapter 3 above. W. H. Stevenson's footnote puts both issues in their proper perspective: "In Four Zoas Luvah is the sufferer whose place is taken by Christ, and imagery derived from the crucifixion narrative is commonly applied to Luvah" (The Poems of William Blake, p. 550n.).


33 See A. L. Owen's comment, in The Famous Druids (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), that "the burning of the Wicker Man . . . demonstrates the ineptitude of the Druids' sacrifice,
for by destroying the human body they achieve nothing" (p. 229).
Damon sees the Wicker Man as "a symbol of war" (Blake Dictionary, p. 447), while John Beer, in Blake's Humanism (Manchester and New York: Manchester Univ. Press and Barnes & Noble, 1968), suggests the sacrifice is to "the moral law" and to "the cult of natural law," for which the stars, whose laws are studied by the astronomers, provide the image (p. 178).

34 H. M. Margoliouth describes the situation in terms relevant to our discussion: "Milton might be expected to destroy Satan or banish him forever, to damn him as in Paradise Lost, but that was not the lesson of the Bard's Song. That would be using Satan to cast out Satan, an act of the priest who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain: to do that is to become what one beholds" (William Blake [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951], p. 148.)

35 We are given an equivocal hint about Satan's ultimate fate in a passage spoken by the Starry Seven to Albion:

Awake Albion awake! reclaim thy Reasoning Spectre. Subdue Him to the Divine Mercy, Cast him down into the Lake Of Los, that ever burneth with fire, ever & ever Amen! (39:10-12, E139)

The references to reclamation and mercy, and the fact that the Lake is associated with Los, suggest that the fire is purgatorial rather than infernal. Damon does not hesitate to identify it with the fires of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "There the dross is burned away and the true metal purified and melted for new creations" (Blake Dictionary, p. 232). However, Milton presents us with no vision of a "purified" Satan; indeed, the poem's action has defined Satan exclusively in terms of "dross."

36 It is possible that 2 Peter is an unacknowledged source for the imagery of Milton's closing plates. Peter's discourse brings together the themes of divine inspiration and the "Idiot Questioner" (see the "scoffers" who ask "Where is the promise of his coming?" -- 3.3-4), and the motifs of the flood and apocalyptic fire. It also contains the suggestive phrase "the madness of the prophet" (2.16).

37 The lovemaking of Milton and Ololon is undescribed in the text, but may be depicted on the full-plate design which appears between Plates 37 and 38 in the E text. This plate is referred to as 42 in Erdman's The Illuminated Blake (pp. 258-9) and elsewhere. Two nudes, male and female, lie on a rocky seacoast in a pre- (or possibly post-) coital embrace while an eagle hovers
overhead. Erdman identifies the figures as Albion and Jerusalem, but Wittreich argues that they may be Milton and Ololon as well: "Plate 42, then, is deliberately ambiguous, Blake wishing to emphasize a state rather than the individuals who occupy that state. . . . Yet the plate is not so ambiguous that identifications are impossible: it draws into one image both Milton and Albion. Doubtless, Blake wishes us to remember that the state depicted here is the one from which Milton is arising and the one from which Albion is awakening" (Angel of Apocalypse, p. 30).

38 Wagenknecht, p. 257.

39 The reader is again reminded of the Crucifixion on the poem's last plate. The design's central figure -- identified by Erdman (somewhat tentatively) as Ololon (The Illuminated Blake, pp. 266-7) -- holds her arms upraised in a position reminiscent of crucifixion, while "the gray-green or blue garment of Selfhood . . . forms a trunk-like cross of self-annihilation" (p. 266).
CHAPTER FOUR

Jerusalem: The Vegetated Christ and Jesus our Lord

In Milton, Blake defined the task of the Christian artist: to imitate Milton in his response to Jesus, and thereby make himself fit to prepare the way for Jesus' return. Blake's last major poem is an example of a work such an artist might create. With Jerusalem, Blake turns from the specialized audience he had in mind for Milton (the artists, the "Young Men of the New Age") and addresses its four chapters, respectively, to the Public, the Jews, the Deists and the Christians. These chapters represent Blake's attempt to accomplish for the members of each group what Milton's famous climactic speech does for Ololon: to inspire them to recognize the distinction between the false wisdom of "the murderers / Of Jesus" (Milton 41:21-2, E141) and the truth of what Blake, in the Preface, calls "our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord" (E94). The key to an understanding of this distinction is an understanding of the role of Jesus as Lamb of
God. Before the audience can recognize what Jesus does, it must first be made aware of the extent to which Druid sacrifice dominates the world in which they live. Jesus may then be presented (as in Milton) as the victim whose sacrifice brings to an end the need for Druid sacrifice to continue. The person who understands Jesus in this way is released from the bondage of having to relate to other men as either victim or priest; instead he is free to relate to them as lover to beloved, as Milton to Ololon. *Jerusalem* dramatizes the process by which men come to such an understanding.

The central characters in this drama, Albion and Los, are defined in terms of their relation to Jesus. Los is the person who attempts to do Jesus' will in the fallen world; his primary task is to communicate the Divine Vision to the rest of mankind. Albion is the person who turns away from Jesus, who insists on playing the dreary game of priest and victim when there is no longer any necessity for doing so. The poem's climactic scene is the one in which Albion is finally able to recognize Jesus in "the likeness & similitude of Los my Friend" (96:22, E253). This signifies that Los has completed his visionary labour, and that the entire human race, not merely its prophet-artists, is prepared to live eternally according to "the Covenant of Jehovah."

Before Albion is able to make this final repudiation of the psychology of Druid sacrifice, however, he has had to experience its horror and futility from every conceivable perspective. In
Chapter I, he repents that he has "taught my children the sacrifices of cruelty" (23:17, E167), but ironically offers to become Vala's victim himself, in a crude parody of the Christian Atonement. In Chapter II, he adopts a contrasting approach and becomes a priest-figure, hoping to solve the problem of fallenness by "sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies / For Atonement" (28:21-2, E173). In Chapter III, he comes under the power of his Spectre — who is, in this poem, Luvah (see 60:2, E207) — and Luvah undergoes yet another crucifixion in the name of Natural Religion, reminiscent of The Four Zoas. In Chapter IV, he comes at last to understand that the death of Jesus is the definitive revelation of Divine Mercy in the fallen world, and that, through his sacrifice, Jesus has broken the power animating the cult of Druidism. As noted above, it is through Los's ministry that Albion comes to this realization. But it would be a mistake to identify Los with Jesus. For Los, too, must struggle with his Spectre, much as Milton does in the earlier poem. There is, however, a significant difference, in keeping with the intensification, in Jerusalem, of the theme of reconciliation. Los does not cast his Spectre out (though he threatens to do so); instead, he forces it to contribute to the creative labour of the furnaces. (The Spectre is deluded in much the same way that Albion is: it believes itself to be the victim of a God who "feeds on Sacrifice & Offering" — 10:48, E152.) When it finally does rebel openly against its master, Los is able to assimilate it, destroying
its works rather than its life. Thus Los must grapple with the problem of working out his own salvation, even as he attempts to communicate the Gospel to Albion. He does not have to die for Albion's sake; instead, he must stay alive in order to carry out his visionary responsibility.

The four chapters are addressed to audiences which become increasingly knowledgeable about the spiritual issues illustrated by the struggles of Albion and Los. The members of the Public of Chapter I need to be awakened to the implications of their fallenness. Blake must reveal to them the nature and extent of Druid sacrifice, and the need for men to find a way to overcome its power. The Jews of Chapter II are aware of this need, and attempt to translate their awareness into effective action. But the way they choose to act involves the explicit rejection of Jesus as Saviour, and consequently their attempt must fail. If the Jews ignore the Crucifixion, the Deists of Chapter III take a lively (or deadly) interest in it, for they are the literal "murderers of Jesus." They understand his death as merely another example of the universal, inevitable bloodbath which is human existence in the fallen world. Since there is no possibility of altering the institution of sacrifice, the Deist, rationally but mistakenly, opts for the role of priest. The Christians of Chapter IV, on the other hand, are those who do profess that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross has redeemed them, but have been unable to respond appropriately to that truth, and indeed often persist
in acting as though they were Jews or Deists (as Blake idiosyncratically defines these terms).

It should be clear from the foregoing account that an understanding of Blake's use of the victim-figure is vital to any interpretation of Jerusalem. But few commentators have made serious attempts to arrive at such an understanding. The only critic who has attempted a comprehensive discussion of sacrifice in Jerusalem, Mollyanne Marks, has fallen into the same trap as did Mary Lynn Johnson and David Wagenknecht in their discussions of sacrifice in Milton. Her hostility to the New Testament concept of Atonement makes it impossible for her to entertain the notion that Blake might have been impressed by it. Thus she concludes her discussion of Jerusalem's closing plates by suggesting that "Blake disposes of the anomaly of a God who would demand the sacrifice of his only son." I will consider the accuracy of this interpretation of Jerusalem later in the chapter; here I want merely to note the distortion of the New Testament attitude to the Crucifixion (for one must assume that it is there that the "anomaly" is to be found). Like Johnson and Wagenknecht, Marks cannot see that the Deity of the Gospels does not "demand" that his son be sacrificed; rather he gives his son to the world out of his love for the world.

But Marks's attitude places her in the mainstream of Blake criticism, for most critics who have commented on the theme of sacrifice in the poem have tended to see Blake's treatment of the
Crucifixion as part of the "Druid" symbolism. No less an authority than Northrop Frye asserts that (in *Jerusalem*) the crucified Christ is no more than "the clarified analogy of pure vision," that is, an illustration of "what man has always done in the world, is doing now, and will always be fated to do as long as he remains in the state of existence in which fate is to be found." This crucifixion has no redemptive power; it merely reveals error in its system. But H. M. Margoliouth has pointed to an element in the Crucifixion story that Frye overlooks, namely the fact that Jesus embraces his fate *voluntarily*. Speaking of "Druidism," Margoliouth comments that "Its greatest triumph was the Crucifixion, but the Crucifixion was, and is, voluntarily suffered by the Saviour, who knows that Satan cannot be overcome by Satanic means but by forgiveness and that a man must die to save not only his friend but his enemy." The argument of this chapter will attempt to establish the validity of the perception which underlies Margoliouth's statement.

Chapter I is addressed to the Public, a term which Blake does not define. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the prefatory plate is Blake's self-definition as a follower of Jesus: "I also hope the Reader will be with me, wholly One in Jesus our Lord . . ." (Plate 3, E144). He reiterates the claim even more strongly in the opening lines of the first chapter, when he asserts that, as he writes, "I see the Saviour over me / Spreading his
beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song" (4:4-5, E145). The song Jesus sings to the fallen Abion encapsulates the burden of Jerusalem's argument:

I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend; Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me: Lo! we are One; forgiving all Evil; Not seeking recompense! (4:18-20, E145)

To forgive evil, to refrain from seeking recompense, is the moral equivalent of rejecting the institution of Druid sacrifice, of refusing to become a priest because one has been a victim. As the chapter unfolds, we find Albion denying the truth of the Saviour's assertion that they are One, while Los, despite the opposition of his Spectre, labours to make that truth manifest in the fallen world. Their disagreement is, as we shall see, rooted in their differing interpretations of the Crucifixion.

