

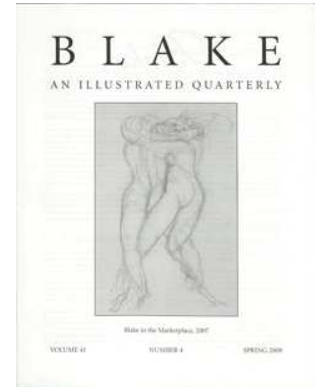
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Reply to G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Aileen Ward

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With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought

The Dates of *Jerusalem*

BY G. E. BENTLEY, JR.

AILEEN Ward, "Building *Jerusalem*: Composition and Chronology," *Blake* 39.4 (spring 2006): 183-185, concludes that the "new Prophecy" of Blake with "60 Plates" referred to by George Cumberland in 1807 (*BR*[2] 246)¹ "cannot have been *Jerusalem* [as we have it], and can therefore only have been *Milton*." However, *Milton* as we have it consists of a maximum of only 50 plates, not the 60 of Cumberland's reference.

She places "*Jerusalem* firmly in the decade of the 1810s" and dismisses the plain "1804" on its title page as merely evidence of Blake's "desire to link the two poems" *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, which are both dated 1804 on their title pages.

Her evidence that there cannot have been 60 plates of *Jerusalem* finished in 1807 derives chiefly from internal evidence of a post-1807 date on more than 50 of the 100 plates of *Jerusalem*. The character "Hand" appears on 26 *Jerusalem* plates,² and Hand, with his "Three Brains in contradictory council" (*Jerusalem* pl. 70, l. 5) and his three pointing hands (pl. 93), is generally agreed to represent Robert, John, and Leigh Hunt in whose *Examiner* Blake was anonymously and recklessly attacked on 7 August 1808 and 17 September 1809 (*BR*[2] 258-61, 282-85). These 26 plates must have been finished after 1807. Further, *BB* p. 228 cites 37 *Jerusalem* plates³ which are anomalous (in terms of size, density of errata, erroneous catchwords, etc.) as suggesting lateness. However, the connection of odd plates with lateness is not very secure. Perhaps the 26 plates with Hand and 14 of the odd plates were finished after 1807.

There is a good deal of evidence that *Jerusalem* as presently constituted differs from previous versions. The simplest evidence is the title-page reference to a work "In XXVIII Chapters" (rather than the present four chapters) and the "End of the 1st Chap:" on plate 14, whereas the last words of chapter 1 are now on plate 25.

Further, watermarks on some proofs suggest an early date: EDMEADS & [PINE] on *Jerusalem* plate 9 and EDMEADS & PINE 1802 on *Jerusalem* (F) duplicate plates 28, 45, 56, plus a loose plate 28. These two watermarks also appear in *Songs of Innocence* (Q), which Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (1993) 243, 378, dates c. 1804.

1. *BR*(2) refers to *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), *BB* to *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977), and citations of Blake are from *William Blake's Writings*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978).

2. *Jerusalem* pls. 5, 7-9, 15, 17-19, 21, 26, 32, 34, 36, 42-43, 58, 60, 67, 70-71, 74, 80, 82-84, 90 have references to Hand.

3. *Jerusalem* pls. 8, 10-11, 16, 19, 33-34-35, 42-43, 46-47, 53, 55-56, 59-60-61, 63-66-67, 70-71-72, 77-78, 82, 89, 92-96, 99-100 (pl. numbers in italic boldface also have references to Hand).

Is there evidence for *Jerusalem* before 1807 aside from the title-page date of 1804 and vague references in his letters to "My long Poem" (e.g., 25 April 1803)? Well, some of the events in it were of 1790-1803:

I heard in Lambeths shades [where Blake lived 1790-1800];
In Felpham [1800-03] I heard and saw the Visions of
Albion[.]

I write in South Molton Street [1803-21] what I both see
and hear (*Jerusalem* pl. 38, ll. 40-42)

Some characters in *Jerusalem* derive from his trials for sedition of 1803 and 1804, particularly the references to Privates Scofield and Cock who accused him, Lieutenant Hulton who preferred the charges, and Justices of the Peace Brereton, Peachey, and Quantock who heard the charges.⁴

There is clear evidence that *Jerusalem* depicts some events of 1790-1804, and the "1804" on the title page clearly implies that the work was written and probably at least partly etched then. It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain what *Jerusalem* consisted of in 1804 or even in 1807, but it is very likely that some of it was committed to paper and to copper in 1804.

