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Prophet Against Oppression: An analysis of William Blake's visionary politics in America and Jerusalem

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Prophet Against Oppression:

An analysis of William Blake's visionary politics in America and Jerusalem

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with Honors to the Department of Languages and Literature at Carroll College, Helena, MT

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Preface

When I first began to read Blake, I was captivated by his images, rhythm, and language. His message, however, eluded me. To be honest, I did not quite understand the numerous proverbs he provides the reader with in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. I did not grasp the implications of his words and the purpose of equating hell with heaven. At that point in my relationship with Blake, I was in a state of innocence—awed by his words and images, but not entirely aware of what Blake's message and poetic vision addressed.

Fortunately, I continued to read in the hope that I would begin to understand more of Blake's prophetic message. I believed Blake's promise that he gives the reader in *Jerusalem*:

> I give you the end of a golden string,
> Only wind it into a ball:
> It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,
> Built in Jerusalem's wall (J 77).\(^2\)

I followed Blake's "golden string." His "golden string" led me through many of his works—short and long—and introduced me to the world of literary criticism. Often, I would find myself discouraged and lost in Blake's mythical universe, but with the help of Dr. Ronald Stottlemyer, Kay Satre, Harold Bloom, probably the best known Blake scholar, and many others, I found myself understanding more and more.
With an increased understanding of Blake's message and world, I began to realize that Blake spanned the distance between my two majors--Political Science and English-Writing. In my political science classes, I found myself wanting to focus more on theory; I often wished that the writing introduced in my political science courses would have more life and vitality. In my literature courses, I discovered the heat and emotion of words; but I was often disappointed with their lack of political content and purpose. Blake satisfied my desire to explore political theory further, and his message is carried by both poetic and artistic achievements charged with energy.

Consequently, my curiosity and loyalty toward Blake led me to write this thesis which focuses on Blake's prophetic works in *America* and *Jerusalem*. I chose these two poems because *America* represents Blake's first prophecy printed in 1793 and *Jerusalem* is Blake's last prophecy printed in 1804. *America* and *Jerusalem* provide the reader with a fairly complete picture of Blake's political vision, since they encompass his earlier thoughts and last efforts to complete his political vision--a vision that changed significantly throughout his lifetime.

In order to understand Blake's political prophecies, even partially, the reader must be reasonably acquainted with the eighteenth century--the historical context he lived in. Therefore, the beginning of my thesis includes a chapter dedicated to providing a basic understanding of that century.
In chapter two, I focus on the political themes contained in America. Next, I provide a brief overview of Blake's visionary universe described in Jerusalem. And, finally, I critique the shift in Blake's political vision from the focus on violent revolution in America to the emphasis on brotherhood, love, and forgiveness in Jerusalem.

By following Blake's "golden string," I have entered a state of experience regarding my knowledge of Blake's vision. Still, my understanding is far from complete. Fortunately, Blake's poems America and Jerusalem clearly outline his political vision, and I hope my analysis provides some insight into Blake's visionary universe where the thoughts and armies of the eighteenth century violently clashed.
Chapter 1: Blake and His Times
I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about Politics. If Men were Wise, the Most arbitrary Princes could not hurt them. If they are not wise, the Freest Government is compell'd to be a Tyranny. Princes appear to me to be Fools, Houses of Commons & Houses of Lords appear to me to be fools; they seem to be something Else besides Human Life.

-William Blake, Public Address of 1810

Even today, Blake's political statements, engravings, and poems continue to spark the rebellious nature of the human spirit. Blake's ability to inspire people of all eras to question the nature of their institutions and world does not stem, however, from his detachment from the eighteenth century but rather can be directly attributed to his earnest concern with his times. Mark Schorer, author of William Blake, clarifies Blake's role in the eighteenth century: "He (Blake) was a visionary poet deeply immersed in radical religious and political movements of the eighteenth century, aware of and keenly interested in the major currents of opinion of his time" (xi). Consequently, to begin to understand Blake, one has to gain a basic understanding of the political, social, and religious events that shaped his poetry and political opinions.

Blake, as all Romantics, was deeply influenced by and disturbed about many aspects of the Enlightenment. Essentially, he embraced the central aim of the
Enlightenment: the effort to free minds from the oppression of dogma and authority. However, he was strongly opposed to the method the Enlightenment took to free humanity from the shackles of oppression: Blake did not believe God, spirituality, and emotions needed to be displaced from society to free humanity from religious and governmental oppression, as the philosophers of the Enlightenment did. He did not think, as Locke and Newton did, reason was God. In fact, Blake was strongly opposed to the deism which the Enlightenment promoted. Rather than reason alone, Blake thought inspiration and reason working together would enable the eighteenth century and future eras to cast off the iron links of authority, without forming new obstacles to Eden—Blake's promised land.

Specifically, the debate between Blake and key figures of the Enlightenment, such as Newton and Locke, rested on epistemological issues (Ferber 16). Locke's view that there was no innate knowledge nor any intuitive faculty in human beings caused much debate between the Romantics and the philosophers of the Enlightenment. And, the consequences of Locke's epistemology led to obvious negative impacts, such as providing a justification for elitism and racism. For instance, many people believed during this time period that women and minorities had less reasoning capabilities than white-males; consequently, women's and minorities' opinions did not carry much weight. Michael Ferber points out how Richard Price, a philosopher and associate of Blake,
illuminated an additional negative consequence of Locke's thinking: Locke's emphasis on reason suggests that human beings may be unable to discern between God's will and a nation's will:

Price spoke of an "innate light" or an "eye of the mind," not unlike the Inner Light of the Quakers, that can directly intuit moral truths. Locke grounded morality on a calculation of probable pleasures and pains and on obedience to a law that will maximize pleasure; Price's faculty could not perceive morality 'without making use of any process of reasoning.' Thus man had a measure of independence from his environment. He was not just a creature of his circumstance but in part a creator of them. And among the conditions he was able to free himself from were the laws and customs of an oppressive, hierarchical England. Locke was unable to discriminate, according to Price, between an act that is right because it is God's will (as our intuition tells us) and an act that is right because it conforms to 'the decrees of the magistrate, or the fashion of the country' (18).

Indeed, if one is solely subject to one's environment as Locke suggests, one cannot necessarily disassociate the will of the government from the will of "truth."
Moreover, Locke's epistemology promoted elitism and slavery, to which Blake was adamantly opposed. Locke and other Enlightened thinkers believed only a select few, like themselves, possessed high enough reasoning ability to govern the world and form social institutions; thus it was their duty to help the less intelligent. Likewise, the philosophers of the Enlightenment were obsessed with the idea of forming a political institution which would lead toward utopia. And, they were convinced that only the likes of Locke, Mill, Rousseau, and Hobbes had the reasoning faculties to conceive of a perfect social structure. This elitist view led to the philosophers of the Enlightenment believing they were the only people who could ascertain what was the best for society. On the other hand, Blake's belief in "common sense" or "intuition" acknowledged that everyone, even minorities and women, possessed the ability to judge issues for themselves--an incredibly radical view for its time.

In addition, Blake believed that knowledge and faith were one. Ferber clarifies Blake's epistemological argument against Locke and Newton in admirably concise terms:

The single vision of Newton and Locke, of Rousseau and Voltaire, enemies of superstition though they may have been, only replaced one confined system of thought with another, equally one-dimensional, system, a system without even the congealed residues of the poetic spirit superstition preserves(38).
To extend Ferber's insight a step further, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, for Blake, only replaced the worship of God with a deist worship of the world. Blake viewed the deism promoted by the Enlightenment as especially damaging, since it focused only on reason and completely denied the spirituality of intuition and mysticism. Blake thought that this simplistic way of thinking would lead to a very narrow-minded approach toward life.