Albion's situation is presented briefly before the focus switches to Los. Albion believes that he is a victim and Jesus is the priest who sacrifices him. Addressing Jesus, Albion accuses him of "Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love! which binds / Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships" (4:25-6, E145). On the following plate, Albion's fallenness is described in terms of the fallenness of the whole English nation. His "mountains run with blood, the cries of war & of tumult / Resound into the unbounded night" (5:6-7, E146), and Jerusalem's children are sacrificed there (an image already familiar to us from Plate 37 of Milton):
Jerusalem is scattered abroad like a cloud of smoke thro' non-entity: Moab & Ammon & Amalek & Canaan & Egypt & Aram. Recieve her little-ones for sacrifices and the delights of cruelty (5:13-15, E146)

Albion himself is responsible for these sacrifices, as he comes to realize later in the chapter. His mistaken fear of Jesus impels him to order his life according to "Laws of Moral Virtue" (4:31) which ensure the perpetuation of Druid sacrifice.

Los wants to remove this fear, even though he knows that he is Albion's victim: "I know that Albion hath divided me" (7:52, E149). He also knows that he cannot rectify the situation by trying to make Albion his victim. Instead, he wishes to be obedient to Jesus, as Milton was, in order that Druid sacrifice may be brought to an end. His concept of Jesus as Lamb of God also seems identical to Milton's (in Milton):

0 holy Generation Image of regeneration!
0 point of mutual forgiveness between Enemies!
Birthplace of the Lamb of God incomprehensible!
The Dead despise & scorn thee, & cast thee out as accursed:
Seeing the Lamb of God in thy gardens & thy palaces:
Where they desire to place the Abomination of Desolation.
(7:65-70, E149)

So Los's task may be defined in terms of waking the Dead. Like Milton the Awakener (Milton 21:33, E115), he must struggle against his own Spectre before he can communicate the Divine Vision to others.

The Spectre is that aspect of Los's character which is committed to Druid sacrifice. It sees itself as Los's victim, but cherishes the thought that one day their roles may be reversed:
"While Los spoke, the terrible Spectre fell shuddring before him / Watching his time with glowing eyes to leap upon his prey" (8:21-2, El50). The Spectre's concept of God is remarkably parallel to Albion's:

he is not a Being of Pity & Compassion  
He cannot feel Distress: he feeds on Sacrifice & Offering:  
Delighting in cries & tears & clothed in holiness & solitude  
(10:47-9, E152)

Los does not allow the Spectre to prevail, however. Indisputably the stronger of the two, he insists that he is not acting as a priest-figure; instead he demands the Spectre's obedience and holds out a promise of mercy which lays the groundwork for their ultimate reconciliation: "Obey my voice & never deviate from my will / And I will be merciful to thee" (10:29-30, E152).

The task of Los and his Spectre is to build the city of Golgonooza (12:24, E154). Bloom (E846) sees the etymology of the word as "New Golgotha," emphasizing Golgotha's meaning as "the place of the skull, or of the wheel or hub." But the well-known "golden builders" lyric of Plate 12 provides evidence for an alternate rendering: "News of Golgotha," that is, the Gospel, the Christian meaning of the Crucifixion. The opening lines of the lyric suggest that, with the building of Golgonooza, the surface "Druid" meaning of the Crucifixion is transformed:

What are those golden builders doing? where was the burying-place  
Of soft Ethinthus? near Tyburn's fatal Tree? is that  
Mild Zions hills most ancient promontory; near mournful  
Ever weeping Paddinton? is that Calvary and Golgotha?  
Becoming a building of pity and compassion?  
(12:25-9, E154)
Although this is the only mention of Ethinthus in Jerusalem, the name appears in Europe to identify one of Enitharmon's daughters, associated, according to Foster Damon, with "the mortal flesh." Damon's comment on the opening lines of the lyric is relevant here: "The builders of Golgonooza would resurrect the flesh that has been punished as a criminal and buried near the gallows." The effect of Los's labours is to superimpose Zion upon Paddington, the life-giving tree of Calvary upon the fatal Druid Tree of Tyburn. For the real significance of Calvary, which appears to be merely another version of Tyburn, has been revealed in terms of pity, compassion and the other divinely human qualities listed later in the passage. Ethinthus, the soft, vulnerable victim of Druid ritual, has been set free by Jesus' work on "Calvary and Golgotha." Golgonooza is the medium by which this truth is to be communicated to men in the fallen world.

Golgonooza provides the only refuge from the terrors of fallen history:

Around Golgonooza lies the land of death eternal; a Land Of pain and misery and despair and even brooding melancholy: In all the Twenty-seven Heavens, numbered from Adam to Luther; From the blue Mundane Shell, reaching to the Vegetative Earth. (13:30-3, E155)

Unfortunately Albion remains outside the city, ignorant of the Gospel's power; even though he sits among the furnaces of Los's creativity, for him they have a demonic Druid significance:

"when Albion sat in Eternal Death / Among the Furnaces of Los in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom" (15:33-4, E158). Bloom
points out (E848) that the Valley of the Son of Hinnom is a place where, according to Jeremiah, children were burned in sacrifice. Thus Los and Albion, the representatives of Christian and Druid sacrifice respectively, are without a meaningful point of contact.

But there is one hopeful sign in the text of Plate 15, even though the hope is destined to remain unfulfilled until much later in the poem. A retelling of the early chapters of Genesis as the history of fallen man concludes with a reference to Abraham, who "flees from Chaldea shaking his goary locks" (15:28, E158), apparently obeying an impulse to abandon the practice of human sacrifice. The meaning of this line is elaborated by the illustration, which depicts Abraham, arms outstretched in a cruciform position, in the act of fleeing. Apparently without noticing it, he is about to collide with a much smaller figure, who is lying on the ground, and whose left arm turns into a root while the right, somewhere below the elbow, becomes a branch. David Erdman has interpreted this "metamorphosis" as Blake's critical comment on the biblical story: "the sacrificial ram caught in the bramble as substitute for Isaac is only another form of blood sacrifice." Erdman's point may be valid, especially when we recall Abraham's role as patriarch of the Jews: the central ritual of the religion he founded was the Atonement, in which, as the writer of Hebrews reminds us, "the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others" (Hebrews 9.25).

Still, the switch from human to animal blood is certainly
significant, and Blake's comment in the Descriptive Catalogue is surely relevant: "Abraham was called to succeed the Druidical age, which began to turn allegoric and mental signification into corporeal command, whereby human sacrifice would have depopulated the earth" (E533). Even more important, Abraham's outstretched arms foreshadow the Crucifixion, the event which ends the necessity for blood sacrifice. Abraham, then, seems to represent that spiritual element in fallen man which impels him to "flee from Chaldea," to search for some alternative to life in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, even if he does not know it is Golgonooza he is seeking.

The remaining plates of Chapter I show us Albion's futile attempt to perform an action parallel to Abraham's. In the plates immediately following the description of Golgonooza, Albion and his Twelve Sons are presented in terms appropriate to the Chaldeans from whom Abraham flees. The Sons are unable to distinguish between that which is "allegoric and mental" and that which is merely "corporeal"; consequently they espouse "War and deadly contention, Between / Father and Son" (18:20-1, E161), and pervert the meaning of the Crucifixion, proclaiming that the result of the "deadly contention" will be

That the Perfect,  
May live in glory, redeem'd by Sacrifice of the Lamb  
And of his children, before sinful Jerusalem.  
(18:26-8, E162)
Like the Elect of Milton, the Sons believe themselves to be perfect, yet they act according to the principles of Druid sacrifice even as they claim to have been redeemed by Jesus.8 Their victim is Jerusalem, who is forced to preside over the sacrifice of her own children (18:33); their motive, we have already been informed, is jealousy, an emotion generated by their sense that Jerusalem and her children enjoy a life of the spirit which is closed to them: they are "Jealous of Jerusalem's children, ashamed of her little-ones / (For Vala produc'd the Bodies. Jerusalem gave the Souls)" (18:6-7, E161).

Albion has deeper insight than do his children, yet he is unable to act effectively because of his lack of faith. At one point he recognizes that "they are taken / In solemn pomp into Chaldea across the breadths of Europe" (21:42-3, E165); but Albion himself, like the Abraham of Plate 15, is unable to escape from the influence of Chaldea. Jerusalem suggests the only possible means of escape when she asks rhetorically of Vala, "What is Sin but a little / Error & fault that is soon forgiven; but mercy is not a Sin" (20:23-4, E164). Albion hears the debate but chooses to commit himself to Vala,9 because he is unable to deal with the problem of his own guilt. No one is able to forgive him effectively. He therefore offers himself as a victim to Vala in order to atone for his murder of Luvah:

But come O Vala with knife & cup: drain my blood To the last drop: then hide me in thy Scarlet Tabernacle For I see Luvah whom I slew. I behold him in my Spectre As I behold Jerusalem in thee O Vala dark and cold (22:29-32, E166)
Albion's gesture is, of course, completely wrong-headed; his sacrifice has no power to save anyone. But the fact that he volunteers suggests the depth of his guilt and the power of his desire to overcome it. The missing dimension is the perception that Christ's sacrifice has already dealt with his guilt. But Albion is to be confronted with this dimension before the end of the chapter.

First, however, he acknowledges responsibility for both the Chaldean exile of his children and for the Crucifixion. Unfortunately he is unable to relate the two situations and arrive at the realization that Jesus has died so that the sons and daughters of Albion might be released from their bondage:

I have erred! I am ashamed! and will never return more:
I have taught my children the sacrifices of cruelty: what shall I answer?
I will hide it from Eternals! I will give myself for my Children! (23:16-18, E167)

This attempt to give himself for his children only leads to a deeper perception of his guilt. As Abraham, fleeing from Chaldea, runs directly into another victim he did not expect to find, so Albion, after deliberately assuming the victim's role, encounters yet another victim: "O Human Imagination O Divine Body I have Crucified / I have turned my back upon thee into the Wastes of Moral Law" (24:23-4, E168)

But Albion refuses, finally, to see the Crucifixion as anything other than one more Druid sacrifice; he is unwilling to adopt the perspective of Golgonooza. Noting that the Lamb of God is "closd in Luvahs Sepulcher" (24:51), he argues (desperately
denying the obvious), that the Crucifixion could not have been
an act of mercy:

Yet why these smitings of Luvah, the gentlest mildest Zoa?
If God was Merciful this could not be: O Lamb of God
Thou art a delusion and Jerusalem is my Sin! O my Children
I have educated you in the crucifying cruelties of Demonstration
Till you have assum'd the Providence of God & slain your Father
Dost thou appear before me who liest dead in Luvahs Sepulcher
Dost thou forgive me! thou who wast Dead & art Alive?
Look not so merciful upon me O thou Slain Lamb of God
I die! I die in thy arms tho Hope is banishd from me.

(24:52-60, E168)

Albion begins by attempting to interpret the Crucifixion as another
in the endless series of "smitings of Luvah"; the perception that
interprets Jesus as Lamb of God is according to him, the one which
involves "delusion." Albion can accept the fact that his children
have made him a victim, since, according to the doctrines he has
learned in the "Wastes of Moral Law," it is just that he should
experience such a fate. What he cannot accept is the forgiveness
Jesus offers him, since such acceptance would be an acknowledgement
that his own life had been rooted in "delusion," and that the
Crucifixion is a revelation of God's mercy, not a proof of his
cruelty.

