

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

1790-1793

- Manifesto or prophetic proclamation
- Satire: parodies of the Bible and of the religious teachings of Swedenborg; assaults on popular images of heaven and hell
- Form of the poem:
 - "The Argument", "The Voice of the Devil" and "Proverbs of Hell" - expositions on concepts of the "contraries"
 - Interspersed "Memorable Fancies" - explicating his expositions
 - "A Song of Liberty" - a prophecy of a future heaven on earth

- Use of traditional symbols of angels and devils, animal imagery, and especially images of fire and flame to:
 - 1) set up a dual world, a confrontation of "contraries" to illustrate how the rules of Reason and Religion repress the creative energy of humanity;
 - 2) argue for apocalyptic transformation of the self "through the radical regeneration of each person's own power to imagine";
 - 3) reconstruct Man in a new image, both rational and imaginative, partaking of his divinity through creativity.

- "Contraries", or paradoxes, are essentials of human nature, but religion has polarized Man's dual qualities -- Christian "good" represses "evil" energy
- The Devils are witty, lively, and have wise things to say; the Angels are dull and get angry when crossed!
- Overturning of the conventional Christian image of fire as punishment and suffering, taking it back as an image of energy rather than fear

- Flame and fire as symbols of transformation, of spiritual alchemy and creativity
- Transformation of consciousness, to develop a new visionary perception whose revelations will be that the Divine is in Man, not cut off from Him
- Fire also as a symbol of light, inspiration, and spiritual vision - a visionary Energy that is God within us

- Heaven and Hell may be, after all, aspects of the One Thing
- Fire represents heaven in its association with the sun, the light, but also hell because it is closely associated with destruction, war, evil, the demonic
- Conclusion, "A Song of Liberty": Fire falls from heaven and brings destruction, yet, when the cataclysm is done, a new age is upon the earth and Man sees with a new perception: "For every thing that lives is Holy"

- Significance of the title
 - the relationship between imagination (Hell) and reason (Heaven) should be like a marriage in which the partners work together but each maintains the integrity of his/her own sphere of perception and action
 - Interactive but not dialectic relationship
 - Man moves back and forth between the poles

“Sacred codes” and “Errors” in Christian dogma (“The Voice of the Devil”)

1. That Man has two real existing principles, Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body; & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

Blake:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body: and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight.