

## In the Caves of Heaven and Hell: Swedenborg and Printmaking in Blake's *Marriage*

### [Part III of The Evolution of William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*]

Joseph Viscomi \*

It was granted me to see from beginning to end how the last judgment was accomplished; and also how the Babylon was destroyed (Rev. 18), how those who are understood by the dragon were cast into the abyss; and how the new heaven was formed; and a new church was instituted in the heavens, which is meant by the New Jerusalem. It was granted me to see all these things with my own eyes, in order that I might be able to testify to them. This last judgment was commenced in the beginning of the year 1757, and was fully accomplished at the end of that year.

—Emanuel Swedenborg,  
*A Treatise Concerning the Last Judgment and the Destruction of Babylon*  
(1758; English translation, 1788).

As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent: the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up.

—William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790).

The present essay is the third of three on the evolution of William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Viscomi 1997, 1998). The first argues that the *Marriage* evolved through 4-6 distinct printmaking sessions in the following plate order: 21-4; 12-13; 1-3, 5-6, 11, 6-10; 14-15, ?4; 16-20; and 25-27. From the chronology of plate production, we can infer that Blake began the *Marriage* without a completed manuscript, a hypothesis supported by the technical exigencies of illuminated printing. We can also infer that the *Marriage's* disjointed structure resulted at least in part from its production history. While literary models, such as Menippean satire or the Higher Criticism's theory that the Old Testament was a gathering of redacted fragments, may also have influenced the structure, they appear to have come into play only after plates 21-24 were written and executed. These four plates constitute an autonomous text expressing almost exclusively Blake's criticism of Emanuel Swedenborg. The text's autonomy and

the fact that its four plates were quarters cut from the same sheet of copper (the first of seven sheets eventually cut) support the hypothesis that it was written as an independent, anti-Swedenborgian pamphlet, as does the fact that plates 21-24 were first printed in black ink on a conjoined sheet of paper folded in half. [1] But instead of being issued separately, this four-plate text became the intellectual core of what became the *Marriage*, helping to generate 20 of its subsequent 23 plates.

The second essay reads plates 21-24 closely as a pamphlet to demonstrate thematic, aesthetic, and rhetoric coherence. It also argues that "The Bible of Hell," announced on plate 24 as forthcoming and thus before the other *Marriage* plates were written and executed, probably referred to the 70 proverbs of hell or to an anticipated work (or series of pamphlets) that included them. This essay also dates Blake's interest in and disillusionment with Swedenborg, placing the latter within the context of critiques most likely known to Blake, and it identifies the primary Swedenborgian texts and themes that Blake satirizes and the audiences he addresses. Blake's decision to combine two separate projects—the anti-Swedenborgian pamphlet and the devil's Bible—to form what became the *Marriage* required writing new plates to contextualize the proverbs and connect them to what had already been written. His decision provided new opportunities to satirize Swedenborg and what he came to represent to Blake, such as organized religion, oppression, imitation, usurpation, and misreading.

The present essay focuses on Blake's allusions to printmaking, their connections to Swedenborg, and the way they evolved. The plates to be examined are 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 20. Each presents a cave, a literary and mythological symbol that has various and often contradictory referents. While it can refer to the material universe, obscurity or illusion, to sex, birth or death, in *Marriage* it is first and foremost an emblem for hell, its traditionally depicted opening. In this inverted world, hell represents creative energy and originality, subjects Blake explores and displays. Their loci are illuminated plates—the impressions we read and the copper plates from which they were printed—and enlightened minds, each symbolized by the open cave. The latter's contrary—the mind closed to all save reason and the five senses—is symbolized by a cave closed save for narrow chinks. [2] As a symbol for the illuminated plate, the cave, along with other allusions to the mechanics and materiality of the written and printed word, sets into play the self-reflexivity usually associated with formalism. When read in light of Swedenborg, however, the symbol can also be seen as part of Blake's intense expressionism.

At first glance, caves seem present only on *Marriage* plates 14, 15, and 17, and these are exclusively verbal. On plate 14, a cave signifies limited perception: "for man has closed himself up till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." On plate 15, in "The Printing house in Hell," a cave is transformed into a book. And on plate 17, a cave opens to the immense abyss that hosts the leviathan. These references seem unrelated and too infrequent to support the claim that the cave is a major symbol in *Marriage*. A closer look at *Marriage* plates as originally designed and executed, however, reveals that the cave was a visual motif on plates 10, 11, 15, and 20 (illus 1-3, and 5). The motif is clearly present in *Marriage* copies G and I, but because these were the last two copies printed (c. 1818 and 1827 respectively), it is thought to have been added to the impressions (Bentley 1977, p. 290). In fact, the cave forms were drawn on the copper plates themselves, as part of the original plate designs; their absence in the seven copies printed and color printed between 1790 and 1795 (i.e., copies A-F and H, though ink traces of the cave forms are present in copy B), is due to the way Blake inked and printed illuminated plates at this time. From 1789 to 1795, Blake wiped the ink from the plate's borders, thereby concealing the plate's rectangular shape and producing impressions that appeared more page-like than print-like. [3] But deleting the borders altered those images whose forms were partly delineated by the border line. In the case of *Songs of Innocence*, it removed the streams on plates 4, 7, 8, 10, 20, 21, and 23 by erasing the bottom line that defined them; in *Marriage*, wiping the borders removed the caves on plates 10, 11, 15, and 20, because it erased the outer defining lines. When Blake began printing plate borders, streams and caves reappeared.

Plates 21-24 are quarters from the same sheet of copper (sheet I); the second sheet quartered appears to have been *The Approach of Doom* (sheet II), which now yielded plates 12 and 13, after which there appears to have been a hiatus (see Viscomi 1997). Production resumed with three sheets of the same size (III, IV, V) quartered to provide plates for the proverbs (7-10) and their introductory material (5-7), the introductory material for *Marriage* (1-3), the ancient poets' episode (11), and two interrelated narratives explaining the origin, purpose, and method of Blake's special mode of printmaking (14 and 15). The texts of these last two plates may have been written and executed with plates 1-3, 5-10, or they may have been written shortly afterward, along with plate 4. In either event, note that the cave motif appears with the plates cut from sheets III, IV, and V, on plates 10, 11, 14, and 15, and that it continues

in the next multi-plate textual unit written and executed. This unit consists of plates 16-20, cut from sheet VI (16-19) and II (20), and has caves on plates 17, 20, and, as will be argued, 16 in the form of the Giants' cell. Visually and/or verbally, then, caves are present on plates 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 20, and they entered *Marriage* during the third stage of its production and continued through the next one or two stages.

Not coincidentally, plates 10 and 11 picture three figures on an island set within a cave open to the text (illus 1 and 2). [4] The chronology of production, however, suggests that plate 11 was most likely composed and executed before plate 10 was executed. Because Blake worked from texts but not



from models for his illuminated pages, the illustration on plate 10 was probably not sketched out when plate 11 was designed and executed (Viscomi 1993, chs. 1-4). One could argue that plate 11's text was written with the texts of plates 14 and 15, where Blake uses the cave metaphor to signify limited perception and etching a copper plate, and thus that the *design* of plate 11 was influenced by their verbal



imagery. But the production record strongly suggests that textual units were executed soon after they were written, and that plates 14 and 15 were probably written after plate 11 was written and executed and were influenced by it (see below). Even if their texts did precede the design and execution of plate 11, such a sequence does not explain what the cave means on plate 11, or whether we view this scene from within a cavern, as Erdman proposes, or are outside looking into a cave (1994, p. 108). To answer these questions—and to ascertain whether the various caves cohere as a unified symbol—requires recognizing plate 11's allusions to Swedenborg and the internal-external dialectic they continue from plates 21-24 and 12-13.