Albion dies in despair, refusing to admit that Calvary and
Golgotha have become a building of pity and compassion. The
illustration on Plate 25 provides a grim footnote to Chapter I.
Albion's victimhood is presented graphically. Three women --
Vala, Rahab, and Tirzah -- officiate at a sacrificial ritual
which includes the drawing out of his intestines. Albion has
been unable to transform his desire to flee from the Chaldea of Druid sacrifice into effective action; he has merely exchanged roles.

In order that the reader should understand what Albion will not, Blake concludes the Chapter with a chorus spoken by "all the Regions / Of Beulah" (25:1-2, E169). What they recite provides a precise description of the work of Jesus:

Why did you take Vengeance O ye Sons of the mighty Albion? Planting these Oaken Groves: Erecting these Dragon Temples Injury the Lord heals but Vengeance cannot be healed: As the Sons of Albion have done to Luvah: so they have in him Done to the Divine Lord & Saviour, who suffers with those that suffer: For not one sparrow can suffer, & the whole Universe not suffer also, In all its Regions, & its Father & Saviour not pity and weep. But Vengeance is the destroyer of Grace & Repentance in the bosom Of the Injurer: in which the Divine Lamb is cruelly slain: Descend O Lamb of God & take away the imputation of Sin By the Creation of States & the deliverance of Individuals Evermore Amen

(25:3-13, E169)

Vengeance, the impulse by which the victim must overthrow the priest, and become a priest in his turn, makes it impossible for fallen man to respond to the Divine Lamb. Albion has recognized his sinfulness, but has no sense of his own identity apart from his sin. He must be delivered from this delusion; Albion must achieve the perception that, as an "individual," he has an identity apart from the "State" of sin in which he finds himself. In Jerusalem, this perception is made available through Los's creation of Golgonooza.
Chapter I has presumably made the Public, if they have been attentive, aware of the way in which Druid sacrifice dominates fallen existence. The Jews, to whom Chapter II is addressed, share this perception, and share Los's commitment to alter the situation. But they are unable to act effectively, because they believe that the source of redemptive power is to be found in fallen men themselves. The crucial moment in Chapter II occurs on Plate 39, when the twenty-eight cathedral cities of England (a visionary company which includes the four Zoas) attempt to redeem Albion by main force, surrounding him "with kindest violence to bear him / Against his will thro Los's Gate to Eden" (39:2-3, E184). The attempt, inevitably, fails. The people Blake identifies as Jews are apparently those who believe that men can re-enter Eden simply by re-directing their own spiritual energy, by acting righteously. He attempts to show this attitude is wrong-headed by linking the "Hebrew" approach with its "Druid" sources, and foreshadowing a "Christian" solution.

Blake prepares us for this set of relationships by Plate 26, a full-plate design which features Hand -- arms in a cruciform position, nails in his hands, surrounded by flames, a brazen serpent wreathed around his arms -- striding away from the figure of Jerusalem. David Erdman has wittily called him a "marching crucifix." The outstretched arms, the Old Testament allusion (the brazen serpent), and the motif of the journey all suggest comparison with the figure of Abraham on Plate 15. The major
point of contrast is that, while Abraham flees from Chaldea, Hand is departing from Jerusalem, and Jerusalem, the text tells us, is "NAMED LIBERTY AMONG THE SONS OF ALBION." Hand must therefore be moving towards bondage, or perhaps he carries his bondage with him as he moves away from liberty, a sacrificial victim even as he travels. In this sense he is involved with Druidism, though the brazen serpent both evokes wanderings of the children of Israel in search of the Promised Land, and, together with the stigmata, reminds the reader of John 3.14: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

The relationship embracing the Druid, Hebrew and Christian elements in the sacrificial imagery is made clearer by Blake's address "To the Jews" on Plate 27. There, the Jews are said to have "derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids" (E169). In the lyric which follows this declaration, Blake contrasts the original, unfallen Jerusalem which at one time stood in England (as over the whole world) with the world created after "Satan the first victory won" (27:28, E170). The institution of Druid sacrifice is identified as the major symptom of fallenness:

Where Albion slept beneath the Fatal Tree
And the Druids golden Knife,
Rioted in human gore,
In Offerings of Human Life
(27:29-32, E170)

Albion's Spectre, Satan, spreads the religion of human sacrifice (whose most spectacular manifestation is war itself) across the
world:

The Rhine was red with human blood:
The Danube rolled a purple tide:
On the Euphrates Satan stood:
And over Asia stretch'd his pride.
(27:45-8, E171)

But even though Satan "witherd up the Human Form, / By laws of
sacrifice for sin" (27:53-4), he could not eradicate the vestiges
of the Lamb of God who had walked on the meadows with his bride,
Jerusalem, before the Fall:

The Divine Vision still was seen
Still was the Human Form, Divine
Weeping in weak & mortal clay
O Jesus still the Form was thine.
(27:57-60, E171)

Blake's response -- one which he implicitly suggests the Jews
should emulate -- is to acknowledge that he, too, has become
involved with the system of "laws of sacrifice for sin," that
he too has been a priest:

And O thou Lamb of God, whom I
Slew in my dark self-righteous pride:
Art thou return'd to Albions Land?
And is Jerusalem thy Bride?
(27:65-8, E171)

He then makes a gesture which directly parallels the one made
by Milton after hearing the Bard's Song:

Spectre of Albion! warlike Fiend!
In clouds of blood & ruin roll'd:
I here reclaim thee as my own
My Selfhood! Satan! arm'd in gold.
(27:73-6, E171)

As in Milton, the confession of guilt is accompanied by a vision
of Jesus -- "Come to my arms & never more / Depart; but dwell for
ever here" (27:69-70) -- in accordance with which the person must now act:

In my Exchanges every Land
Shall walk, & mine in every Land,
Mutual shall build Jerusalem:
Both heart in heart & hand in hand.
(27:85-8, E172)

The Jews, then, must follow the example of the speaker of this lyric, admit their own complicity in Druid sacrifice, and embrace Jesus as Saviour.

In the prose passage which concludes the address to the Jews, Blake reminds them of their intimate connection with Druidism ("your tradition that Man contained in his Limbs, all Animals
... & they were separated from him by cruel Sacrifices") and exhorts them to obey the Divine Vision as Milton did after listening to the Bard's Song: "The Return of Israel is a Return to Mental Sacrifice & War. Take up the Cross O Israel & follow Jesus" (E172).

In Chapter II of Jerusâä'lem, Los fails to inspire Albion to make a parallel gesture, largely because he himself fails to understand what is going on in his own furnaces. But Blake presents this double failure in such a way that the need for the members of the audience to take up the Cross and follow Jesus has been effectively dramatized.

That the prime failure here is Los's and not Albion's is the point made by the crucial dialogue between the two on Plate 42. It is significant that this plate retains its position in both of Blake's systems or organization. The two systems involve changes in the ordering of three sequences of plates -- 29-37,
38-41, and 43-6 in Erdman's edition -- which appear as plates 33-41, 43-6, and 29-32, respectively, in two of Blake's copies. For our purposes, there is no significant difference between the two arrangements. In Erdman's text, the dialogue between Los and Albion occurs after the Cities have mistakenly attempted to redeem Albion against his will, and before a sequence (43-6) in which Los comes to admit the impossibility of his task. In the other order, the dialogue occurs in the middle of the narrative involving the Cities, between Plate 37 [41], in which the Cities experience despair and Plate 38 [43], in which Los inspires them with his prophetic fury. Plates 43-6 then become 29-32, but since the narrative involving the Cities ends unsatisfactorily, with Albion turning away "refusing comfort" (41:16, E186), a parallel negative context has been created for Plate 42. It is obvious that the different arrangements emphasize different aspects of the theme, but in both cases the contrast between Albion's Druidism and Los's more visionary (but still inadequate) alternative to it, is what is of central importance. Consequently I have chosen to discuss Chapter II using Erdman's order, without providing a second detailed account for Blake's other arrangement.

The opening plates of the chapter contrast the fallen Druid sacrifice presided over by Albion with the Crucifixion, the sacrifice which makes Albion's salvation possible. Albion has regressed "From willing sacrifice of Self, to sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies / For Atonement" (28:20-1, E173). Needless to say, any
attempt to achieve atonement in this way is misguided. Albion succeeds only in alerting his potential victims to the need to "seek ransom," to find their own candidate for victimhood:

Albion began to erect twelve Altars,
Of rough unhewn rocks, before the Potters Furnace
He nam'd them Justice, and Truth. And Albions Sons
Must have become the first Victims, being the first transgressors
But they fled to the mountains to seek ransom: building A Strong
Fortification against the Divine Humanity and Mercy,
In Shame & Jealousy to annihilate Jerusalem!

(28:21-7, E173)

Shortly after Albion has built the Altars, his Spectre -- identified in the introductory lyric as Satan -- makes his appearance, together with Vala, a parody of Jerusalem. The reign of Druidism has been firmly established.

At this point, however, a "Divine voice" comes from Los's Furnaces:

And the appearance of a Man was seen in the Furnaces;
Saving those who have sinned from the punishment of the Law,
(In pity of the punisher whose state is eternal death,)
And keeping them from Sin by the mild counsels of his love.
(31:5-9, E175-6)

The Man explains that "In Me all Eternity. / Must pass thro' condemnation, and awake beyond the Grave!" (31:9-10, E176).

The identity of the Man is clearly revealed by the design, which takes up most of the Plate. Although his back is turned towards the viewer, his arms are outstretched in a cruciform position, and his hands and feet bear the stigmata. Erdman identifies him as his Jehovah with the nail marks of Jesus," Wicksteed simply as "the Saviour." He hovers in the air over two prone figures,
labelled by Erdman as "Adam-Albion" and Eve." However the Man
is to be described, there can be no doubt that his task is to
redeem Albion through his own experience of "Condemnation," a
sacrifice which will definitively separate the "real" Albion
from his sin:

Albion hath entered the State Satan! Be permanent O State!
And be thou for ever accursed! that Albion may arise again:
And be thou created into a State! I go forth to Create
States: to deliver Individuals evermore! Amen.
(31:13-16, E176)

On the following plate, Blake drives this point home by having
"those in Great Eternity who contemplate on Death" remind us that
"the Divine Mercy / Steps beyond and Redeems Man in the Body of
Jesus Amen" (32:54-5, E177).

Thus Albion's "twelve Altars" and the Cross of Jesus have
been contrasted with each other. However neither Albion nor
Los is in a position to respond to the implications of the contrast.
The reasons for this are obvious enough in the case of the deluded
Albion, who has "turn'd his back against the Divine Vision" (35:
14, E179). But it is more surprising that even Los, in whose
Furnaces the Man has appeared, is unable to grasp fully the
distinction between the two forms of sacrifice. This fact becomes
clear on Plate 35, when Albion announces his descent to "Eternal
Death," and inquires plaintively: "Will none accompany me in my
death? or be a Ransom for me / In that dark Valley" (35:19-20,
E179). Los's response reveals his uncertainty:
Los answered, troubled: and his soul was rent in twain:
Must the Wise die for an Atonement? does Mercy endure Atonement?
No! It is Moral Severity, & destroys Mercy in its Victim.
So speaking, not yet infected with the Error & Illusion,
Los shuddered at beholding Albion... (35:24-36:1, E179)

Thomas J. J. Altizer has referred to this passage to prove his contention that "Blake was deeply ambivalent toward the idea of atonement, but he was capable of condemning it in no uncertain terms."  

