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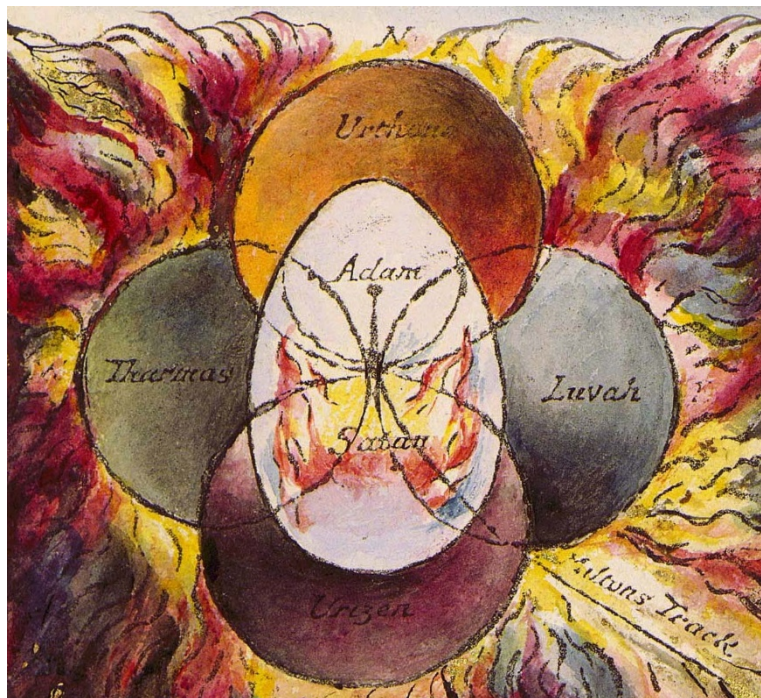
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1

WILLIAM BLAKE'S MYTHIC SYSTEM

By

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William Blake *The Four Zoas* (from *Milton: A Poem*)

William Blake's Mythic System

Four Zoas – Four Emanations

Los & Enitharmon *Imagination*

Urizen & Ahania *Reason*

Luvah & Vala *Feeling Function*

Tharmas & Enion *Basic Needs*

Four States of Being

Ulro

Generation

Beulah

Eden/Eternity

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William Blake's Mythic System

William Blake's mythic system is designed to change the way we think and see, to lead us into a world where imagination and ferocious forgiveness are social structuring principles. Featuring Zoas, Emanations, and different states of being, Blake's system evolved throughout his working life. This paper outlines the basic features of that system, as well as some sources influencing key concepts in his prophetic vision.



Blake's mythic system evolved between 1789 and 1820. In those 31 years, he created 13 illuminated books (**S1**)¹, and a manuscript called *Vala, or the Four Zoas* (FZ). He never engraved that text, but his subsequent books – *Milton* (1804), and *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804-21) - assume that you know it, that you know about Blake's characters and locations. Blake's system is most fully formed in *Jerusalem* (J), his masterpiece, which, Blake tells us, was dictated to him by Jesus (**S2**). In its first scene he announces his purpose and he prays:

I rest not from my great task!
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love!
Annihilate the Selfhood in me; be thou all my life!
Guide thou my hand . . . (J5:17-23, K623)²

Before engraving *Jerusalem* (consisting of one hundred illuminated plates) Blake mentioned to a patron that he had in him “the grandest poem that the world contains.”³ He may have been right.

Unfortunately, this grand poem is rarely read, because of its complexity. Packed with allusions, peopled by characters called Zoas and Emanations, it takes place not only in physical settings, but in fluid mindsets called Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden/Eternity. (When the poet prays to open your eyes into Eternity he's referring to a state of being.) Additionally, *Jerusalem* contains what Jon Mee calls a ‘bricolage’ of imagery⁴, stemming from sources that shaped Blake's consciousness. He learned to read by reading the Bible, guided by his mother, who'd been an enthusiastic member of the Moravian Fellowship before her marriage to Blake's father.⁵ Throughout his life William Blake treasured the Bible; he

¹ Slide 1 in the Power Point entitled ‘Mythic System.’ There are 19 slides. Blake plates have been accessed through the Yale Center for British Art; they are in Public Domain. Slide References (**S1**, **S2** etc) are in boldface.

