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# REASON AND THE DEIFICATION OF HUMANITY: WILLIAM BLAKE

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### Abstract

Blake associates human love and creativity with man's perfect state (the Edenic State) and the Incarnate Logos (the Word of God). For Blake, humanity can restore her ideal Self and become One with God if she activates the Logos residing in her heart. Focusing on *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, this article discusses Blake's view on the essence of God that makes humanity's theosis (deification) possible. Also, the definition and function of Blake's Urizen/Reason in the process of human perfection are examined, with illustrations from Blake's Marginalia and "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

**Keywords:** Blake, Reason, Imagination, Love, Panentheism

## AKIL VE İNSANLIĞIN YÜCELTMESİ: WILLIAM BLAKE

### Öz

Blake, insani aşkı ve yaratıcılığı insanın mükemmel hali (Cennetvari Hal) ve cisimlenmiş Logos (Tanrının Kelamı) ile ilişkilendirir. Blake'e göre eğer kalbinde yeralan Logos'u etkinleştirirse insanlık kendi ideal benliğini yeniden canlandırabilir ve Tanrı ile bir bütün olabilir. Bu makale Kudüs: Dev Albion'un Ortaya Çıkışı şiirine odaklanarak Blake'in insanlığın theosis'ini (tanrılaştırmasını) mümkün kılan Tanrı'nın özü ile ilgili olan görüşünü tartışmaktadır. Ayrıca Blake'in insanın mükemmeliği sürecindeki Urizen/Akıl terimlerinin tanımı ve fonksiyonu

Blake'in Marginalia'sı ve "Cennet ve Cehennem Evliliği" adlı eserinden örneklerle incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Blake, Akıl, Hayal, Aşık, Panentheizm

## 1. Introduction

In the opening part of *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* entitled "To the Public," William Blake invites his readers to unite with him and become "wholly One in Jesus our Lord" (Blake, 2008: 210). He also asks his readers to appreciate the poet's creative labour even if they disagree with the content of his poem: "Dear reader, forgive what you do not approve, & love me for this energetic exertion of my talent" (Plate 3) (Blake, 2008: 210). "To the Public" ends with the statement "The Primeval State of Man, was Wisdom, Art, and Science" (Plate 3) (Blake, 2008: 211) that is accompanied by the epigram *Movoc o Iecovoc* (Only Jesus) (Plate 4) (Blake, 2008: 211) that ushers readers to the first chapter of *Jerusalem*, in which Christ says,

Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand!  
I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine:  
[...] I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;  
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:  
Lo! We are One" (*Jerusalem* 1.4:6-7,18-20) (Blake, 2008: 212)

Blake associates human love and creativity with man's perfect state (the Edenic State) and Christ, the Incarnate Logos (the Word of God). The Greek term "logos" is synonymous with "reason" and carries the meanings of cause (creative force/poetic genius), speech, and covenant (the promise of the loving union between two parties). Logos/Reason (Christ) has all the meanings above. For Blake, humanity<sup>1</sup> can restore her ideal Self and become One with God if she activates the Logos residing in her heart. Focusing on *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, this article discusses Blake's view on the essence of God that makes possible humanity's theosis (deification), within the context of orthodox<sup>2</sup> Christian panentheism. Furthermore, the definition and function of Blake's Urizen/Reason in the process of human perfection are examined, with illustrations from Blake's Marginalia and "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

## 2. Orthodox Christian Panentheism in Blake's *Jerusalem*

Panentheism—a term coined by Karl Krause (1781-1832) (Cooper, 2006: 26)—acknowledges the different essence of the One Creator and His creations. Still, it advocates their interaction and union through the establishment of a bond that permits this union (Cooper, 2006: 18). Explaining panentheism, John W. Cooper (2006) quotes Arnulf Zweig: "Though God contains the world, he is nevertheless other than and superior to it. The distinction between God and the world is that of whole and part" (p. 122). Classical panentheism (Neoplatonism) was developed in parallel with Christianity in the same Hellenistic cultural environment. Plotinus (204-270), the father of Classical panentheism, was raised in a pagan environment of similar religious ideas to the Christian doctrines developed

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, "humanity," the "soul," and the "Church" are treated as female nouns. Also, "humanity" and "man" are used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> The term orthodox is used inclusively to refer to all Christian denominations that embrace the Trinity doctrine and the "hypostatic union" doctrine.

during Plotinus's adult life (Herman, 2014: 137). Embracing Plato's eternal, infinite, and all transcendent One (Cooper, 2006: 42), Plotinus views God and the universe ontologically different. However, he enriches Plato's classical theism with the concept of emanations/hypostases. According to Plotinus, the One remains undiminished by His contractions. However, His contractions—the Mind, the World-Soul, and the cosmos—are generated hierarchically (the Great Chain of Being). At the same time, each emanation is reinforced by eros/love in an upward movement and tries to unite with the One (Cooper, 2006: 40-41). Thus, the material world is not divine but “participates in” the One through the mediation of the “divine,” “distinct,” and “transcendent World-Soul” (Cooper, 2006: 42-43). The ideas of early Fathers of the Church such as Origen (c. 185-c. 254), Arius (c. 250-c. 336), and Eunomius (c. 335-c. 394), who considered the Son inferior to the Father, are kin to Plotinus's panentheism but are considered heretical by the orthodox tradition (McGrath, 2011: 274-275; Basil of Caesarea, “Dogmatic: Against Eunomius,” 1894: 55-56).

Orthodox Christian panentheism is sustained by the Christian ideas of the Trinitarian God (the Trinity doctrine) and Christ's dual nature, fully God and fully man (the “hypostatic union” doctrine). Orthodox Christian panentheism claims that the three “hypostases” (modes of existence)—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—expressed in the Trinity doctrine are coequal and consubstantial; therefore, they do not emanate hierarchically but are the Godhead. According to the “hypostatic union” doctrine, the “contraction” of the Son assuming flesh (the Incarnate Logos/Christ) neither diminishes His divinity nor results in the mingling of His divine and human natures (McGrath, 2011: 17) but elevates humanity. Therefore, the bond between God and humanity that allows the latter's theosis (deification) is Christ, the Incarnate Logos. Traditionally, the Fathers of the Church have used the imagery of marriage to explain Christ's dual nature<sup>3</sup> as well as the relationship between Christ (male lover) and His Church (female lover).