### I. "Ancient Poets animated all sensible objects"

The Memorable Fancy of plates 22-24 presents an angel and a devil debating the nature of God. To the devil, God is incarnate in "great men" and the "greatest man" is Christ, who was "all virtue & acted from impulse; not from rule." To the angel, Christ "sanctioned . . . the law of ten commandments," is an external and powerful lawmaker and "all other men [are] fools sinners &

nothings." Given the connotations of "devil" and "angel," the devil's victory challenges orthodox morality and, more disturbingly, reveals how language affects perception and experience, a point Blake will make explicit on plate 3, where he states that "Good & Evil" are merely what "the religious *call*" those qualities "springing" from "reason" and "energy." In the debate, these contraries correspond to "rules" passively followed by angels and "impulses" associated with devils, yet acted upon by Christ. The former, grounded in intellectual laziness, validates imitation and rationalizes restriction; the latter encourages originality and freedom. That originality requires more effort and courage than imitation Blake will make explicit on plates 12-13, 11, 5-6, and 16-20; in the debate, it is implied by the angel's response to the devil's argument: he "embrac[ed] the flames of fire" to arise "as Elijah" and "become a Devil"—and Blake's "particular friend" (see also Viscomi 1997, n. 24).

The angel's conversion signals the truth of the devil's position. Plates 12-13, which show Blake learning from prophets and not, like Swedenborg, from angels, offer another version of the same debate and a similar conversion. Dining with the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, Blake inquires about the nature of God. Again, the issue is whether God is transcendent or incarnate, with Blake initially accusing the prophets of being like Swedenborg, "assert[ing] that God spoke to them," and thus potentially being a cause of "imposition" (plate 13). Blake discredits Swedenborg's angelic sources but believes the prophets' "Poetic Genius," which they identify as "the first principle" of "human perception," from which "all Gods would at last be proved to originate" (plates 12-13) (see also Viscomi 1997b). Whereas plates 21-24 differentiate Blake and Swedenborg, associating the former with great writers and prophets and the latter with imitators and followers, plates 12-13 differentiate true prophets and followers, between those who continue the Word and those who codify it. Blake "confess[es his] own conviction," signaling, like the converted angel, the validity of the prophets' positions.

Plate 11 echoes themes raised in these and the other plates composed before it. It states that the "ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses . . . Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood." Plate 11 presents the origin of organized religion as yet another version of the fall of man, a theme expressed also on plates 2 and 5-6. It also comments on plates 12-13 and 21-24 by explaining why belief in "the jews code and worship[of] the jews god"—that is, accepting

the angel's version of God—is the "subjection" claimed by Isaiah and Ezekiel. The "vulgar" were subjected or "enslav'd" because they "forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (plate 11), forgot, that is, what the prophets knew, that "all Gods would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius." This belief in man's divinity, expressed earlier in Blake's *There in No Natural Religion* and *All Religions are One* (1788), echoes the devil's version of God as incarnate, a belief that Blake will restate on *Marriage* plate 16: "God only Acts & Is. in existing beings or Men."

While expressing the sentiments of the French Revolution, Blake's anti-clericalism follows closely Swedenborg's description of Babylon (signifying the degenerate Christian church, but more specifically the Catholic Church), which itself follows closely Protestant ideology that casts priests as mediators, deliberately keeping the Word from the people. "All they who make Dominion their end, and Religion as a Means conducive thereto, constitute Babylon in general." In the "Spiritual World," those from Babylon "consult about various things relating to their Religion, especially how the Vulgar are to be kept in blind Obedience, and their dominion extended." They keep "the People in Ignorance" by extinguishing "the Light of Heaven by forbidding the Reading of the Word." [5] Blake gives this neat causality an infernal spin, accusing "Priests" of *creating* the light of "heaven" by their misreading—and forbidding the continuation of—the poetic/prophetic Word. Their attending to the external rather than the internal, to the letter rather than the spirit and source of the poetic/prophetic texts, created ritual, "forms of worship" derived from "poetic tales," a displacement they claimed "that the Gods had ordered." Foiling infinite perception, "Priests" are to "ancient Poets" what "heaven" is to "hell" (plate 6); they are derivative, an imitation, a falling away from the original—and provide the model for Urizen, "the primeval Priest" (*Book of Urizen*, pl. 2: E70).

Swedenborg's description of Adam's church and its fall also figures into plate 11. According to Swedenborg, the "four Churches" that preceded the New Church were those of Adam ("the Most Ancient"), Noah ("the Ancient"), the Jews ("the Israelitish") and the Apostles ("the Christian"). [6] Of these, the Most Ancient was closest to God. Its members understood the "science of correspondences," the system of analogies that links every perceived thing and event to its spiritual counterpart and cause. Moreover, they

had no other than internal worship, such as there is in heaven; for with them heaven so

communicated with man that they made one. This communication was the perception of which so much has been said above . . . perceiving in all objects of sense something Divine and heavenly . . . . Thus it was with the man of the Most Ancient church; whatever he saw with his eyes was to him heavenly; and thus with him each and all things were as if alive. From this it is evident what the nature of his Divine worship was; that it was internal, and in no respect external. [7]

It did not remain authentic, however. According to Swedenborg, “the representative rites of the [Most Ancient] church” were slowly “converted into things idolatrous,” and “knowledge [of correspondence] . . . was gradually lost, and among the Israelitish and Jewish people entirely forgotten.” [8] “Images representative of spiritual truths” “became objects of worship” and “adored as deities.” [9] The Christian church provides only a partial correction, for it professes one God while actually praying to a "Trinity of Divine Persons," whom Blake identifies as "the Father [as] Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum" (plate 6). [10]

These are the "idols" of "priesthood," but the New Church's "One God" is also an idol, an abstraction unaware of its origin in the "Poetic Genius," the origin of "all Gods." Swedenborg's “representative rites” did not degenerate into idolatry, but were themselves idolatrous, for as derivations of “poetic tales,” they represent the earliest misreadings of works of the imagination and the beginning of their repression. Blake examines the same history as Swedenborg, and he once again implies that Swedenborg has not gone deep enough and is part of what he criticizes, a priest complicit in the repression of poets. [11] Blake also implies that he, not Swedenborg, will restore our original, Adamic state of being.

The conflict between ancient poets and priests parallels that between devil and angel, as well as that between Blake and Swedenborg, with the latter fixated on external forms, looking outward for answers, and the former looking to the Poetic Genius within (a conflict given its most demanding expression in *Jerusalem*). In light of Blake's ongoing debate with Swedenborg, plate 11's cave appears anti-Platonic, with reality residing in and within the cave rather than outside and transcendent. The living island's deities reside in the “human breast” and are “mental,” representing a mode of perceiving and not external objects perceived. [12] As such, a cave opening to reveal an island recalls the devil's

message: "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight clos'd by your senses five?" [13] In peering into the cave, readers peer into the mind of the ancient poets, glimpsing their own potential in this "immense world of delight" (plate 7). Using hell's emblem to symbolize the creative mind reinforces the link between hell and "Genius" made on plate 6 and, as we will see, points to the illuminated book as the embodiment of that "Genius." Blake's depicting on copper the "immense world" of the cave is his "displaying the infinite which was hid" (plate 14), a prophetic task expressed concisely in *Jerusalem*:

...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.