It should be remembered, of course, that Los and Blake are not to be identified in this situation; but even so, Los's apparent condemnation of atonement may seem puzzling. But Los has not yet understood the nature of the atonement that has been offered by the Man in the Furnaces. He is responding to Albion's request for the only kind of atonement Albion understands: the "sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies / For Atonement" (28:20-1, E173). In the Druid version of atonement, one fallen being is substituted for another in the role of victim; one avoids victimhood only by clinging to the role of priest. David Wagenknecht makes this point when he characterizes Albion's understanding of atonement here as "an epiphany of his own vision of Law."  

To acquiesce to Albion's attitude is to be "infected with the Error & Illusion."

Another form of Atonement is possible. Though Los does not consider it in this passage, the reader must have still in his mind the vision of Jesus as the Man in the Furnaces, with his stigmata and his assertion that his action will make it possible
for Albion to rise again. An unfallen victim who assumes his sacrificial role voluntarily may embody the sort of Mercy which does "endure Atonement"; acting out of love rather than "Moral Severity," such a victim need not have Mercy destroyed in him. In pointing to Blake's ambivalent attitude towards Atonement, Altizer raises a question which he does not attempt to answer in detail. Had he examined Blake's use of the word "atonement," he might have found the ambivalence to have disappeared. As in the case of other theological terms (most notably those such as "hell," "Satan," and so on), the word "Atonement" has two meanings for Blake, one ironic, the other not. When the word is applied to Druid sacrifice, the irony is obvious -- and it is of course Atonement in this sense that Los is considering here. But when the word is used to describe what Jesus accomplishes on the Cross -- as it is, for example, in The Ghost of Abel, where Satan is opposed to Atonement -- it has a force similar to that which it has in the New Testament. Of course the Crucifixion can be mistaken for Druid sacrifice, and this potential for misunderstanding occupies much of Blake's attention in the second half of Jerusalem. However, the issue has not yet been raised by Plate 35, and Los's rejection of Druid Atonement is to be contrasted favourably with Albion's eagerness to embrace it.

But the rest of Chapter II reveals that Los's vision is not yet adequate, and that nothing less than the descent of Jesus in his role as Lamb of God can deal effectively with the problem
of man's fallenness. Even then, men must understand the uniqueness of his accomplishment before they can experience salvation. This is a central theme of the narrative sequence in the plates which describe the aftermath of Albion's descent to Eternal Death. The cathedral cities wish to save him, and there is some indication that they have the power to do so: "and they were One in Him. A Human Vision! / Human Divine, Jesus the Saviour, blessed for ever and ever" (36:46-7, E180). The truth that Jesus is Saviour must be communicated to Albion if he is to be saved. But the cities apparently fail to understand this.

In fact, they do not recognize Jesus as their Saviour. Instead, they view themselves, erroneously, as being caught in the dilemma of Druid sacrifice. The Zoas (associated with the four major cities) reduce the question of whether they should act wrathfully or mercifully to the question of whether they should themselves adopt the Druid roles of priest or victim:

They saw America clos'd out by the Oaks of the western shore; And Tharmas dash'd on the Rocks of the Altars of Victims in Mexico. If we are wrathful Albion will destroy Jerusalem with rooty Groves If we are merciful, ourselves must suffer destruction on his Oaks! Why should we enter into our Spectres, to behold our own corruptions O God of Albion descend! deliver Jerusalem from the Oaken Groves! (38:6-11, E182)

Los responds to this prayer with a long, angry prophetic speech which inspires the cities to action. But Los's approach to the problem is misguided, and the cities' action is completely ineffective. Los's approach is misguided because he assumes that Albion
can be saved by their direct intervention:

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 . . .

(38:12-14, E182)

It is not a "hand" that is required here, however. Los denounces Druid sacrifice, but does not invoke the sacrifice of Jesus: although he refers to the slaying of the Lamb of God (38:30, E183), he does not suggest that this sacrifice has redemptive power.

Instead of the way of Christ's sacrifice, then, the cities rely on the way of well-intentioned, righteous action:

With one accord in love sublime, & as on Cherubs wings
They Albion surround with kindest violence to bear him back
Against his will thro Los's Gate to Eden . . .

(39:1-3, E184)

The attempt is doomed; the phrase "Against his will" is the key one. It is clear that Albion must respond directly to the Divine Vision if he is to "arise again" from Eternal Death. The result of the cities' action is that they find themselves reduced to Albion's level: "Strucken with Albions disease they become what they behold" (39:32, E185). The single positive result of the whole adventure is that one of the cities, Bath, now recognizes his own arrogance in attempting to save Albion: "none but the Lamb of God can heal / This dread disease: none but Jesus! O Lord descend and save!" (40:15-16, E185).

Oddly enough, Los does not seem to achieve a parallel perception. In his dialogue with Albion on Plate 42, he does
not refer directly to the Christian concept of the Atonement -- although there is one incidental mention of "the Saviour" (42:32). Albion continues to espouse the Druid concept of sacrifice, asserting that "Man lives by deaths of Men" (42:49, E188). Los can respond to Albion's Druidism only by maintaining his prophetic stance, insisting that mercy should be added to Albion's demand for "Righteousness & justice" (42:19-21, E187). He is still apparently unaware of the possibility that Druid sacrifice can have been transformed by the participation of Jesus in the Crucifixion. Needless to say, Albion is not impressed by Los's appeal for mercy, and by Plate 45, Los expresses his fear that he will never communicate his message of forgiveness:

O Albion, if thou takest vengeance; if thou revengest thy wrongs
Thou art for ever lost! What can I do to hinder the Sons
Of Albion from taking vengeance? or how shall I them perswade.
   (45:36-8, E192)

Persuasion is no doubt better than "hindrance," but Los can accomplish neither. He has been able to identify the central problem of Albion's fallenness in terms of the need to replace vengeance with mercy. But he is unable to urge the Christian solution.

It is left to Erin, in the sequence of plates which brings Chapter II to a close, to present the Christian response to the situation. Erin has emerged from Los's furnaces early in the poem (11:8-12, E153), but has played no significant role until this point. Like the Man in the Furnaces, she has a perspective on events which is entirely different from that of Los, even though her existence is intimately related to his creative activity. Her sequence is introduced by a reprise of the Plate
27 account of the spread of Druidism after the Fall:

Luvah tore forth from Albions Loins in fibrous veins, in rivers Of blood over Europe: a Vegetating Root in grinding pain. Animating the Dragon Temples, soon to become that Holy Fiend The Wicker Man of Scandinavia in which cruelly consumed The Captives reard to heaven howl in flames among the stars (47:4-8, E194)

The description of a world given over entirely to Druid sacrifice is followed by one of the most concise accounts of its psychology in Blake's poetry. The interdependence and interchangeability of victim and priest is emphasized in this passage, which immediately precedes yet another of Albion's multiple deaths:

Hark! & Record the terrible wonder! that the Punisher Mingles with his Victims Spectre, enslaved and tormented To him whom he has murderd, bound in vengeance & enmity (47:14-16, E194)

Erin's magnificent speech in response to this situation expands upon Bath's insight about the need for Jesus to descend. Unlike Los, she is able to perceive that Jesus is the source of the mercy which must replace vengeance, and Jesus in his role as the sacrificial Lamb of God. She describes a world which is

Sway'd by a Providence oppos'd to the Divine Lord Jesus: A murderous Providence! A Creation that groans, living on Death. Where Fish & Bird & Beast & Man & Tree & Metal & Stone Live by Devouring, going into Eternal Death continually: Albion is now possess'd by the War of Blood: the Sacrifice Of envy Albion is become, and his Emanation cast out: Come Lord Jesus, Lamb of God descend! for if; O Lord! If thou hadst been here, our brother Albion had not died. (50:4-11, E197)

Her plea is echoed by the Daughters of Beulah in the last line of the Chapter: "Come then O Lamb of God and take away the
remembrance of Sin" (50:30, E198)

That it is Erin, and not Los, who delivers this speech is a measure of the failure of the "Jews" to whom the chapter has been addressed. Los has not himself been able to perceive man's fallen situation as clearly as the speaker of the introductory lyric of Plate 27. Los's inadequacy as a prophet in Chapter II stems from the fact that Jesus as Lamb of God is absent from his vision. He is an articulate and moving spokesman for an ethical system rooted in mercy, but is unable to "persuade" the Sons of Albion to abandon their obsession with vengeance.

But the seeds of salvation have been sown in the creative Furnaces of Los, even though he is himself unaware of the significance of the events which occur there. The voice of Jesus as the Man in the Furnaces and the prophetic speech delivered by Erin both foreshadow a "Christian" solution to the problem of man's fall into Druidism, a fall which Los's "Hebraic" analysis can define clearly but not resolve. For the reader who is one of the "Jews" Blake is addressing, one of those who (like Los) sees the need for "a Return to Mental Sacrifice & War," there is one obvious course of action: "Take up the Cross . . . & follow Jesus." Only in this way can Albion be saved from the Eternal Death of Druidism.

Chapter II reveals the need for the Lamb of God to descend and redeem the fallen world. Chapter III presents his Crucifixion from the perspective of those who crucify him: the men Blake
Blake identifies as "Deists" in the chapter's prefatory note. Deism Blake defines in terms of self-righteousness; it is, he says, a religion espoused by those who do not believe that redemption is necessary: "Your Religion O Deists: Deism, is the Worship of the God of this World by means of what you call Natural Religion and Natural Philosophy, and of Natural Morality or Self-Righteousness, the Selfish Virtues of the Natural Heart. This was the Religion of the Pharisees who murdered Jesus. Deism is the same & ends in the same" (E199). Blake contrasts Deism with "the Religion of Jesus, Forgiveness of Sin." Whitefield "pretended not to be holier than others: but confessed his Sins before all the World," while the Deist Rousseau's book "called his Confessions is an apology & cloke for his sin & not a confession" (E199).

Blake's purpose in this chapter, then, is to bring his audience of Deists to a conviction of their own sin. His major strategy is simply to anatomize the phenomenon of Druid sacrifice in excruciating detail, after having invoked the notion of forgiveness of sins. Unlike the Jews of Chapter II, the Deists do not acknowledge the fallenness of the world. In that sense, they are Druids, since they have not made a gesture equivalent to Abraham's flight from Chaldea. Blake traces the Deists' spiritual lineage back through "Greek Philosophy (which is a remnant of Druidism)" and which "teaches that Man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre" (E198). It is the Deists, Blake charges, who are responsible for the continuation of the institution of Druid sacrifice
in the so-called "Christian" era, even though Christ's death and resurrection have made it possible for men to be liberated from Druidism.

The Deists' negative influence on European history is the central theme of the lyric which concludes the introductory plate, a lyric which is a re-working of the Pickering Manuscript poem, "The Grey Monk." In this version, the Monk's Christlike suffering is inflicted upon him by Gibbon and Voltaire, representative Deists:

Gibbon arose with a lash of steel
And Voltaire with a wracking wheel
The Schools in clouds of learning rolld
Arose with War in iron & gold.

(52:5-8, E199)

The monk is again described in terms appropriate to the crucified Christ: "The blood. red ran from the Grey Monks side / His hands & feet were wounded wide" (52:13-14, E200); thus Gibbon and Voltaire are the modern equivalents of the men who murdered Jesus. But it is Satan who provides the inspiration for all Druid sacrifice:

When Satan first the black bow bent
And the Moral Law from the Gospel rent
He forgd the Law into a Sword
And spilld the blood of mercys Lord.

(52:17-20, E200)

But the lyric closes with the same cryptic assertion of the power of righteous suffering, as does the Pickering lyric:

For a Tear is an Intellectual thing;
And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King
And the bitter groan of a Martyrs woe
Is an Arrow from the Almightys Bow!