### **2.1. Blake's View on the Essence of God**

Blake's adherence to the Trinity doctrine, viz., the non-hierarchical emanation of the divine, is clearly expressed in “Marginalia: On Thornton's *The Lord's Prayer, Newly Translated*.” Blake prays, “Jesus, our Father, who art in thy Heavens call'd by thy Name the Holy Ghost [E 668]” (Blake, 2008: 469). Although his prayer is not the standard One, it expresses that God has three different hypostases

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<sup>3</sup> In the Eighth Catechetical Oration, Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), a theologian of the Antiochene School, calls the dual nature of Christ “the union of good pleasure,” alluding to the relationship of a husband and a wife: ‘The distinction between the natures does not annul the exact conjunction, nor does the exact conjunction destroy the distinction between the natures, but the natures remain in their respective existence while separated, and the conjunction remains intact because the one who was assumed is united in honor and glory with the one who assumed, according to the will of the one who assumed him [...] The fact that a husband and wife are ‘one flesh’ does not impede them from being two. Indeed, they will remain two because they are two, but they are one because they are also one and not two. In this same way here [i.e., in the incarnation] they are two by nature and one by conjunction; two by nature, because there is a great difference between the natures, and done by conjunction because the adoration offered to the one who has been assumed is not divided from that offered to the one who assumed him, since he [i.e., the one that is assumed] is the temple, from which it is not possible for the one who dwells in it to depart.’ (McGrath, 2011: 279-280)

(modes of existence) of one ousia (substance).<sup>4</sup> Blake adopts the orthodox interpretation of the Trinity by applying perichoresis,<sup>5</sup> the interchangeable use of the attributes of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Blake uses perichoresis in his references to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit throughout *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*. When Blake uses the epithets “Divine Lord & Saviour” (*Jerusalem* 1.25:7) and “Father & Saviour” (*Jerusalem* 1.25:9) (Blake, 2008: 239) to address Christ, he brings the incomprehensibility of the Father and the redeeming nature of the Son in a harmonious union. Also, in the opening part of *Jerusalem*, Blake refers to Christ as “the God of Fire and Lord of Love to whom the Ancients look’d and saw his day afar off, with trembling & amazement” (“To the Public,” Plate 3) (Blake, 2008: 210) and “And of that God/ Who in mysterious Sinai’s awful cave,/ To Man the wond’rous art of writing gave./ Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!/ Thunder of Thought, & flames of fierce desire” (“To the Public,” Plate 3:2-6) (Blake, 2008: 210). Blake acknowledges that the God of the two covenants—the Old Testament and the New Testament—is the same. Blake rejects the literal reading of the Old Testament that provides a conventional understanding of Jehovah (the Father) as the fearful God-punisher. Instead, he promotes the figurative meaning of the Old Testament that consists of types. Thus, Blake promotes the Bible’s allegorical reading and clarifies the function of all biblical imageries as prooikonomia (foreshadowing) to the coming of the Incarnate Logos (Christ), the forgiving God. To support that Jehovah is the loving God of the New Testament (Christ/Logos), Blake stresses the divine attributes of desire/erotic love and thought/poetic genius and delivers them through the imagery of the thunderous Christ, conventionally associated with the Father-the punisher.

The passage above also mirrors Blake’s belief in the dual nature of Christ that, in turn, sustains his view on humanity’s theosis (deification). Promoting the allegorical interpretation of God’s thunder and fire, Blake implies the need for the active reading of the Bible based on each person’s poetic genius. In the love synergy between Jehovah/Christ and man manifested in the divine gift of written speech/the Law given to humanity,<sup>6</sup> humanity responds by demonstrating faith in Christ in

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<sup>4</sup> Blake’s understanding of the One God having different hypostases is also mirrored in “And the Divine voice came from the Furnaces, as multitudes without Number!” (*Jerusalem* 2.35/31: 3-4) (Blake, 2008: 253), in which the Logos of God is manifested in various ways in the human heart where an imaginative reason resides. Another imagery is the “Universal Concave” (the whole as one/the Godhead) that appears as particulars: “the Seven Eyes of God;/ Lucifer, Molech, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, Jehovah, Jesus” (*Jerusalem*, 3.55:31-32) (Blake, 2008: 278).

<sup>5</sup> Basil of Caesarea states, He who perceives the Father, and perceives Him by Himself, has at the same time mental perception of the Son; and he who receives the Son does not divide Him from the Spirit, but, in consecution so far as order is concerned, in conjunction so far as nature is concerned, expresses the faith commingled in himself in the three together. He who makes mention of the Spirit alone, embraces also in this confession Him of Whom He is the Spirit. And since the Spirit is Christ’s and of God, as says Paul, then just as he who lays hold on one end of the chain pulls the other to him, so he who ‘draws the Spirit,’ as says the prophet, by His means draws to him at the same time both the Son and the Father. (Basil of Caesarea, Letter XXXVIII, 1894: 429)

<sup>6</sup> The moment of the world’s creation, God speaks. This is the first outward manifestation of God—at least, the part Who is willing to reveal—allowing us to apprehend Him Whose infinity cannot be captured by the human mind. Thus, at the moment of creating nature, God is indirectly manifested in the product of His Logos. Later, the Word of God appears in a physical form as human—Jesus of Nazareth—who has the

the form of love and creativity. Blake's advocacy of the symbolic meaning of the Bible abides by the teachings of Gregory of Nyssa:

For the name of 'thunder' is given in mystical language to the Gospel. Those, then, in whom arises firm and unshaken faith in the Gospel, pass from being flesh to become spirit, as the Lord says, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit [John iii.6].' It is God, then, Who by establishing the voice of the Gospel makes the believer spirit: and he who is born of the Spirit and made spirit by such thunder, 'declares' Christ; as the Apostle says, 'No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Spirit' [1 Cor. xii.3]. ("Dogmatic Treatises: On the Faith") (Gregory of Nyssa, 1892: 628)

Like Gregory of Nyssa, Blake advocates that the New Testament (Logos) is not Law with the conventional meaning of the word, viz., a particular set of rules of proper behaviour (morality). Blake perceives the reading and understanding of Scripture as a creative and love activity based on the activation of the believer's faith, the activation of divine reason (the Holy Spirit) in man as the believer's love response to God/Christ Who is Love. Because the Bible is the eternal and infinite Logos, man's understanding of it is a constant process that depends on the way each reader's mind perceives the text. All readers become creators since, through their active mind, the Bible is infinitely re-created. However, the free character of the interpretation of Scriptures is not equal to arbitrariness. Blake considers the activation of the Holy Spirit in man a prerequisite before any interpretation of the Scriptures.