(5:17-20)

One might wish to agree with Erdman that the design places the viewer inside a cave and represents limited perception, illustrating either the "clos'd" rather than the "immense" part of the devil's message, or that "man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (plate 14). Caverned Man is Man as rock, with the senses figured as crevices or chinks through which he experiences the external world. As noted, however, plates 14 and 15 were executed after plate 11, though it is not clear from the production record whether their texts were written afterwards as well. The caves, trip to hell, and images of writing and etching on plates 11, 6-7, and 10 all figure prominently in the texts of plates 14 and 15 and may have given rise to them. Be that as it may, plate 11's design pictures a cavern wide open, not a narrow chink, and while the view is limited by our being outside the opening—and in a different state of mind than the one represented—the mode of perception depicted within is more likely meant as limited perception's contrary. The caves in *Marriage* come in two states, open and closed, representing either limited or, as on plate 11 and those plates dealing with creativity and illuminated printing (plates 10, 15, 20; see below), illimitable perception.

Blake's identifying creativity with hell and hell with open minds inverts Swedenborg's oft-used metaphors of open and closed, light and dark. Indeed, Blake seems deliberately to invert Swedenborg's key terms about open minds: "in Proportion as the Interiors of the Mind are open, in the same Proportion



Man looks toward Heaven, but in Proportion as the Interiors are shut and the Exteriors open, in the same Proportion he looks toward Hell." [14] In *Marriage*, the mind looking toward or from "Heaven" as defined by the "religious" is passive, imitative, and hence closed, whereas the mind looking toward or from "Hell" as defined by Blake is active, original, and open. The one is an ascent into constriction, the other a descent into expansion.

## II. "...at liberty when of Devils and Hell"

Blake's recreational trip to hell to retrieve its proverbs not only makes the connection between creativity and hell explicit, but also reveals the angels' and priests' deepest fears. "To Angels," the "fires of hell" and the "enjoyments of Genius"—that is, desire and energy-- "look like torment and insanity" (plate 6). These, Blake's first recorded uses of the words "insanity" and "torment," allude possibly to Swedenborg's statement that "evils cannot otherwise be restrained and subdued" without "torments" and "fear of punishment," without which the "evil would burst forth into madness and the whole world would be dispersed, as a kingdom on earth where there is no law and no punishment." [15] By entering hell, Blake shows himself as *not* "restrain[ing] desire" (plate 5) or "resist[ing] his genius" (plate 13), though the visit's origin may lie in his accusing Swedenborg of never having made such a visit, of his not having "conversed . . . with Devils" (plate 22). Swedenborg's failure implied his being poorly informed and, more subtly, uninspired: a criticism now reinforced. He shares the angels' fear of hell fire, of "Eternal Hell," whose personification as a naked woman lustfully and shamelessly enwrapped in flames (plate 3) links creative fires to the sensual and physical.

The physical presence of the open caves on plates 10, 15, and 20 also suggests that creativity has a material component, as does Blake's coming "home, on the abyss of the five senses" (plate 6). At first, Blake sounds Swedenborgian, likening the body to an "abyss," but in light of the satire, the term is positive, a synonym for hell. [16] Moreover, Blake uses the preposition "on" instead of "to," suggesting that the "abyss" is a vehicle of transport and not the thing to which he returns. By coming home "on" the body, not "to," and by identifying the body in this way, Blake conflates the sensually material with the creative. His return "home" actually criticizes Swedenborg. For example, Swedenborg states, "On hearing and understanding all of these Things, my Heart exulted within me, and I went Home with Joy,

and there returned to the Body, from being in the Spirit, and wrote the Things which I have seen and heard." [17] Blake, on the other hand, does not separate vision and body; he collected/wrote the proverbs while in "hell" and returned home with them. Instead of referring to consciousness, to a return to sensation after being asleep, "home" more likely refers to everyday life, akin to exiting the printing studio to take out the trash—that is, to a cessation in the overtly artistic process (see note 25). In the immediate context of travelling, "home" suggests England, "where a flat sided steep frowns over the present world." That a "Devil" writes on the "sides of the rock" suggests that Hell and Earth are not mutually exclusive and that Blake returns without completely leaving hell. The presence of earthly things ("Men" and "libraries") in the sixth chamber of Hell's "Printing house" suggests the same (see below).

Blake became increasingly skeptical about vision requiring a separation between body and spirit. To Swedenborg's claim that "Man, in whom the spiritual Degree is open, comes into that Wisdom when he dies, and may also come into it by laying asleep the Sensations of the Body, and by Influx from above at the same Time into the Spirituals of his Mind," Blake says, "this is while in the Body. This is to be understood as unusual in our time but common in ancient" (E606). At first, Blake tried to defend Swedenborg by accusing his followers of "perversely understand[ing] him. as if man while in the body was only conversant with natural Substances. because themselves are mercenary & worldly & have no idea of any but worldly gain" (E606). Indeed, Blake's belief that "Man has no body distinct from his Soul" (plate 4) made having visions outside the body "in this age" (plate 4) impossible. [18] Blake's entering hell is entering the creative state, which for an artist must manifest itself materially, in his physical body and artwork. The open, visionary mind, in other words, is realizable in body and, as visionary art, materially realizable. This view of the oneness of spirit and body underlies Blake's insights about invention and execution (E637, 643, 657) and his idea of himself as a visionary artist. In this sense, art is vision's physical form, the marriage of heaven and hell.

The ancient poets and the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel exemplify the visionary mind. The latter identify themselves as "poets," affirm the Poetic Genius as an internal voice and the voice of God, refute external instruction, and make no distinction between vision and writing, or between spirit and sensual body. Isaiah says: "I saw no God. nor heard any. in a finite organical perception: but my senses

discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded. & remain confirm'd; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God. I cared not for consequences but wrote" (plate 12). Hearing the inner voice and writing appear to be simultaneous rather than sequential acts. That, in any event, is how Blake pictures himself at work on plate 10, writing from dictation, from "the voice of the devil" (illus 1). [19]

The devil dictating the "Proverbs of Hell"—which Blake claimed "shew the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any description of buildings or garments" (plate 6)—is naked (as is that other paragon of inspiration, the child dictating to the Piper in the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*). Presumably, Blake means to present the Wisdom of Devils as the "naked truth," akin to the resurrected (and linen-free and hence) naked Christ (plate 3) and Blake-as-Christ (plate 21 [see note 21]), and to contrast it with Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels*. [20] The dictating devil kneels between two scribes. Erdman identifies the one on the devil's left as Blake, because he and the devil are both in profile (1974, p. 107). It seems more likely that Blake is the one recording what he *hears*. In terms of *Marriage's* composing process, Blake had heard the devil speak when witnessing him and the angel debate (plates 22-24), saw it inscribed in rock (plates 6-7), and now pictures himself creatively working from that voice. (These instances of devils speaking all precede the writing and execution of "The Voice of the Devil" (plate 4), which, as it were, gives the devil his due.) Blake depicts himself as writing from dictation, indifferent to consequences, which not only shows him to be of the devil's party, like Milton and the prophet Elijah, who heard the lord's voice in a cave (I Kings 19: 13), but also likens him to the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel (plates 12-13).

