

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

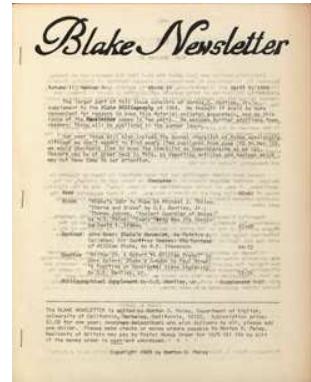
BLAKE

Q U E R Y

Milton 29: A Retort to William Frend?

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QUERIES

I. Milton 29: A Retort to William Frend?

I wonder whether anyone else has seen in *Milton* 29:

And every Space that a Man views around his dwelling-place
Standing on his own roof or in his garden on a mount
Of twenty-five cubits in height, such space is his Universe:
And on its verge the Sun rises & sets, the Clouds bow
To meet tha flat Earth . . .
As to that false appearance which appears to the reasoner
As of a Globe rolling thro' Voidness, it is a delusion of Ulro.

a retort to William Frend's *Evening Amusements*, 1814, pages 40,41:

Leaving the system of Newton and of all other makers of systems, let us suppose that we have never heard of them, and that now, for the first time, we began to reflect on our situation on this Earth, and to contemplate the heavenly bodies around us. A crowd of thoughts press upon the imagination, which is drawn every way by the multitude of objects exciting our attention. We find ourselves placed in a vast body, which we call Earth, apparently a plain, diversified by hill and dale, and bounded by the great expanse of air or heaven, which is above and around us. Had we been confined to the village or town that gave us birth and received no information from others, who had travelled beyond the limits of our horizon, the Earth might have remained to our conceptions a vast plain, bounded by the sky, and we might have been lost in the thoughts of what existed beyond our visible limits. . . . But the knowledge of others comes to our assistance, and we find that beyond our village are immense regions . . . we are convinced that the Earth is a round body, the figure of whose orb is nearly globular.

The year 1814 is more than a trifle late for an influence on *Milton*, but this may have been the kind of point Frend made in conversation long before he put it in print in a popular scientific publication. We know, from his daughter's memoirs,¹ that he both knew and respected Blake.

Mrs. Frida Knight of Reading is writing a biography of Frend. If anyone has any information or advice, I shall be happy to pass it on to her. Full acknowledgment will of course be made.

¹ Sophia Elizabeth de Morgan: *Threescore Years and Ten*, London, 1895, pages 66-68.

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