(52:25-8, E200)
The implicit, paradoxical assertion is that the spilled blood of mercy's Lord has more power than Gibbon's lash or Voltaire's wheel. "The Glory of Christianity," Blake has already told the Deists, is "To Conquer by Forgiveness" (E199). The futility of Druid sacrifice, as well as its cruelty, is to be Blake's central theme in this chapter.

The chapter begins with Los engaged in his task of building Golgonooza "In the midst of the rocks of the Altars of Albion" (53:17, E200). As in Chapter II, Los is sometimes unaware of the significance of the events which occur in his own furnaces, and at times he responds with incomprehension and even terror to the things he sees in the world around him (see, for example, 60:2, E202; 63:36, E212; 66:16, E216). Despite this, he perseveres, and, at the end of the chapter it is a creature from his furnaces -- this time Dinah, "the youthful form of Erin" (74:54, E228) -- who presents an image of the final, terrible beauty emerging from the spiritual warfare which Blake has by then described in such hideous detail.

Images of Druid sacrifice abound in this chapter, but they become especially prominent after Plate 60.19 There we are presented with "Albions Spectre who is Luvah / Spreading in bloody veins in torments over Europe & Asia" (60:2-3). (In this chapter we hear relatively little about Albion himself, although his Sons and Daughters play prominent roles.) Plate 60 also features the re-introduction of Jesus, the "Divine Vision" who, as on Plate
31, appears within Los's furnaces, but now leaves them to walk through the fallen world, in immediate response to the appearance of Luvah:

within the Furnaces the Divine Vision appeard
On Albions hills: often walking from the Furnaces in clouds
And flames among the Druid Temples & the Starry Wheels
Gatherd Jerusalems Children in his arms & bore them like
A Shepherd in the night of Albion which overspread all the Earth
(60:5-9, E208)

Jesus reproaches Jerusalem for failing to respond to his work of salvation. She has, he complains, prolonged the Crucifixion unnecessarily by continuing to act as if it had not occurred, performing Druid sacrifices to alien gods:

I gave thee liberty and life O lovely Jerusalem
And thou hast bound me down upon the Stems of Vegetation

Why wilt thou rend thyself apart, Jerusalem?
And build this Babylon & sacrifice in secret Groves,
Among the Gods of Asia: among the fountains of pitch & nitre
(60:1-2, 22-4, E208)

Jerusalem answers by saying that she is unable to maintain a constant sense of Jesus' reality: "Art thou alive! & livest thou forevermore? or art thou / Not: but a delusive shadow, a thought that liveth not" (60:54-5, E209).

Jesus (the "Divine Voice") attempts to comfort Jerusalem by presenting Blake's celebrated version of the story of Joseph and Mary. The meaning of the parable depends upon the contrast between fallen and unfallen sacrifice, although no explicit mention is made of the Crucifixion's unique status as a point of transition between the two. But Jerusalem is not able to identify herself
completely with the Mary of the story. Jerusalem's first joyful speech records that her original sense of herself as "a Harlot drunken with the Sacrifice of Idols" (61:38, E210) has given way to a newfound sense of purity through Jehovah's mercy (which has been manifested to her through the story of Joseph's act of forgiveness):

The Chaldean took
Me from my Cradle. The Amalekite stole me away upon his Camels
Before I had ever beheld with love the Face of Jehovah; or known
That there was a God of Mercy . . .

(61:40-3, E210)

Joseph has been able to forgive Mary, despite his initial anger, because he has received a direct revelation of "Jehovahs Salvation," which is to be found "in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins / In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity" (61:22-3, E210).

But soon doubts begin to arise for Jerusalem, and the theme of the ambiguity of the Crucifixion is introduced:

Times passed on
Jerusalem fainted over the Cross & Sepulcher She heard the voice
Wilt thou make Rome thy Patriarch Druid & the Kings of Europe his Horsemen?

(61:48-51, E210)

John Beer's comment on these lines is relevant here: "Jerusalem sees the Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus and hears a voice which comments on this submission to the Roman penal code . . .". Jerusalem's temptation is to interpret "Cross & Sepulcher" as a stumbling-block, to see the Crucifixion not as the act by which "Jehovahs Salvation" is made accessible to man, but as merely another victory for Druidism, the spirit which animates any ritual
involving the execution of a victim.

But Jesus continues to insist that his death has a different meaning. When Jerusalem expresses her anxiety, he responds by asserting that he dies in order to "prepare a way" for men in the fallen world to end their alienation from him:

Jesus replied. I am the Resurrection & the Life. I Die & pass the limits of possibility, as it appears To individual perception. Luvah must be Created And Vala; for I cannot leave them in the gnawing Grave. But will prepare a way for my banished-ones to return. (62:18-22, E211)

It will be important for us to remember Jesus' account of his sacrificial death when we attempt to interpret the "Druid" version of the Crucifixion, to which so much space is devoted in the closing plates of Chapter III.

Before that scene, however, Jehovah's attitude to Druid sacrifice is once again made clear. Vala conducts a sacrifice after Luvah has murdered Tharmas and Albion has "brought him / To Justice in his own city of Paris" (63:5-6, E212):

Then Vala the Wife of Albion, who is the Daughter of Luvah Took vengenace Twelve-fold among the Chaotic Rocks of the Druids Where the Human Victims howl to the Moon & Thor & Friga Dance the dance of death contending with Jehovah among the Cherubim. (63:7-10, E212)

The moon itself becomes "a lovely Victim," but at this point Blake reveals that Jehovah contends with the Druid priests not by means of a show of force, but through the Incarnation: "And Jehovah stood in the Gates of the Victim, & he appeared / A weeping Infant in the Gates of Birth in the midst of Heaven" (63:16-17, E212).
By now we have acquired sufficient information to interpret the Crucifixion in Christian terms. Jehovah is the God whose salvation is rooted in forgiveness of sins. Jesus is his incarnation. Jesus dies, but is resurrected; his death and resurrection provide the means by which those who are imprisoned in the "gnawing Grave" may be set free. I stress this point because critics who have commented on the "long fantasia on the Crucifixion" in this chapter have tended to ignore its context. Blake has carefully prepared his readers to adopt an anti-Druid, "Christian" perspective on the events he describes in the last part of the chapter. What appears to be merely another Druid sacrifice is in reality the sacrifice which destroys the power of Druidism. Since Blake is, in Chapter III, attempting to move an audience of Deists (or contemporary Druids), he might have expected his reader to recognize the enormity of his sin—since the Druids have been the priests who have for centuries presided over the Crucifixion, not knowing what they have done.

It will be neither possible nor necessary to analyze every aspect of the sacrificial imagery which fills the following plates. Indeed, much of it is only slightly re-worked material from Blake's other poems. The initial description of Luvah's crucifixion, for example — "They vote the death of Luvah, & they nailed him to Albions Tree in Bath" (65:8, E214) — is taken almost verbatim from Night VII (b) of The Four Zoas, and the ensuing passage (65:13-55) closely follows the corresponding lines from
the earlier poem (92:13-93:19, E396-7). As in the case of Night VII (b), the image of Luvah's crucifixion is here used by Blake to distinguish Luvah from Jesus rather than to identify them. This Luvah, too, dies "a death of Six thousand years" (65:10); he is definitely not the Resurrection and the Life. Of course, those who deny that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life would argue that the fact that both are crucified is sufficient to identify Luvah with Jesus. In the context Blake has established, however, the point is that those who would make such a denial are themselves Deists.

More significant, for our purposes, is the central passage in which the Crucifixion is apparently identified with other instances of Druid sacrifice:

The Knife of flint passes over the howling Victim: his blood Gushes & stains the fair side of the fair Daug[h]ters of Albion. They put aside his curls; they divide his seven locks upon His forehead; they bind his forehead with thorns of iron They put into his hand a reed, they mock: Saying: Behold The King of Canaan whose are seven hundred chariots of iron! They take off his vesture whole with their Knives of flint ... (66:20-6, E216)

Thorns, reed, mockery, seamless garment -- all these obviously derive from the Gospel Crucifixion narratives. The other motifs -- Druid, Old Testament, Aztec, and so on -- associate the Crucifixion with fallen sacrifice in general. To say that the Crucifixion is therefore a Druid sacrifice is to tell part of the truth, but only a part; and to imply that Blake sees the Crucifixion as no more than another Druid sacrifice is to misrepresent his
poetic argument. To make such an assertion as "In this passage, Jesus becomes another Luvah," is misleading unless the statement is qualified to something like: "From the point of view of the Daughters of Albion, Jesus becomes another Luvah." We can compare this situation with the one described in the introductory lyric, in which the Monk is tormented by Gibbon and Voltaire, who are blissfully unaware (as yet) that "the bitter groan of a Martyrs' woe / Is an Arrow from the Almighty's Bow!" Jesus "becomes" another Luvah only in the eyes of his murderers -- and they are mistaken.

What is true of this key passage is true of the whole "fantasia." Northrop Frye is misleading when he writes that its "point ... is to show that Jesus also was killed as a Luvah in the role of the dying Albion." Its "point" is rather that from the perspective of his executioners, Jesus was killed as a Luvah-figure. The situation contains the same sort of irony we found in Night VIII of The Four Zoas, in which Rahab "beholds the Lamb of God / She smites with her knife of flint She destroys her own work" (113:33-4, E362). The difference is that in Jerusalem we do have the carefully established context provided by the depiction of Jesus as the one who dies voluntarily in order to prepare a way for the "banished-ones" to return. Frye ignores this context in his discussion of the Crucifixion sequence.

But Blake reminds us of it in a coda at the end of the chapter. Los has been continuing to work at his Furnaces, despite
all the discouraging experiences he has undergone. The end of his prophetic endeavour is to provide a clear vision of the significance of Rahab in her role as priestess, and Jesus in his role as the victim who tastes death and hell in order to accomplish his work of mercy:

thus Rahab is revealed
Mystery Babylon the Great: the Abomination of Desolation
Religion hid in War: a Dragon red, & hidden Harlot
But Jesus breaking thro' the Central Zones of Death & Hell
Opens Eternity in Time & Space; triumphant in Mercy
(75:18-22, E229)

The explicitness of this description of Jesus' work contrasts with the presentation of Jesus in the "fantasia" itself: there, Jesus is at no point even named as the victim. This can be explained as another aspect of Blake's attempt to present the Druid sacrifice from the Druid (or Deist) perspective. The ritual has a predictable effect on its participants: "at the sight of Victim, & at sight of those who are smitten, / All who see: become what they behold" (66:35-6, E216). What they behold is not, of course, Jesus. But the Deist reader, the person Blake is addressing, is by now equipped to achieve such a perception.