In addition to the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution sparked much of Blake's political and social dissent. Blake spoke freely against industrialization since he saw it tear apart the lives of countless Englishmen, a tragedy he depicts in *The Chimney Sweeper*:

> And so he was quiet, & that very night,
> As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,
> That Thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack
> Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black(v 9-12).

Blake also saw industry destroying the beauty of nature as well as the potential for brotherhood. Worst of all, he witnessed how his countrymen, such as the chimney sweeper, were destroyed by the cogs of the Industrial Revolution. Even in his personal life, Blake would defy industrialization by resisting technological innovations that could lead toward self-promotion, such as improvements in the printing press.
To put it briefly, a common theme in Blake's poetry is the innate wickedness of industrialization.

Aesthetically, however, Blake's stance against the Industrial Revolution centered around his belief that art was superior to industry. Blake's definition of art, not surprisingly, is very broad. As Ferber notes, it encompasses a wide spectrum of human sentiments: "art gathered nearly everything that faced extinction: organicism, intuition, harmony of human faculties, joy and creativity in labor, and so on" (Ferber 54). In short, art became a symbol, for Blake, of everything capitalism and industrialization destroyed.

In fact, Blake began his critique on capitalism and started to conceptualize Marx's argument against capitalism almost a century before Marx was born. Blake can certainly be seen as crying out against the "alienation of labor" that was fostered by industry and capitalism (Ferber 52). Throughout Blake's work, especially in Jerusalem, he refers to industrialization as destructive "cogs" which rip apart society and destroy spiritualism. When he refers to the destructive nature of religion, he describes it as "the wheels of religion" which serves the purpose of down-grading religion to the same mechanical level as industrialization.

Blake was extremely concerned about the consequences of capitalism and industrialization, since he thought the massive focus they placed on efficiency would destroy the "human" element in mankind. Blake writes, "A Machine is not a Man nor a Work of Art; it is destructive of Humanity & of
Art; the word Machination" (Schorer 179). Today, as we watch computers take over an increasing number of tasks, which once were performed by people, in order to increase efficiency, Blake's quote appears strikingly prophetic.

Blake was also affected by the oppressive political and social institutions of his world because of the imperial and repressive ambitions of the court and the aristocracy (Ferber 36). England's war with France caused philosophers, artists, and writers who supported liberty and France to have a legitimate concern about their safety in England. During England's war with France, many people who supported France in their writing and art were persecuted. Unfortunately for Blake, who associated with some of the most radical writers of the time, such as Richard Price, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Paine, who all were severely reprimanded by the English government. For instance, Paine would have probably been executed for his blatant views about the war with France if Blake had not urged him to flee England (Schorer 163).

In reaction to the repressive atmosphere in England, Blake became very concerned about the spies and thought-police of the English government, which he called "Satan's watch-fiends" (Ferber 62). Blake protested against the government's restrictive attitude with observations such as, "To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life. . . . I have been commanded from Hell not to print this, as it is what our Enemies wish" (Schorer 165).

Obviously, Blake believes his life and the lives of his
associates are in danger because of their non-conformist views. Consequently, some critics argue that Blake's latter poetry begins to become increasingly obscure because Blake attempts to protect himself from those "watch-fiends." Whether or not he was intimidated into obscurity, Blake did not publish several of his latter poems, such as Jerusalem, because of his fear of persecution by the government. However, he did keep his rebellious views until death, even though he constantly feared persecution from a seriously repressive England.

After this brief review of the dominant intellectual and political views of the eighteenth century, it is increasingly clear how the historical period Blake lived in dramatically affected his views and poetry. He lived in a period of tremendous political and social upheaval in which it would not be too far fetched for spiritually inclined people to believe that the apocalypse was coming, as Blake did. And, in America and France a political apocalypse, which completely destroyed social structures that had existed for centuries, did occur that would forever alter world history by introducing liberty and liberalism. Not surprisingly, Blake was fascinated with revolution in both countries. He was both inspired and horrified by the events that occurred on the French and American countryside. Thus, the enormous impact these events had on his poetry is apparent in all of his prophetic works, even though his attitude toward revolution changes in his latter prophetic poems.
Chapter 2: Blake’s Politics in America
Blake's engraving that precedes his poetry in America. The image above portrays the condition of the Americans.
In America, Blake's first political prophecy printed in 1793, the reader encounters Blake's heated description of revolution and the consequences of dictatorship. America can be read as Blake's first poem that deals with the nature and consequences of revolution, which are symbolized in his character Orc. Also, America is Blake's tribute to the fierce spirit of the Americans who freed their land from Albion's (England's) dogma and oppression, even if Blake feared that Albion might only be replaced by another dictator. For Blake, America was the promised land—the lost Atlantis. He therefore unleashes the revolutionary spirit of Orc upon the "American plains" to free all of humanity from Urizen's false laws and to awaken Albion from his deep slumber with the battle cries of the Americans.

To clarify, America is one of Blake's shortest political prophecies—only 15 plates—in comparison to Jerusalem's 99 plates. America also is certainly one of Blake's most historically allusive poems; since it makes actual references to real people who participated in The American Revolution. In comparison to his latter prophetic works—Jerusalem and Milton—America is by far the most readable prophecy of Blake's. Overall, America is an epic poem about an explosive revolution led by the "fierce" Americans and the "demon" Orc. America provides a specific allusion to The American Revolution, and Orc, the hero of the poem, symbolizes humanity's universal revolution against the oppressive laws of government. America is the first instance when Orc, the
fiery spirit of revolution, and Urizen, the figurehead of
dogmatic oppression, meet head-to-head, even though Urizen
sends the "guardian prince of Albion" in his place. America
reads like a screen-play: the reader can see the conflict
between Orc and Albion's guardian on a plane spanning between
England and America. Most importantly, Blake's poetry is
magnificent and explosive, inspiring a feeling of revolt and
anger against Urizen in the reader.

Moreover, America, along with The Marriage of Heaven and
Hell, marks Blake's beginning trend of viewing himself as a
prophet. A prophet, for Blake, is a seer who sees deeper
into the nature of the world and public issues. As a result
of his visionary faculties, a prophet is compelled to warn
his fellow men about the implications of their
actions (Johnson & Grant 103). Peter Fisher, author of The
Valley of Vision, expands further on Blake's sentiment that
prophets are people who see the consequences of events with
their "imaginative vision":

"Prophets", in the predictive sense of the term, says
Blake, "have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the
modern sense, for his prophecy of Nineveh failed"
because the Ninevites reformed. The prophet in Blake's
sense sees with imaginative vision in the light of
eternal principles. Isaiah and Ezekial were prophets
not because they predicted events but because, seeing
imaginatively, they say more deeply and clearly than other men (88).

If Fisher's observation is correct, Blake himself saw into the heart of the revolution that occurred in America, thus making him a prophet. And, in his poem America, Blake makes strong predictions about the nature of the revolutionary energy that was set free during America's fight for independence from England. To understand the particular nature of Blake's prophecy, however, one must delve into his poetry and follow his prophetic message which, like Promethean fire, he gives to the world.

In America Blake asks the reader: who is this burning red "devourer of children" named Orc? According to Northrop Frye, "Orc is the power of the human desire to achieve a better world which produces revolution and foreshadows the apocalypse; and the 'Preludium' to America represents him as having arrived at puberty determined to set the world on fire as a promising youngster should do" (206). In short, Orc is the spirit of political revolution, unbound sexual energy, and a symbol of the strong governed by the weak (Erdman 582). Orc, for many Blake scholars, is also Blake's representation of the revolutionary spirit of Christ, who reshaped the world and freed it from past repression. Blake introduces Orc in the following lines:

'Dark virgin,' said the hairy youth, 'thy father stern abhorr'd
Rivets my tenfold chains while still on high my spirit soars:
Sometimes an eagle screaming in the sky, sometimes a lion
Stalking upon the mountains, & sometimes a whale I lash
The raging fathomless abyss; anon a serpent folding
Around the pillars of Urthona, and round thy dark limbs(A 1.11-16). 