Perichoresis may also be applied in the lines referring to Christ as the One God: "Even from the depths of Hell his voice I hear, /Within the unfathomed caverns of my Ear" ("To the Public," Plate 3:7-8) (Blake, 2008: 210). The kingdom of the Son (Christ) is mysterious, incomprehensible, and infinite (attributes of the Father). The same passage also refers to the relationship between God and man. God's kingdom penetrates Hell (falsehood), the territory of those who perceive reality by relying on natural reason (thinking based on the human physical senses). As Logos (love and creative imagination), the Godhead resides in the heart of each individual. Blake uses the noun "voice" (Logos/oral speech) to refer to the infinite and eternal Reality of the Godhead offered to humanity through revealed knowledge, the activation of the Holy Spirit in one's heart. Because the relationship between God and man is intimate, man must respond to the Godhead's Logos (speech). Even if the poet is a member of a society that defines reality only in physical terms, he activates his infinite inner senses (divine reason in him)—"I hear"—to communicate with God. Blake's active hearing of God's voice<sup>7</sup> manifests his access to the highest human mental state (the Edenic state), in which the working of the Holy Spirit is manifested through his intense creative activity.

The passage above has its counterpart in the last chapter of *Jerusalem*. After her separation from Luvah, Vala appears as mother nature (Rahab/natural reason/Satan) whose kingdom supplants God's

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ability to speak. After Jesus's resurrection, God's Logos appears as Scripture/New Testament (written Speech) and as the Holy Spirit, the dweller of the believer's soul that enables the believer to utter speech and to act according to the will of God.

<sup>7</sup> In *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, Gershom Scholem (1969) states that the highest form of Jewish mystical experience is Moses's hearing the voice of God (pp. 19-20). Blake sees mystical experience of the highest degree in Christian terms. Blake believes that every person who activates his/her poetic genius is a prophet of God, and he values more the authority of an individual's spiritual hearing of the Holy Spirit residing within him than the authority of one's physical hearing of a distant God.

(Christ's) kingdom in the lowest human mental state of Ulro, geographically presented as Entuthon Benython.<sup>8</sup>

They took their Mother Vala, and they crown'd her with gold:  
They named her Rahab, & gave her the power of the Earth  
The Concave Earth round Golgonooza in Entuthon Benython,  
Even to the stars exalting her Throne, to build beyond the Throne  
Of God and the Lamb, to destroy the Lamb & usurp the Throne of God. (*Jerusalem* 4.78:15-19) (Blake, 2008: 313)

Despite its aspirations of ruling the heavens, the reign of Satan (natural reason) is earthly (physical reality). Blake creates a claustrophobic atmosphere by identifying geographically the confines of natural reason through which man perceives reality in the Ulro state ("Entuthon Benython"). In contrast, Blake highlights the supreme authority of the activation of divine reason in the heart of each man in the Edenic state, the kingdom of the Godhead that—as the poet claims "To the Public"—extends everywhere.<sup>9</sup> The epithet "the Throne of God and the Lamb" stresses the oneness of the Father and the Son. The same epithet also unifies two epithets addressing Christ earlier in *Jerusalem*, namely, "the Lamb of God incomprehensible" (1.7:67) (Blake, 2008: 217) and "the Throne of God" (2.34/30:27) (Blake, 2008: 252). Thus, when Blake breaks the epithet into two parts—"to destroy the Lamb & usurp the Throne of God"—readers understand that in both parts, the poet refers to Christ as the Godhead.

The application of perichoresis is also possible in the interpretation of passages in which Blake views Jehovah as the merciful and forgiving Christ, Who is the Redeemer of humanity through His sacrifice. In such passages, Blake also views the Old Testament and the New Testament as the One Logos of God: "[...] I heard Jehovah speak / Terrific from his Holy Place & saw the Words of the Mutual Covenant Divine" (*Jerusalem* 4.98:40-41) (Blake, 2008: 340), and

[...] But Jehovah's Salvation  
Is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins  
In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity! for behold!  
There is none that liveth & Sinneth not! And this is the Covenant  
Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You. (*Jerusalem* 3.61:21-25) (Blake, 2008: 287)

Blake's Jehovah also shares Christ's dual nature (fully God and fully man): "Before I had ever beheld with love the Face of Jehovah; or known/ That there was a God of Mercy; O Mercy O Divine Humanity!" (*Jerusalem* 3.61:42-43) (Blake, 2008: 288), as well as "And Jehovah stood in the Gates of the Victim, & he appeared/ A weeping Infant in the Gates of Birth in the midst of Heaven" (*Jerusalem* 3.63:16-17) (Blake, 2008: 290).

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<sup>8</sup> "Entuthon Benython" may be a pun consisting of the Greek word "ἐνταυθα"/"ἐντουθα" (entautha), which means "here," and the English word "beneath" with a Greek-sounding suffix. Hence, "Entuthon Benython" may have the meaning "here below," that is, in the physical world. It also alludes to "here lies," written on a tombstone. "Entuthon Benython" is a territory of death/natural reason.

<sup>9</sup> Los also says, "God is within & without! he is even in the depths of Hell" (*Jerusalem* 1.12:15) (Blake, 2008: 221).