The last chapter of Jerusalem is introduced by Plate 76, perhaps the most controversial of Blake's designs. Jesus is crucified on a tree; Albion stands facing him, his own arms in a cruciform position. Erdman points out that this is the first time in the poem that Albion has risen to his feet, surely a
sign of hope. Yet there is an influential body of Blake criticism -- to which Erdman himself has contributed -- which holds that Jesus is a negative figure here. Underlying this position is Frye's cloven fiction about Blake's notion of Jesus. There is, Frye tells us, a "Jesus of action" (of whom Blake approved) and a "Jesus of passion" (of whom he disapproved). The latter is to be identified with the "Satanic body of Holiness." This last phrase is highly ambiguous. Luvah, the victim of the extended ritual in Chapter III, has been identified as Satan, Albion's Spectre. Since his body is the object on which the Druid ritual is focused, it is holy in that sense at least. At the Crucifixion, Jesus voluntarily assumes Luvah's role. In this sense, Jesus does take on the Satanic Body of Holiness, as Los, in Chapter IV, calls on him to do (90:38, E247). But Jesus does this in order to transform the Druid ritual; by assuming the Satanic Body of Holiness, he is opening "Eternity in Time & Space." Worshipping the crucified Christ, as Albion does on Plate 76, is not necessarily equivalent to worshipping the crucified Luvah, or the sacrificed Luvah in any of his other avatars. Jesus is worthy to be worshipped not because he is the most recent in an endless series of dying gods, not because of the holiness of the Druid Satanic body he has taken on, but because it is through him that "Jehovahs Salvation" has been revealed.

To say with Erdman that "Albion is at an acme of Satanic worship of a vegetated Christ," is to beg all sorts of questions
about Albion's attitude (mental and physical) as it is presented on Plate 76. If Albion is responding to Jesus as if he were "God of this world" (as Erdman asserts), then Albion is indeed deluded. If, on the other hand, he is responding to Jesus as Lamb of God, the case is quite different. In my discussion of Chapter IV, I shall attempt to show that the relationship between Jesus and Albion presented here is a preparation for the final revelation of Jesus to Albion on Plate 96, not the antithesis of that revelation, as Erdman implies ("The living Jesus will not display wooden hands but embrace his brother Albion").

Henry Lesnick's interpretation of Plate 76 is similar to Erdman's, but he is less definite in his judgment of Albion, and he puts the central issue clearly: "The action depicted in this design might be construed as a kind of devil-worship. But it must be understood that in viewing the Satanic body of holiness that has been put off, Albion is also viewing the archetype of Self-Annihilation." The whole question, then, is whether Albion understands the full significance of the figure he is viewing or worshipping: whether he is worshipping the Satanic body of holiness itself, or the Saviour who has put that body on in order to put it off, becoming as we are that we may be as he is.

I would submit that Blake's aim in addressing this chapter "To the Christians" is to force them to choose between the alternatives. In his prose preface on Plate 77, he makes an implicit distinction between two types of Christians, those who "pretend
to despise Art & Science" and those who "engage ... in some Mental pursuit for the building up of Jerusalem" (E229-30).

The power to build up Jerusalem, we learn in a blank verse passage which follows the prose, comes from Jesus. There are two ways of interpreting his death on the Cross. On the one hand, Jesus died because he opposed the "Wheel of Religion," a "devouring sword" associated with death, sin, sorrow and punishment, and identified with Natural Religion (77:16-20, E230). This interpretation would seem to make him no more than another Luvah-figure, and the Christian who worships this Jesus is clearly of the Drūd party without knowing it. But there is another way of viewing this apparent defeat. The Crucifixion can also be seen as the ultimate act of self-denial, the act by which Jesus truly became the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world:

But Jesus is the bright Preacher of Life
Creating Nature from this fiery Law,
By self-denial & forgiveness of Sin.
(77:21-3, E230)

Those who see the Crucifixion of Plate 76 as no more than an epiphany of Law do indeed worship the Satanic body of holiness.

It is essential to see the Crucifixion as a creative act, one which liberates the world from the devouring sword of the Law, a revelation of Jesus' "self-denial & forgiveness of Sin." The Christian who interprets the Crucifixion in this way can appropriate the power to "cast out devils in Christ's name / Heal ... the sick of spiritual disease" (77:24-5, E230) and so on. In the dramatic action of Chapter IV, Los must first have his identity
as this second, "creative" type of Christian confirmed. Then he is able to become the vehicle through whom Jesus reveals himself to Albion in the poem's climactic passage on Plate 96. Before Albion can see in Jesus "the likeness & similitude of Los my Friend" (96:22, E253), Los must gain confidence in the validity of his own prophetic message.

Chapter IV begins at a point of crisis, with the Spectres of Albion's Sons threatening to destroy the Lamb of God himself, and Los and Jerusalem both apparently on the verge of despair:

While Los laments at his dire labours viewing Jerusalem, Sitting before his Furnaces clothes in sackcloth of hair; Albions Twelve Sons surround the Forty-two Gates of Erin, In terrible armour, raging against the Lamb & against Jerusalem, Surrounding them with armies to destroy the Lamb of God. (78:10-14, E231)

Jerusalem delivers a long lament for the world's fallenness, in which the prevalence of Druid sacrifice provides much of the evidence from which she draws this desolate conclusion:

I am a worm, and no living soul! A worm going to eternal torment! raised up in a night To an eternal night of pain, lost! lost! lost! for ever! (80:3-5, E234)

But all is not well in the camp of the enemy, either. Vala, the mother of Albion's Twelve Sons, has been named Rahab by them, and given "power over the Earth" (78:16, E231). But immediately after Jerusalem's lament, she gives voice to her own insecurity. She admits that she is responsible for the original murder of Albion, although she adds that she was inspired by Luvah; but now she fears that Jesus will resurrect Albion, despite
her efforts to keep his body "embalmed in moral laws":

But I Vala, Luvah's daughter, keep his body embalmed in moral laws
With spices of sweet odours of lovely jealous stupefaction:
Within my bosom, lest he arise to life & slay my Luvah
Pity me then O lamb of God! O Jesus pity me!
Come into Luvah's Tents, and seek not to revive the Dead!
(80:27-31, E234)

Although she recognizes the power of Jesus, Vala obviously mis-
understands his intention. She fears that if Albion were resurrected,
the customary shifting of sacrificial roles would occur, and
Luvah would become Albion's victim.

The initial movement towards redemption comes not from
Vala, but from two of her daughters, Cambel and Gwendolen. These
characters, however, are also embodiments of the Female Will.
They assume the role of priestess with respect to their masculine
counterparts (Hand and Hyle, respectively), although in this case
the victim is not murdered, but instead re-created according
to the perverse desires of the priestess-figure. Gwendolen gives
Hyle the body of fallen, natural man (80:66-76, E235), but more
important than the ironic physiological detail is the result
of her "creative" activity:

raving he ran among the rocks,
Compelled into a shape of Moral Virtue against the Lamb.
The invisible lovely one giving him a form according to
His Law a form against the Lamb of God opposed to Mercy
(80:76-9, E235)

Later she boasts to the other Daughters of Albion that "Hyle
is become an infant Love" (82:37, E237), but when she attempts to
display him to her sisters, it turns out that he has somehow
metamorphosed into a "winding Worm" (82:47). Gwendolen is horrified,
and flees, but Cambel is jealous (presumably of her sister's power to transform Hyle, rather than of the end result of her labours).

But when Cambel attempts "To form the mighty form of Hand according to her will" (82:63), the result is "deformity" not "beauty":

she gave her beauty to another: bearing abroad
Her struggling torment in her iron arms: and like a chain,
Binding his wrists & ankles with the iron arms of love.
(82:69-71, E238)

When Gwendolen sees Cambel's victim-child, she is overcome, apparently jealous because Hand, however deformed, is at least an Infant, while Hyle is only a "winding Worm." But whatever her motive, Gwendolen is at last "Repentant" (82:74), and this attitude is soon shared by her sisters, who "in tears / Began to give their souls away in the Furna[c]es of affliction" (82:78-9, E238). For the first time in the poem, Druid.priest-figures have recognized the heinous nature of their actions. The way has been prepared for the apocalyptic changes which occur at the poem's climax.

The immediate effect of the Daughters' change of heart is that Los is "comforted" (82:80). He no longer "laments at his dire labours" as he did at the beginning of the chapter. Now he proclaims, with full confidence, that he has an eternal identity he can assume at will, but he has chosen to remain in the fallen world in order to awaken Albion:

I know I am Urthona keeper of the Gates of Heaven,
And that I can at will expatiate in the Gardens of bliss;
But pangs of love draw me down to my loins which are
Become a fountain of veiny pipes: O Albion! my brother!
Corrupt[ilability appears upon thy limbs, and never more
Can I arise and leave thy side, but labour here incessant
Till thy awaking! yet alas I shall forget Eternity:
Against the Patriarchal pomp and cruelty, labouring incessant
I shall become an Infant horror.

(82:81-83:5, E238-9)

The last lines introduce a note of self-pity which reminds us
again that Los is not to be confused with Jesus. But Los is
certainly a Christian, if that can be said of any character in the
poem, and in the rest of the passage there is a clear, though
only implicit parallel drawn between Los and the Jesus of the
blank verse section of Plate 77. Los's decision to allow "pangs
of love" to determine his plans, even if he must forego, for the
moment, the "Gardens of bliss," indicates that his labours at the
Furnaces certainly involve a Christlike "self-denial"; and his
aim is to heal his sick brother, Albion, of "spiritual disease."
But Los's fear of becoming an "Infant horror" like Hyle reveals
that he is also drawn in the direction of the Druid attitude
towards sacrifice, and hence towards Jesus. This tension within
Los is dramatized in the ensuing plates as a struggle between
Los and Enitharmon. Predictably enough, Enitharmon becomes the
advocate of Druidism; Los is driven to respond in terms which
are unequivocally Christian.

Enitharmon repeats the errors of Gwendolen and Cambel as
she declares herself to be a priestess who will treat all men
(including Jesus) as victims, in the same way as the Daughters
of Albion abused Hand and Hyle:
A triple Female Tabernacle for Moral Law I weave
That he who loves Jesus may loathe terrified Female love
Till God himself becomes a Male subservient to the Female.
(88:19-21, E244)

She attempts to translate her boast into action by "creating
the Female Womb / In mild Jerusalem around the Lamb of God"
(88:52-3, E245). This image takes us back to the climax of the
Bard's Song in Milton, when "the Body of Death was perfected
in hypocritic holiness, / Around the Lamb, a Female Tabernacle
woven in Cathedrons Looms" (13:25-6, E106). Enitharmon attempts
to make Jesus appear to be no more than another Luvah, automatically
subject to Druid crucifixion on the stems of Generation. In
Milton, the Elect and the Redeemed were able to see the sacrificial
Lamb as the Saviour. It is essential for Los to present this
"likeness & similitude" of Jesus to Albion, but before he can do
this he must deal with the false Christ created by the rebellious
Enitharmon.

Historically, the Christian era has been dominated by this
"Antichrist" Blake calls "the Covering Cherub" (89:9-10, E245).
The Covering Cherub masquerades as the crucified (and resurrected)
Christ, but is in reality the power animating the false image of
God which, men should have realized, has been destroyed by Jesus
on Calvary:

Tho divided by the Cross & Nails & Thorns & Spear
In cruelties of Rahab & Tirzah[,] permanent endure
A terrible indefinite Hermaphroditic form
A Wine-press of Love & Wrath . . .

...
Thus was the Covering Cherub revealed majestic image
Of Selfhood, Body put off, the Antichrist accursed
Covered with precious stones, a Human Dragon terrible
And bright, stretched over Europe & Asia gorgeous
In three nights he devoured the rejected corpse of death
(89:1-4, 9-13, E245)

The Wine-press is obviously Luvah's, familiar to us from both
The Four Zoas and Milton. Worshippers of the Covering Cherub
are worshipping a form of Luvah under the name of Jesus. But
this does not mean that Jesus has no identity apart from Luvah,
only that they have not recognized this identity.32 The result
of this confusion has been the continuation of the Druid religion,
under the guise of Christianity, long after Christ's death and
resurrection have made it possible for Druidism to be permanently
abolished. From the point of view of this parody of Christianity,
the Crucifixion was a defeat for a Jesus who ultimately becomes
"the rejected corpse of death" rather than the risen Lord.