² All Blake quotations are taken from *Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (K), Oxford University Press, 1966). I know David Erdman's edition is considered the ‘Authorised Version’ but Keynes rightly follows the plate ordering of *Jerusalem* Copy E – Blake's fully finished version.

³ Letter to Thomas Butts, 6 July, 1803 (K825).

⁴ Much of Blake's work can be called a ‘bricolage.’ Mee discusses this in his fine book, *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2002).

⁵ The Moravian Fellowship, led by a visionary Lutheran pastor, was known for its mission work and marvellous music. Members lived communally, and all that they did – farming, painting, cooking, composing – was meant

calls it “the Great Code of Art” (K777). He assumes that his readers know it; most of his contemporaries knew it very well.

During his seven year apprenticeship (from 1772 to 1779) young William Blake encountered ancient British (and Norse) mythology. His master, James Basire, was the official engraver to the Society of Antiquaries, who wrote about the nature of Druids, and early British history. Many Antiquaries, like Benjamin Franklin,⁶ were also Freemasons, and some believed, as Tom Paine proclaimed in his 1805 essay, “Origins of Freemasonry,” that “Masonry is the remains of the religion of the Druids.”⁷ Masonic imagery and ritual were literally in young Blake’s face, for the Freemason’s Tavern and Hall was built directly opposite Basire’s studio. Blake also read the works of Jacob Boehme (among other esoteric writings). He was fourteen when he began his apprenticeship and the ideas and imagery he absorbed interweave in *Jerusalem* with allusions to Blake’s personal and political predicaments more than forty years later. His epic’s structure is somewhat akin to that of St. John’s Revelation, which (according to Benjamin Heath Malkin, his earliest ‘biographer’) was Blake’s favourite book.⁸ A ten-year old, unencumbered by theology, might be enthralled by the imagery in John’s Apocalypse, not caring what it means. The Book of Revelation is filled with dragons and beasts, heroic angels, an emerald rainbow, glorious music, a woman clothed with the sun, an evil harlot. It has something in common with a Marvel comic (like *Wonder Woman*). Its structure, and layers of meaning, can’t easily be systematised.

“I must Create a System or be enslav’d by another Man’s!” (J10:20-21). So cries Los, the heroic character with whom William Blake most closely identifies. Furiously forging, Los, a visionary blacksmith, seeks to create a structure called **Golgonooza**, through which humanity can be reunited with the divine. Los is one of Blake’s **Four Zoas**: human, angelomorphic, and divine. **Zoas and Emanations** embody the four principles of being human.

Blake’s individual characters can take many forms. They can coinhere with one another, and with nations and landscapes. They can dwell within you and me as well (**S3**).

Zoas and Emanations live in **Albion** (a man and a land): all are part of the Divine Body, **Jesus**, who is both human and cosmic. **Jerusalem**, the Bride of Jesus, a woman and a city, is Albion’s Emanation, ideally connecting him with the divine, with others, and other cultures. When Jerusalem emanates, giving forth fibres of love, the **Four Zoas** interrelate, their contrary natures generating ferocious joy in the state of being called Eden/Eternity. Zoas, Emanations, and States of Being are at the heart of Blake’s mythic system; they are unique to him. They spring from his divine imagination – as does the name of the structure called Golgonooza.

Zoas are not flat allegorical figures (**S4**). Like us, they have motivations, domestic squabbles, strong emotions. They can be fallible and they can change. They’re elemental as well, like Ariel in Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. Emanations and Zoas exist not only in the world of

to be prayer and praise. Lovemaking between a husband and wife was the highest form of prayer and praise. See Craig Atwood, ‘Sleeping in the Arms of Christ: Sanctifying Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century Moravian Church’ (1997). *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. 8.1, 25-51.

⁶ Benjamin Franklin joined the Society of Antiquaries 13 May 1773. See *A List of the Members of the Society of Antiquaries*, London: 1798, p. 26.

⁷ Paine, Thomas (1805) ‘Origin of Freemasonry’. In Philip S Foner (ed.), *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*.

⁸ See G.E. Bentley, *Blake Records* (2004). Yale University Press, 567.

the text; they also dwell microcosmically within us, and macrosomically, they shape nations, politics, cultural values. Inner and outer worlds interrelate. When creatively interconnected, internally and externally, we and our nations can participate in divine life. Opening inward eyes affects not just your soul, but the whole body politic.