The illustration's ironic comment on originality also associates the devil with Poetic Genius. While Blake appears to be illustrating the line about his recording the devil's proverbs (plate 6), the proverbs are clearly his own creations, depicted as originating from an inspiriting, diabolical voice. That the voice/source is internal is implied by the manner in which Blake works, attending exclusively to what he writes (or draws) and to no external referents, models, or figures. [21] The other figure also ignores the devil, but for very different reasons: he strains to see the first scribe's work, altogether oblivious of its origin (illus 2). The former, working from the origin, is creative, whereas the latter, imitating the form or letter of an inspired text, exemplifies the priests' misreading and appropriation of

poets—the heart of Blake's critique of Swedenborg.

Writing from the Poetic Genius without fear of consequences, Blake not only behaves like the prophets but also like Christ, acting “from impulses; not from rules.” His art, the site of originality and inspiration and not imitation, contrasts starkly with the "systematic reasoning" of angels (plate 21) and priestly rituals and laws. By placing poets, prophets, Christ, and now himself in the devil's party, Blake clarifies the conflict between angels and devils as one between Religion and Art. Picturing himself writing, Blake mirrors the creative process embodied in the illuminated plate and book. This connection between mind—both the artist's and the reader's—and plate/book becomes explicit when caves reappear verbally and visually on plates 14, 15, and 20 to represent perception, illuminated plate, and illuminated printing. And in all these cases, states of open and closed represent Blake's hell and heaven and reverse what Swedenborg identifies as open sight and closed sight.

### **III. "Melting apparent surfaces away" or "narrow chinks of his cavern"?**

The texts of plates 14 and 15, which appear to have been executed together, may also have been the first ones that Blake *wrote* after writing and picturing writing, trips to hell, infernal messages, and ancient poets (plates 6-7, 10, 11), in which case they not only extend or develop the preceding metaphors of book and perception but were possibly generated by them. If invented in response to previously executed plates, as many of the latter textual units and designs assuredly were, then they exemplify the fluidity and flexibility of Blake's composing process, which enabled execution to generate invention quite literally, and enabled Blake to print plates and sections of books without completing the manuscript. Even if the texts of plates 14 and 15 were executed with the other plates from sheets III, IV, V, they appear to have been written to develop themes previously executed and to express Blake's awareness of his mode of production. Blake states that he will print "in the infernal method, by corrosives . . . melting apparent surfaces away" (plate 14), which is relief-etching poetically described. A copper plate's pre-etched and etched surfaces are identified as "the rock & the cave" (plate 15), with "rock" recalling the medium upon which the "mighty Devil" inscribes—graves open—(plate 6) and "the cave" recalling the devil's cave in which Blake writes his book (plate 10), as well as the mind of the ancient poets (plate 11).

By printing "in the infernal method," Blake intends to display "the infinite which was hid" and "expunge . . . the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul," a notion responsible for "man [having] closed himself up till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (plate 14). By stating that "man has closed himself up," Blake implicates man—individual and species—in his own imprisonment. Blake has it both ways: external forces restrain individuals, and individuals partake in their own restraint. Individuals have the power to open their "doors of perception" and yet need assistance to open them—or at least to see that they are closed. Their need defines the artist's role, which is, like that of the devil and prophets—and that espoused by Swedenborg—to open the mind. Blake's means for opening the mind, the illuminated book, is also the paradigm for the open mind. Just as the illuminated plate displays the "infinite" when its "apparent surfaces" are melted away, so too perception: "if the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: Infinite" (plate 14). The "infernal method," or its manifestation, the illuminated book, here the symbol of original art, is the cleansing agent. The relation between illuminated plate and mind is thus causal as well as analogous, with the former a key to opening the latter.

Blake's metaphor for perception was well chosen. A door, which signals, like a cave, an entrance or passageway to a hidden world and can be open or closed, was also used by Swedenborg for the same purpose:

Who is not able to see that the Lord cannot enter so long as the devil is there? And he is there so long as man keeps the door closed, . . . That the Lord enters when by means of man this door is opened the Lord teaches in the Apocalypse:—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3: 20). [22]

For Blake, the devil—in the form of Blake and the "infernal method"—opens the door, and the open door reveals the devil, for it opens to hell, to desire, energy, and creativity, and therein lies Christ. One does not open the door to let Christ in; one opens the door to find Christ there: "God only Acts & Is. in existing beings or Men" (plate 16).

The causal relation between illuminated plate and reader appears also to allude to Swedenborg. As prophet/poet/printer, Blake intends to open the doors of perception—transform them into the gates of

hell—through the hellish light of illuminated printing. Ironically, by aiding and abetting the reader's entrance to hell, Blake functions like Swedenborg's God: "the internal man is not opened except by Divine Truth proceeding from the Lord, because that is the light of heaven and the life of heaven." [23] In Blake's incarnational aesthetic, the "Lord" or Christ symbolizes Imagination and is manifest in Blake as Blake is manifest in his book; reading/entering the illuminated book (and by extension all original, visionary works of imagination) is to participate in the body of Christ. In other words, visionary art alters perception and holds open the possibility of conversion and salvation, the subjects expressed by the illustration on plate 14.

With arms outstretched (like those of the sky-God at the bottom of plate 11), a female figure hovers over a naked and an apparently dead male body in flames. The illustration may symbolize the mistaken notion of soul separate from body, or the "cherub with his flaming sword" guarding the "tree of life" (plate 14; see Genesis 3: 24), in which case the supine body represents either a dormant Eden or tree of life. The image's overt sexuality, though, and its place in the chronology of production suggests that the body is the one shown on plate 21 as being resurrected. Presumably, by this time in the composition of *Marriage*, Blake knows that he will end with plates 21-24, enabling him to connect the two male figures causally. The body's transformation from supine to erect is analogous to that of the plate's, from a flat, unetched surface to a design cast in relief. In this analogy, the illustration alludes to both the "infernal method" and to the "hovering" devil writing on rock with "corroding fires" (plates 6-7), with the body symbolizing a copper plate, the flames the acid ("corroding fires"), and, in place of the abstract sky-god, the hovering figure the printmaker. Hovering over the entire creation are both Blake and his reader.

Swedenborg's ideas about the Most Ancient Church and about law and restraint lying behind plates 3, 11, and 5-6 resurface on plate 14. For Swedenborg, "Adam and his Wife . . . meant the most ancient Church," and "the Garden of Eden . . . meant the Wisdom of the Men of that Church," and "the Tree of Life [meant] the Lord in Man, and Man in the Lord." [24] For Blake, Adam's return to Paradise was the restoration of the ancient poets, which required removing the "cherub with his flaming sword . . . guard[ing] the tree of life." [25] Blake again turns the tables. An angel, clearly a member of Swedenborg's camp, *prevents* the apocalypse and must, like preconceptions and the copper plate's

surface, be removed, at which point "the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite. and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt" (plate 14). But Blake also states that this transformation "will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment." By giving two causes for altering perception, Blake appears to equate removing the angel/plate surface with improving sensual desire. Both actions are to be realized through illuminated printing.