As these lines seem to support, Orc is the universal symbol of revolt which dwells in all men who are chained by false laws and who are governed by the weak.

To look even deeper into the character of Orc, Orc's name may be derived from the Latin word cor, heart, or the word orca, a whale or Leviathan (Lewis 125). This explanation of what Orc's names refers to makes sense, since Orc is the passion of the heart resisting the calculating reason of the mind. It is more probable, however, that Orc's name refers to orcus, the Latin term for hell, since he embodies the fiery energy of Satan (Lewis 125). Orc's fate is also to be imprisoned in hell, so the world can be saved from his all-consuming and irrational energy. Regardless of the nature of his name, it is clear in America Orc epitomizes the spirit of rebellion and is the American's leader (see figure 2.1).

Blake next leads the reader to his preludium which consists of a portrait of incredible sexual release:
Fig. 2.1

Blake's engraving of Orc leading the Americans.
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 from the silent deep(A 2.1-5)

At this moment, the reader experiences Orc's, as well as the nameless female's, liberation from sexual repression. Orc's and the female's sexual liberation is represented in the line "Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting struggling womb." Orc's liberation will lead him to bring his new found freedom to the world. Martin K. Nurmi outlines the result of Orc's sexual union with the nameless female as being the moment when Orc begins to wage his war on The American plains:

And in context it is clear that politically the liberation of Orc from his chains is connected with revolts of one kind or another. Though at fourteen his is just pubescent, his sexual union with the shadowy female makes a coming to maturity of a new force. His soaring spirit has been on her American plains all along; but now it will become effective, as it was not before(Nurmi 89).
According to Linda M. Lewis in The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake, and Shelley, Orc by achieving a personal revolution can now become an effective motivator for social change. To further explain, Orc had to first break through his own chains, so he could help others break through the iron-links of Urizen's "false" law: any decree or order that restricts human freedom. To clarify, Blake believed that in order to wage a revolution against oppression one has to first liberate oneself from the repression that exists in his or her soul (Lewis).

More importantly, in the preludium Orc represents a figure who has been chained by Urizen's repressive laws for fourteen years, and at the age of fourteen his sexual energies become too great for Urizen's false laws to bind him. Likewise, Blake seems to suggest, dictatorships and monarchies function the same way: dictators and monarchs can only repress the energy of the individual and society for a limited time until society rebels. David Erdman, a Blake scholar who focuses on the historical analysis of Blake's poetry, concurs with this point in Blake: Prophet against Empire, when he observes that Blake is admonishing earthly rulers to treat their subjects justly:

...Blake warns kings, nobles, and bishops: If you go on binding the nations, oppressing the poor, and ravaging the countryside with war, the result must be
revolt. The people will overthrow war, pull down the temples of tyranny, and bring you to judgment(29).

As this passage suggests, for Blake a dictator can only keep the fires of human energy under control for a limited time until they erupt in rebellion against their oppressor.

Unfortunately for revolutionaries, Orc's rebellion is two-sided, since the female personage, after reflecting on her sexual release, is appalled by her liberation and wishes to return back to her innocence:

O what limb rending pains I feel. Thy fire & my frost
Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by the lightnings rent.
This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold(A 2.15-18)

Blake foreshadows that the revolution of Orc does have drawbacks(Nurmi 90). And, as we will see in the Four Zoas, Orc's fires will indeed have to be contained before they destroy the world. Possibly, Blake adds the negative element of the female personage's reaction to the Preludium because of the violence he saw in the French Revolution. The French Revolution caused him to reevaluate his thinking about revolution and made him realize that both Urizen's laws and Orc's violence needed to be contained.

After the Preludium, Blake takes his reader directly into Orc's and the American's battle against the Guardian
Prince of Albion. Blake clearly sets out the objective of his poem in Orc's dramatic and fierce declaration of himself to Albion's prince:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd,
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening!
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst,
Let the slave grinding at the mill run out onto the field:
Let him look up into heaven & laugh in the bright air;
Let the inchained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
Rise and look out; his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open
And let his wife and children return from the oppressor's scourge,
They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream,
Singing, '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'"
(A 6.1-15)

In this powerful anthem, Blake sketches Orc's revolutionary objective of liberating politically shackled man. To put it another way, in America Orc is the Christ of Revelations who
has come to set his people free. And indeed this passage mirrors many of the images of *Revelations*, such as the image of "the grave is burst" representing the rising of the dead.

Throughout *America*, then, Blake is reacting against the oppressive social structures of the eighteenth century. He hopes that Orc's revolutionary fires in *The American Revolution* will awaken England to its past wrongs and bring about reforms so the world can once again live in peace. At the same time, *America* demonstrates Blake's poetic effort to liberate society from the repressive tyrants and dictators of the world through Orc's fierce heat. Unfortunately, Orc gives off "heat but not light," meaning that he has the potential to destroy through his fiery energy, but he has no redemptive, healing faculties of light. Blake consequently revises his image of Orc and replaces him with Los, in his later prophetic works, who gives off both heat and light, and is indeed the savior of Blake's world. For example, Los is the hero of *Jerusalem*, and his role in Blake's last prophetic poem is to lead humanity toward apocalypse and redemption. Los's guiding light can lead people toward redemption, while Orc's "heat" can only cause destruction.

Overall, Orc triumphs and achieves his objective of liberating the Americans from Urizen's laws:

```
That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad
To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves;
```

24
But they shall rot on desert sands, & consume the bottomless deeps (7.5-8),

Of course Orc does not succeed against Albion alone. He receives assistance from Washington, Franklin, Paine and Warren, Gates, Hancock, and Green. These famous revolutionary figures of The American Revolution act as colleagues with Orc and join him in battle on the American plains:

So cried he, rending off his robe & throwing down his scepter
In sight of Albion's Guardian. And all the thirteen Angels Rent off their robes to the hungry wind, & threw their golden scepters Down on the land of America. Indignant they descended Headlong from out their heav'nly heights, descending swift as fires Over the land; naked & flaming are their lineaments seen In the deep gloom. By Washington & Paine & Warren they stood, And the flame folded, roaring fierce within the pitchy night Before the Demon red, who burnt towards America In black smoke, thunders, and loud winds, rejoicing in its terror, Breaking in smoky wreaths from the wild deep, & gathering thick In flames as of a furnace on the land from North to South (A 12.1-12)
Orc and his angels do not win without a fight, however, even though throughout the entire poem they do not appear to directly attack Albion's angel. In reaction to the American's rebellion, Albion's angel releases a plague upon America, which is similar to the plague of Exodus. Yet, not even Albion's plague can defeat the Americans' fierce spirit, for the Americans' solidarity and strength set the plague back upon Albion:

Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic,
And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite,
But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire,
The red fires rag'd! the plagues recoil'd! then rolld they back with fury (A 14.16-20)

When the plague is set back to Albion tinged with Orc's fire, it has a special property that causes it to affect only Orc's enemies, such as the Bard of Albion and the Priests of England:

The plagues creep on the burning wind, driven by the flames of Orc,
And by the fierce Americans rushing together in the night;
Driven o'er the Guardians of Ireland and Scotland and Wales,
They, spotted with plagues, forsook the frontiers; & their banners seared
With fires of hell, deform their ancient heavens with shame & woe.
Hid in his caves, the Bard of Albion felt the enormous plagues.
And a cowl of flesh grew o'er his head & scales on his back &
ribs;
And rough with black scales all his Angels fright their ancient
heavens (A 15.11-18)

As these lines suggest,, the plague is "driven o'er" the
innocent and attacks the guilty. According to Erdman, the
strange property of this plague is attributed to the belief
of the eighteenth century that the Black Plague resulted from
the aggressive wars of Edward III (59). Consequently, it
follows that Albion's aggressive stance toward the Americans
could result in a similar plague.