In Blake's Divine Body, in the state of Eden/Eternity, **Urizen** embodies reason and clarity (S5), wielding the great golden compasses emblematic in Freemasonry. **Los**, a cosmic blacksmith, forges prophetic vision with the help of a huge hammer like Thor in the Norse mythology Blake encountered during his apprenticeship. Los, embodying vision and imagination, becomes indistinguishable from Jesus in *Jerusalem* (J96). Los is akin to Blake himself, first appearing in *The Book of Urizen* (1794), followed by two books of his own: *The Book of Los* (1795), *The Song of Los* (1795). His character deepens, develops, and changes throughout Blake's life.



Luvah and Tharmas don't have books of their own, but **Luvah** makes his appearance in Blake's work earlier than the others, in *The Book of Thel* (1789). He features prominently in *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), appearing every *Night* (or episode). Luvah is the Zoa of love and emotions, including political passions. *The Four Zoas* begins with **Tharmas**, "the parent sense, the tongue" (FZ1.24 K264), who has to do with basic physical life: primal seas, hunting and loving (S6).

Zoas are almost always masculine characters and each has a feminine emanation. It is through emanation that Zoas connect with each other in infinitely translucent "fibres of love" as well as with other people, cultures, and with "the Saviour." In Eden/Eternity Zoas and Emanations joyfully commingle – spiritually and sensually.⁹

Ahania, Urizen's feminine counterpart, has a book of her own. She loves Urizen very much, and can be seen as a gracious organiser. The prime minister of New Zealand has a lot of Ahania in her.

Enion (S7) who conjoins with Tharmas, is something like an earth mother. Throughout *The Four Zoas* she has terrible domestic trouble for she seeks dominion over Tharmas, which destroys their love. She's jealous, a deadly sin that can cripple all Emanations, all Zoas. The tension between love and jealousy is at the heart of *The Four Zoas*. I think of that poem as an erotic epic.

Enitharmon (S8) contends with love and jealousy in *Jerusalem* as well as in *The Four Zoas*. She's referred to as "the wife of Los" in mundane time; most scholars agree that she's a bit like Blake's wife, Catherine, who helped him print and colour his books. In Blake's *Milton* (1804) "Los is by mortals name'd Time, Enitharmon is nam'd Space"

⁹ Please see the slides for the charts that map out Blake's Zoas and Emanations.

(M24:68, K590); she has a cosmic golden loom, and in it, she weaves human life, mortal bodies.

In the earlier *Book of Urizen* (1794), she and Los have a child named **Orc (S9)**, a fiery creature filled with revolutionary energy – who can promote life, liberty, and happiness, as well as the slaughter of thousands by the guillotine. He’s a pivotal character in Blake’s political prophecies, *Europe* and *America* (1795). But he makes only a cameo appearance in *Jerusalem*.

In that poem, Orc’s furious destructive energy emanates from **Vala (S10)**. When Jerusalem, feminine-divine, is banished, Vala’s consort, romantic Luvah, gets sealed in a furnace. Vala can no longer commingle with him. Then she, who co-creates with Jerusalem in Eternity, becomes shadowy, ferocious, jealous, and destructive. Repressed erotic energy spawns violence and war. “Blood human blood” becomes Vala’s “life and delightful food!” (J68:34-5, K706). Negating the feminine and the erotic can destroy individuals and whole nations, causing widespread suffering with “Religion Hid in War, a dragon red and hidden harlot” (J75:20, K716) like the seven headed dragon in the Book of Revelation (**S11**).

Blake saw this in his lifetime, for Britain was in a state of perpetual war with France from 1793 until 1815 (with a brief pause, the Peace of Amiens, between 1802-3). The Established Church of England condemned sensual joy and supported the war effort, demonising the French. When peace finally came, after Waterloo, prosperity did not accompany it. Most returning soldiers got no pension, many could not find jobs. There were riots and ‘risings,’ and an economic depression that lasted until 1821 (when *Jerusalem* was completed).¹⁰ Life was easier, and work more plentiful before 1794, when Blake was a young man.

War, poverty, and repression do not exist when Jerusalem rises and we enter the state of being Blake calls Eden/Eternity.



¹⁰ N. Gash (1978) “After Waterloo: Society and the Legacy of the Napoleonic Wars,” *Royal Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 28 (1978), pp. 145-157: Cambridge University Press. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3679205>. Accessed: 01-04-2020

II.