As mentioned, Blake returns from hell "on" and not "to" the body, and he identifies the body as an "abyss" in and on which the "enjoyments of genius" take place, thereby associating hell with both the creative mind and the sensual body. Blake's celebration of the senses throughout the *Marriage* is, no doubt, directed at Swedenborg, who consistently associates the sensual with evil.

It is unlawful to inquire into the mysteries of faith by means of things of sense and knowledge, by which means his celestial quality is destroyed. A desire to investigate the mysteries of faith by means of things sensuous and known, was not only the cause of the fall or decline of the Most Ancient Church, . . . but it is the cause of the fall . . . of every church; for hence come not merely false opinions, but evils of life also. [26]

Blake argues that the contrary is the means of returning "home," that only through an "improvement of sensual enjoyment" does one re-enter Eden or the "Most Ancient Church" of Adam.

"But first," before such an improvement can take place, "the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged" (plate 14). The relation between perception or preconception ("notion") and experience ("sensual enjoyment") recalls the angels' inability to enter the creative fires of hell, and anticipates the Giants, harper, and leviathan episodes on plates 16-20. Logically, if the notion that body and soul are distinct obstructs perception and experience, then it must be removed. But note that Blake proposes to cleanse the mind of this restricting and self-fulfilling perceptual bias by *example* and not argument. He says "this I shall do by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives . . . melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid." He may be implying that he will print illuminated texts specifically attacking this notion, but here he explicitly proposes to rectify the problem by working in a printing process whose material product exemplifies or manifests the infinite Imagination. In this process, the relation between "surface" and "infinite" is not analogous to that between body and soul, as though melting or removing the body reveals essence. That position is

orthodox and Swedenborg's. The key word is "apparent" and not surface; remove what *appears* to be true to see what is really true. If cleansed perception is exemplified by relief-etching, wherein the "infinite" revealed after etching is the design cast in relief and embodied in paper, then, as is suggested by the caves on plates 10 and 11, the visionary mind is materially manifest. In addition to providing an analogy for the open mind and the means to open it, the illuminated plate manifests the apocalypse: the metal removed, consumed, expunged, cleansed, and melted away displays the "whole creation" after it is "consumed in fire." Like the devil's "Bird," the small illuminated plate is an immense and Edenic world of delight.

Plate 14 is about removing restraint, in the form of angelic guards, misleading appearances, metal surfaces, and false notions. Removing the angel is removing law, usurper, governor, oppressor, and restrainer; it is to remove Edom's "yoke" (plate 3, Genesis 27: 40) and is synonymous with Adam's return and creation's consummation. The word "consumed" (Blake's first recorded use of the word) appears to pun on Swedenborg's "consummation," which describes the end or last judgment of a church. [27] In *Marriage*, being "consumed" in fire represents creativity (e.g., Blake's stroll through hell), or it represents conversion and resurrection (e.g., the angel's embracing "the flame of fire" and arising "as Elijah"). Swedenborg believed that a Church comes to its last judgment or consummation "by various Causes, particularly by such as make what is false to appear like what is true." [28] True enough, but the causes that make the false appear true, Blake asserts, are church and state, which pass off "passivity" and "reason" as good and creativity and "energy" as "evil." Hence, the true and infinite world "now appears finite & corrupt."

Plates 14 enriches through graphic allusions the satire on Swedenborg begun on plates 21-24. The announcement, for example, that Blake will print to change the world not only anticipates "The Bible of Hell" but also echoes Swedenborg:

Since the Lord cannot manifest Himself in Person . . . and yet has foretold that He would come and establish a New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that this will be effected by means of a man, who is able not only to receive the doctrines of that church into his understanding, but also to publish them by the press. [29]

Again, Blake provides the contrary, identifying his press with the devil's and arguing that the Lord



manifests Himself in true artists and works of art. Blake's describing the stages of infernal printing also satirizes Swedenborg, who acknowledges that "infernal spirits" have their "atrocious arts," the third kind of which "relates to . . . communication and influx of thoughts and affections, by conversions, by inspections. . . ." Swedenborg, however, refuses to "describe them specifically . . . because they are too bad to be told." [30] Blake describes them on plate 15 in detail. They are dragons, vipers, eagles, and lions, a motley crew perhaps meant to evoke Joseph Johnson's printing house in St. Paul's Churchyard and his circle of friends. They more obviously recall the animated island of plate 11, suggesting that they are the presiding deities assigned by the poet, which in turn reinforces Blake's connection to the ancient poets and his role in returning Adam to Eden (Eaves et al. 1993, p. 215).

### V. "Dragons . . . hollowing the cave"

Plate 15 continues the news from hell, picturing the "infernal method" as eagle and viper opening a cave (illus 3). That hell's symbol represents the illuminated plate continues the theme of the whole manifest in the part. It also puns on engraving itself, whose inner word "grave" connotes an opening in the earth. Blake's method for making or hollowing caves in rock has five stages, which correspond to preparing copper plates, writing and drawing, etching, inking, and printing. These stages are depicted as chambers in the printing house. Through them passes "the rock & the cave," which, like the caverned man, will be transformed from stony to infinite landscape, with "immense cliffs" and valleys, the topographical metaphors for the raised and shallow portions of the relief-etched plate.



In the first chamber is "a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a caves mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave." The dragon's activity is not mere house- cleaning, for it refers to preparing the plate for etching by removing the greasy film from its surface so that etching ground will adhere firmly. Symbolically, clearing reveals hell's entrance, making possible all subsequent stages and events. Like cleansing "doors of perception," melting apparent surfaces away, and removing the cherub from Eden's gates, clearing rubbish is one of infinite perception's prerequisite acts.

The "dragon-man" revives the debate between faith in Christ (or "firm perswasion" in "poetic

genius") and faith in the decalogue, first expressed on plates 21-24 and then on plates 12-13. Swedenborg identifies those who believe in Christ but reject the law as the "dragons" mentioned in the bible.

It is said that the dragon has much power, because the salvation of man by faith alone, without the works of the law—which faith is meant by the dragon—captivates the minds of men, and then confirmations produce conviction. It captivates, because when a man hears that the damnation of the law is taken away, and that the Lord's merit is imputed to him through faith alone therein, he can indulge in the pleasures of mind and body without any fear of hell. [31]

Exactly. Fear of "torment" closes "immense worlds of delight," as the angel's response to hell evinces (plate 6); conversely, as evinced by Blake's infernal stroll, "Hell" unfeared is mental and sensual pleasure. By placing the "dragon" (his first recorded use of the word) inside the first and fundamental chamber, Blake reasserts his faith in an impulsive, rule-breaking, incarnational Christ (22-23).