On Plate 90, Los reveals the prophetic truth about this
situation in a cryptic speech which Erdman and others have used
to justify their interpretation of Plate 76:

Los cries: No Individual ought to appropriate to Himself
Or to his Emanation, any of the Universal Characteristics
Of David or of Eve, of the Woman, or of the Lord.
Of Reuben or of Benjamin, of Joseph or Judah or Levi[.]
Those who dare appropriate to themselves Universal Attributes
Are the Blasphemous Selfhoods & must be broken asunder[.]
(90:28-33, E247)

In the context Blake has established for Plate 90, we must see
this as Los's response to the threat posed by the Covering Cherub,
the Antichrist who has attempted to appropriate the Universal
Characteristics of the Lord. To be more precise: the Covering Cherub is not an Individual, but is composed of individuals, for example the "multitudes of those in Alla" who "become One with the Antichrist & are absorb'd in him" (89:58, 62, E246-7). More immediately, the first part of Plate 90 itself presents a description of some specific manifestations of the Antichrist in England. Particularly relevant is the parody of the communion ritual in which "the Twelve Sons / Of Albion drank & imbibed the Life & eternal Form of Luvah" (90:16-17, E247).

Los's speech continues:

A Vegetated Christ & a Virgin Eve, are the Hermaphroditic Blasphemy, by his Maternal Birth he is that Evil-One And his Maternal Humanity must be put off Eternally Lest the Sexual Generation swallow up Regeneration Come Lord Jesus takenon the Satanic Body of Holiness (90:34-8, E247)

The question is whether the "Vegetated Christ" is, as Erdman assumes, synonymous with the crucified Christ. The fact that Jesus is called to "take on" the Vegetated Christ's Satanic Body suggests that there are two possible interpretations of the Crucifixion: that it involved only the Vegetated Christ, and that it involved the deliberate taking on of the Vegetated Christ's body by the person Blake addresses as "Lord Jesus."33

The distinction becomes clearer immediately after Los's speech, in a passage describing the activities of the Sons of Albion:
So Los cried in the Valleys of Middlesex in the Spirit of Prophecy
While in Selfhood Hand & Hyle & Bowen & Skofeld appropriate
The Divine Names: seeking to Vegetate the Divine Vision
In a corporeal & every dying Vegetation & Corruption
Mingling with Luvah in One, they become One Great Satan
(90:39-43, E247)

To "vegetate the Divine Vision" is to identify Jesus with Luvah,
the "ever dying" victim of Druid sacrifice, not with the Lamb of
God who has voluntarily assumed the dying god's body in order to
bring Druid sacrifice to an end.34

Los's inspired wrath has thus revealed the falseness of
Antichrist, but its effect has been one of self-purification.
In the ensuing plates, he destroys his Spectre's works, tries to
reassure a now-terrified Enitharmon, and makes good his first-
chapter promise of mercy by uniting with the Spectre.35 He is
now completely confident of the righteousness of his stance; he
has the faith to examine all the evidence of the ascendancy
of "The God of this World" and conclude: "Is it not that Signal
of the Morning which was told us in the Beginning" (93:26, E251).
This is the Los through whom Jesus reveals himself to Albion
on Plate 96.

This dialogue between Jesus and Albion brings us to the
centre of Jerusalem's meaning.36 Jesus explains the significance
and nature of the sacrificial act depicted so powerfully on Plate 76:

Jesus replied Fear not Albion unless I die thou canst not live
But if I die I shall arise again & thou with me
This is Friendship & Brotherhood without it Man Is Not
So Jesus spoke: the Covering Cherub coming on in darkness
Overshadowd them & Jesus said Thus do Men in Eternity
One for another to put off by forgiveness, every sin

Albion replyd. Cannot Man exist without Mysterious
Offering of Self for Another, is this Friendship & Brotherhood
I see thee in the likeness & similitude of Los my Friend

Jesus said. Wouldest thou love one who never died
For thee or ever die for one who had not died for thee
And if God dieth not for Man & giveth not himself
Eternally for Man Man could not exist! for Man is Love:
As God is Love: every kindness to another is a little Death
In the Divine Image nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood

(96:14-28, E253)

When Albion suggests that men should attempt to "exist without
Mysterious / Offering of Self for Another," Jesus responds by saying
that the endless chain of priest and victim can be broken only by
an act of Love. Albion -- fallen man -- could, of his own selfish­
ness, never love in such a disinterested way nor could he give
himself willingly to someone to whom he owed no debt. The act
of Love must therefore come from God. Without it, man could
not "exist" in any real sense, since man's real, unfallen existence
is to be identified as Love in the same sense that God is to be
identified as Love. After God (as Jesus) has made this Mysterious
Offering, other men may imitate the act "in Eternity," forgiving
each other. True forgiveness is impossible for anyone still
bound to the psychology of Druid sacrifice. Only Jesus can
break this bondage, by voluntarily suffering its worst effects,
revealing to men that they are not irrevocably alienated from the
God who manifests himself as Love, who dies in order to "arise
again & thou with me."
At the conclusion of the dialogue, the Cloud of the Covering Cherub overshadows them, and Albion's response to this development reveals that he has understood and accepted the Gospel Jesus has just preached:

So saying the Cloud overshadowing divided them asunder
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! O my Cities & Counties
Do you sleep! rouze up. rouze up. 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

(96:29-37, E253)

Albion has not, of course, "saved" Jesus -- in fact there is something Quixotic about his gesture\(^{37}\) -- but he has demonstrated his willingness to die for his Saviour. In so doing, he has performed an act of obedience parallel to Milton's at the end of the Bard's Song, and implicitly acknowledged the Lordship of Jesus. Albion does not have to undergo an experience equivalent to crucifixion; there is no need for him to suffer in the Furnaces before they are transformed into Fountains. The point of the incident is that Albion does not become a victim, though he has offered to be one for Jesus' sake: No ône need be a victim anymore.\(^{38}\)

The final speech of Jerusalem, the "Cry" of the "Living Creatures of the Eath" (98:54, E256) is a celebration of this fact. Druidism has been replaced by Forgiveness of Sins as the principle which orders human existence:
Where is the Tree of Good & Evil that rooted beneath the cruel heel
Of Albion's Spectre the Patriarch Druid! where are all his Human
Sacrifices
For Sin in War & in the Druid Temples of the Accuser of Sin . . .
(98:47-9, E256)

The "Druid Spectre" has been annihilated by Albion himself
(98:6, E254), using "Arrows of Love" and "A Bow of Mercy & Loving-
kindness" (97:11-12, E254). The "Christians" to whom Blake
has been speaking in this Chapter should by now have no excuse
for confusing the Jesus of Plates 76 and 96 with the god whose
cult of "Religion hid in War" (89:53, E246) has kept man in
unnecessary bondage. The message of liberation has been pro-
claimed: "For Hell is opend to Heaven; thine eyes beheild /
The dungeons burst & the Prisoners set free" (77:34-5, E231).
Having been made conscious of the error of worshipping the
"Vegetated Christ" (Jesus as Luvah), the reader should have
been set free to be with Blake, "wholly One in Jesus our Lord"
(E144).
NOTES


2. Marks, 49.


6. For a conflicting interpretation of this passage, see Margoliouth, p. 156: "Golgotha was Tyburn, and Tyburn was Golgotha."


8. John Beer, in Blake's Visionary Universe (New York and Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press and Barnes & Noble, 1969), misses Blake's point here when he comments: "Again the individuality of Blake's attitude to orthodox Christian doctrine is apparent. Sacrifice, in the sense of self-giving, is not the object of his attack; instead, he criticizes the idea that sacrifice of the innocent can ever provide an 'atonement' for sin" (p. 221). But the real object of Blake's attack here is not the concept of atonement, but the attitude of the Sons of Albion, who consider themselves "Perfect," the righteous beneficiaries of the Lamb's sacrifice. In fact they are self-righteous, and a few lines later Blake reminds us of Jesus' role as "the Friend of Sinners" (18: 37, E162).

9. Interestingly, Vala presents herself as a Christ-figure, crucified by Albion's Sons: "Thy Sons have naild me on the Gates piercing my hands & feet" (22:2, E165). Harold Bloom calls her
religion a "demonic version of Christianity" (E850), while W. H. Stevenson, in his edition of Blake: The Complete Poems (London: Longman, 1972), comments that "since she is in error, her words are . . . to be treated as probably false" (p. 669n.).


11 The Illuminated Blake, p. 305.

12 Erdman describes the two arrangements and concludes that Blake "considered neither definitive" (E730).

13 For the biblical sources, see Margoliouth, who suggests 2 Samuel 21.3 and Joshua 8.29-31 (p. 158), and Stevenson, who mentions the reference in Joshua and adds Deuteronomy 27.5 (p. 68ln.).

14 Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p. 310; Wicksteed, pp. 164-5.


17 By "Atonement", Blake here means the process by which one victim replaces another in the ritual of Druid sacrifice: no forgiveness is involved. This is the "sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies" (28:21, E173). Thus when Blake in his role as narrator informs us that there will come a "Religion /Of Generation" which will "destroy by Sin and Atonement, happy Jerusalem" (41: 26-7, E187), he is not referring to the Crucifixion and its significance for the Christian Church described in the New Testament. Instead, he is speaking of the misunderstanding of the Crucifixion which causes it to be interpreted as merely another example of "Druidic" sacrifice. (The phrase "Religion /Of Generation" is important here.) There is a temptation for the critic to seize on the word "Atonement" and disregard the context Blake has established for it. Beer, for example, concludes that the plate presents Blake's (adverse) "verdict on the Doctrine of the Atonement" (Blake's Visionary Universe, p. 187).

18 It is often difficult to tell whether the pronoun "they" in these plates refers to the Zoas -- each of whom is identified with a city -- or to all twenty-eight cities, comprising the
entire "Divine Family." I have followed Bloom (E852) in assuming that Blake means the word to refer to all twenty-eight.

I have attempted to concentrate on those which have greatest thematic importance. Bloom suggests that a new "movement" begins with Plate 60 (E856), and it is this latter portion of the chapter with which I am most centrally concerned.

Blake's Visionary Universe, p. 205.


The quoted phrase is Frye's (Fearful Symmetry, p. 398).

Blake's treatment of the Crucifixion scene here draws heavily on his depiction of it in the Eighth Night of The Four Zoas. On Plate 67, Tirzah and Rahab reappear: "And the Twelve Daughters of Albion united in Rahab & Tirzah" (67:2, E217). Certain lines describing the sacrifice are taken almost directly from the earlier poem. (67:45-68:9 derive from The Four Zoas 105:31-53.) In the context of the earlier poem, this passage immediately precedes the descent of the Lamb of God, who "descended thro the twelve portions of Luvah / Bearing his sorrows & rec[ie]ving all his cruel wounds" (105:55-6, E364).


Bloom, E857.

Fearful Symmetry, p. 398.

The Illuminated Blake, p. 355.

Fearful Symmetry, p. 387.

The Illuminated Blake, p. 355.