Now let us consider the **four states of being** in Blake's mythic system: Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden/Eternity (**S12**). Ulro (also called "Satan") is a world of 'single vision' or empirical abstraction. In Ulro, that which can't be expressed quantitatively does not exist. The state of Generation is more organic, a cyclical state, a productive world filled with cycles of birth and copulation and death. Manufacturing, breeding, and farming all happen in Generation, which can sustain humanity, or be mindless and mechanistic. It's not an emotional state like Beulah (the land called "married" in Isaiah 62.4). Blake's Beulah is a resting place, where erotic bliss can flourish. If the bliss of Beulah is blighted by what Blake calls Selfhood it can fall into reductive Generation and/or Ulro, reducing the beloved to an object, a thing to be controlled. But when Selfhood is annihilated, Beulah is a launching pad into the state called Eden/Eternity, where all living things interconnect in the sensuous divine body. This fourth state of being, Eden/Eternity, is the place of fourfold vision.

Think of these four states in terms of a tree. Imagine a pine tree: it can exist in Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden/Eternity. In **Ulro** the tree isn't an individual tree: it's an abstraction. A paper company can put our tree in Ulro; the company sees it as a statistic, a tiny factor in cost-benefit analysis (as a single mother supporting three children becomes a statistic in an America bankruptcy filing, because she could not afford treatment for cancer, and a dead Iraqi boy becomes "collateral damage" in a Pentagon report). Ulro makes it possible for us to dehumanise people and nature. Blake abhors this way of thinking, and urges us towards an empathic connection with every created thing.

We might not be empathic in the state called **Generation**, either, but Generation does take into account cycles of growth, life, and change. When our tree is "harvested" by the paper company another one is planted; this is good business. The beauty of our tree isn't important; it's alive, but only in what Blake would call a "vegetative" or material way. In Beulah, however, we have an emotional response to our tree.

In **Beulah's** romantic moony state of being we may rest beneath the tree, enjoy its beauty, write a poem about it. We might hug the tree or embrace our beloved beneath it. If blighted by Selfhood we can treat the beloved (and the tree) as an object and fall into emotional and spiritual Ulro. When we are freed from Selfhood then we and the tree and our beloved participate in the Divine Body, the Saviour's Kingdom. That is Eden/Eternity. You and I and the tree together can be in an intersubjective relationship. We see the tree and the tree sees us. We interconnect.

Eden/Eternity does not negate the values of the other states of being. In Eden/Eternity we retain the differentiations of Ulro, the productivity of Generation, and the bliss of Beulah. It is a **fourfold** state of being. In Eden our tree is a tree of life – and so am I, and so are you.

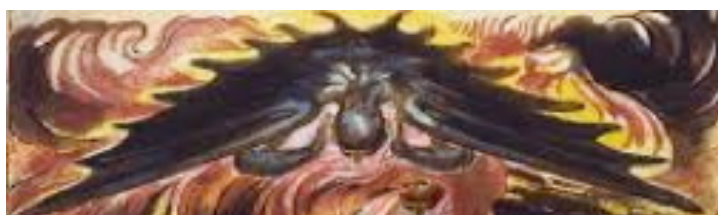
When in the Divine Body we can eat from the tree of life. But Selfhood, a word I've used repeatedly, prevents that from happening. In *The Book of Urizen*, we see the prototype of Albion, trapped in Selfhood, in Ulro's "mind-forg'd manacles."



William Blake gleaned the term, ‘**Selfhood**’ from Jacob Boehme, the seventeenth century Lutheran visionary – and alchemist. In 1800 Blake wrote a letter to his good friend, John Flaxman (the sculptor) declaring: “Paracelsus and Behmen appeared to me, terrors appear’d in the Heavens . . . the American War began” (K799). The American War began in April, 1775 – when William Blake was seventeen. Because Blake was comfortable with the Book of Revelation and Ezekiel as a child, reading Boehme might have been less challenging for him than it would be for you – or me.