Now that the revolution has been won and liberation has
been gained on the American plains, Albion attempts to
retreat and confine Orc's heat to America:

Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France, Spain &
Italy,
In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues
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.
Albion and the ancient Guardians fail miserably at containing the fires of Orc, which shows that Blake realized the spirit of The American Revolution could not be limited to the American continent. Bloom summarizes Blake's intent in the final lines of his poem when he observes that "Blake brilliantly closes his poem not on its political level, but on its apocalyptic program for action" (Blake's Apocalypse 128). Next, Orc's red heat would sweep over the country of France and progress around the world.

To look deeper into the nature of Orc's fire, Blake asserts an even more apocalyptic outcome than wide-spread revolution. The "five gates" refer to the senses of man, according to numerous Blake scholars, which had been closed by Urizen's and Albion's false laws. Now that these gates are open, human beings will view their world differently and demand freedom as the Americans have. The American Revolution opened the world's eyes to the power of liberty, brotherhood, and equality. Bloom describes the eternal effect of Orc's and America's revolutionary fire on the way people view the world: "Whether or not Orc is to win (and history and Blake's poetry alike will prove that he cannot) his effect upon human faculties is a permanent one. Desire shall fail, but the gates are consumed, and man is opened to infinity if he will but see his own freedom" (Blake's Apocalypse 128). Indeed, in America, Orc's fires in The American Revolution inspires the people of France and
countless other countries to see the possibility of their own freedom; the fires thus burn away the bonds of dictatorship and monarchy around the world.

Blake realizes, however, that there is a potentially negative consequence from Orc's fires, which he hints at in the last line of America: "And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men." Bloom explains the negative element of Orc's fires when he focuses on the consequences of Orc's fires burning through the heavens:

For the flames to burn through the heavens would liberate mankind from spatial limitations, but also from the security of its fixed conceptual position. America is at once Blake's fiercest tribute to our Promethean potential and yet also a warning that to be unbound will be an experience that must be paid for by a loss of the comforting certainties of the fallen experience (Blake's Apocalypse 129).

As always, it appears as if Blake has prophetically foreseen a peculiarly modern problem, a problem witnessed in the collapse of the former Soviet Union today. Revolution introduced the wonderful gift of freedom, but this freedom has a terrific price—the loss of personal and collective security that so many Russians miss. Thus, in Blake's terms, Orc's fires can be viewed as burning away both the chains of security and oppression. After all, liberation of any sort
brings with it new responsibilities and chaos for the citizens of a country because they have entered a new state of being--a new social structure has been formed. However, if Orc's fires were allowed to burn forever, as Blake also points out, the heavens themselves would be burned away. Similarly, "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear as it is, infinite" (Marriage of Heaven & Hell). Blake realizes, though, that such a dramatic apocalypse would be too much for fallen humanity to accept or even handle because humanity is not yet ready to see infinity. Consequently, the fires of Orc must ultimately be contained, and Blake's containment of Orc is illustrated in his latter poems.

By examining Blake's words and his mythological figures a little further, one begins to see Orc for what he really is--part of Blake's circle of destiny. The circle of destiny can be understood as the recurrence of states, similar to tyranny and liberation; stagnation and rebirth; or winter and spring. Orc is the revolutionary energy that brings rebirth to the world and overthrows the shadows that are blocking the sun's rays. To apply this interpretation to America, the revolution developed in this poem portrays the natural renewal of life in society (Frye 209), which Blake believed was as predictable as the coming of spring. Possibly Frye summarizes this point best when he discusses Orc's function in America as being one of renewal:
Orc, then, is not only Blake's Prometheus but his Adonis, the dying and reviving god of his mythology. Orc represents the return of the dawn and the spring and all the human analogies of their return: the continuous arrival of new life, the renewed sexual and reproductive power which that brings, and the periodic overthrow of social tyranny (207-08).

Orc is the spring. And, in America, he lives up to his role of renewal by bringing in the heat of summer through causing the American's fierce revolution against the cold winter of Urizen's and Albion's restrictive laws.

After following Blake's message to the end of his first prophecy America, his prophecy becomes relatively obvious. Blake believed that whenever there was a repressive government that forced humanity into false chains, humanity would eventually rise up and liberate itself from its oppressor. For Blake, this revolution is as sure as the coming of spring and the dawn. Yet, Blake would cringe at the violence of revolution, especially after witnessing the French Revolution. He realized that to break free from this circle of violence and create a perfect society, humanity would need more than the fiery fires of Orc. But, Blake's attempt to liberate fallen humanity from Orc's fierce fire had to wait until his poem Jerusalem. His prophecy does not end on the American plains, but rather in the spiritual realm of Jerusalem—Blake's promised land.
Chapter 3: Blake’s Visionary Politics in *Jerusalem*
Los took his globe of fire to search the interiors of Albion's Bosom...
In *Jerusalem*, Blake's last major prophecy printed in 1804, the reader enters into Blake's apocalyptic universe. *Jerusalem* is Blake's last effort to provide the world with a synthesis of his beliefs. Consequently, *Jerusalem* is Blake's longest work and masterpiece, consisting of 99 plates. To outline the action of the entire poem would require a book; however, a few brief notes can be made to introduce the premise of the poem. Basically, *Jerusalem* is broken into four chapters for four separate audiences--To the Public, To the Jews, To the Deists, and To the Christians in order to instruct each group on how to achieve salvation and redemption. For instance, when Blake addresses the Jews, he urges them to follow Jesus, even though he already considers the Jews Christians.

The action in the poem centers around Blake's hero Los, Blake's ideal prophet and visionary; not surprisingly,Los has many similarities to Blake. Los, as Blake, is a metal worker, builder, poet, and prophet. Likewise, Los's task in *Jerusalem* is to lead humanity toward salvation and apocalypse, so the world can begin anew. Also, Los's goal is to wake up Albion, Blake's mythological representation of England, to cause Albion to realize his past errors and urge him to reform.

Overall, it is important to understand that Blake literally wrote this poem in order to save humanity. Consequently, since Blake thought salvation could be sought only in the spiritual world, *Jerusalem* is set in a surreal
landscape where gods and goddesses interact in a spiritual battle between good and evil, truth and error. Jerusalem primarily focuses on religious issues, so the reader has to ask himself or herself as Blake did "Are not Religion and Politics the same thing" (J 57.10)? For Blake, religion and politics are the same thing; so in Jerusalem, Blake's politics are integrated with his spiritual insights.

To clearly understand Blake's objective behind his last prophetic work, the reader has to understand his prophetic words on plate 15. On plate 15, Los outlines his objective of waking up Albion and saving the world from the oppression he sees all around him. Through Los's words the reader begins to understand Blake's objective and reasons for writing Jerusalem:

I see the Four-fold Man. The Humanity in deadly sleep
And its fallen Emanation. The Spectre & its cruel Shadow.
I see the Past, Present & Future, existing all at once
Before me; O Divine Spirit sustain me on thy wings!
That I may awake Albion from his long & cold repose.
For Bacon & Newton sheathd in dismal steel, their terrors hang
Like iron scourges over Albion; Reasonings like vast Serpents
In fold around my limbs, bruising my minute articulations,
I turn my eyes to the Schools and Universities of Europe
And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire,
Wash'd by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
In heavy wreathes folds over every Nation: cruel Works
Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheels, with cogs tyrannic
Moving by compulsion each other: not as those in Eden, which
Wheel within Wheel in freedom revolve in harmony & peace
(J 15. 5-20).