## 2.2. Blake's View on the Essence of Humanity

William Blake's perception of humanity stresses her ousia before her material existence. In *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, Northrop Frye (1990) notes that Blake views "all humanity we know in the world of time and space" as an infinite and eternal member of the council of God contained in the body of Christ (p. 125). Blake's view on the essence of humanity is not pantheistic but panentheistic. For Blake, the essence of humanity is divine to the extent that is part ("being in Christ") of the whole ("beyond being"), the infinite, eternal, and one God/Christ. She existed in God as part of His Creative Imagination before her becoming (being materialized), and after her physical manifestation, she still exists in God through the activation of Logos in her. In his works, Blake focuses on the integration of physical humanity in the eternal and infinite body of Christ. Envisioning Christ as a gigantic human body, Blake does not challenge His fully divine nature. He highlights the importance of Christ's "female" side—His fully human nature—that makes humanity's deification possible. The integration of humanity in the divine body is a mental process during which the individual can emotionally and intellectually fall (the states of Ulro and Generation) and rise (the states of Beulah and Eden) at present. The mental state of the individual both reveals the degree of one's spiritual proximity to the immutable Reality (God/Truth) and controls one's free will to be united with or detached from God/Truth.

In the mental states of Ulro and Generation, Albion is called Adam/Satan: "There is a limit of Opakeness, and a limit of Contraction:/ In every Individual Man, and the limit of Opakeness is named Satan: and the limit of contraction is named Adam" (*Jerusalem* 2.42:29-31) (Blake, 2008: 262). Albion experiences mental fall when he objectifies and admires his feminine aspect: "The body is the soul seen from the perspective of this world" (Frye, 1990: 74). According to Blake, man falsely views his soul and reality physically when Selfhood (natural reason), an understanding of reality only based on the physical senses, dominates him. The natural man (fallen Albion) has lost control over his feminine part/soul that is now the "female will" perceived by Adam as nature or woman (Frye, 1990: 126). Albion exclaims,

O how I tremble! How my members pour down milky fear!  
A dewy garment covers me all over, all manhood is gone  
At thy word & at thy look death enrobes me about  
From head to feet, a garment of death & eternal fear. (*Jerusalem* 2.34/30:3-6) (Blake, 2008: 251).

Blake's idea that the physical world is the product of Albion's passivity rather than Christ's creative energy<sup>10</sup> may not be taken at face value. Blake repudiates man's fixation with the mutable and temporal world of matter as the only reality. Detaching Jerusalem (his soul) from Christ, and, thus, from eternity, Albion states, "Jerusalem is not! [...]/By demonstration, man alone can live, and not by faith./ My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself:[...] Here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue" (*Jerusalem* 1.4:27-31) (Blake, 2008: 212). Within a Christian context, physical reality associated with human mortality also corresponds to man's spiritual death, a sterile reason. Dark,

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<sup>10</sup> The orthodox Christian tradition views the creation of the cosmos as a manifestation of divine creativity (Christ). Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373) claims, "There is thus no inconsistency between creation and salvation for the One Father has employed the same Agent for both works, effecting the salvation of the world through the same Word Who made it in the beginning" (*On the Incarnation of the Word* 1.1).

opaque, and suffocating imageries of entrapment, chaos, corruption, and pain portray the mental states of Ulro and Generation, which are associated with negative feelings, including jealousy, frustration, and desperation. Albion speaks “in jealous fears” (*Jerusalem* 1.4:33) (Blake, 2008: 212) and

The banks of Thames are clouded! The ancient porches of Albion are  
Darken'd they are drawn thro' unbounded space, scatter'd upon  
The Void in incoherent despair! Cambridge & Oxford & London  
Are driven among the starry Wheels, rent away and dissipated,  
In Chasms & Abysses of sorrow, enlarg'd without dimension, terrible. (*Jerusalem* 1.5:1-5)  
(Blake, 2008: 212).<sup>11</sup>

Los (human creative imagination) has the leading role to Albion's restoration of his relationship with his soul (Jerusalem) and later God. Los's separation from his emanation Enitharmon and his fighting against his Spectre, who attempts to deceive Los that Christ's “Friendship” is destructive, correspond to man's frustrating perception of reality in the state of Generation.

For as his emanation divided, his Spectre also divided  
In terror of those starry wheels: and the Spectre stood over Los/ Howling in pain: [...]  
Los rag'd and stamp'd the earth in his might & terrible wrath!  
He stood and stamp'd the earth! then he threw down his hammer in rage &  
In fury; then sat down and wept, terrified! Then arose  
And chaunted his song, labouring with the tongs and hammer:  
But still the Spectre divided, and still his pain increas'd (*Jerusalem* 1.6:3-12) (Blake,  
2008: 214-215)

Los's Spectre views “the beauty of Eternity” (Logos) “as deformity” and Logos's “loveliness” “as a dry tree” (*Jerusalem* 1.9:7-8) (Blake, 2008: 218) because the wealthy and powerful religious authority promotes falsehood by rationalizing man's faith in Christ.<sup>12</sup> Blake depicts a Satanic morality that fosters fear, guilt, and shame as a predatory beast threatening man's intellect:

Awkwardness arm'd in steel: folly in a helmet of gold:  
Weakness with horns and talons: ignorance with a rav'ing beak!  
Every Emanative joy forbidden as a Crime:  
And the Emanations buried alive in the earth with pomp of religion:  
Inspiration deny'd; Genius forbidden by laws of punishment. (*Jerusalem* 1.9:12-16)  
(Blake, 2008: 218)

Blake also refutes his contemporary prelates' advocacy of natural reason in “Marginalia: On Bacon's *Essays*,” stating that “Rational Truth is not the Truth of Christ [E621]” (Blake, 2008: 460). Similarly, in his “Marginalia: On Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*,” he asserts that “[Bishop] Watson has defended Antichrist [E612]” (Blake, 2008: 456) and explains that “conscience in those that have it is unequivocal, it is the voice of God Our judgment of right & wrong is Reason [E613]” (Blake, 2008: 456). Blake refers to the Logos of God (“voice of God”) as the “conscience” that is the absolute truth (“unequivocal”); conscience/Logos in man is intrinsic (in the human heart), and through it, man participates in the divine realm. In contrast, Blake associates empirical reason with morality

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<sup>11</sup> See some other examples in *Jerusalem* 1.4:9-10, 1.5: 6-8, 1.5: 13, 1.5: 56-65, 1.7: 22, 1.8-9: 41-2, 2.39/35:16-20.