In Blake and Boehme, “Selfhood” is like a disease. In Blake’s system there is no “true Self,” as in the writings of Carl Jung (who was also influenced by Boehme). What Blake calls **Selfhood** creates destructive conflict, for Selfhood impedes forgiveness and interconnection. “Self” is never a good thing in Blake’s world. It dehumanises others, craving power and control. It’s equated with Satan (J27) and a creature called the Spectre (J33.17–18, J58.46-9, K659), “the abstract objecting power that negatives every thing” (J10.14, K629). Selfhood does not love; it consumes. Selfhood does not “emanate”, or give forth “fibres of love.” Selfhood traps us in Ulro, closing our minds, destroying the dynamic balance between the Four Zoas within us and in our culture. Selfhood animates what Blake calls “the Spectre,” wreaking havoc in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*.

As all people contain some cancer cells, so does every person and nation have a **Spectre**, which can, when empowered, be deadly (S13). The Spectre occludes Divine Vision, ruining love, work, and relationships. A Spectre can encourage you or your culture to be violent, unjust, unproductive: it can make you think your work is no good; it can trap you in anger, envy, or fear. Pulverizing Spectres requires determination, courage, divine help – and vision. Imagination and vision are a spiritual immune system which Blake seeks to bolster.



The Spectre appears in many forms: every Zoa has a Spectre.¹¹ When “The Holy Reasoning Power,” embodied in Urizen, gets divorced from Imagination and compassion, it’s called “the Spectre of Man” (J10.15-16, 36.23, 54.7). An individual, and a nation can be spectrous, trapped in Selfhood (which is also called the state of Satan in *Jerusalem* (J27, J33.17, K659). Spectrous Selfhood is as divisive and greedy as an unfallen Emanation is connective and generous.

Emanations, Zoas, and human beings also have **Shadows**. Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion, must contend with Vala, who becomes Shadowy when Albion negates the Saviour and banishes the feminine (**S14**). Albion’s narcissism infects her and changes her from a loving Emanation into a malevolent shadow, helping to proliferate what Blake calls “the polypus of death,” the pandemic of Selfhood.

Vala is not a Spectre. Shadows are not Spectres. The Spectre must be pulverised before the human can reunite with the divine. Shadows, however, must be transformed. When Los shatters his Spectre, Vala can be incorporated in Jerusalem again, imbued with divine life. Unfortunately, Blake does not tell us how to tell the difference between Spectres and Shadows in our lives. He does show, however, that the “Druid Spectre” is annihilated before all things coinhere in **Fourfold Vision (S15)**.

Many readers are puzzled by Blake’s **Druids**. They’re denizens of Ulro. In Blake’s *Milton* “Urizen is trapped “in darkness & solitude; in chains of the mind lock’d up. . . Among indefinite Druid rocks & snows of doubt & reasoning” (M3:8-9, K482). In *Jerusalem*, Albion is “the parent of the Druids” (J27, K649), and his bellicose sons and daughters wreak havoc among the rocks of the Druids. Druids in Blake are bloodthirsty and addicted to abstract reasoning.



Blake encountered bloodthirsty Druids in the first year of his apprenticeship, helping his master, James Basire, with engravings of (so-called) Druid stones and hammer heads for volume II of *Archaeologia* (A), the journal of the Society of Antiquaries which appeared in 1773 (**S16**). The text accompanying those engravings likens ‘antient’ pillars in the churchyard at Penrith to the ruins of Druid temples; the author, Mr. Lyttleton, wonders

¹¹ E.g. Tharmas (FZ1.78 K266), Los/Urthona (FZ1.530, K278), Luvah (J22.31 K645). The Worship of Urizen at the expense of imagination and love is Spectrous.

whether British or Norse Druids constructed those temples (A1773: 50-2). (Eighteenth century Antiquaries believed that Stonehenge, Avebury, and other Neolithic stone clusters were created by Druids). Large stone hammerheads are presumed to be “sacrificial . . . for killing victims,” in Druidic ritual. Another learned antiquary, Mr. Pegge, likens Druid hammers to the Norse observing “the *Edda* makes mention of the golden Malleus of Thor which is celebrated as fatal, not only to enemies, but to gods and demons” (A1773: 125).

Like those learned Antiquaries, William Blake can conflate British Druids with Norse warriors, harbingers of death and destruction. Caesar’s *Commentaries* describe Druids burning victims in their Wicker Man,¹² and Wordsworth alludes to this in his “Salisbury Plain” poems (48, 1794), recalling the suffering of those burnt alive in the Druid’s “giant wicker.”¹³ Blake places his “Wicker Man of Scandinavia” among “Druid Dragon Temples” in *Jerusalem* (J47:7 K677). In those Dragon Temples “the abstract reasoning power” is worshipped, dehumanising people and nature, inciting violence.

Some Antiquaries championed Druids as paragons of rationality and reason, idealising their culture. (Thomas Paine, author of *The Age of Reason*¹⁴ did so, too.) But Blake despised the worship of reason at the expense of imagination and feeling. Reason is necessary – but imagination, in Blake, is paramount. As he engraved for Basire he’d have been very aware that thousands of men in white leather aprons, dedicated to God the Geometer, the Great Architect of the Universe, were building temples of Jerusalem in their rituals, not only in the Masonic Hall across street, but in lodges throughout England’s green and pleasant land, bearing banners emblazoned with golden compasses, like those which Blake gives to his Urizen (below). There are records of at least two Masonic parades – one with a brass band, another with thirty musical and sixty vocal performers – processing directly in front of the window of Basire’s studio.¹⁵ Blake was certainly intrigued by the worldwide building of Jerusalem – but his Jerusalem, a woman and a city, could never be dedicated to what Freemasons call “sceptered Reason.”



¹² S Foster Damon, *Blake Dictionary*, Brown University Press, 1965, 447, citing Caesar’s *Commentaries*, vi., 16.

¹³ <http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/ayliu/research/around-1800/FR/salisbury-plain.html>

¹⁴ Paine’s *Age of Reason* was published in three parts, between 1794 and 1807. Blake knew Paine.

¹⁵ “The Foundation Stone” ceremony of May 1, 1775 involved “a numerous and brilliant company,” all clad in full Masonic regalia, accompanied by a brass band. While an anthem praising “Heaven’s High Architect” filled the air (*Institutes of Freemasonry*, 1788: 75-7), the Grand Master struck the stone three times with a mallet, like Blake’s Los at London Stone in *Jerusalem*. (J6-8; 94:24). A year later in May, 1776 a more brilliant throng processed to the new Hall, accompanied by over “sixty instrumental and thirty vocal performers” and “upwards of 160 ladies.”

Freemasonry is almost wholly masculine¹⁶ but in Blake's masterpiece, Jerusalem the feminine divine, permeates and enhances the identity of every living thing: "even tree metal earth and stone" (J99:2). There are no secret words, no spiritual engineering principle reserved for the elite, no hierarchy or great chain of being with God at the top and rocks at the bottom. In Blake's mythic system even tree metal earth and stone are integral to life in the Divine Body. The smallest sprout can have cosmic resonance. Inner worlds and outer worlds coinhere.

Blake's understanding of the coinherence of inward microcosmic and outward macrocosmic worlds may derive from his encounters with Jacob Boehme, the seventeenth century visionary shoemaker. Blake praises the beauty of the designs in William Law's "Behmen" edition¹⁷ and it may be that Basire had such a treasure in his home. In Boehme's *Aurora* young Blake would have encountered a micro- and macrocosmic sevenfold fire world; in which wrath and love, fire and light, contend. Did Boehme's sevenfold fires inspire the seven furnaces of beryl in *Jerusalem* – where Los with his hammer contends with wrath and love, until at last they meld in the furious joy that transforms souls and societies? Love and wrath are what Blake would call "contraries" and their energy can be powerful, as we see in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c.1791, K148). Love and wrath can transform societies and souls – in what Blake calls, "Wars of Love." His fourfold vision is not polite.

I'd like us to look at the passage in which world-changing Wars of Love emerge. This is towards the end of *Jerusalem*, on plates 97 and 98. In the beginning of the epic, in Ulro, Albion banishes Jerusalem – which destroys him and his people, as well as the eco-system. Continually Jerusalem offers forgiveness, the structuring principle of life in Eden/Eternity. In the poem's last scene Albion is dead – but the Divine Breath of God (animated, in part, by the forgiveness embodied in Jerusalem and by Los's tenacity) revives the fallen man. Rising with the breath of God he sees that Los is in and with Jesus; Jesus is in and with Los. Aware of his addiction to Selfhood and the destruction he's wrought, Albion throws himself into Los's fiery furnaces. He is Self-Annihilating, and when he does so, the flames become "Fountains of Living Water, flowing from the Humanity Divine" (J96:37, K744) like the river of the water of life in Revelation 22. Judgement is forgiveness. Let us look closely at what happens to humanity.



After Self-Annihilating, Albion, the man and the land, humanity and the nation, seeks to be reunited with the Emanation he's banished. He echoes the words of the Song of Solomon when he calls her from sleep (J97ff):

¹⁶ Only in France was and is there a lodge that admits women.

¹⁷ Bentley, *Blake Records*, 423.

“Awake Awake Jerusalem! O lovely Emanation of Albion,
Awake and overspread all nations as in Ancient Time;
For lo! The Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
Appears upon our Hills. Awake, Jerusalem, and come away.”

So spake the Vision of Albion & in him so spake, in my hearing.
The Universal Father.

Blake hears Albion’s call, and in that call he hears God, the Universal Father. Albion, like Los before him, has become human-divine. In and with God, his Zoas act in concert, four horsemen in a Blakean apocalypse (S17):

. . . Then Albion stretch’d his hand into Infinitude.
And took his Bow. Fourfold the Vision: for bright beaming **Urizen**
Lay’d his hand on the South & took a breathing bow of carved Gold.
Luvah his hand stretch’d to the East & bore a Silver Bow, bright shining:
Tharmas, Westward, a Bow of Brass, pure flaming, richly wrought
Urthona Northward in thick storms a Bow of Iron, terrible thundering.

Urthona is Los’s Eternal name. In Ulro, Generation, and Beulah he is Los; in Eden/Eternity he is Urthona. (Nuns and monks sometimes do this: a nun called Sr. Clare might have been Karen in the secular world).

In Eden/Eternity the Zoas ready themselves for mental fight. Urizen, embodying reason, is not marginalised. He has a bow of gold, the most precious earthly metal. In Eden/Eternity, Reason is imaginative, empathic, and connected to basic needs. Imagination is not disorganized; it has clarity, emotion, connected to all life. Emanations are not yet mentioned, but male and female are in balance.

The Bow is a **Male & Female** & the Quiver of the Arrows of Love
Are the Children of this Bow, a Bow of Mercy and Loving Kindness laying
Open the hidden Heart in Wars of Mutual Benevolence; **Wars of Love**
And the Hand of Man grasps firm between the male & female loves.

Wars of love do not kill; they open hidden hearts. Wars of Love destroy defence mechanisms; wars of love intensify emanation, interconnection: on personal, political, and cultural levels.

Murmuring the Bowstring breathes with ardour. Clouds roll round the horns
Of the wide Bow; loud sounding Winds sport on the Mountains’ brows
The **Druid Spectre** was Annihilate, loud, thundering, rejoicing, terrific, vanishing,
Fourfold annihilation! & at the clangor of the **Arrows of Intellect**
The innumerable Chariots of the Almighty appear’d in Heaven
And **Bacon & Newton & Locke, & Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer**
A Sun of blood red wrath surrounding heavens on all sides around
Glorious, incomprehensible by Mortal Man, & each Chariot was **sexual threefold**.



Arrows shot from the fourfold bow do more than open hidden hearts. They annihilate “the Druid Spectre.” Druids, you may remember, were, according to Blake, bloodthirsty warriors, practising human sacrifice, and dedicated to the worship of what he calls “the abstract reasoning power that negatives every thing” (J10:14, K629); Yet paragons of reason, Bacon & Newton & Locke, join with the great English poets, Milton & ‘Shakespear’ & Chaucer, in cosmic chariots, vehicles through which the human becomes divine. The energy of wrath propels them, as does “sexual threefold” energy (**S18**). The joy found in Beulah can launch us to life in the divine body. Human-divine life is sensual.

And every Man stood Fourfold; each Four Faces had: One to the West,
One towards the East, One to the South, one to the North, the Horses Fourfold.
And the **dim Chaos brighten’d** beneath, above, around: Eyed as the Peacock
According to the Human Nerves of **Sensation**, the Four Rivers of **the Water of Life**.