To clarify the above excerpt, Blake viewed himself as a
prophet against an entire age (Blake's Apocalypse 383); thus
Jerusalem, as all of his other texts, reflects his rage and
indignation at the eighteenth century. In short, Jerusalem
is Blake's last attempt to awaken people from their slumber,
so they could shake off the shackles of both inward and
outward oppression. In order to read Jerusalem as a
political text, it is very important to understand Blake's
insistence on the inseparability between religion and
politics. Blake addresses the issue of the difference
between politics and religion: "I must Create a System or be
enslav'd by another Man's./I will not Reason & Compare: my
business is to create" (J 10.20-21). For Blake, an artist's
main objective is to create systems to free man from Urizenic
laws and Moses's ten commands. And, to do this, Los has to
battle against both politics and religion since each shapes
the other as Schorer writes,

The point here, which Blake makes time and again, is
basic to understanding the exact results of the
confluence of ideas in his mind, to see, that is how
from a theological point of view politics corrupted his
religion, or how from a social point of view politics gave religion meaning. Blake's attempt is to fuse sacred aspiration with secular objects (367).

Blake viewed religion and politics as the same evil. Therefore, in Jerusalem, both religion and politics are attacked because they feed off one another, promoting the same objective--oppressing the human spirit.

In this poem more than any other, Blake gives his reader a "golden thread" which allows him or her to find heaven's gate buried in Jerusalem's wall. This "golden thread" leads the reader through a series of poetic insights that articulate definite political and religious themes: humanity is to focus on loving their "brother" to save themselves from war and ultimate destruction. To understand Blake's last major political prophecy, the reader must know who Los is and grasp the reason behind Los's systems. In addition, the reader must comprehend that Jerusalem is a poem about universal salvation and gain an understanding of the political implications contained in the progression from Urizen to the Eternals. And, finally, one has to ascertain the major themes contained in Jerusalem in order to understand Blake's last prophetic work.
I. Defining Los

Los is the poetic genius whose aim is to free humanity from Urizen's chains and introduce the world to a higher reality--life after the apocalypse. Linda M. Lewis, acknowledging Paley's listing of Los's main roles in Jerusalem, goes on to highlight Los's Promethean qualities:

Morton D. Paley interprets Los, especially in Jerusalem, as various forms of prophecy, poetry, and creation; "Old Testament Prophet, New Testament Evangelist, Miltonic Seraph, ancient British Bard, the classical Hephaistos/Vulcan, alchemist, blacksmith, and watchman, and always the Imagination of Humanity." But Los is really Prometheus, the Titan who illuminates with divine light, not Promethean Orc who wields stolen fire(145).

Los, for Blake, Paley, Lewis, and many others is humanity's inspiration and savior. For Blake, Los is himself at his very best and what he wished he could be, since Los's character mirrors Blake's mission and profession. Los, like Blake, is also a metal-worker, poet, and prophet. In addition, the motivation behind his work is to wake up humanity and England to their errors: Blake's goal, too. In the same light, Los embodies the focus on inspiration and dedication to their art in every artisan. Like many Romantic Poets, such as Shelley, Blake identified himself with
Prometheus, whose aim was to bring the fire of his inspiration to humanity.

Blake's attempt to cast himself in the light of Prometheus, however, was plagued with trials, such as his lack of success as an artist in his own time period. Blake believed he possessed the poetic fire to save England, but he was faced with an indignant country who refused to hear his message (Paley 244). Generally, Blake's work was ignored by his countrymen, leading Blake to have doubts about both his talent and vision. Thus, Blake needed to compel his spectre (his self-doubt and negativity) to follow his emanation (his inspiration and positivity) to save the world. Los echoes Blake's view toward his spectre, when Los commands his spectre to work with him in order to save Albion at the beginning of Jerusalem:

Thou art my Pride & Self-righteousness: I have found thee out: Thou art reveal'd before me in all thy magnitude & power:
Thy Uncircumcised pretenses to Chastity must be cut in sunder:
Thy holy wrath & deep deceit cannot avail against me,
Nor shalt thou ever assume the triple-form of Albion's Spectre,
For I am one of the living: dare not to mock my inspired fury.
If thou was cast forth from my life, if I was dead upon the mountains
Thou mightest be pitied & lov'd; but now I am living: unless
Thou abstain ravening I will create an eternal hell for thee.
Take thou this Hammer & in patience heave the thundering Bellows,
Take thou these Tongs: strike thou alternate with me: labour obedient (J 8.29-40).

To produce Jerusalem, Blake compelled his spectre, his worst doubts and fears, to work with him (see figure 3.1 for Blake's illustration of Los's battle with his spectre.). Equally, Los had to compel his spectre to cooperate, if he wanted to awaken Albion from his deep slumber.

Los is a mental warrior who aims his energies at defeating Albion's spectre. He battles Albion's spectre by building Golgonooza, the city of art and hope. In Conversing in Paradise, Leonard W. Deen outlines Los's effort to build Golgonooza so he can save Albion from his spectre:

Los labors in hope, 'forging the poetry of spiritual warfare to combat Albion's increasing inhumanity--his denial of genius and inspiration. He takes 'the sighs & tears, & bitter groans' and in his furnaces forms of them 'the spiritual sword./That lays open the hidden heart'(9.16-19) and reveals identity(208-09).

According to Deen, Los forges this reality through the strokes of his hammer which stand for mercy, hope, and justice; and, the blows bring understanding and intellect(209). Regardless of Deen's interpretation of Los's building of Golgonooza, the ultimate intent behind Los's efforts is to free Albion from his spectre.
Los answer'd unterrified to the onake blackening Fiend

Figure 3.1

Blake’s engraving of Los’s spectre attempting to destroy Los’s effort to restore Albion and build Golgonooza
In short, Los is Blake's representation of the ideal prophet or hero, since he epitomizes the dedication and passion of the prophet toward his work. And, Los's main objective in the poem is to liberate humanity from Albion's oppressive laws and lead the world toward redemption.

II. Los's systems

In Jerusalem, Los struggles to create a political and social system, so he will not be enslaved by another person's reality, such as the political systems created by Newton and Locke. Contrary to Newton and Locke's systems, he is "Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems" (J 11.5). In effect, Los is fighting systems with systems (Deen 216). Los's effort to create his own system focuses around separating states, such as female and male, so humanity can realize that no state, such as memory or reason, is permanent. Deen explains that Blake wants to separate these states to liberate humanity from being forced to remain in any one particular state when he outlines the logic behind Blake's systems:

Los's effort to divide individuals from states, to show that states are not identity, is an effort to get intellectual and voluntary control of what would otherwise be invisible or confused, bringing it to clear consciousness and organized form, so that what is seen
becomes separable from one's identity. Thus (as in the *Four Zoas*) Los builds 'the stubborn basement' of the language lest Albion be a 'dumb Despair.' By articulating the despair and making it conscious, the language gives it a separable form of its own, and in this way rescues us from being enslaved by it. Once seen as a state, it loses its obsessive power and its apparent inevitability. Thus individuals can be delivered from states, as Albion is delivered at the end of *Jerusalem* when he recognizes Satan as his selfhood (216).