<sup>12</sup> See also *Jerusalem* 2.33/29:5-18.



(“judgment of right & wrong”); thus, he implies natural reason’s deceiving character because morality is extrinsic (outside the human heart and thus detached from the truth).<sup>13</sup>

Blake rejects morality, the product of natural reason. He praises human imagination, Logos in man, asserting: “[...] Imagination / Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed for ever” (*Jerusalem* 1.5:58-59)(Blake, 2008: 214) and “O Human Imagination O Divine Body I have Crucified / I have turned my back upon thee into the Wastes of Moral Law” (*Jerusalem* 1.24:23-24) (Blake, 2008: 237). Blake’s worship of human imagination and anathema of empirical reason lies in the “hypostatic union” doctrine. The fully human nature of Christ, the historical Jesus, coexists inseparably with the fully divine nature of Christ, Logos/Imagination. The influence of the “hypostatic union” doctrine upon the shaping of Blake’s view on the perfect man is also seen in the identification of Los as the one who leads Albion’s participation in the divine realm: “They [the Sons and Daughters of Los] feared they never more should see their Father, who/ Was built in from Eternity, in the cliffs of Albion” (*Jerusalem* 1.11:14-15) (Blake, 2008: 221).

Los (human imagination) is the only faculty that is directly connected with Logos (divine creative imagination and love) by becoming the foundation of human reason. Thus, only Los can support a human reason that facilitates man’s union with his soul in the Beulah state and the human soul’s union with God in the Edenic state. Striving to gain control over his Spectre through hard labour, hopeful Los forces his Spectre to build Golgonooza,<sup>14</sup> made of pity, affections, love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, honesty, humility, devotion and thanksgiving, as well as the memory of the spoken truth (*Jerusalem* 1.12:30-37). For Blake, a constructive human imagination lies in affections.<sup>15</sup> Still, the state of Generation is related to mental inactivity/infertility. Vala (natural reason and nature), the Virgin-Mother, is worshipped in Babylon, built upon power-relationships, hate and guilt. There, the human soul (*Jerusalem*) is condemned as a harlot (*Jerusalem* 1.18:28-35).<sup>16</sup>

In the states of Beulah and Eden, man perceives the immutable Reality as mental, viz., the pure Mind (Christ). Blake stresses the qualitative aspect of the connection between God and humanity by focusing on the essential role of Christ’s creative energy (Logos) towards the completion of humanity’s deification. Albion’s awakening<sup>17</sup> requires the submission of the female will, viz., the surrender of man’s selfhood/natural reason, and the activation of divine reason in man (faith). Los

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<sup>13</sup> Compare to an allegorical reading of Athanasius’s words, But if they [mankind] went astray and became vile, throwing away their birthright of beauty, then they would come under the natural law of death and live no longer in paradise, but, dying outside of it, continue in death and in corruption. (*On the Incarnation of the Word* 1.3)

<sup>14</sup> Golgonooza is a pun consisting of the word “Golgotha,” where Christ died as a man but resurrected as God, and the word “nous” (mind). It symbolizes the striving human mind that although it suffers in the Generation state, it is redeemed and perfected in the states of Beulah and Eden respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Later in this article, it is argued that Blake’s definition of human reason is inspired by the teachings of Richard of St. Victor, who states that affection is the basis of imagination.

<sup>16</sup> See also *Jerusalem* 2.31/45:50-66.

<sup>17</sup> Blake’s main image of the sleeping Albion—which connotes intellectual passivity—is biblical. A characteristic biblical example is the parable of the ten virgins in which the marriage between Christ and humanity is the theme; thus, in Matthew 25:5, it is stated: “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.”

(human imagination) cannot act alone towards man's restoration of his ideal self but needs Christ's grace. Los labours, "Shouting loud for aid Divine" (*Jerusalem* 2.32/46:9) (Blake, 2008: 250).<sup>18</sup> Christ is responsive to Los's asking for help: "[...] Los sick & terrified beheld the furnaces of Death/ And must have died, but the Divine Saviour descended/Among the infant loves & affections" (*Jerusalem* 2.42:5-7) (Blake, 2008: 261) and "[...] the Divine hand was upon him, strengthening him mightily" (*Jerusalem* 2.42:56) (Blake, 2008: 262). The passages above reflect orthodox Christian panentheism. Human imagination and Christ (Imagination) are distinct. Also, human imagination cannot redeem man without Christ's essential contribution. Still, human imagination must be active by demonstrating the will to activate God's grace. The union between human imagination and Christ, who are distinct but inseparable, is the only means to man's redemption and theosis (perfection).

Beulah is the mental state in which man is intellectually and emotionally fertile. In *Jerusalem*, the activation of divine reason in man is expressed through the orthodox Christian marriage imagery (see footnote 3) that, permeated by the spirit of orthodox Christian panentheism, explains the dual nature of Christ as well as the relationship between Christ and the Church, or each individual. Through the description of false Jerusalem<sup>19</sup> as "Sexual Reasoning Hermaphroditic" (*Jerusalem* 2.33/29:28) (Blake, 2008: 250), Blake rejects the idea of the blending of the feminine and the masculine natures (a distorted union). In contrast, he approves Los's efforts to divide "rocky Spectres" (natural reason/ego) into "Male & Female forms in his Furnaces," "dashing in pieces Self-righteousnesses" (*Jerusalem* 4.78:5-7) (Blake, 2008: 312). Through this, the male and female forms can unite properly by preserving their distinct identities.

