Chapter - 2

William Blake

(1757–1827)

"And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear."
("Introduction", Songs of Innocence)

" "O Earth, O Earth, return!
"Arise from out the dewy grass;
"Night is worn,
"And the morn
"Rises from the slumberous mass."
("Introduction", Songs of Experience)

Chapter - 2

WILLIAM BLAKE

"And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear."[1]

"Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise."[2]

Recent researches have shown the special importance and significance of childhood in romantic poetry. Blake, being a harbinger of romanticism, had engraved childhood as a state of unalloyed joy in his Songs of Innocence. And among the romantics, he was perhaps the first to have discovered childhood. His inspiration was of course the Bible where he had seen the image of the innocent, its joy and all pure image of little, gentle Jesus. That image ignited the very imagination of Blake, the painter and engraver. And with his illumined mind, he translated that image once more in his poetry, Songs of Innocence.

Among the records of an early meeting of the Blake Society on 12th August, 1912 there occurs the following passage :

> "A pleasing incident of the occasion was the presence of a very pretty robin, which hopped about unconcernedly on the terrace in front of the house and among the members while the papers were being read... Miss Wood, who wrote some verses on the occasion, makes the robin say of the members of the society : 'They were friends of the man who loved the lamb,/And would never do me harm'."[3]

Such is the price that William Blake has had to pay for the fact that his most lucid verses are also those which are most gratifying to the sentimental. For many readers, still, he is a poet who expressed with ingenuity sentiments which are worthy but naive. He is the poet, above all, of innocence, and the fact that after a supposed time of bitter disillusionments he also wrote some of experience, is purely secondary.

William Blake (1757-1827) had a happy childhood. His father was reasonably well off and the family was free from want. The best thing about his father was that he had a remarkable understanding of his son and did not fall a prey to the temptation of sending him to school where William would have been completely out of place. Blake was a visionary from an early age. He claimed to have seen visions, and had he been to school he would only have been the butt of schoolboys' ridicule. Quite at an early age, he showed one of his most marked characteristics — a power of imaginative visualization, whether with the inward or the outward eye. When he was four years old, he was frightened by seeing God looking through the window. Margoliouth has rightly pointed out :

> "Even if that can be rationalistically explained by the unexpected appearance of some venerable gentleman, the rationalization has little point : it is just the sort of 'vision' young William would have had. A little later he saw a tree at Peckham full of angles — an externalized vision. But it cannot be generically different from what Blake himself wrote in 1810 about the sunrise : 'I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying : Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro'it & not with it.'"[4]

These visions were, however, not hallucinations; they were not fantastic either — they were seen but not believed to be there in the sense in which physical objects are. Blake claimed to have the power of bringing his imagination before his mind's eye, so completely organised and so perfectly formed that he copied the vision, on his canvas; he could not err.

When Blake was born, the eighteenth century manner was dying. Even Pope could not revive it in his masterpiece The Rape of the Lock. Though the poem had excelled in colour, sound, and touch, it had however lacked in imagery. Gray tried to translate the life into his Odes (1757) by presenting an imagery of violence. Burke had just urged upon such imagery, in his Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful. And it had been used

fifteen years before, in the two poems for which Blake was later thought most filted to design : the "Night Thoughts" of Edward Young and "The Grave" of Robert Blair. Unhappily, the decay of the eighteenth century manner lay deeper than in tricks of speech. The gloom and the indecision of the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" had been those of a dying society. They were not lessened by being overlaid with Gothic horror : they were merely made fanciful. Blake knew, and shared, the faults of both manners. In his boyhood poem "To the Muses", he set out the eighteenth century manner with care and with charm, part parody and part pastiche, precisely in order to attack it.

"Whether on chrystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea
Wand'ring in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry!
How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoy'd in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move!
The sound is forc'd, the notes are few!"[5]

Blake was foremost among the Romantic poets in his emphasis on imagination. For a century, English philosophy has been dominated by the Theories of Locke. He assumed that, in perception, mind is wholly passive, a mere recorder of impressions from without. This way of thinking was well suited to an age of scientific speculation which found its representative voice in Newton. The mechanistic explanations which both philosophers and scientists provided of the world meant that scant respect was paid to the human self and, especially, to its

more instinctive, though not less powerful convictions. Thus, both Locke and Newton found a place for God in their universe, for reasons which were rejected by the Romantics. For them, religion was less a question of reason than feeling. They complained that these mechanistic explanations were a denial of their innermost feelings.

Locke did not have a very high regard for poetry. For him it was a matter of wit, and the task of wit is to combine ideas and "thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy".[6] Wit, he thinks, is quite irresponsible, and has nothing much to do with truth or reality. The Romantics rejected with contempt a theory which robbed their work of its essential connection with life.

Blake leads a scathing attack on Locke. For him, he represents a deadly heresy on the nature of existence. Blake is concernd with more than discrediting his views on God and poetry. He is hostile to the whole system that supports these views, and robs the human self of all importance. He rejects Locke's conception of the Universe, and replaces it by a new one, which may be called idealistic, because in this system mind is the central point and the governing factor. In other words, this system is called idealistic because instead of being mechanical and objective, it is subjective, and is created by the ideas, as they crystallise in the poet's mind.

The Romantics insist that the most vital activity of the mind is imagination. For them it is the very source of spiritual energy. They believe that it is divine

and it partakes of the activity of God. Blake says in his usual proud and prophetic manner :

> "This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Everything which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. All things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, The Human Imagination."[7]

For Blake any act of creation performed by imagination is divine, because, for him, imagination is nothing less than God as He operates in the human soul. He believes that man's spiritual nature is fully and finally realized only in imagination. In this respect Coleridge seems to agree with Blake :

> "The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the finite I AM."[8]

It is true that Coleridge regards poetry as the product of secondary imagination. But since the secondary imagination differs only in degree from the primary

imagination, it is clear that for Coleridge also, imagination is of the first importance, for it shares the creative activity of God.