Los's systems are created so they can be overcome in the end and be recognized as just an unpermanent state of existence. By constructing his systems, Blake is reacting against oppressive political systems advocated by philosophers of the Enlightenment, including Locke's effort to create the perfect state, and the rise of Utilitarian philosophy. More specifically, Blake reacted against any political or philosophical system any person or organization was forming because he believed all forms of systems restricted humanity rather than freed them. He realized that none of these political or philosophical systems were ideal; consequently, he constructed a system which could be overcome, so humanity could by-pass systems and achieve union with God. According to Blake, utopia was not in this world, but in the spiritual world when humanity was received into the arms of God.
To show his distaste for elitism and the concept of election, Blake creates unpermanent political and social states to demonstrate the flaws behind elitism and kinship. Michael Ferber continues this sentiment when he demonstrates how Blake's states liberate people from elitism: "Blake's distinction between a state, which, however personified, may be annihilated, and individuals, who may inhabit them or pass through them and be saved, corresponds obviously enough to that between the office and the official, or between the 'body politic' and the 'body natural' of the king" (192). Blake, in addition, wanted to destroy concepts such as kinship, to open people's eyes to universal salvation. It is not only the wealthy and elect who gain entrance to heaven's gate, but the poor and the oppressed. In fact, in Blake's eyes, the poor and the oppressed had a much better chance of witnessing the glory of God than the elect.

Overall, Los's systems are forged to free and not to bind; even though, as all systems, Los's systems will have to be abandoned so humanity can be joined with God. Fortunately, at the end of Jerusalem, Los's systems liberate humanity because the world realizes that no state is permanent.

III. Universal Salvation

Jerusalem is a testament of Blake's belief in universalism, meaning that everyone has the chance to gain
salvation, even Satan. For many critics and scholars, such as Mark Schorer, Blake's belief in universal salvation was his most important theme and is the driving thrust behind Jerusalem. The theme of universalism is mainly important because it leads towards Blake's ultimate objective of allowing everyone the opportunity of gaining salvation. For instance, Blake's need to allow everyone the opportunity for salvation can best be seen in the comprehensive lists Los draws up of the counties and countries of the world that are included in the halls of Golgonooza:

Here Los fixd down the Fifty-two Counties of England & Wales
The Thirty-six of Scotland, & the Thirty-four of Ireland
With might powers, when they fled out at Jerusalem's Gates
Away from the Conflict of Luvah & Urizen, fixing the Gates
In the Twelve Counties of Wales & thence Gates looking every way
To the Four Points: conduct to England & Scotland & Ireland
And thence to all the Kingdoms & Nations & Families of the Earth[ .]
The Gates of Reuben in Carmarthenshire: the Gate of Simeon in Cardiganshire: & the Gate of Levi in Montgomeryshire
The Gate of Judah Merionethshire: the Gate of Dan Flintshire
The Gate of Napthali, Radnorshire: the Gate of Gad Pembrokeshire
The Gate of Asher, Carnarvonshire the Gate of Issachar
Brecknockshire
The Gate of Zebulum, in Anglesea & Sodor, so is Wales divided.
This exhaustive compilation is one of Blake's virtues, since it demonstrates his massive concern for making certain everyone would gain salvation. And, as Bloom points out in his book *Blake's Apocalypse*, every great poet is allowed a few faults, especially when it concerns the accuracy of their vision. In *Jerusalem*, Blake's predominant flaw may definitely be found in his exceptionally lengthy lists, but the same can be said for the Bible's genealogies. Regardless, Blake makes a mighty attempt to include every race, country, and culture in his apocalyptic narrative to demonstrate his firm commitment to the belief that everyone can gain salvation. Blake's belief in universalism goes so far that even Locke, Newton, and Voltaire, his greatest enemies, gain entrance into heaven's gates at the end of his poem.

Blake's theory of universalism also contains a strong political element. Ferber explains how Blake's theory of universalism suggested that humans could escape from the social tyranny of class structure through spiritual liberation:
For his part Blake seems to have seen history in two ways. He sees it as a ruling-class affair only, as though the lower classes have had no 'Churches,' no traditions and institutions, of their own, and did not fight back and change the course of history, but played the parts only of victims, the same in every era; or he sees periodic eruptions of the people (Orc) followed by relapses into tyranny and oppression. Recycling history may be useful in moments of despair, but redemption seems to be a total escape from it (202).

In Jerusalem, Blake portrays the type of redemption which would allow everyone to achieve salvation on an equal plain. Basically, Jerusalem is Blake's attempt to escape the circle of destiny through apocalypse and redemption, which for Blake, is a new beginning. More importantly, Jerusalem illustrates Blake's disgust for the upper-class that before and even throughout the eighteenth century tried to control everything from material wealth to spiritual salvation. Blake condemns the elitism he witnessed in the eighteenth century and he promotes his theory of universalism which allows everyone to achieve salvation. As always, Blake seems peculiarly ahead of his times both socially and politically. As much as a century before, Blake began to form a philosophy that can clearly be see in the thought of Marx and other liberationists.
IV. The Political Themes Contained in the Progression from Urizen to the Eternals.

James E. Swearingen offers a unique analysis of Blake's visionary politics in *Jerusalem* in his article "William Blake's Figural Politics." Swearingen believes the political themes in *Jerusalem* are not explicit but buried in the progression of focus in Blake's poetry from Urizen to the Eternals. He claims that, through analyzing Blake's progression of characters, one begins to see Blake's true political vision.

First, Blake introduces Urizen to his reader. Urizen represents Blake's universal tyrant who tries to bind humanity to his oppressive laws. In *Urizen*, Urizen makes clear his intent to subjugate humanity:

Laws of peace, of love, of unity:
Of pity, compassion, forgiveness.

One command, one joy, one desire,
One curse, one weight, one measure
One King, one God, one Law (U 4.34-35, 38-40)

At first glance, Urizen appears to be a dictator who has humanity's best interests in sight, and he does. According to Blake, however, his restrictive code of laws, though, inherently work against an individual's freedom and ability
to function on their own because laws alienate the individual from their own judgment. Swearingen clarifies the consequences of Urizen's laws when he comments, "Urizen seeks to abolish suffering rather than to make persons responsible and strong for bearing the burdens that liberty entails" (128). Thus, since he does not allow for outside opinion and believes that he alone can provide human happiness, Urizen is a dictator. In latter poems, such as in *The Four Zoas*, the reader discovers that Urizen cannot save humanity from pain because Urizen cannot completely bind humanity to his laws. Urizen's inability to save mankind eventually leads him to great despair.

According to Swearingen, Urizen's laws also illustrate another characteristic of his, namely his inability to face change. Urizen is severely threatened by change because change leads toward political insurrection (128). For example, in Blake's poem *America*, Urizen sends "Albion's guardian" to restore order in America. Fortunately, Urizen fails, and the massive social change witnessed in America causes France and many other countries to revolt against Urizen's oppressive laws. Consequently, Urizen attempts to make iron-clad laws that will prevent revolution, so he can remain in control at all times. Urizen epitomizes a typical dictator who believes only his law and his strength can save his people. And, in Blake's works after *America*, Urizen becomes more obsessed with keeping his laws from being burned
up by the heat of Orc than with leading his slaves toward happiness.

Second, the reader is introduced to Los's visionary politics in Jerusalem with his building of Golgonooza--the city of art. Swearingen interprets Los's actions as also being oppressive, since Los binds his spectre, sisters, and brothers to his will in order to build Golgonooza, but not to the extent of Urizen's domineering actions (130). However, many critics would disagree with Swearingen on this point. In the actual text of Jerusalem, they would argue this point is never explicitly proved and Los appears to be the hero throughout the poem.

Swearingen's interpretation of Los as an oppressive figure centers around Los's attempt to build Golgonooza in the midst of anarchy and uncertainty. Swearingen points out that the downfall of Los's action is symbolized by the retreat of Jerusalem, Blake's representation of the promised land:

Golgonooza holds unpredictability at bay by offering an island of stability in the midst of an indeterminacy which is no place at all. Though Los builds "in hope: Jerusalem wanders far away,/Without the gate of Los". (J 12.43-44); for while his 'city of art' is rich in implications, Golgonooza is precisely not a political entity. Only Jerusalem toward which it points,
accommodates the human need to act with and against others (130).

For Swearingen, there is something amiss in Golgonooza because Jerusalem wanders away. If Los's building of Golgonooza would have ultimately freed humanity from their fallen condition, Jerusalem would have remained and helped him build Golgonooza.

Los is also a builder: he is very interested in his end objective, which Swearingen believes saves him from being wrapped up in Urizen's oppressive laws (132-33). Los's end is more important to him than controlling the actions of others. Yet, he exhibits domineering tendencies, according to Swearingen, when he demands that his spectre obey him:

Los gains a functional sense of power by talking to, not with, the Spectre and Enitharmon. The hierarchy of responsibility and achievement denies the mutuality of political life and reserves the creative space to himself. Under Los's model for action, the cooperation (or coercion) of the builders derives its value from the end in view. As value derives from the project, it extends only to those who belong to the means and ends and to them only insofar as they serve the project. Here nonetheless is an advance on Urizenic tyranny: whereas for Urizen power rules over another, for Los
power subordinates both self and other to a purpose at hand (133).

Looking past Swearingen's gross misinterpretation of viewing Los's spectre as an outside influence Los is trying to control, rather than a part of himself he has to master to be productive and to build Golgonooza, one can begin to see his point. Los has not yet reached the promised land of communal life because he still forces others to do his bidding. But, he does come one step closer to building Jerusalem than Urizen since he transcends himself and becomes one with his end objective—waking up Albion. Therefore, Los takes us one step closer to utopia.

Third, the polity of the Eternals introduces utopia. To Blake, utopia simply began with free speech where everyone is involved in the action of forming their communal reality. Blake addresses the power of conversation in Los's response to Enitharmon, Los's lover, who is trying to resist complete union with Los because it would erase her uniqueness. To clarify, Enitharmon is concerned about losing her identity, since the separation between male and female would cease to exist if she joined Los:

> When in Eternity Man converses with Man they enter
> Into each others Bosom (which are Universes of delight)
> In mutual interchange, and first their Emanations meet
> Surrounded by their Children, if they embrace & comingle
The Human Four-fold Forms mingle also in thunders of Intellect
But if the Emanations mingle not; with storms & agitations
Of earthquakes & consuming fires they roll apart in fear
For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations (J 88.3.10).

Through conversation, humanity can reach into each other's hearts and discover the true ends of society. And, this conversation and good will is maintained by Blake's chief virtues—friendship, love, and brotherhood. For when society keeps these virtues in sight, people focus on forgiveness, rather than retribution, and everyone is viewed as social equals.

In a variety of ways, Blake's political theory here appears to embody some aspects of democratic theory. Mainly, he seems to be suggesting that for an ideal society to exist, all of humanity must be allowed to voice their views. And, according to Blake, the voices of a nation's people must not strive for peaceful conversation in order to reach the promised land, but must engage in "mental warfare." After all, the violent and active clashing of ideas always uncovers more truth than the passive acceptance of opinions. As Blake says in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Opposition is true friendship." Indeed, Blake is right since opposition leads people to reevaluate their views and continue to question their surroundings, so they can discover truth.

Basically, Swearingen points out that Blake's ideal society is to be founded on the values of brotherhood, love,
and friendship. These values depend upon and promote free speech. And, after genuine free speech begins to take place, humanity, as a whole, will be able to seek out Jerusalem together. Swearingen describes Blake's intent behind forming the "polity of Jerusalem" perfectly when he explains that Blake was not striving to create the ideal system, but to provide humanity with an idea of how to reach the ultimate end of utopia:

The polity of Jerusalem is 'figural' in that Blake declines to smash one idol by instituting another, but instead draws the reader into the dynamics of perpetual figuring and refiguring of social life. Instead of offering the 'what,' he causes us to practice the 'how' (142-43).

Blake does not give mankind Jerusalem, but provides humanity with the means to discover her for themselves. For Blake, free speech, consisting of open and equal discussion, would provide the tool for building Jerusalem.

V. Major Themes Contained in Jerusalem

Jerusalem stands as Blake's attempt to synthesize his entire poetic vision into one work, setting forth his major themes in dramatic proportion. For example, all of Blake's major philosophical beliefs are present as Los declares to
In these opening lines, Blake provides his reader with a synthesis of his entire poetic vision. To clarify, Bloom outlines the major themes in the above passage from Jerusalem: "All the themes of Jerusalem are sounded in these intense lines, from the identity of God and awakened man in their mutuality of love through the imaginative fibres that
must bind man to man if England is to be liberated from the vegetative fibres that form the chains of selfhood and jealousy" (Blake's Apocalypse 369). Initially, it is apparent that Blake is trying to form a world of brotherhood where all human beings are connected in love and one with God.

In Jerusalem, as in all of his other poetry, Blake functions as a social critic. For example, Blake despised the terrible social conditions and lack of compassion in England, arising from Industrialization and Enlightenment thinking. Thus, Los looks into Albion's heart and describes the condition of Albion's social state:

And saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down

The kennels of the streets & lanes as if they were abhorr'd:
Every Universal Form was become barren mountains of Moral Virtue; and every Minute Particular harden'd into grains of sand;
And all the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth & mire
Among the winding places of deep contemplation intricate
To where the Tower of London frownd dreadful over Jerusalem
(J 28.18-23)

Blake saw the reason and the laws of the eighteenth century destroying the individual and their compassion toward their brother. He especially viewed law and justice as being perverted in this time, victimizing saviors of the world as himself, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Paine (Rose 598).
Consequently, when Los looks into Albion's heart above, Los sees a land without "moral virtue," a land where "the tenderness of the soul [has been] cast forth as filth and mire," and a country where "the Tower of London frownd dreadful over Jerusalem." The last line of the above excerpt is especially troubling. Since if London is looking menacingly over Jerusalem, London's stance suggests England has turned its back on the promised land and redemption.

However, Blake does not want to take vengeance against his oppressor, since needless violence would simply end up fueling the circle of destiny which goes around and around in endless circles. Again, Blake exhibits his views about the necessity of not revenging our oppressors through Los when Los urges Albion not to take vengeance on his enemies:

What shall I do? what could I do, if I could find these Criminals?
I could not dare to take vengeance; for all things are so constructed
And builded by the Divine hand that the sinner shall always escape,
And he who takes vengeance alone is the criminal of Providence.
If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of sand
In way of vengeance, I punish the already punish'd. O whom Should I pity if I pity not the sinner who is gone astray?
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 persuade?

As he suggests here, Blake believes that revenge entraps a person in an endless cycle of violence. Orc is an example of a person entrapped in violence, and Blake has to destroy him to free humanity from his revolutionary fires. Blake, following the message of Christ, finds only error in violence and the disintegration of the human spirit. His vision is a Christ-like message of peace, and he hopes that Albion will heed his advice, for Albion will be forever lost if he gives into the impulse of revenge.