Blake's dragon, representing unrestrained creative energy feared by church and state, is pictured as a "flying" or "winged serpent," the traditional description of dragons. It is formed by a viper in the talons of an eagle (illus 3) and designed apparently to echo the devil and his serpentine scroll (plate 10). Blake's depiction may allude to Swedenborg as well: "Serpents in general signify the sensual things of man, and thence sensual men; and therefore the dragon which is a flying serpent signifies the sensual man, who though sensual yet flies towards heaven, in that he speaks and thinks from the Word, or from doctrine derived from the Word." [32] The viper and eagle inhabit the second and third chambers, which in the technical analogy represent writing and etching. The former is the calligraphic line bending "round the rock & the cave," and the latter "caused the inside of the cave to be infinite" and "built palaces in the immense cliffs." As composite being, viper/eagle is the devil's "Bird that cuts the airy way," "an immense world of delight" (plate 7) that is the illuminated plate. And, as a conflation of writing and etching, it conflates invention and execution. As such, it represents the writing devil's mode of production, in which text was written "with corroding fires" (plates 6-7), as opposed to being written and then etched to make it printable. The devil's writing implement is pictured at the bottom of plate 6 as a lightening bolt inscribing an "H" (the first letter of "How") on the same plane as Blake's text. As a

writing instrument, the bolt is like Job's "iron pen" (19: 24). More interesting, Swedenborg states that in ancient Hebrew "the H, which was added to the Names of Abram and Sarai, signified Infinite and Eternal." [33] As a conflation of writing and etching, the devil's message—the proverbial writing on the wall—alludes to and diabolically inverts the "stony law" of the "ten commandments" (plates 27 and 23), "written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31: 18). [34]

Blake's fourth and fifth chambers refer to inking and printing, which is the job of the pressmen, "who apply ink upon [the type] and take off the impression." [35] After the marriage of plate and paper, the creative process ends anticlimactically, in the form of a book closed, unread, and shelved with many of its own kind: "the metals . . . cast . . . into the expanse" in the "fifth chamber" were "reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries." The sixth chamber is outside of hell proper but is part of the creative process; its being occupied by readers suggests that they have a role in the production and completion of a work of art. As is demonstrated by the devil's presence on earth and Blake's in hell, the creative and everyday interact. Indeed, the causal relation between plate and reader is inherently interactive. Furthermore, the illuminated book, in embodying a fabulous but hidden journey, exemplifies the devil's message about seemingly common objects possibly being "immense worlds of delight." Its journey through hell to the surface recalls the journey of the "just man" from garden into exile (plate 2). It more clearly recalls the *Marriage* title page (illus 6), where enormous energy and desire lie hidden just below the surface, in a cavelike space framed



by flames and clouds, the elements of Rintrah and relief-etching. [36] The surface is delineated by a thin line, the erasure or melting of which would reveal the "infinite which was hid" (plate 14). The surface is a small and bland place, the "earth" where the book is "perceived by the minds of men, & read by them" (plate 7). The question is whether one will read it as angel or devil, in Swedenborg's "internal sense" or Blake's "infernal sense."

Writing is a theme on plates 21-4, 12-13, 3, 5-7, and 11, and it is implied by the list of proverbs on plates 7-10. But only on plate 10 is it the subject of an illustration, and only on plates 14 and 15 is the purpose and technique of its dissemination explained. In these plates, Blake becomes overtly self-referential and proclaims mythical significance for his new technique and for his

daily life as a printmaker. By modeling his own printing house on the one in hell, earlier associated with the sensual body and creative mind, Blake again alludes to the inseparability of execution and invention. In taking us into and through hell's "Printing house," Blake takes us deeper into the creative process in which he and readers are engaged, transforming the "now" of the writing devil's audience (plate 7) into the "now" of Edom and Adam and the ancient poets (plates 3, 11), a reality always present but hidden in the "now" of the "just man"'s exile and the dominion of the "finite and corrupt" (plates 2 and 14). The mythopoeic and creative processes of ancient and visionary poets are manifest in and surging through the illuminated plate and the mind of its maker and reader. Indeed, plates 14 and 15 force readers to rethink the meaning of the caves encountered earlier, on plates 10 and 11, which foregrounds the figurative process, revealing the reader's role in producing the work of imagination.

#### VI. "...with all the fury of a spiritual existence"

Images of hell and caves, begun on plates 6, 11, and 10, continue on plates 14 and 15; all five plates appear to have been written and executed before plates 16-20, which continue the cave imagery, were written or executed. On plate 16, the "Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence" are identified as "the causes of its life & the sources of all activity." They are further identified as "energy," "portions of being," "portions of existence," "producers," and the "prolific." As the "source" and "cause" of life and its "sensual existence," the Giants are a version of the prophets and ancient poets. Like them, their vision of and place in the world have been usurped. But unlike them, they are pictured as prisoners, huddled together inside a cave-like cell (illus 4). They are shown as they appear to nonproducers, to "Those who restrain desire" (plate 5), just as the devil's fall is pictured as it "appeared to Reason" (plate 5) and as illuminated printing is depicted as it appears to angels (plate 20, see below). [37] Blake calls the nonproducers "devourers," one of the "two classes of men . . . always upon earth" and whose reconciliation would "destroy existence." Devourers have "weak and tame minds," the "power to resist energy," a lack of "courage," and an abundance of "cunning." The "Giants . . . now seem to live" in the devourers' "chains," but "it is not so," for devourers, like



Swedenborg and others denying the devil's voice, "only take portions of existence and fanc[y] that the whole." The portion chained, in other words, is the portion they exclude and restrain in themselves and wish to restrain in others. Hence, on one level, the prisoners represent devourers' disdain for the prolific, creative mind, and, on another level, they represent the individual's repression of his or her own desires and energies. Plate 16 repeats the basic design of plate 11, with the cave at the top of the plate, only here readers peer inside the ancient poets' contrary, the cave/mind of the devourer. The very static, unanimated prisoners reminiscent of the cannibalizing Ugolino and his sons represent not only what devourers do to themselves and wish to do to others, but also what they look like to the prolific: the cavered man in need of emancipation.

Plates 10, 15, and 20 are also similarly designed, with the cave in the plate's bottom half. Indeed, plate 20 repeats the form of the two earlier caves overtly, a repetition again focusing readers' attention on what happens inside the cave and signaling that this cave also refers somehow to illuminated printing. The leviathan is the viper grown ever more dragon-like, the devil's scroll more fully animated. It is the "infernal method" causing the "inside of the cave to be infinite" (plates 14 and 15). It is also the serpent of Revelation 12: 9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan . . . was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Swedenborg notes the same: "Those who are understood by the dragon were cast into the abyss," [38] which has creative connotations from the devil's perspective, since the illuminated plate is itself a cast and was "cast," like the devil, "into the expanse" (plate 15), described here as the "infinite Abyss." This Abyss is "fiery as the smoke of a burning city," where "a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro . . . blackning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea & rolled with a terrible noise . . . [of] a black tempest" (plate 18). The apocalyptic imagery recalls that of the title plate and echoes Swedenborg's description of Babylon's destruction. "Some endeavor[ed] to escape by Flight, some hiding themselves in Caves, some into the Cells and Vaults where their Treasures were deposited." But after an earthquake, "ebullition" from below, and "strong wind from the East," everyone in the "southern quarter" was

cast into a Sea of black Water . . . afterward, there arose a Smoke from that whole Region, as from a great Fire, and at last a thick Dust . . . [which] signifies Damnation. At length there was seen as it were Something black flying over the whole Tract, which had

the Appearance of a Dragon, a sign that the whole of that Great City, and the whole of that Tract, was made a Desert. The reason of such appearances was, because by dragons are signified the falses of that religion, and by the place of their abode is signified a desert after its overthrow, as in Jer. IX, etc. [39]

The angel, with whom Blake "hung over this immensity" and "beheld the infinite Abyss," perceived the leviathan as hell, the revolutionary power of artistic creation—here manifest in illuminated printing—and good reason for him to flee the scene. Overlooking the leviathan and cave, Blake sits in the roots of an oak (illus 5). He hovers like the devil "folded in black clouds" before England's cliffs (plate 6), while



the illustration's tri-part structure—Blake-leviathan-cave—associates it with the other tri-part illustrations: devil-scroll-cave, woman-flames-body, and eagle-viper-cave of plates 10, 14, and 15.