Imagination is practically the same thing as insight. Insight awakens the imagination to work, and is, in turn, sharpened by it where it is at work. This is the assumption on which Blake and other Romantics wrote poetry. It means that when their creative gifts are engaged, they are inspired by their sense of the mystery of things to probe into with a peculiar insight and to shape their discoveries into imaginative forms. They combine imagination and truth because their creations are inspired by a peculiar insight. According to Blake,

> "Mental Things are alone Real; what is call'd Corporeal, Nobody knows of its Dwelling Place : it is in Fallacy, & its Existence an Imposture. Where is the Existence Out of Mind or Thought? Where is it but in the Mind of a Fool?"[9]

Since what mattered to the Romantics was an insight into the nature of things, they rejected Locke's limitation of perception to physical objects, because it takes away from the mind its most essential function, which is at the same time to perceive and to create. Once again, Coleridge comes to the same conclusion as Blake on this point.

When alongwith Coleridge Blake rejected the sensationalist view of external nature, he prepared the way to restore the supremacy of the spirit which had been denied by Locke, but was at this time being propounded by the German

metaphysicians. Blake knew nothing of them, and his conclusions arose from his own visionary outlook, which could not believe that matter is in any sense as real as spirit. He dismissed the atomic physicists and their like as men who try in vain to destroy the divine light which alone gives meaning to life and declared that in its presence their theories ceased to count :

> "The Atoms of Democritus
> And Newton's Particles of light
> Are sands upon the Red sea shore,
> Where Israel's tents do shine so bright."[10]

He was concerned with the things of the spirit and hoped that, through imagination and inspired insight, he could both understand them and present them in compelling poetry.

According to Blake,

> "To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General knowledge are those knowledges that Idiots possess."[11]

He goes on to ask,

> "What is General Nature? is there such a Thing?
> What is General Knowledge? is there such a Thing?
> Strictly speaking All Knowledge is Particular."[12]

The Romantics appeal to the whole range of intellectual faculties, senses and emotions. Only individual presentations of imaginative experience can do this.

In them we see examples of what cannot be expressed directly in words, and can be conveyed only by hint and suggestion. The powers which Wordsworth saw in Nature and Shelley saw in Love are so enormous that we begin to understand them only when they are manifested in single, concrete examples. Then, through the single case, we apprehend something of what the poet has seen in visions. The essence of the imagination, as Blake would have it, is that it fashions shapes which display these unseen at work, and there is no other way to display them, since they resist analysis and description and cannot be presented except in particular instances. Thus, Blake's indignation against generalities has been exemplified. He knew that nothing had significance for him unless it appeared in a particular form.

When Blake laid emphasis on the particular, the Romantic poets, in general, agreed with it. Their art aimed at presenting as forcibly as possible the moments of vision which give to even the vastest issues, the coherence and simplicity of single event. Even in 'Kubla Khan' which has so many qualities of the dream in which it was born, there is a highly individual presentation of a remote and mysterious experience, which is, in fact, the central experience of all creation in its Dionysiac delight and its enraptured ordering of many elements into an entrancing pattern.

Imagination in Blake is the source of the Sublime. He says,

> "All Forms are Perfect in the Poet's Mind, but these are not Abstracted nor compounded from Nature, but are Imagination."[13]

The highest examples of the imaginative art are Michael Angelo and Raphael. In Wordsworth, Blake sees a great imaginative poet, hampered by what Blake considers to be a mechanistic philosophy. The influence of Locke and Hartley had provided Wordsworth terminology which Blake could not accept because of its metaphysical implications. It is probably Wordsworth's Hartleian vocabulary that caused Blake to say,

> "I do not know who wrote these Prefaces : they are very mischievous & direct contrary to Wordsworth's own practise."[14]

Wordsworth's 'Practise', Blake considers to be, at times, "... in the highest degree Imaginative & equal to any poet ..."[15] 'Immortality Ode' moved Blake to tears. But against Wordsworth's heading "Influence of Natural Objects / In calling forth and strengthening the Imagination / in Boyhood and early youth,"[16] Blake sets forth Wordsworth's own translation of Michael Angelo :

> "Heaven-born, the Soul a heaven-ward course must hold;
> Beyond the visible world She soars to seek,
> For what delights the sense is false and weak
> Ideal Form, the universal mould."[17]

Between Issac Watts' day and the early years of the nineteenth century, very little verse was written specially for children. Nursery rhymes and rhymed alphabets, even if they were widely circulated in print, as to which the evidence is of a negative kind, were no more than traditional. Watts held a field which few people deemed worth tillage. It would be nearly true, to say that between 1715

and 1804 no original poems for infant minds were uttered. The eighteenth century regarded child as a miniature adult. It has been observed,

> "... by 1740, for stealing a handkerchief worth one shilling, so long as it was removed privily from the person, children could be hanged by the neck until dead."[18]

Blake knows this is not true; and he gives the readers his vision of the world as it appears to the child, or as it affects the child. An intense conviction of the importance of childhood is seen in him, who is also poignantly aware of the terror and hostility of conventional adult society in face of some features of the child's outlook. But the 'child' was for Blake primarily "an aspect or possibility of every human personality."[19]

An yet with all his maturity of meaning and mastery of craft Blake is in many ways singularly childlike. Indeed, he might almost be described as the boy who grew up to be a master, a genius, a prophet, without ever "growing up". Like other geniuses, Blake shows a rare association of comparatively common powers, which, finding themselves in company, are stimulated to an intense activity, and in moments of inspiration accomplish supreme achievements of the human mind. But taken separately very many of the strands which make up Blake's peculiar genius are characteristically child-like things. Children love to draw pictures and then paint them in bright colours; to make up little rhymes and sing them. They think it would be very nice if all human being run about and play with the animals. They like to imagine dreadful and lovely things happening. They are often very

angry with the grown-up world, and if any god or gods dare to create such a place, they with them too. All these things Blake understood not as an outsider but because they were himself.