At the end of Jerusalem, then, Blake bestows upon the reader the power of his political and social vision through his poetic insight. After a lifetime of trial and error in searching for God and truth, Blake is finally able to articulate his prophetic message through Los's last speech to Albion, which advocates the importance of forgiveness, communication, love, and brotherhood:

It is easier to forgive an Enemy than to forgive a Friend.
The man who permits you to injure him deserves your vengeance:
He also will receive it; go Spectre! obey my most secret desire
Which thou knowest without my speaking, Go to these Fiends of Righteousness,
Tell them to obey their Humanities & not pretend Holiness
When they are murderers: as far as my Hammer & Anvil permit.
Go, tell them that the Worship of God is honouring his gifts
In other men: & loving the greatest men best, each according
To his Genius, which is the Holy Ghost in Man; there is no other
God than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity.
He who envies or calumniates, which is murder & cruelty,
Murders the Holy-one. Go tell them this, & overthrow their cup,
Their bread, their altar-table, their incense & their oath,
Their marriage & their baptism, their burial & consecration.
I have tried to make friends by corporeal gift but have only
Made enemies. I never made friends but by spiritual gifts,
By severe contentions of friendship & the burning fire of thought.
He who would see the Divinity must see him in his Children,
One first, in friendship & love: then a Divine family, & in the
midst
Jesus will appear; so he who wishes to see a Vision, a perfect
Whole,
Must see it in its Minute Particulars(J 91.1-21)

In these lines Blake achieves a compilation of his entire
political and social vision. To comment on all the themes
above would take a book, but for now, one just can enjoy the
magnificence of Blake's visionary universe. Blake's world
rests on the foundation of brotherhood, love, and
forgiveness. In addition, Blake's visionary politics embody
his emphasis on free and open communication to achieve
utopia. Blake demonstrates this point when he writes "I have
only made friends by spiritual gifts." Last of all, Blake
views the world in its "minute particulars." In other words,
he sees "a World in a Grain of Sand/And a Heaven in a Wild Flower." To clarify, Blake focuses on every person and object as a miracle of creation; and he believes it is important for human beings to view the world this way, if they are going to fully appreciate their surrounding and their fellow citizens of the world. Unfortunately, Blake's world has yet to be awakened to life after the apocalypse.

Today, many countries have achieved and value democratic liberty, which Blake recognized, but equality and fraternity still allude us. Humanity has not been able to nail down in the world's constitutions and politics a systematic framework which guarantees equality and fraternity. Not surprisingly, Blake realized that it would be impossible to organize a framework to bring these virtues to the world, so he does not try to do so. He did not want to make the world's oppressive condition any worse by constructing his own oppressive laws. For Blake, laws only lead toward the stagnation of the human spirit. However, he does know that if men were ruled by brotherhood, love, and forgiveness, the virtues of liberty, equality, and fraternity would be realized, and humanity could live in peace. But, Blake also understood that it was impossible for the physical world to be ruled by brotherhood, love, and forgiveness. Thus, he waited for the apocalypse to free man from his fallen state.

Fortunately, at the end of Jerusalem, Los finally is able to awaken Albion through the ultimate sacrifice of dying, like Jesus, to save humanity. His loss of self-hood
embodies the ultimate sacrifice, which Jesus made earlier, and allows Albion to awaken. (See figure 3.2 to view Blake's portrait of the "self lost in the contemplation of faith.") This sacrifice starts off Blake's apocalypse and allows Albion to be restored to his unfallen state:

All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth & Stone. All Human Forms identified, living, going forth & returning wearied
Into the planetary lives of Years, Months, Days, & Hours; reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality,
And I heard the Name of their Emanations; they are named
Jerusalem (J 99.1-5).

In these lines, Apocalypse is achieved by Los's sacrifice of his life. Human beings have awakened from their deep slumber, and they realize that "everything that lives is holy" (see figure 3.3 for a depiction of man after apocalypse).

Looking back at Blake's poetic achievement in his political prophecies, Blake provides mankind with a work of pure genius in Jerusalem. Amazingly, Blake's genius lives on and the themes contained in Jerusalem continue to inspire and motivate people centuries later. Maybe Schorer summarizes this sentiment best when he describes why Blake was a poetic genius:
Self was lost in the contemplation of faith.

Figure 3.2
A genius is one whose insights enable him to penetrate and sort out the materials of his times, to break up exhausted and stultifying patterns of myth and logic, and to forge new patterns that will prove to be more deeply expressive of life. A genius is not a tame man, nor a well-bred, pretty one. The first ingredient of his imagination is violence; the second, love. He is committed to an angry denunciation of the world in order to reassert a faith in the world. Blake's denunciation we have observed. His irrepressible faith was that the condition of life can approximate the condition of art. Nothing less. It was his sublime error—the triumph of his poet's ego, the folly of his love (392).

As Schorer expresses, Blake embodies the image of the romantic rebel. His vehement denunciation of the eighteenth century still causes feelings of rebellion and disgust to surface in his reader. Also, Blake's genius surfaces in his obstinate attitude that life could reflect art which he attempted to verify his whole life in his words and engravings.

Jerusalem is Blake's last attempt to enlighten the world with his poetic genius. And, his message lives on in the minds and hearts of people who also wish that life on Earth could mirror the harmony and unity of the greatest artistic achievement known.
Conclusion

After experiencing Blake's historically allusive politics in *America* (1793) and visionary politics on the spiritual plains of Jerusalem and Golgonooza in *Jerusalem* (1804), one can notice a definite change in his ideology between these two poems. Between the years of 1793 and 1804, Blake rethought his views on revolution and replaced Orc's fire with Los's light of forgiveness, brotherhood, and love.

To further explain, when Blake first constructed *America*, he was caught up in Orc's heat of rebellion which was rapidly falling upon Europe in France. Consequently, Blake glorified the fire of Orc and did not yet realize the consequences of revolution. He had not yet seen the sickening consequences of the French Revolution: he had not witnessed the massive blood-shed brought on by "the people's revolution" as they ended countless lives with the sharp blade of the guillotine. Later, in his last poetic endeavor to save the world, Blake gave birth to *Jerusalem*, which would present his political views on the spiritual plane, rather than on the physical landscape of the American continent. Now, the fires of Orc are replaced by the light of brotherhood, forgiveness, and love carried by Los. Los's light, rather than heat, represents Blake's concerted effort to raise revolution above violence and bloodshed and thus avoid the massacre and chaos he had witnessed in The French Revolution.
Surprisingly, Blake's shift in ideology during his lifetime is really not hard to understand. After witnessing the terror of revolution, he simply could not condone the violence. Furthermore, Blake began to realize Orc's fire was caught up in the circle of destiny which, as Schorer explains, continues in an endless cycle like the seasons. Therefore, Blake strives in Jerusalem to raise his prophetic vision above the physical world and onto the spiritual planes where the circle of destiny can finally be overcome by apocalypse. Being a mystic, Blake begins to focus on Jesus's emphasis on brotherhood, love, and forgiveness rather than on the world's rapid, unpermanent solutions brought on by war and violence.

Overall, then, Blake's prophetic, political works represent his endeavor to free man from the shackles of oppression and bloodshed. On the spiritual plains of Jerusalem, when human beings embrace the values of love, brotherhood, and forgiveness, he believes human beings can accomplish this goal. Unfortunately, Blake did not think humanity would ever be able to fully achieve peace on this planet. Thus Jerusalem is a spiritual city set above Los's physical construction of Golgonooza and will be entered into when our physical realm achieves union with God's spiritual world.

Now that readers have entered into Blake's imaginative world, they can raise themselves above the state of innocence and enter into the world of experience, where actual change
can take place. Hopefully, Blake's message of peace and love carried through his mythical universe--illustrated by his art and words--will cause our world to reflect on its actions and pick up Los's torch of love and forgiveness. When human beings take up Los's torch, our world will be one step closer to achieving union with Jerusalem. Regardless of mankind's actions, Blake rises above the physical world and claims spiritual insights which he shares with the world in his poetic visions. And, after experiencing Blake, the reader will never view the world the same again.
Notes

1 All artwork was taken from *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, edited by Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979.


3 Blake's view of the apocalypse changed throughout his lifetime. But, when Blake uses the term apocalypse, he is referring more to any major social, individual, or political change which redefines a society or a person, rather than the traditional conception of apocalypse presented in *Revelations*.

Works Cited