4. Brereton, Cock, Hulton, Peachey, Quantock, and Scofield appear in various spellings on *Jerusalem* pls. 5, 7-8, 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 32, 36, 43, 51, 58, 60, 67-68, 71, and 90.

Reply to G. E. Bentley, Jr.

BY AILEEN WARD

FIRST, I wish to thank G. E. Bentley, Jr., for his careful reading of my paper and his thoughtful reply. However, I must respectfully disagree with a number of his points. Though he states it is "exceedingly difficult to ascertain what *Jerusalem* consisted of in 1804 or even in 1807," he stands by his earlier argument that George Cumberland's 1807 memorandum stating that Blake "has eng[rave]d 60 Plates of a new Prophecy!" must refer to *Jerusalem*, the only poem by Blake of over 60 plates (*BR*[2] 246 and fn), and dismisses my conclusion that it refers to *Milton* ("Building *Jerusalem*" 185), which, as he notes, "consists of a maximum of only 50 plates" in its final form.¹ Rather, he concludes from the evidence of the 1804 date on the title page and other considerations that *Jerusalem* as a whole "was written and probably at least partly etched then," that is, by 1804.

However, the 1804 title-page date is not plain evidence for the composition of *Jerusalem*, as Bentley implies, but prob-

1. Yet Bentley has previously stated the possibility of a longer form of *Milton* in a composite version with *Jerusalem* in draft c. 1803-05 (*BB* 307; see also Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi, eds., *Milton a Poem*, Blake's Illuminated Books, vol. 5 [Princeton: Princeton UP/Blake Trust; London: Tate Gallery/Blake Trust, 1993] 36), a possibility explored by David V. Erdman (*Blake: Prophet against Empire*, 3rd ed. [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977] 423-24). See also "Building *Jerusalem*" 184 and n19.

lematical, as I have argued and as Bentley himself earlier suggested ("misleadingly dated '1804,'" BR[2] 246fn). When its design is compared to those of Blake's other poems containing title-page dates, the "1804" looks like an afterthought rather than an integral part of the whole page, and thus was quite possibly added after the poem was finished some years later ("Building *Jerusalem*" 185). Bentley's other evidence for an early date (i.e., before 1807) consists of the existence of several contradictory chapter references (corrected in the final version) as well as the 1802 watermark on some proofs duplicating those of copy Q of *Songs of Innocence*, dated c. 1804 by Viscomi. But in pulling these proofs (pls. 9, 28, 45, 56) some time later it seems quite likely that Blake merely used paper on hand left over from the 1804 printing of *Songs of Innocence*. Bentley further argues that some of the events mentioned in *Jerusalem* also support an early (pre-1807) date: for example, Blake's residences in Lambeth, Felpham, and South Molton Street, where he moved in the autumn of 1803 (BR[2] 748), as well as the various allusions to Blake's trial for sedition (1803-04) in the mentions of Scolfield, Cock, Hulton, Brereton, Peachey, and Quantock scattered throughout *Jerusalem*. But these events, recollected several years later, are hardly precise enough to prove that Cumberland's 1807 mention of a "new Prophecy" refers to *Jerusalem*. Rather, the allusions to the devastating review of *The Grave* in August 1808 (BR[2] 258-61) scattered throughout *Jerusalem* in the 26 plates with references to "Hand" provide a surer clue ("Building *Jerusalem*" 183n8; BR[2] 286fn). Bentley concedes that "these 26 plates must have been finished after 1807," that is, 1808 and after. But it should be noted that 17 of these post-1807 plates mentioning Hand are found in the first 60 plates of *Jerusalem*,² which cannot have been written until after August 1808 and which cannot therefore have been the "60 Plates of a new Prophecy" which Blake is said to have shown to Cumberland in 1807.³ Since the "new Prophecy" cannot have been *Jerusalem*, it can only have been *Milton*, which was well underway by the summer of 1807. Bentley also cites Blake's "vague" reference to "My long Poem" in his letter to Butts of 25 April 1803 as evidence of the early composition of *Jerusalem*. However, the allusion is not vague but fairly clear: the long poem descriptive of "the Spiritual Acts of my three years Slumber on the banks of the Ocean" (E 728) must refer to *Milton*, which was probably drafted during the Felpham years (E 728-30, 806) but not etched till after his return to London in the autumn of 1803. *Jerusalem*, on the other hand, appears not to