The leviathan's "infinite Abyss" was hidden by "a church" and entered by way of a "cavern" (plate 18), and no doubt to Blake it was "an immense world of delight." To the angel, however, the Abyss and everything inside it were

monstrous. After removing himself from the scene, as the cherub must before

Eden (plate 14), the truth of place and moment—and Blake's perception of illuminated printing—revealed itself. Blake sits "on a pleasant bank beside a river by moonlight hearing a harper" sing about how the "man who never alters his opinion . . . breeds reptiles of the mind" (plate 19; see also Revelation 15:2). For the angel to see a harper, the poet's traditional symbol, as a leviathan plays ironically on what Swedenborg states should be the case. The outward appearance of devils "is a fallacy; for as soon as any ray of light from heaven is let in their human forms are turned into monstrous forms, such as they are in themselves . . . For in the light of heaven everything appears as it is in itself." [40]

Blake again reverses Swedenborg, treating the angelic "light from heaven" as a distorting force, claiming that the leviathan's form was "owing" to the angel's "metaphysics." The core of that metaphysics was revealed in the angel's belief that "God alone [is] the Prolific," and in its contrary as expressed in Blake's response: "God only Acts & Is. in existing beings or Men." Plates 16-20 recapitulate the debate between angel and devil, between the "law of ten commandments" and, as represented by the leviathan's dragon-like shape, "salvation of man by faith [in Christ] alone, without the

works of the law."

The trip to the Abyss alludes to Swedenborg's *Conjugial Love*, n. 477, in which an angel shows a young man various contrary visions to scare him onto the correct path. In mistakenly assuming that he and Blake shared the same fears, the angel revealed only his own.

flew westerly thro' the night, till we were elevated above the earths shadow: then I flung myself with him directly into the body of the sun, here I clothed myself in white, & taking in my hand Swedenborgs volumes sunk from the glorious clime, and passed all the planets till we came to saturn, here I staid to rest & then leap'd into the void between saturn & the fixed stars. (plate 19) [41]

Parodying Swedenborgian space travel, Blake implies his ultimate victory, for the phrase "clothed . . . in white" alludes to Revelation 3: 5: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." As victor, Blake uses Swedenborg writings as an anchor, to assist his entrance into the "void," which is a vacuum or empty abyss and thus only an imitation of its model. In the "void," Blake and angel saw "the stable and the church," and at "the altar . . . open'd the Bible, and lo! it was a deep pit," a grave-like opening leading not to an "immense world of delight" but to a cannibalizing simian house (plate 20), whose stench—a possible allusion to the descent into Swedenborg's tomb—was overwhelming (Paley 1985, p. 25).

The chained simians appear to be a version of the chained giants. Whereas the latter reflect what devourers look like to producers, the former reflects what they look like to Blake. After catching the weak "with a grinning aspect," the strong "coupl[ed] with & . . . devour[ed]" parts of the body till it "was left a helpless trunk," which, "after grinning & kissing it with seeming fondness they devoured too" (plate 20). Within the devourers' exclusively rational mind lie chaos and violence.

Upon Blake's return, no writing devil awaits. Instead, Swedenborg's writings had revealed their true form, becoming in Blake's hand "the skeleton of a body, which in the mill [became] Aristotles *Analytics*," an author treated sympathetically by Swedenborg in his *Worlds in the Universe*, n. 38, of which Blake was aware (E602). [42] In Swedenborg, images are constantly transforming "by Virtue of the Influx of Light." [43] Here, the transformation of Swedenborg's writings to "skeleton" (presumably simian) to *Analytics* mirrors the transformation of viper/eagle to leviathan to harper. Blake presents his

writings as a living continuation of the Word and Swedenborg's as tied to the dead past. Moreover, "skeleton of a body" puns on "skeleton," the repeatable portions in the body of a book. [44] Blake portrays Swedenborg again as a copyist of the analytical or "systematic reasoning" of "Angels," though now the attack is even nastier. Symbolically, by reducing him/his writings to bare bones, Blake kills Swedenborg, and does so in stark contrast to his own idealized and resurrected self pictured on plate 21. Blake's pun prepares for another play on printing. The angel accuses Blake of having "imposed" his "phantasy," which, metaphorically, in the printing sense of imposing type into pages to create books, he has, but so has the angel, "whose works are only Analytics." Blake and the angel "impose on one another" in a sort of battle of books, which opens Blake to accusations that his visions are owing to his metaphysics and that versions of reality are relative and equally valid—or invalid. Or, as I argue in the second part of this study, it suggests a hierarchy of texts, of the kind Blake clearly establishes in his attack on Swedenborg on plate 22 and again in his defense of the prophets and ancient poets.

## Conclusion

Swedenborgian rhetoric, images, and ideas figure consistently in the *Marriage* and helped to generate Blake's narrative counterstatements. If Swedenborg spoke only to angels and published their wisdom (plate 21), then Blake would present himself as Swedenborg's contrary, one who spoke to devils and published their wisdom, their "Bible of Hell." If Swedenborg claims heaven, angels, and reason for his own, then his adversary claims hell, devils, and energy, using these controlling metaphors to express their different ideas of God, the remote and external sky-god of angels versus the incarnate spirit of devils. In the inverted world of *Marriage*, descent into hell is an ascent into eternity, and ascent into heaven a descent into the cavered man. As a satirist, Blake intends to sound like Swedenborg; he too announces that a new age has begun, and agrees that a special kind of reading or perception once ours must be restored to perceive what is hidden. The loss of this perception, though, is not due to the devolution of the Churches, but to mankind's forgetting that "all deities reside in the human breast," an act synonymous with the usurpation of the "just man" and "man [having] closed himself up till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (plates 11, 2 and 14). Its restoration lies not in



Swedenborg's writings, but in opening the cave—in opening Blake's illuminated books.

Reading *Marriage's* textual units in the order in which they were executed reveals thematic and visual connections not readily apparent in the book's finished order. It reveals the cave as a motif and its role in making *Marriage* both overtly self-reflexive and expressive. The cave symbolism, by drawing readers' attention to the book and to the creative processes it embodies, reveals clearly that one of Blake's major purposes in the *Marriage* is to show what opens and closes the human mind. Blake offers "The Bible of Hell" and an infernal way of reading the Bible, demonstrates his reading prowess, and takes us deep within the creative mind without losing sight of his main object of criticism and satire. In doing so, he produced an aesthetic manifesto defining the nature of God, himself as a prophet, and art as the marriage of heaven and hell.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 10, Fitzwilliam Museum.
2. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 11. Fitzwilliam Museum.
3. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 15, Fitzwilliam Museum.
4. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 16, Fitzwilliam Museum.
5. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 20, Fitzwilliam Museum.
6. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy I, plate 1, Fitzwilliam Museum.