The Illuminated Blake, p. 355. Other critics have been able to see Jesus in a more positive light. See Margaret Bottrall, The Divine Image (Roma: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 1950),


32 As Bloom points out, "The four instruments of the Crucifixion do not liberate mankind from natural torment" (E861). The Churches, Bloom adds, have subverted Christ's sacrifice, transforming it into "spiritualized natural warfare" or, in Blake's phrase, "Religion hid in War" (89:53, E246).

33 Lesnick distorts the text when he writes that "Jesus, in his generative existence, becomes -- is -- that Evil-One" (p. 399). The "Vegetated Christ" is not the real Jesus, as we have seen. Jesus does not become the Evil-One; he is to "take on" the Evil-One's body (i.e.e. the role of the victim in Druid sacrifice) while maintaining his distinct identity. Altizer makes a comparable error in equating Jesus with Luvah and Satan: "Jesus, who is the incarnation of the primordial passion of Luvah, is at once the dark body of Satan and the redemptive body of holiness" (p. 107).

34 It is worth noting, too, that Jesus is not the Individual Blake has in mind when he has Los say "No Individual ought to appropriate to Himself . . . any of the Universal Characteristics." It is the Sons of Albion who "appropriate / The Divine Names," not Jesus.

35 For the integration of Los and his Spectre, see Los's speech to his Sons: "Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. he is become One with me / Behold him here! We shall not Die: we shall be united in Jesus" (93:18-19, E251). Bloom's identification of the Waking Death with the Spectre (E862) seems most reasonable, though there are apparently other possibilities. See Kathryn R. Kremen, The Imagination of the Resurrection (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1972), p. 232 and Stevenson, p. 832n.

36 Albion has been resurrected as a result of Britannia's confession (94:23-5, E252).
Albion's response might be compared with Peter's in the New Testament transfiguration narratives (Matthew 17.1-8, Mark 9.2-8, Luke 9.28-36) which together constitute the source for this passage. Blake's major ironic transformation has been to make the Cloud the symbol of the Antichrist rather than the means by which God reveals himself. But Peter's reaction -- in Mark, for example -- parallels Albion's: "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid" (Mark 9.5-6). Both Peter and Albion are fearful, and reveal their gaucherie by making an inadequate gesture which nevertheless also bears witness to the depth of the commitment each has made to Jesus.

Mollyanne Marks misses this point when she asserts that "The sacrifice of self on the cross becomes literally the act which redeems the fall and precipitates the victim into Eternity" (49). Rather, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and Albion's response to that sacrifice, have made it possible for Albion to be precipitated into Eternity without becoming a victim.
CONCLUSION

At the end of the Introduction I quoted a passage from *Fearful Symmetry* in which Northrop Frye, having made a distinction between the "Jesus of action" and the "Jesus of passion" in Blake's work, characterized the Jesus of passion in exclusively negative terms: "the Jesus of passion, according to Blake, is the 'Satanic body of Holiness' which Jesus had to assume in order to consolidate error, and show what the opposite of Christianity is." In the ensuing chapters I have attempted, by examining Blake's use of the figure of the victim, to show that Frye's analysis is inadequate, that the Jesus of passion as he is presented in the major prophecies, is also the Jesus of action. Blake's last poems, the fragments of *The Everlasting Gospel* and the brief verse-drama *The Ghost of Abel*, together provide a sort of paradigm of Blake's notion of victimhood, with particular reference to the figure of Jesus.

Frye's description of the Jesus of passion is of course a description of the Vegetated Christ, the Jesus who is misperceived and worshipped as Luvah. In *The Everlasting Gospel* we are presented
with a vision of this figure in terms almost identical to those of Jerusalem:

Then rolld the shadowy man away
From the limbs of Jesus to make them his prey
An ever devouring appetite
Glittering with festering venoms bright
Crying crucify this cause of distress
Who dont keep the secrets of holiness

But when Jesus was crucified
Then was perfected his glittering pride
In three nights he devoured his prey
And still he devours the body of clay

(PAGES 48-52: 81-6, 91-4, E514)

The "shadowy man" is not definitively identified by Blake in this context, but the following passage from Jerusalem is surely relevant:

Thus was the covering cherub revealed majestic image
Of selfhood, body put off, the antichrist accursed
Covered with precious stones, a human dragon terrible
And bright, stretched over Europe and Asia gorgeous
In three nights he devoured the rejected corpse of death

(89:9-13, E245)

If this were all Blake had to say about the Jesus of passion, then one would have to concede Frye's analysis to be accurate.

But elsewhere in The Everlasting Gospel, the crucifixion is described quite differently:

And thus with wrath he did subdue
The serpent bulk of nature's dross
till he had nailed it to the cross
He took on sin in the virgins womb
And put it off on the cross & tomb

(PAGES 100-1: 52-6, E515)

This passage, unlike the first one, has an obvious new testament source and its argument seems quite consistent with mainstream
Christian orthodoxy. We might compare Romans 6.6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Jesus nails sin to the Cross by voluntarily assuming the guilt of all men and allowing representative fallen men to execute him. This passage might be used to refute Frye's charge that the Jesus of passion is no more than the "Satanic body of Holiness" assumed by Jesus in order to "show what the opposite of Christianity is," for here the Jesus of passion is said to be performing the act which is central to Christianity, the act which makes it possible for men "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6.11).

Discussion of The Everlasting Gospel can never be conclusive, however, since Blake never established a final text for the poem. The case is different with The Ghost of Abel, a work which gives us his clearest statement about the relation between Druidism and Christianity. In this poem the two conflicting visions of Jesus' sacrifice which we have found in the fragments of The Everlasting Gospel are set against each other in a concise and definitive way.

The action begins immediately after the first murder. The Ghost of Abel, the first human victim, cries out for vengeance against Cain, the first priest of Druidism, a situation which implies the familiar theme of the interchangeability of priest and victim. "O Jehovah," the Ghost cries, eager to celebrate his
own sacrifice, "I am the Accuser & Avenger / Of Blood O Earth Cover not thou the Blood of Abel" (1:12-13, E268). Jehovah intervenes to point out calmly that such vengeance would only initiate the endless chain of Druidic sacrifice: "He who shall take Cain's life must also Die O Abel" (1:15).

But there is another alternative, one presented to Adam and Eve through "Spiritual Vision" (1:22, E269), in which Jehovah appears as "Father of Mercies" (1:21) and there is also a different version of Abel, as Eve reports:

I see also Abel living
Tho terribly afflicted as We also are, yet Jehovah sees him Alive & not Dead: were it not better to believe Vision . . . (1:23-2:1, E269)

Adam and Eve decide to "believe Vision"; they kneel before Jehovah in a gesture representative of what Abel's Ghost calls "the Sacrifices of Eternity . . . a Broken Spirit / And a Contrite Heart" (2:4-5, E269). Jehovah attempts to explain how it is that Adam and Eve can participate in the "Sacrifices of Eternity." Unmistakably referring to the Crucifixion, he replies to Abel's expression of the desire for vengeance: "Lo I have given you a Lamb for an Atonement instead / Of the Transgressor, or no Flesh or Spirit could ever Live" (2:10-11, E269). The Lamb of God is Jehovah's gift to men, so that they may experience forgiveness of sins; Jehovah is not the bloodthirsty tyrant-god who irrationally demands the execution of his own son.

The role of bloodthirsty tyrant is played rather by Satan,
who, according to Blake's "stage direction," at this point rises from Abel's grave to become Jehovah's debating opponent. His speech indicates that it is he who is the god of Druid sacrifice:

I will have Human Blood & not the blood of Bulls or Goats
And no Atonement O Jehovah the Elohim live on Sacrifice
Of Men: hence I am God of Men: Thou Human O Jehovah.
By the Rock & Oak of the Druid creeping Mistletoe & Thorn
Cains City built with Human Blood, not Blood of Bulls & Goats
Thou shalt Thyself be Sacrificed to Me thy God on Calvary

(2:13-18, E269)

According to this rather startling boast, Satan is the true God, who presides, as the eternal priest of Druidism, over the Crucifixion itself. For him, Calvary signifies that whatever is "Human," whatever expresses the impulse for "Atonement," has been utterly and irrevocably crushed. The "God of Men," Satan claims, will defeat the "Human" Jehovah (in the form of Jesus).

Satan's analysis is so patently false that Blake does not need to insert a corrective statement about the identity of Jesus and Jehovah or the Christian significance of the Crucifixion. Instead, the action concludes with Jehovah's casting down of Satan "to Eternal Death / In Self Annihilation even till Satan Self-subdud Put off Satan" (2:19-20, E269). (For Satan to put off Satan presumably means for Satan the Individual to put off Satan the State.) The poem ends with a chorus of angels singing praises to Jehovah for his "Covenant of the Forgiveness of Sins" (2:24, E270).

From the perspective furnished by The Ghost of Abel, we can see the inaccuracy of Frye's assertion that "His [Jesus']
sufferings do not reveal the character of a joyous creator."\(^5\)
The action of the poem has revealed Jehovah as (in Satan's word)
"Human," and his humanity has been revealed through his attitude
toward Calvary. The Jesus of passion has been presented as a
participant in the complex of events which will one day extend
to all men the experience described in the joyful conclusion:
"each in his station fxt in the Firmament by Peace Brotherhood
and Love" (2:26, E270).

The Ghost of Abe\(\text{d}\), then, is a parable which presents in a
concise form Blake's mature understanding of the nature and
significance of the experience of victimhood. Abel cannot forgive
Cain: in the fallen world, the victim cannot forgive his sacrificer.
No fallen human being can be a source of forgiveness, because without
Jehovah's inspiration, no fallen man can envisage the sinner as
possessing an identity separate from his sin. Satan, of course,
as the voice of Druidic sacrifice, insists that it is impossible
to effect such a separation: sin exists, and any attempt to
"atone" for it results only in the commission of further sin.
But Calvary breaks Satan's power, because there sin is atoned for
in a way that does not require further sin to be committed. Jesus,
the sinless Lamb of God, takes away the sins of the world by
refusing to condemn those who have sinned against him. He bears
the burden of all men's sins so that men in the fallen world can
discover their unfallen identity as Love, capable of participating
in the Sacrifices of Eternity. Men who "believe Vision" experience
this separation of one's real identity from one's sin so that the apparently impassible gulf which (Satan declares) keeps God and men eternally apart, is annihilated, and "Man is Love: / As God is Love."
NOTES


3 For a different response to this passage, see Jean Hall, "Blake's Everlasting Gospel," Blake Studies, 4:1 (1971), 72. Hall's over-ingenious analysis ignores the allusion to Pauline Christology.

4 Thomas J. J. Altizer, in The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (n. p.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1967), having quoted Satan's speech and Jehovah's response, adds: "Compressed as these lines are, they contain the dual theme that God must be sacrificed to Satan on Calvary, and that Satan must be self-annihilated and forever perish as Satan" (pp. 75-6). Altizer apparently does not consider the possibility that Satan is lying -- a rather strange oversight for a Christian theologian.

5 Fearful Symmetry, p. 387.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


---------. "Blake and Wesley." Notes and Queries, N.S. 3 (1956), 522-4.


Mabbott, Thomas Ollive. "Blake's A Poison Tree." Explicator, 6 (1948), item 19.


---------. "Good-bye to Orc and All That." Blake Studies, 4:2 (1972), 135-54.


Sampson, Edward C. "Blake's A Poison Tree." Explicator, 6 (1947), item 19.


---------. "William Blake's Use of the Bible in a Section of 'The Everlasting Gospel.'" Notes and Queries, N.S. 9 (1962), 171-6.