Blake views Albion in the ideal Edenic state as the bisexual male whose feminine aspect—his soul—is under his control. The submission of the female will is man's rejection of his ego (Selfhood),<sup>20</sup> which leads to the attainment of man's true Self. Speaking to Enitharmon, Los observes, "How can I ever be united as Man with Man/ While thou my Emanation refusest my fibres of dominion" (*Jerusalem* 4.88:12-13) (Blake, 2008: 327). Still, man's soul is not annihilated; she plays an active part in man's intimate relationship with Christ (Damon, 1988: 120) by becoming the bride of Christ. In Matthew 19:5-6, Matthew 19:11, and Mark 10:6-9, Christ portrays marriage as a spiritual exercise. He stresses the oneness of man and woman and thus implies the mutual rejection of ego and demonstration of sincere love by both partners.<sup>21</sup> Blake understands the union between man (the bridegroom) and his soul (the bride) and the union between Christ (the bridegroom) and Jerusalem/the human soul (the bride) as love relationships, not power relationships.<sup>22</sup> Appearing as the bride of Christ, Jerusalem talks about a union of pleasure:

[...] The Lamb of God met me there,

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<sup>18</sup> See also *Jerusalem* 3.71:56-57.

<sup>19</sup> Vala/Rahab, natural reason and the religion of Generation promoted both by the Deists and the worldly Church.

<sup>20</sup> See *Jerusalem* 4.91:42-46, in which Los subdues his proud Spectre (natural reason).

<sup>21</sup> Also, in Matthew 25:1-13, Christ appears as the bridegroom ready to unite with many wise virgins (human souls) representing humanity as a whole.

<sup>22</sup> For an example of a power relationship, see *Jerusalem* 4.87:12-16 and 4.88:16-21, in which Enitharmon, separated from Los, addresses Los.

There we walked as in our secret chamber among our little ones.  
They looked upon our loves with joy: they beheld our secret joys:  
With holy raptures of adoration rapd sublime in the Visions of God (*Jerusalem*  
4.79:41-44) (Blake, 2008: 314).<sup>23</sup>

The reintegration of humanity (or the individual) in the divine body of Christ takes place in the Edenic state. Albion exclaims, “O Vala/In Eternity they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (*Jerusalem* 2.34/30:14-15) (Blake, 2008: 251); Los asserts, “Sexes must vanish & cease/ To be when Albion arises from his dread repose O lovely Enitharmon” (*Jerusalem* 4.92:13-14) (Blake, 2008: 333). Towards the end of *Jerusalem*, Blake expresses his advocacy of orthodox Christian panentheism openly through the comforting dialogue between Albion and Christ. When Albion expresses his fear that he is Selfhood/Satan, he addresses Christ as his “Divine Creator and Redeemer” (*Jerusalem* 4.96:13) (Blake, 2008: 337). Albion’s statement is shaped by his belief in the Trinity doctrine and the “hypostatic union” doctrine. Albion identifies himself as a creation unable to save himself; thus, he implies that his essence is different from God’s essence. He also acknowledges Christ as the “Creator,” the One God, and the “Redeemer,” Whose dual nature is redemptive for humanity. Christ explains to Albion that through His sacrifice as man and His resurrection as God, humanity is redeemed from her Selfhood: “Fear not Albion, unless I die thou canst not live/ But if I die I shall arise again & thou with me/ This is Friendship and Brotherhood, without it Man Is Not” (*Jerusalem* 4.96:14-16) (Blake, 2008: 337); later, Christ states, “[.] For Man is Love;/ As God is Love [...] nor can Man exist but by Brotherhood.” (*Jerusalem* 4.96:26-28) (Blake, 2008: 337). The words of Christ mirror the “hypostatic union” doctrine. The word “Friendship” implies the divine nature of Christ, Who is the relational God, while the word “Brotherhood” implies Christ’s human nature. Stressing His sacrifice, Christ/Logos also manifests Himself as Selfless Love and explains that man cannot exist in eternity without Logos/Selfless Love, viz., man participates in the divine realm through Christ. As the Perfect Man, Christ becomes the role model for humanity’s theosis (deification), that is, man can attain his ideal Self through the practice of unconditional love. As God, Christ (Love) is the life force that permeates all creations, including humanity. Finally, Christ’s reference to humanity’s experiencing eternity as “brotherhood” also strengthens the claim that Blake defends orthodox Christian panentheism. Humanity is elevated in Christ collectively, without, however, each member of the brotherhood to lose his/her distinct identity. The oneness of perfect humanity is collective because she is a creation, as opposed to God’s Oneness that is simple because He is the Creator.

### 3. Blake’s Christian Definition of Urizen (Human Reason)

For Blake, humanity’s narrow or expanded perception of her true self depends on how she reasons. Reason, either natural reason (the Generation state and the Ulro state) or divine reason (the Beulah state and the Edenic state), defines all mental states. The central function of reason in the process of man’s perfection for Blake is evident in the figure of Urizen, one of Blake’s Four Zoas that make up Albion’s essence. S. Foster Damon (1988) provides various interpretations of Blake’s Urizen. Urizen may be a pun meaning “Your reason” (p. 419). Kathleen Raine traces the origins of the word in the Greek “orizein” (to limit), the root also of the term “horizon” (Damon, 1988: 419). Raine associates Urizen only with natural reason, “the limiter of energy” (Damon, 1988: 419). Raine’s Urizen

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<sup>23</sup> See also *Jerusalem* 4.81:15.

(the natural reason) restrains man's life force (Logos/Christ/the Holy Spirit in man) and is identical to Blake's Satan/selfhood/natural reason, an expression of man's free will. However, her observation about the Greek origins of the word also encourages a neutral understanding of Urizen that stresses the active role of the human soul in her intimate relationship with Logos through the practice of her free will. The Greek word "orizein" also means "to control," which may have both positive and negative connotations. That the activation of divine reason in man is the product of man's free will implies that one must be in control of (to know) oneself before they voluntarily activate the divine reason. The preservation of the distinct identity of the self in union with God is an essential trait of panentheism.