It is very difficult to relate Blake to any prevalent eighteenth century tradition. The only tradition to which he owed any loyalty was that of a wide-ranging visionary-prophetic tradition (mainly Christian — but Christian in an extended or special sense of the term). This is more or less the agreed critical opinion on the highly controversial subject of Blake's alignment with the traditional modes. The search, however, has continued and succeeded in relating Blake's Songs of Innocence so illuminatingly to a shortlived eighteenth-nineteenth century convention — the convention of moral stories in prose and verse for children. The convention was plainly an extension of the scriptural-prophetic tradition to which Blake so eminently and indisputably belongs. One very important writer in this "moral tales for children" tradition was Dr. Isaac Watts who published in 1715 his Divine Songs attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children, and in 1719 his Psalms of David written in imitation of the language of the New Testament. In the preface to his Divine Songs, possibly an archetypal book in the tradition, Dr. Watts expressed his desire to stimulate by his publication a successor who would more competently write for the benefit (moral edification) of children. It is quite possible that Blake found his inspiration for Songs in this publication. His own easy language suggests that the volume was meant to be comprehended easily by the teenagers. The nursery-rhymes and folk-tunes, so expertly explored in the poems, only confirm the impression that Blake wrote for children. His

own very intimate acquaintance with the Bible and the Bible-based didactic literature in English is also evident to any reader of the Songs. It has been observed,

> "Having before him the dissenting tradition of children's literature from Bunyan through Watts to Mrs. Barbauld, Blake did not achieve his new inspiration entirely on his own. Of these predecessors, however, only one had an important influence on him : Anna Laetitia Barbauld. From her fine little book, Hymns in Prose for children (1782), Blake borrowed a number of themes and images (at least twelve of the Songs of Innocence contain parallels with the Hymns), but these isolated images were far less important to Blake than one fundamental conception he gained from Mrs. Barbauld's book."[20]

There were other influences besides Locke who played their part (indeed Blake from the beginning to the end of his writing life strove to answer and expose the fallacious teaching of Locke) in causing Blake to write Songs of Innocence. It is interesting that the tradition enlisted as writers some of Blake's personal acquaintances like Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft was the French editorial assistant of Johnson (one of Blake's friends, a radical publisher and bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, for whom Blake worked from time to time as an engraver) and had come under the influence of Rousseau; whom Blake had also read.

Rousseau's novel ideas on natural goodness were adopted with enthusiasm

by Mary Wollstonecraft, and also by Blake, even though the Rousseaunian concept of freedom, being atheistic, is only in certain respects comparable with Blake's. Mary translated a charming book entitled Elements of Morality for the Use Of Parents and Children, by Saltzmann; kindly stories with a great number of illustrations of which Blake made some of the engravings. She wrote a book of her own, Original Stories from Real Life, for which Blake was both an illustrator and engraver. At the time he must have known Mary Wollstonecraft well. Visions of the Daughters of Albion, whose theme is the situation of women under restrictive marriage laws, may also have been inspired by Mary; who while publishing her Vindiction of the Rights of Women adopted Rousseau's views on free love and courageously and disastrously put those ideas into practice. Kathleen Raine has recorded :

> "Blake's Songs of Innocence may well have been directly or indirectly suggested to him by Mary Wollstonecraft; they were his contribution to the current conflict of ideas in the field of education at the end of the eighteenth century, and to the new thought of which Rousseau was the moving spirit. His poem 'The Schoolboy' well describes the restrictive kind of education practised by those who believing that all knowledge comes from without, set themselves, to form the infant mind by cramming it with facts."[21]

Blake's poem puts forward the view he shared with Mary and with Rousseau that every child will develop by the light of its own nature if given freedom to

follow its innate bent. Blake's poem challenges the practice of 'forming' the young mind by loading it with information, envisaging just such a childhood as Wordsworth had been living only a few years earlier, and about which he too, in "The Prelude", was to write under the influence of Rousseau.

'Innocence' and 'Experience' are multidimensional concepts in Blake's poetry and prose, so intimately related to each other that neither has its full meaning alone. They should therefore be explained in terms of their essential unity and disunity. Thus considered, each would gain in meaning from a mutual inter-relatedness based on the principle of similarity and contrast. This dramatic interplay extending their meanings, each would look forward to superior dimensions in man's spiritual existence.

In 1789, the year of the French Revolution, William Blake issued his Songs of Innocence as the first volume to be produced in his new manner of illuminated printing. In 1794, he reissued it in the same manner, but with the addition of Songs of Experince to form a single book (Songs of Innocence and of Experience). The fact that the two books jointly published, suggest that they are in certain ways related, and this mutual relatedness has very important bearings on the question of unity between the two parts that clearly appear to have been two separate books in the original design. The title description (Songs of Innocence and Experience / Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul) suggests, as it was evidently intended to do, the nature of the relationship between the two.

This book is noteworthy among Blake's works because it is the only volume

of poems which he himself published. The Poetical Sketches of 1783 was published by the Reverend Henry Mathew, no doubt with Blake's approval or acquiescence but not with his own loving care. Blake's other publications were either prophetic books or prose works, not poetry in the strict sense. What prompted Blake to publish the Songs was the importance he attached to them. There can be no doubt that he intended them to be as good as he could make them both in contents and in appearance. The Rossetti manuscript shows not only what pains he took in revising his texts but what self-denial he exerted in omitting from the book poems which are among the best that he wrote but which for some reason he did not think suitable for publication in it. A book formed with such care deserves special attention. Blake was thirty-seven when he issued it in its complete form, and it represents his mature, considered choice of his own poems. It is perhaps not surprising that in recent years scholars have tended to neglect the Songs for the prophetic books; for the Songs look limpid and translucent, while the prophetic books are rich in unravelled mysteries and alluring secrets. But the Songs deserve special attention if only because they constitute one of the most remarkable collections of lyrical poems written in English. It has been rightly observed:

> "... the Songs of Innocence express for the first time in English literature the spontaneous happiness of childhood. Now nothing in the whole world of emotion is of lighter texture than the happiness of a child. Like the dew, it vanishes with the first rays of the sun, and its essential quality, spontaneity, is a thing never to be recalled. One

> would have thought that to write songs which not only have this quality, but are so deeply dyed in it that they are its expression, the singer must have been one who carried over into his manhood all his childish innocence."[22]

Of forty-six poems in the Songs of Innocence and of Experience, roughly twenty are written about a child. Six of these are about a child lost and found. These six poems are coupled to make three pairs, of which one pair stands in the Songs of Innocence, and two stand in the Songs of Experience. Their contraries are less simple than those of other paired poems, set one against the other in the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience. This contrary was prompted by social bitterness. But it was the contrary not to social but to spiritual innocence. To be just, it must remain a contrary within the soul. The symbol of innocence had been the child. The symbol of experience, mazy and manifold as the hypocrite, and as fascinating, is the father.

The sense of happiness is the only seed of writing genuine lyrical poetry. It does not mean that lyrical poetry solely depends on happiness. It has close proximity with both the sense of happiness and that of abysmal misery. For, the sweetest songs in Blake can not stand without the contrast of saddest thoughts in Shelley. The lyrical poets always try to establish the sense of happiness as vivid enjoyment with greater efforts than their fellows.

The happiness of every lyrical poet finds its fullest expression in Blake's

original happiness. The immeasurable wealth that the Songs of Innocence clearly ventilates is self-dependent unalloyed happiness. In the Songs of Innocence Blake was the first to discover and announce childhood. Breaking the shackles of the state of immature growth, he leads to light the harmonious blending of happiness, unity and self-enjoyment. Here one finds the Glory of God and the original state of the soul. Blake opined :

> "Unorganiz'd Innocence : An Impossibility. / Innocence dwells with Wisdom, but never with Ignorance."[23]

A comparison between the Songs of Innocence and Robert Louis Stevenson's Child's Garden of Verses is worthy to be mentioned. If the readers compare the two, they are at once conscious of an immense difference. Stevenson writes of his own childhood, making the reminiscent efforts and fanciful condescensions of a grown man. Blake recaptures the child mind. He gathers the flower with the dew upon it. He does not merely write about childish happiness; he becomes the happy child. He does not speak of, or for, the child, he lets the child speak its own delight. What is most marvellous, there are no false tones in his voice. It has been rightly remarked :

> "Stevenson is particular : he writes memoirs of his own childhood : he expresses what he remembers of his own wonder or fancy, his childish hopes and fears. Blake is Universal; he expresses the natural delight in life of every happy child in the world. The cry of his "Little Boy Lost" is the cry of every child at the first discovery of loneliness."[24]

"Introduction" to Songs of Innocence (undoubtedly a graceful poem) introduces the realm of Innocence by telling how these poems came to be written, what they are to be about, and to whom they are to bring joy ("Every child may joy to hear").[25] That is all very clear, and the dramatic form of the poem, characteristic of most of the poems that follow, relates these things in a way that unites the adult poet with the child. The simplicity of the words, the repititious phrasing, and the directness of feeling belong to the speech of children; the intellectual control and the symbolic implications are adult. This fusion of the childlike and the adult presents the child's unfallen world as being penetrated by religious insight but given form and explicitness by the wise innocence of a more comprehensive intelligence. The idea of Christ, who is both child and man, is the underlying idea that unifies, indeed identifies the piper and the child in this and all the poems of Innocence. This identification of naive and wise innocence is symbolized also in the Lamb, who is at once the helpless and vulnerable child, and also the Lamb of God — the watchful and shepherding adult. This extraordinary territory of child, adult, and lamb, all ultimately one, as implied by the word atonement, is imaged as a special pastoral world, that must be written about with a "rural pen".[26] In a letter Blake wrote :

> "I see the face of my Heavenly Father; he lays his Hand upon my Head & gives as blessing to all my works; why should I be troubled? why should my heart and flesh cry out?"[27]

The poem is not just about the moment of joyful religion and artistic

inspiration; it is also about the process of making poetry out of such inspiration ("... he lays his Hand upon my Head...")[28]. Here the controlling force of adult intelligence is both represented and shown in operation. At first the inspiration is wordless, a feeling, a melody without lyrics. But the melody is so beautiful that it must not be lost :

" 'Piper, pipe that song again;'
So I piped : he wept to hear."[29]

And again :

" 'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy chear :'
So I sung the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear."[30]

Blake usually placed "The Shepherd" immediately after the "Introduction", probably because it so perfectly expressed the interchangeable identities of God and Man, Shepherd and Lamb, Guardian and Child. It is one of the most direct expressions of the meaning to Innocence of life in its wordly dimension, the dimension which pertains to human interrelationships. In Blake's analogy between the Shepherd and God, the religious affirmation is considerably more complicated :

"How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise."[31]

And again,

"For he hears the lamb's innocent call,
And he hears the ewe's tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in piece,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh."[32]

The poet (identified as the Shepherd) concerns himself with the spiritual nature of children.

In "The Echoing Green", the village common, be it ever so lightly sketched, provides to innocence a suitable idyllic setting. The speaker is evidently a child; the child's viewpoint is manifest in the vision of the integrated world with which the poem opens :

"The Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;
The merry bells ring
To welcome the spring; ..."[33]

It is essentially the child's world generally inaccessible to the experienced adult for whom this world hardly exists except as a phantasy to be mocked at. Only such grown-ups as can defy their age and experience or can continue in the child-like condition of mind have access to the child's green sportland :

"Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk."[34]

The clearest hint of prophetic meaning is properly exemplified here where Blake, like Wordsworth, finds in one's memory of childhood intimations of immortality. The old folk who recollect their natural past in the joy of children see both their source and their rebirth in Eternity. The ability of old John to "... laugh away care"[35] is a sign not that his worldly care is inconsiderable but that he, like the Nurse, finds peace in the laughter of children. The natural harmonies of the echoing green are sacramental. Like human guardianship, the pastoral landscape is at once an occasion for and the content of prophetic vision, and just as a transcendent meaning resides within the natural world, so the realm of eternity also resides within the human breast. Eternity is both within and without.

'The Lamb' opens with an apparently innocent question : "Little Lamb, who made thee?"[36] But here the child seems to echo an adult, as if the child is quite aware of the creator and hence he has no uncertainty to continue :

"He is called by thy name,
For he called himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name."[37]

The basic piety of the young speaker testifies to his innocence in which the essential oneness of the 'identities' is intuitively perceived. The line, "He is meek, & he is mild"[38] seems to be almost a verbatim echo of Charles Wesley's hymn, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild."[39] More important, however, is the echo of

Jeremiah xiv, 9 ("Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not")[40] in "He is called by thy name"[41] or "We are called by his name."[42] The poem approximately concludes in a spirit of Christian charity, benediction and prayer which are characteristics of innocence : "Little lamb, God bless thee!"[43]

In "The little Black Boy", the little Black boy and the little English boy have the same father, and ultimately the same colour : "And I am black, but O! my soul is white."[44] The final lines are meant as an admonition that refers to life in the world as well as to Heaven :

> "And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
> And be like him, and he will then love me."[45]

Men are cruel to each other just as they had been cruel to Christ but the true meaning of that cruelty resides in the love with which it is answered by Christ and by the little Black boy, who in this poem quite explicitly has Christ's role as intermediary between the little English boy and God. It is a central and typical poem of Innocence. The primary themes of sacramental guardianship and prophetic vision have equal weight and are perfectly integrated. The mother is the guardian-Christ who lovingly explains both the meaning of suffering and of Eternity : "Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day."[46] Similarly, the little Black boy is the guardian-Christ of English child, shading him from the heat until he too can bear the beams of Love. And, finally, of course, god is the ultimate guardian who comforts people through life and then mercifully releases them from it :

"Saying : 'Come out from the grove, my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice."[47]

"The Blossom" is a child's expression of delight in the birds like the sparrow and the robin. The scene is set under leaves so green — in a kind of Arcadian bower. The speaker seems to be a little girl whose motherly feeling for the birds is conveyed partly by the word "Bosom".[48] The blossom, as well as the child, see and hear the birds, giving an additional impression of natural innocence and uniting the human child, the birds, and the plants in simple harmony. In "The Chimney Sweeper", the little slaves, black with soot, become clean, free and happy in a green plain by a river in the sun :

"*Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,*
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun."[49]

In spite of the obvious misery of their lives, the boys retain a vision of eternal happiness and are sustained by it. Like "Holy Thursday", this poem ends with a moral : "So if all do their duty they need not fear harm."[50] Whatever the poetic objections to this didactic statement, it strikes an optimistic note.

"The Little Boy Lost" is a sad commentary on the condition of children, who, once orphaned or separated, would have none to help them out. The system, based on exploitation of man by man is an inhuman system, where there is none to look after even the innocent children. The poem, if read apart from its sequel, is really a tragic poem :

"The night was dark, no father was there;
The Child was wet with dew; ..."[51]

It is only in the sequel ('The Little Boy Found') that the child's tears become efficacious. God appears "like his father in white"[52] and leads the little boy to his mother :

"He kissed the child & by the hand led
And to his mother brought,"[53]

"Laughing Song" is a pastoral poem about children and joy. Just as in "Nurse's Song" and 'The Echoing Green', the landscape gaily echoes the laughter of children ("When Mary and Susan and Emily / With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha, Ha, He!"),[54] and the atmosphere is one of complete harmony and joy ("When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy").[55] The speaker himself, if not a child, is a person who invites the reader "to join in this thoughtless and unclouded happiness."[56] Blake transforms pious analogy into literal sacramental truth in "A Cradle Song". Here he goes far beyond the expected Christological comparisons :

"Sleep, sleep, happy child,
All creation slept and smil'd;
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.

Sweet babe, once like thee,

Thy maker lay and wept for me."[57]

While the mother sees Christ in her infant, the poet sees Christ in the mother weeping over her child. For Blake every mother is Mary and Christ, and every infant is, like God, the parent's parent. The mother's final words as she watches over her child are :

"Infant smiles are his own smiles;

Heaven & Earth to peace beguiles."[58]

For William Blake, God is the divine essence which exists potentially in every man and woman. The power and appeal of this belief appear in "The Divine Image". The divine image, of course, is man, but man in part of his complex being and seen from a special point of view. Blake speaks quite literally and means to be taken at his word when he says :

"To Mercy, Pity, and Love

All pray in their distress;

And to these virtues of delight

Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love

Is God, our father dear,

And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love

Is Man, his child and care."[59]

The divine qualities which Blake enumerates exist in man and reveal their

divine character through him. Though Blake says of man's imagination that "it manifests itself in his Works of Art"[60], he spreads his idea of art to include all that he thought most important and most living in conduct. In mercy, pity, peace, and love, he found the creed of brotherhood which is the centre of his gospel. The presence of this faculty in the child implies its universal presence in man, and Blake explicitly formulated the connections between poetry, prophecy, and the universal religious instinct in another etched work of 1788, "All Religions Are One" :

> "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius ... As all men are alike (tho' infinitely various), So all Religions &, as all similars, have one source. The true Man is the source, he being the Poetic Genius."[61]

All religions are one because all men are one as Christ and in Christ :

> "... all must love the human form,
> In heathen, turk, or jew;
> Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell
> There God is dwelling too."[62]

In "Holy Thursday", one of the two London poems in the Songs of Innocence, the poet is delighted by the visual splendour of the scene : the children in red, blue, and green, the beadles with grey hair and snow white wands. What stirs Blake is the re-enactment before his eyes, and in an overtly religious context,of

Christ's guardianship of man. It is re-enacted on an overwhelming scale. The beadles are shepherds : "wise guardians of the poor"[63], the children are "lambs".[64] But once inside the cathedral, the aged men sit "beneath"[65] the children, so that the roles of sheep and shepherd are interchanged just as in 'The Shepherd'. Blake's imagination being stirred, the words that present themselves to him are inevitably biblical :

"Oh what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town!"[66]

The song of children is also a biblical reenactment :

"Now like a mighty wind they raise to Heaven the voice of song."[67]

Thus the emphasis is on innocence, purity, meekness, and radiance.

"Night" deals with satisfying pictures of angels looking into all creatures, animal and human. In "new worlds"[68] the angels receive the spirits of the sheep killed by wolves and tigers. The wild beasts are even transformed in those new worlds driving away wrath by the meekness of Christ :

"And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep;
Or think on him who bore thy name,
Graze after thee and weep."[69]

No such heaven of sinless animal life was ever conceived so intensely and sweetly.

The Swedenborgian doubleness of Blake's landscape is best seen in a simple poem like "Spring", where the interest resides almost entirely in the sacramental meaning. Like the new year they celebrate, the inhabitans of the poem's springtime landscape are newly born : the lamb, the little boy, the little girl. While it is appropriate to the natural sense of the poem that these young creatures be the celebrants at the birth of the natural year, it is absolutely essential to the poem's spiritual sense that they be newly born, for the poem is not only about birth but also about rebirth and apocalypse. The opening Words :

"Sound the Flute!
Now it's mute."[70]

are a pastoral prophecy of the last trumpet. So is the crowing of the cock, which, in Blake's apocalyptic reading of the Bible, announces the moment when a previous cock-crowing assumes its final significance :

"And immediately the cock crew. Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the hall of Judgement."[71]

Similarly the refrain,

"Merrily, Merrily, to welcome in the Year."[72]

gives to the word "Year"[73] the same apocalyptic sense it has in Isaiah. And the last stanza, so embarrassing to some readers, carries a weight of apocalyptic meaning in the words :

"Little Lamb,
Here I am."[74]

In the "Nurse's Song", the nurse speaks to herself meditatively, then aloud to the children. A little drama ensues, and finally the poet's own voice speaking in

the past tense, distances the scene and gives it a significance. These shifts of voice impose shifts of perspective — from the adult world to the children's and then to a "wise innocence"[75] that embraces both. It is the world of carefree children which knows nothing of suffering. But the nurse's mood at the beginning places this joy in the same adult perspective in which the poet places it at the end. Her heart is at rest,

"When the voices of children are heard on the green."[76]

Implicitly there are times when her heart is not at rest. The centre of the poem is the contrast between adult knowledge and childish ignorance. Each has a different way of interpreting the disappearance of the sun below the horizon. The nurse knows that this augurs night and unhealthy dews. The children know that it is still light, and so do the sheep and the birds. Both the nurse and the children are right; and in giving way to the children, the nurse expresses not only her love for them but also her understanding of their divine insight. Thus it turns out that the innocent children are just as wise as the experienced adult, and the full truth is one that encompasses both innocent joy and "the dews of night".[77]

"Infant Joy" is a cradle song in which the mother ponders a name for her baby and finally, victoriously, discovers one. The happiness of the infant solves the mother's problem by suggesting the name "Joy",[78] and the mother then sings a lullaby in which she confirms the name and prays for its continued appropriateness. This is the "realistic"[79] account of what happens in the poem, and should be kept in order to avoid the irrelevant question "How could a two-day-old speak?"[80] On

the other hand, the infant does speak, even carries on its share of a dialogue. Here Blake's reticence in employing inverted commas is functional, since it brings home to the reader the primary demands of the Songs of Innocence — adult empathy with the child. The poem expresses that empathy in its strongest form, motherly love. Neither the mother nor the child speaks separately : the child speaks of the mother's joy, and the mother the child's meaning. The dialogue is to be understood as occurring in the mother's singing as she listens to and watches her baby. The refrain of the mother's cradle song is "Sweet joy befall thee."[81] The infant's refrain is "I happy am,"[82] and the readers have therein the counterpoint between the child's knowledge of joy and the mother's knowledge of the sorrow in life. Yet the mother, through her empathy with the child, knows both joy and sorrow, and the sacramental significance of both is implied here as in all the other poems of Innocence.

"A Dream" is, first of all, that at every point celebrates the ideal of guardianship. The speaker's bed is guarded by angles as he sleeps :

"Once a dream did weave a shade
O'er my Angel-guarded bed."[83]

the ant, though lost, is herself a guardian, more concerned with the plight of her family than herself :

" "O, my children! do they cry?
Do they hear their father sigh?" "[84]

Finally, the glow-worm and the beetles are guardians :

" "I am set to light the ground,

While the beetle goes his round :" "[85]

The dreamer's world is one in which everyone is both guarded and guardian, and even if he cannot help the ant in her trouble he does what every helpless guardian does: "Pitying, I drop'd a tear."[86] Thus "A Dream" is an authentic poem of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love whose tone is that of unqualified trust in God's beneficence. It is notable that this is the only dream in Innocence which is about the natural world, and the only poem in which a nonhuman speaker is not in eternity.

In "On Another's Sorrow" — addressed to the child in the adult and to the "true man"[87] in the child — the selfhood is to "annihilate".[88] Both the unknowing child and the poet-adult affirm a truth that empirical and palpable evidence of cruelty, callousness, and perversity cannot touch. The poem is, in fact, invulnerable. It makes itself so by the simple assertion that the readers pity another's sorrow because Christ pities all. This must be, since Christ is the Divine humanity and so are the readers :

"He doth give his joy to all;

He becomes an infant small;

He becomes a man of woe;

He doth feel the sorrow too."[89]

While the poem is about guardianship and pity — like all the Songs that pertain to life in the world — the final stanza summarizes the entire sacramental

cycle of life. The first two lines present the joy that is the inner vision of eternity :

"O! he gives to us his joy
That our grief he may destroy, ..."[90]

Until the readers fully enter that envisioned Eternity all men, like Christ, must pity another's sorrow :

"Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan."[91]

From innocence man passes to experience (in arranging his work Blake followed his own maxim that "without contraries is no progression"[92]), and what Blake means by this can be seen from some lines in Vala, or The Four Zoas :

"What is the price of Experience? do men buy it for a song?
"Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the/price
"Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children.
"Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy,
"And in the wither'd field where the farmer plows for bread in/vain."[93]

Blake knew that experience should be bought at a price that is bitter, not only in an atmosphere of comfort and mental peace, but also in the spiritual values to the extreme. On one hand experience is factual, on the other, it is dialectical in the cycle of being. Blake hinges upon the fact that experience, being a state much lower than innocence, can not be ignored in the light of necessity. The creation, as a whole, is puzzled with the state or cause of grievous distress. Material striving resounds in the poems of experience that is communicated by infancy and age. According to a critic,

> "In Innocence it is day, and spring or summer, with the sun giving light and heat; in Experience, it is "eternal winter" with darkness and the howling storm around."[94]

A remarkable type of transplantability easily indicates the point of intersection between innocence and experience — a meeting place where the opposition between them ceases to exist. It also suggests that innocence does not completely preclude experience, nor does experience veto innocence out of existence; there is a common ground where they meet and merge. The poems themselves also abundantly show that experience lies latent in innocence and innocence remains dormant in experience. But "contrariness", as Northorp Frye has shrewdly pointed out, does not mean negation[95] in Blake's poetry and as such the two antithetical states of innocence and experience can co-exist without negating each other and can supply each other's deficiency. This, however, necessitates a process of change and evolution through a mutual give-and-take till the two, after necessary modifications, lead on to a higher order or dimension of reality.

The poems (both the Innocence and Experience series) suggest two opposite ways of looking at the same event (child-birth), each way reflecting the speaker's state of mind; the spiritual state of the first speaker, needless to say, is innocence and that of the second is experience. The antithetical approaches are juxtaposed and contrasted by means of the deliberately intended correspondence that exists between the two titles. Similar other corresponding sets or pairs in Songs suggest how the method helps the poet's nicely calculated patterning of thoughts, the correspondence method being Blake's very special variant of the much-used and

hence worn-out poetic technique of similarity and contrast. The method, incidentally, is much explored in twentieth-century literature; the most obvious example it recalls is Huxley's Point Counterpoint. The following table is intended to show how the 'point-counter point' method (evidently from music) has been used by Blake with very subtle variations :

Songs of Innocence		Songs of Experience
"The Lamb", "Nurse's Song",		"The Tiger", "Nurse's Song,"
"Holy Thursday",	Correspond	"Holy Thursday,"
"The Chimney Sweeper",	respectively	"The Chimney Sweeper",
"The Divine Image",	to	"A Divine Vision", "The Human
"The Little Boy Lost", &		Abstract", "The Little Girl Lost",
"The Little Boy Found"		"The Little Girl Found".

The "correspondence" technique, however, works not only in "sets" or "pairs"; it may exist even within a single poem.

When experience destroys the state of childlike innocence, it puts many destructive forces in its place. In the first "Nurse's Song", Blake tells how children play and are allowed to go on playing until the light fades and it is time to go to bed. It is not spoiled by senseless restrictions. But in the second "Nurse's Song" the readers hear the other side of the matter, when experience has set to work :

"When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisp'rings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring & your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise."[96]

The voice sees play as a waste of time and cruelly tells the children that their life is a sham passed in darkness and cold, like one of Blake's terrible prophetic scenes of desolation, as in "The Four Zoas" :

"But from the caves of deepest night, ascending in clouds of mist,
The winter spread his wide black wings across from pole to pole :
Grim frost beneath & terrible snow, link'd in a marriage chain,
Began a dismal dance. The winds around on pointed rocks
Settled like bats innumerable, ready to fly abroad."[97]

The first and most fearful thing about experience is that it breaks the free life of the imagination and substitutes a dark, cold, imprisoning fear, and the result is a deadly blow to the blithe human spirit.

For Blake hypocrisy is as grave a sin as cruelty because it rises from the same causes, from the refusal to obey the creative spirit of the imagination and from submission to fear and envy. He marks its character by providing an antithesis to "The Divine Image" in "The Human Abstract". In bitter irony he shows how love, pity, and mercy can be distorted and used as a cover for base or cowardly motives. Speaking through the hypocrite's lips, Blake goes straight to the heart of the matter by showing how glibly hypocrisy claims to observe these cardinal

hence worn-out poetic technique of similarity and contrast. The method, incidentally, is much explored in twentieth-century literature; the most obvious example it recalls is Huxley's Point Counterpoint. The following table is intended to show how the 'point-counter point' method (evidently from music) has been used by Blake with very subtle variations :

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"When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisp'rings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

virtues :

"Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we."[98]

In this corrupt frame of mind, selfishness and cruelty flourish and are dignified under false names. This process shatters the world into pieces. It supports those outward forms of religion which Blake regards as the death of the soul :

"Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpiller and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.
... ...
The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree;
But their search was all in vain :
There grows one in the Human Brain"[99]

So the poet recreates the myth of the Tree of Knowledge or of Life. The tree, which is fashioned by man's reason, gives falsehood instead of truth and death instead of life.

Perhaps the worst thing in experience, as Blake observes, is that it destroys love and affection. On no point does he speak with more passionate conviction.

In "The Clod and the Pebble", he shows how love naturally seeks not to please itself or have any care for itself, but in the world of experience the heart becomes like "a Pebble of the brook"[100] and turns love into a selfish desire for possession :

" "Love seeketh only Self to please,
"To bind another to Its delight,
"Joys in another's loss of ease,
"And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite." "[101]

The withering of the affections begins early, when the elders repress and frighten children. In "Holy Thursday" Blake shows what this means, how in a rich and fruitful land children live in misery :

"And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak & bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns :
It is eternal winter there."[102]

The horror of experience is all the greater because of the contrast, explicit or implicit, which Blake suggests between it and innocence. In "The Echoing Green", he tells how the children are happy and contented at play, but in "The Garden of Love", to the same setting, he presents an ugly antithesis. The green is still there, but on it is a chapel with "Thou shalt not"[103] written over the door, and the garden itself has changed :

"And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires."[104]

In the state of experience, jealousy, cruelty, and hypocrisy forbid the natural play of the affections and turn joy into misery.