2. Pls. 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 26, 32, 34, 36, 42, 43, 58, 60. See *A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, 2 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967) 1: 860.

3. It might also be noted that Cumberland's 1807 visit to Blake is itself hypothetical. In the summer of 1807 Cumberland "apparently came to London ... and called on Blake" (BR[2] 246); there is no corroboratory evidence for the call. The information in a series of notes about Blake, which Cumberland made in his notebook at this time, may well have come from Cromek, with whom he was on familiar terms, and not from Blake himself: his diary notation about the "new Prophecy" may be hearsay, or a piece of literary gossip.

have been begun until at least 1808, as its early references to Hand would indicate.

To turn from textual matters to historical, the contemporary allusions in *Jerusalem* are mostly to events which occurred after 1811 ("Building *Jerusalem*" 184nn11-14). Bentley does not consider the biographical question of what Blake might have been doing in the years between his return from Felpham in September 1803 and the summer of 1807 which would make the writing and engraving of 60 plates of *Jerusalem* practically impossible: first, the completion of *Milton* as a "Grand Poem" (E 730), continuing with minor revisions until at least the autumn of 1808;⁴ second, his labors on the manuscript of *The Four Zoas*, on which he continued to work until at least 1807,⁵ and perhaps the mysterious composite version of *Milton* with *Jerusalem* (see note 1, above); third, almost 30 commercial engravings (see table, BR[2] 820-21) executed between 1803 and 1806, as well as the engraving of *Milton* (first printed c. 1810) during these years. A similar question arises concerning Blake's activity between 1810 and 1818 ("Building *Jerusalem*" 185), when he produced little original art of significance after completing *The Grave* in 1808 and *The Canterbury Pilgrims* in 1810: rather, he was occupied with illustrations for the Wedgwood *Catalogue* and the Rees *Cyclopædia*, as well as engraving Flaxman's 37 designs for Hesiod, *Works and Days* (1816-17), and making a copy of his large drawing of *The Last Judgment*, on which he labored for almost eight years (BR[2] 320fn). This is the time in which he most probably composed the better part of *Jerusalem*.⁶ Indeed, it is hard to imagine otherwise—six or eight years in the life of a major artist and poet at the height of his powers with little to show for them beyond routine illustrations for a pottery catalogue and an encyclopedia, the engraving of Flaxman's Hesiod designs (see table, BR[2] 821-22), and yet another copy of *The Last Judgment*.

To conclude: the balance of evidence suggests that the "60 Plates of a new Prophecy" of George Cumberland's 1807 note cannot refer to *Jerusalem*. Quite apart from the basic improbability that over half of Blake's major work was completed two decades before his death, to view the first 60 plates of *Jerusalem* as arising from his experience prior to 1807 is to miss the profound spiritual transformation in Blake's life occurring in the years between the composition of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, recorded in the change from the attack on his enemies in the "Public Address" (1809) pp. 51-56 and the self-justification in the ending of *Milton*, pls. 40-43, to the spirit of contrition of the prologue of *Jerusalem*: the confession of "the most sinful of men" in the proem to *Jerusalem* and the glimpse of the Heavenly City with which it ends.

4. Essick and Viscomi 36.

5. Essick and Viscomi 36.

6. In 1812, however, he contributed a set of "Detached Specimens of an original illuminated Poem, entitled '*Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion*'" to the annual exhibition of the Associated Painters in Water Colours (BR[2] 311-12 and 312fn). The exact number of these plates is a matter of speculation, perhaps half a dozen, and none is higher than pl. 53 in the final numeration. In any case, this shows Blake's work on *Jerusalem* well advanced by 1812.