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## NOTES

[\*] *Blake in the Nineties*. Eds. Steven Clark and David Worrall. London: Macmillan, 1999. 27-60.

[1] The separate printing of plates 21-24 is referred to as *Marriage* copy K. See Bentley, (1977) pp. 287-88.

[2] For the "cave" in the "Printing house in Hell" as both the metal plate and its impression and, by extension, the illuminated book as an "immense world of delight," see Erdman (1974) p. 19.

[3] Plate borders are the strips of metal standing in relief around the copper plate. They were created by strips of wax forming a dyke to hold acid. After the etch, the wax was removed, and the metal it protected from the acid became part of the relief line system and helped to support the inking dabber.

For a fuller account, see Viscomi (1993) ch. 8.

[4] In copies H, I, and G, the ground is framed by water.

[5] Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning the Last Judgment and the Destruction of Babylon* (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1788) nn. 54-56.

[6] Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion; Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church*, 2nd edition (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1786; 3rd edn, 1795) n. 760.

[7] *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 920, in *A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, compiled by Samuel M. Warren, 1875 (repr. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1974). The perception of the Most Ancient Church was "diminished in the succeeding churches and became more general" (*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 502).

[8] *True Christian Religion*, n. 204.

[9] *Conjugal Love*, n. 78, in *A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, compiled by Samuel M. Warren, 1875 (repr. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1974).

[10] *True Christian Religion*, nn. 132, 172.

[11] By 1790, the Swedenborgian New Church emphasized external rituals, the decalogue, and priests (see Viscomi, 1997b).

[12] A cave enclosing mental processes puns visually on the human skull, the "cavity of the cranium" (see "Anatomy," sect. IV, of the Brain in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1769). For gods in caves, see also Jacob Bryant, *A New System; or an Analysis of Antient Mythology*. 6 vols. 3rd edn. (London: J Walker, 1807), I: 269; my thanks for this reference to Denise Vultee.

[13] For the source in Thomas Chatterton, see Eaves et al. (1993) p. 212, nn. 3-4. Swedenborg wrote that "birds correspond, according to their species, to the intellectual things of both spiritual and natural mind," *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell* (London: J. Phillips, 1778) n. 110.

[14] *True Christian Religion*, n. 188; see also *Heaven and Hell*, nn. 250, 76. In this light, the figures on plates 21 and 24 are, ironically, open and closed. For the visual puns on Blake as Christ and Swedenborg as Nebuchadnezzar and/or King George III, see Viscomi 1997b.

[15] *Heaven and Hell*, n. 581.

[16] "Abyss," from the Greek meaning "a place of great depth," is a translation of the Hebrew word for "deep." In the Book of Enoch (21: 7), it refers to fiery punishment; in the New Testament to the name of Hades and the place of the dead; in Revelation, to "the bottomless pit" (9: 1).

[17] *True Christian Religion*, n. 625.

[18] The words "body" and "soul" do not appear in the *Marriage* until plates 14 and 4, which explicitly refute the "notion that man has a body distinct from his soul" (14) and assert that body is "a Portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (4). The chronology of production suggests that plates 14 and 4 were executed near one another, after the trip to hell and proverbs, with plate 14 probably written and executed before plate 4.

[19] For Blake working from dictation, see *Europe* plate 3 and the letters of 25 April and 6 July 1803

(E729-30). For an incisive discussion, see Essick (1989) ch. 4.

[20] See also Peter Provo's *Wisdom's Dictates; or, a collection of maxims and observations concerning divine, and spiritual truths . . . Extracted . . . particularly from [the works] of Emanuel Swedenborg*, published in 1789 and sold by Hindmarsh. Provo, a Swedenborgian, celebrated restraint, submission, and order as virtues.

[21] For copying Imagination rather than Nature, see E547, 574, and 577.

[22] *Divine Providence*, n. 233 in *A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, compiled by Samuel M. Warren, 1875 (rpr. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1974); see also n. 119. For the open door as metaphor for understanding, see *True Christian Religion*, n. 178. See also John 10: 9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

[23] *Heaven and Hell*, n. 250.

[24] *True Christian Religion*, n. 466.

[25] An angel is stationed to guard the tree of life (Genesis 3: 24), but Ezekiel prophesizes that the "covering cherub" will be burned up (28: 11-19)—which happens to the angel on plate 24 when he converts and becomes a devil.

[26] *Arcana Coelestia*, nn. 126-127.

[27] *True Christian Religion*, nn. 753-56.

[28] *True Christian Religion*, n. 754.

[29] *True Christian Religion*, n. 779. Blake may be satirizing Robert Hindmarsh, Swedenborg's publisher and the official printer to the Prince of Wales.

[30] *Heaven and Hell*, n. 580.

[31] *Apocalypse Revealed*, n. 539 in *A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, compiled by Samuel M. Warren, 1875 (rpr. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1974).

[32] *Apocalypse Explained*, n. 714 in *A Compendium of the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, compiled by Samuel M. Warren, 1875 (rpr. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, Inc., 1974)

[33] *True Christian Religion*, n. 278.

[34] The origin of engraving was often traced to Exodus 32: 16, the "writing of God . . . engraved upon the tables" of stone (see Joseph Strutt, *A Biographical Dictionary; Containing an Historical Account of All the Engravers*, 2 vols., London, 1785, vol. 1, p. 8).

[35] See the entry for "Printing" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1769.

[36] Erdman notes that the cave on plate 15 is "indicated by cloud-rock sides and floor" (1974, p. 112). This is an apt description, for in etching, copper nitrate turns blue and, when biting much exposed metal, clouds over with orange fumes.

[37] In plate 5, a naked man, a sword, a horse, and possibly a chariot fall upside down from the sky into flames. Swedenborg states that the fallen are seen from heaven "with their Feet upwards and their Heads downwards" (*True Christian Religion*, n. 613).

[38] *Last Judgment*, n. 45.

[39] *Last Judgment*, n. 61. The dragon is a celestial power in Eastern philosophy. In the *Marriage*, the dragon appears "to the east, distant about three degrees" (plate 18). Blake writes that the "philosophy of the east taught the first principles of human perception" (plate 12), while Swedenborg also identifies the East with God and clear perception (*Heaven and Hell*, nn. 141, 148, 149, 151; see also *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, nn. 83-167). Swedenborg also wrote that the "natural mind" is a "form and image of hell" and descends through "three degrees" or levels (*Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, nn. 273-75; see also nn. 237-39, which Blake annotated, E605-06). See also Eaves et al. (1993) p. 217, n. 23.

[40] *Heaven and Hell*, n. 553.

[41] According to Swedenborg, good spirits turn left to right, and bad turn right to left (*Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, n. 270).

[42] See also *True Christian Religion*, n. 696, and Paley, p. 27.

[43] *True Christian Religion*, n. 187.

[44] The skeleton refers to the frame of furniture in the printing chase that forms the margins of pages and holds the forme in which the type lies. Repeated portions, like "the headlines of a book . . . remained in position in the skeleton after type was distributed and subsequent pages were imposed" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1769, Printing).