In "London" (another poem that depicts sordid and sad conditions of life), Blake's compassionate heart was outraged and wounded by the sufferings which society inflict on its humbler members and by the waste of human material which seems indispensable to the efficient operation of rules and laws. The poet sees "marks of weakness, marks of woe"[105] in every face. He hears "mind forg'd manacles"[106] in every voice, whether of man or child. Then there is the soldier who sheds his blood in obedience to his King, and there are the blackened chimney sweepers. Lastly, there is the tragedy of loveless marriages which compel men to go to prostitutes and beget illegitimate children. Bowra feels,

> "The child chimney-sweeper, the soldier, and the harlot are Blake's types of the oppressed — characteristic victims of a system based not on brotherhood but on fear. Each in his own way shows up the shams on which society thrives. The chimney-sweeper's condemned life is supported by the churches; the soldier's death is demanded by the court; and the harlot's calling is forced on her by the marriage-laws. The constrasts between truth and pretence, between natural happiness and unnatural repression, are stressed by Blake in these three examples, and through them we see the anguish in which he faced the social questions of his time."[107]

"Cruelty has a Human Heart,
And Jealousey a Human Face;
Terror, the Human Form Divine,
And Secrecy the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forged Iron,
The Human Form a fiery Forge,
The Human Face a Furnace seal'd,
The Human Heart its hungry Gorge."[114]

In 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard', Blake looks forward to a new age, but the present world is full of doubt, dark disputes, folly and "clouds of reason".[115] The theme of sexual guilt and repression runs through "The Angel", "The Sick Rose", "Ah! Sunflower", and "A Little Girl Lost". "The Sick Rose" has been called the most concentrated expression of the horror of repressed sexuality. The youth and the virgin in "Ah! Sunflower" pine and languish because they are denied the freedom of love. In "The Lilly", the poet sees the possibility of danger and treachery in love (represented by the rose and the sheep), but the poet also sees the possibility that genuine innocence and love do exist (in the shape of the white lilly).

Two poems first included in Songs of Innocence but later transferred to Songs of Experience are strange narratives, evidently belonging to some world of myth or fairy-tale that yet does not seem to be drawn from any familiar tradition. "The Little Girl Lost" tells of a girl-child who falls asleep beneath a tree in a "desart

wild";[116] she is found by the lion king, who carries her to his cavern where she continues to live safely among leopards and tigers; in a plate which accompanies this poem a young woman is shown among her children; so that the readers must conclude that the little girl descended into the world of generation, where in the animal existence of the embodied soul she gave birth to children. In the second poem, "The Little Girl Found", her parents, grief-stricken, seek for their daughter. The mother in turn meets the lionking, and recognises the king of the caverns deep of the underworld of generation as "A spirit arm'd in gold".[117] He leads the mother to her child, whom she finds living in safety among the creatures of the natural creation. The stories are based on the Greater and Lesser Mysteries of Eleusis; doubtless based on Thomas Taylor the Platonist's Dissertation on the Mysteries of Eleusis and Dionysus. The poems stand appropriately among Blake's songs of childhood, as an affirmation of his belief that the soul that enters the world of generation is already complete in humanity, existing in an eternal world from which it descends and to which it will return.

Blake knows well that consummation will not come simply from good will or pious aspirations and that the life of the imagination is possible only through passion, power and energy. That is why he sometimes stresses the great forces which lie hidden in man and may be terrifying but are none the less necessary if anything worthwhile is to happen. He sees that the creative activity of the imagination and the transformation of experience through it are possible only through the release and exercise of awful powers. The poetry of this desire and of what it meant to Blake can be seen in "The Tyger" being a counterpart to "The Lamb". The tiger seems to symbolize fierce spiritual forces which are needed to

break the shackles of experience. Blake believes in the all embracing nature of godhead. The apparent evil in the tiger is only an expression of divine strength and energy. Thus Blake's view of good and evil, as manifestations of the same heavenly spirit, is essentially mystical. The "... forests of the night",[118] in which the tiger lurks, are ignorance, repression, and superstition. The tiger has been fashioned by unknown, supernatural spirits, like Blake's mythical heroes, and this happened when "the stars threw down their spears",[119] that is, in some enormous cosmic crisis when the universe turned round in its course and began to move from light to darkness. Just as early in the Songs of Innocence Blake sets his poem about the lamb, with its artless question ("Little Lamb, who made thee? / Dost thou know who made thee?"),[120] so early in the Songs of Experience Blake sets his poem about the tiger with its more frightening and more frightened questions. The lamb and the tiger are symbols for two different states of the human soul. When the lamb is destroyed by experience, the tiger is needed to restore the world.

In the Songs of Innocence and of Experience there are only hints of the final consummation which shall restore men to the fullness of joy. The poems are concerned with an earlier stage in the struggle and treat of it from a purely poetical standpoint. What Blake gives is the essence of his imaginative thought about this crisis in himself and in all men. When he completed the whole book in its two parts, he knew that the state of innocence is not enough, but he had not found his full answer to his doubts and questions. From this uncertainty he wrote his miraculous poetry. Against the negative powers, which he found so menacingly in the ascendant, he set, both in theory and in practice, his gospel of the

imagination. Strange as some of his ideas may be to the readers, the poetry comes with an unparalleled force because of the prodigious release of creative energy which has gone to its making. The prophet of gigantic catastrophies and celestial reconciliations was also a poet who knew that poetry alone could make others share his central experiences. In the passion and the tenderness of these songs there is something beyond analysis, that living power of the imagination which was the beginning and the end of Blake's activity. Of course, profound things are simple too, and any child can respond to the voice of life itself in the lines :

"Arise, you little glancing wings & sing your infant joy!
Arise & drink your bliss!
For everything that lives is holy; for the source of life
Descends to be a weeping babe ... ."[121]

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