Damon (1988) also presents Kerrison Preston's interpretation of Urizen that enriches Raine's definition of Urizen. He explains that because a fourfold Albion is the image of God, then God must be fourfold. Tharmas corresponds to the Father, Luvah corresponds to the Son, Urthona corresponds to the Holy Spirit, and Urizen is "that aspect of deity which, when fallen, becomes Satan" (Damon, 1988: 419). If so, that aspect of God should be Divine Free Will associated with Divine Creativity (Logos as the Prime Cause) since fallen man's free will is controlled by Satan/natural reason. Thus, the connecting bond between Urizen/reason and Elohim (the Judge/ Punisher and Creator of Adam and the material world) is Satan. Damon (1988) claims that the association of Urizen/reason, Satan, and Elohim/the Judge becomes for Blake a means of explaining the Original Sin (p. 119) that results from man's free will. Satan convinces Eve that eating from the tree of knowledge, "ye shall be as gods [judges], knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5); the deceived humanity assumes the role of the judge, making the error of "dividing all human realities into good and evil" (Damon, 1988: 119). Furthermore, Damon (1988) refers to a conversation of Blake with Crabb Robinson, during which Blake "refers to Nature as the work of the Devil" (p. 119).

Raine's and Preston's views may become the source of inspiration for an orthodox Christian interpretation of Blake's Urizen, in which Albion (humanity) in his ideal state is the image of God sharing God's reason (the Holy Spirit in man). In the Edenic state, the four zoas making up the soul of Albion—Tharmas (sensuality), Luvah (affection), Urthona (imagination), and Urizen (reason)—are in harmonious synergy, and, thus, man can enjoy union with Christ. Blake seems to be familiar with Victorine Richard's use of the marriage imagery, which traditionally refers to the love union between Christ and the Church.<sup>24</sup> Blake states that when Albion is overwhelmed by natural reason and becomes the Spectre of his true self, there is "Deadly Hate between Leah & Rachel" (*Jerusalem* 3.69:11) (Blake, 2008: 300).

In "The Way to Contemplation," Richard of St. Victor (2006) explains that man's sensuality (Zilpah), affection (Leah), imagination (Bilhah), and reason (Rachel) should deliver their offspring based on an orderly collaboration corresponding to the consecutive activation of the senses, feelings, imagination, and reason. Thus, he rejects the reason that is supported by the senses (natural reason)

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<sup>24</sup> Another name for the process of man's contemplation of the Divine—that is, the workings of Christ in us—is faith. The lack of collaboration among the four elements of man's soul—that is, lack of faith—causes man's false perception of himself and reality, or a malfunctioning of the Holy Spirit in man, weak faith that results from man's free will.

and acknowledges imagination as the basis of reason.<sup>25</sup> In “To the Reverend Dr. John Trusler, August 23, 1799,” Blake shows the intimate relationship between reason and imagination by quoting Bacon: “Sense sends over to Imagination before Reason have judged & Reason sends over to Imagination before the Decree can be acted” (Blake, 2008: 471).<sup>26</sup>

Echoing Richard of St. Victor, Blake sees the soul in the Beulah state to be dominated by love and imagination but has not reached perfection yet. Man’s soul has not become one with Christ, Who is infinite and eternal Creative Imagination and Love. Richard of St. Victor asserts that the children of Rachel (reason) are born last. Benjamin (contemplation) is Rachel’s last child. He signals the soul’s laborious entering into the Edenic state, the love synergy between the soul and God: “She [Rachel/reason] multiplieth her study, and whetteth her desires, seeking desire upon desire” (“The Way to Contemplation,” Capitulum X) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 112). During this process, human reason is assisted by God, “[...] Yet may a man [his soul] never come to such a grace by his own slight” (“The Way to Contemplation,” Capitulum X) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 111). Blake’s creative imagination shares with Victorine Richard’s reason the constant desire for more productivity. Blake exclaims, “The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & himself infinite” (“There Is No Natural Religion [b], VII”) (Blake, 2000: 42) and “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom/Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity./He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence [...] Eternity is in love with the productions of time” (“The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” Proverbs of Hell, Plate 7) (Blake, 2000: 75). Blake also echoes Richard’s view on reason as “a working soul” (“The Way to Contemplation,” Capitulum X) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 111), viz., energy, when he asserts, “Energy is the only life. [...] Energy is Eternal Delight” (“The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” The Voice of the Devil, Plate 4) (Blake, 2000: 74).

The end of contemplation signals the union of man and Christ, man’s (the part’s) reintegration in the body of Christ (the whole). Blake views the death of reason as the completion of the individual (man in the Edenic state), echoing Richard’s words, “So that at the last, in great abundance of brenning desires and sorrow of the delaying of her [Rachel’s/reason’s] desire, Benjamin [contemplation] is born, and his mother Rachel [reason] dieth” (“The Way to Contemplation,” Capitulum X ) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 112). Richard of St. Victor uses the imagery of Rachel assisted by Bilhah to depict the activation of divine reason in man as feminine. Divine reason in man is the virtues of God—love and wisdom (the Logos of God)—comprising God’s feminine side. Victorine Richard’s view of the union between man and God through the labour of the female reason

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<sup>25</sup> Richard of St. Victor states: Then when Judah waxeth, that is to say, when love and desire of unseen true goods is rising and waxing in a man’s affection, then coveteth Rachel for to bear some Children; [...] But who is he that woteth not how hard it is, and near-hand impossible to a fleshly soul, the which is yet rude in ghostly studies, for to rise in knowing of unseeable things, and for to set the eye of contemplation in ghostly things? For why: a soul that is yet rude and fleshly knoweth nought but bodily things, and nothing cometh yet to the mind but only seeable things. And, nevertheless, yet it looketh inward as it may; and that that it may not see yet clearly by ghostly knowing, it thinketh by imagination. And this is the cause why Rachel had first children of her maiden than of herself (“The Way to Contemplation,” Capitulum V) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 101)

<sup>26</sup> See also *Jerusalem* 3.74:10-13.

is strikingly the same with Blake's view of the union between Albion and Christ through their feminine sides.