In fourfold vision you can see and experience from four perspectives simultaneously, like the angelic beings in the Book of Ezekiel; you and your Zoas are carried up, like the four horsemen of the apocalypse. But you are not, as in John’s Revelation, riding into and bringing death, destruction, and chaos. When in and with Blake’s fourfold humanity, “dim Chaos” brightens, as it does when the Lord says: “Let there be light” in the first chapter of Genesis. You are part of creation, your nerves of sensation enhanced: sensuality intensifies. Your senses, rivers of life, flow with the living water to which Jerusalem, the Spirit and the Bride, invites all to drink at the end of the Book of Revelation. Blake’s apocalypse brings forgiveness – and this is embodied in the Divine Body, in you, flowing from each of you, and all of you, expanding:

South stood the Nerves of the Eye; East **in Rivers of Bliss, the Nerves** of the
Expansive Nostrils: West flow’d the Parent Sense, the Tongue; North stood
The labyrinthine Ear: Circumscribing & **Circumcising the excrementitious**
Husk & Covering, into Vacuum evaporating, revealing the lineaments of Man,
Driving outward the Body of Death in an Eternal Death & **Resurrection**,
Awaking it to Life among the **Flowers of Beulah**, rejoicing in Unity,
In the Four Senses, in the Outline, the Circumference & Form, for ever
In **forgiveness of Sins** which is Self-Annihilation; it is the Covenant of Jehovah.

The cardinal points (north south east and west) are the senses – when we are in and with the Divine Body, the cosmic Christ. There what we hear, in our labyrinthine ear, cuts away the excrementitious husk of our mundane mortal flesh, revealing our spiritual and sensual eternal body. Your mundane body goes through Eternal Death – but Eternal Resurrection eclipses such death. Your spiritually risen body has erotic Life, “among the Flowers of Beulah.” It is not amorphous; it has form. Body, spirit, mind, heart, and soul participate in forgiveness, the joy of Self-Annihilation. In Blake the Covenant of Jehovah is not exclusive; all living things, all human forms, animate the metabolism of the Divine Body. Each is responsive to all (**S19**).

The future of human life on earth requires that we see that we are each responsible for all; that we interconnect, not just with one another – but with every created thing. Blake wrote so that we should be changed, promulgating the joy of ferocious forgiveness.



III.

You won't have a proper sense of Blake's mythic vision unless you read his words aloud. His vision cannot be understood by the mind alone: it must be given voice, embodied. Blake intended that his sensual words should be spoken and heard. He tells us that he's chosen every word and every character to suit "the mouth of a True Orator" (J3, K621). That may be you, entering into "Fourfold Vision." Please take three minutes to read this aloud, perhaps in concert with a friend:

. . . Then Albion stretch'd his hand into Infinitude.

And took his Bow. Fourfold the Vision: for bright beaming Urizen
Lay'd his hand on the South & took a breathing bow of carved Gold.
Luvah his hand stretch'd to the East & bore a Silver Bow, bright shining:
Tharmas, Westward, a Bow of Brass, pure flaming, richly wrought
Urthona Northward in thick storms a Bow of Iron, terrible thundering.

The Bow is a Male & Female & the Quiver of the Arrows of Love
Are the Children of this Bow, a Bow of Mercy and Loving Kindness laying
Open the hidden Heart in Wars of Mutual Benevolence; Wars of Love
And the Hand of Man grasps firm between the male & female loves.

Murmuring the Bowstring breathes with ardour. Clouds roll round the horns
Of the wide Bow; loud sounding Winds sport on the Mountains' brows
The Druid Spectre was Annihilate, loud, thundering, rejoicing, terrific, vanishing,
Fourfold annihilation! & at the clangor of the Arrows of Intellect
The innumerable Chariots of the Almighty appear'd in Heaven
And Bacon & Newton & Locke, & Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer
A Sun of blood red wrath surrounding heavens on all sides around
Glorious, incomprehensible by Mortal Man, & each Chariot was sexual threefold

And every Man stood Fourfold; each Four Faces had: One to the West,
One towards the East, One to the South, one to the North, the Horses Fourfold.
And the dim Chaos brighten'd beneath, above, around: Eyed as the Peacock
According to the Human Nerves of Sensation, the Four Rivers of the Water of Life.

South stood the Nerves of the Eye; East in Rivers of Bliss, the Nerves of the
Expansive Nostrils: West flow'd the Parent Sense, the Tongue; North stood
The labyrinthine Ear: Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious
Husk & Covering, into Vacuum evaporating, revealing the lineaments of Man,
Driving outward the Body of Death in an Eternal Death & Resurrection,
Awaking it to Life among the Flowers of Beulah, rejoicing in Unity,

In the Four Senses, in the Outline, the Circumference & Form, for ever
In forgiveness of Sins which is Self-Annihilation; it is the Covenant of Jehovah.

Sweet Joy Befall Thee!

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