The death of man's reason (Rachel) who resides in man's soul and who laboriously produces contemplation (Benjamin) does not have a negative meaning. Richard of St. Victor states, "a soul is ravished above itself by abundance of desires and a great multitude of love, so that it is inflamed with the light of the Godhead, sickerly then dieth all man's reason" ("The Way to Contemplation," Capitulum X) (Richard of St. Victor, 2006: 112). To be perfected, man's poetic genius must submit to Christ's infinite and eternal mind in the final stage of contemplation, during which man mentally transcends the boundaries of physical reality. Similarly, Blake is aware that man's reason must follow the yearnings of the human soul for union with God and not act independently and arbitrarily. Natural reason (man's ego)<sup>27</sup> puts obstacles to the completion of the human soul's union with Christ. Paradoxically, the surrendering of man's will to God's will connotes a laborious mental activity. It gives man access to a constant fertile process of getting to know God. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Blake echoes Victorine Richard's teachings in several proverbs: "Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead," "No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings," and "The most sublime act is to set another before you" (Proverbs of Hell, Plate 7) (Blake, 2000: 75).

In *William Blake's Religious Vision: There's a Methodism in His Madness*, Jennifer G. Jesse's view on Urizen defends the orthodox interpretation of Urizen proposed here. Jesse (2013) associates human imagination with faith and faith with reason. She notes that Blake's Los (imagination) and Urizen (reason) may not always symbolize the good and the evil, respectively (p. 51). Unlike Raine's interpretation of Urizen as "the limiter of energy," Jesse (2013) offers another proper meaning of the Greek term "horizo," namely, "'the appointed one' the One who is 'decisive' for the salvation history recounted in the epics" (p. 52). She associates Urizen with Christ's redeeming nature seen in Christianity as the Messiah: "Does his very name declare (designate) his Christological identity? Has he been separated not in a negative way, but in Paul's positive sense of being 'chosen' or 'set apart' for a special apostolic vocation?" (Jesse, 2013: 53) Her logic abides by orthodox Christian teachings that view a productive reason in man as divine reason/the Holy Spirit, that is, Logos/Christ and the Savior of humanity.

Jesse explores the influence of John Wesley on Blake. She observes that John Wesley differentiates between pure imagination (faith) and the false imagination of radicals who repudiate reason and claim to be permeated by the Holy Spirit (Jesse, 2013: 40;197). Wesley's definition of faith and its catalytic role toward the shaping of man's genuine response to Christ, Who is absolute Love and Creative force, is a noteworthy example of the preservation of the orthodox Christian tradition within the fragmented Church. The approach of Richard of St. Victor and John Wesley to reason is the same. Jesse's claim of "the integral interconnection between Los and Urizen [...] that fall and rise together" (Jesse, 2013: 203) is evident in Blake's letter to Reverend Dr. John Trusler, August 23, 1799:

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<sup>27</sup> What Blake describes as a restrainer of energy— "the bound or outward circumference of Energy" ("The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," The Voice of the Devil, Plate 4) (Blake, 2000: 74)—is exclusively natural reason, a distorted reason formed by the lack of faith, miscoordination among the four Zoas.

‘That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot<sup>28</sup> is not worth my care [...]. I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision [...] I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike. [...] To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination.’ (Bentley, 2001: 182)

In the passage above, Blake, the artist, does not question that reason is the mental faculty through which humanity perceives Reality. However, he redefines it by pointing out that the basis of pure human reason is not the physical senses but imagination. Blake’s repudiation of the natural reason is reflected in his view of the individual who understands reality physically as an “idiot.” According to the classical Greek tradition, an “idiot” is a self-centered person who is characterized by limited consciousness and lacks a sense of brotherhood. The domination of ego/excessive pride (hubris) produces a tainted human reason (hatei). Therefore, an idiot has a limited understanding of reality and, inevitably, experiences falsehood. Blake associates the exercise of natural reason with the domination of one’s ego and the inactivity of Logos in man, which, in turn, causes one’s detachment from the eternal and infinite Reality. In contrast, Blake points out that an imagination-based reason is strongly associated with God Himself, Who is Logos. Thus, it allows the participation of humanity in the eternal and infinite Reality, the immutable truth. Blake’s choice of diction reveals his embracement of Christian pantheism. Placing together “imagination” and “vision,” he endows imagination with a spiritual character. Also, Blake’s reference to the oneness of the cosmos through imagination implies Logos as the connecting bond between the Creator and His creations, including humanity.

#### 4. Conclusion

Blake’s view on the essence of man is related to his view on the essence of God. In *Jerusalem*, Blake advocates orthodox Christian pantheism that lies in the Trinity doctrine and the “hypostatic union” doctrine. Applying perichoresis, Blake expresses his belief in the Trinity doctrine and, thus, he perceives Christ the One, infinite, and eternal God. Also, embracing the “hypostatic union” doctrine, Blake believes in humanity’s attainment of her ideal Self (theosis) in union with Christ. Without ignoring the physical essence of humanity, Blake advocates that Reality is mental and brings to the fore the spiritual essence of humanity that is Christlike. Christ is the Logos/Reason, that is, Creative Imagination and Love. Hence, the spiritual essence of humanity is a human reason permeated by the life force of Christ (divine reason). The man who sees reality based on the physical senses (natural reason) denies the divine reason in him. Thus, he experiences only the finite physical reality of corruption and death and alienates himself from his soul/the higher Self in union with the eternal and infinite God/Christ. Blake celebrates the activation of Logos in man—a human reason illumined by creative imagination and love—as the means of fallen humanity to perceive the eternal and infinite Reality and to experience her theosis. Understanding Christ, the Logos of God, as Love and Creativity, and encouraging his fellowmen to become Christlike, William Blake helps his readers realize that culture is the backbone of perfected humanity. His poetry is a spiritual exercise that stimulates and invigorates the readers’ intellect and, thus, contributes to humanity’s infinitely

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<sup>28</sup> Blake uses the word “idiot” with its original Greek meaning that is “a self-centered man, an egoist.” Within a Christian context, an egoist is a man who solely uses his natural reason.

expanding understanding of Reality and perennial exploration of her ideal Self beyond the confines of the physical world.

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