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D I S C U S S I O N

The Source of Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth

Edward W. Taylor, Everett C. Frost

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other circumstances, writing or thinking about it directly, Blake might possibly have interpreted Raphael's scene as Mr. Beer does, perhaps even, for ideological purposes, made Mr. Beer's shift from unveiling to veiling. But I still would relate "Madonna of the Veil" to *Europe* 4 only through the ironic Orc-Jesus analogy, and through the pictorial image of the veil itself.)

Both external and internal evidence (to use those old-fashioned scholarly terms) confirm a reading of this particular design which does not really conflict with anyone else's reading of *Europe: A Prophecy* as a whole. Mr. Beer's own interpretation may be "perfectly self-consistent," as he asserts, but aside from the inapplicable lines of text, he offers no objective evidence to persuade us to accept it, and even no subjective evidence but his feeling about the outstretched arm. When "vision" is silent about so much, it may be time to return to the humbler, vegetative eye.

Irene Chayes's reply has been shown to John Beer, and he has written a brief riposte on some of the issues involved. Since Blake Newsletter 20 will be devoted to the British Museum Blake Handlist, however, the riposte will not appear until Newsletter 21. (Eds.)

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The Source of "Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth"

Edward W. Tayler Louis Middleman asserts (*Blake Newsletter*, 4 [Spring 1971], 147) that Blake's use of the Bible, though "copiously documented," includes an unnoticed allusion to *mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*. But the infernal Proverb in question, "Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth," unquestionably relies on the apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Solomon 11.21: *omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti* ("thou hast disposed all in measure and number and weight"). This verse is quoted, varied from, and alluded to frequently in medieval and renaissance literature. Blake, doubtless, knew the original; but he could also have encountered it in any number of neo-platonic treatises, not to mention John Donne and Ben Jonson. In any case Blake would have had to go no farther than his edition of John Milton which would include the commendatory lines of Andrew Marvell:

Thy verse created like thy *Theme* sublime,
In Number, Weight, and Measure, needs not *Rhime*.

There is no need, then, to confuse Blake's Proverb with Daniel's "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided."

Everett C. Frost Louis Middleman argues that the

fourteenth Proverb of Hell ("Bring out number, weight & measure in a year of dearth") "is built on a close translation of the Aramaic writing on the wall (Daniel 5.25-28), 'mene, mene, tekel, upharsin,' or 'numbered, numbered, weighed, divided.'"

But first, Middleman's translation of this perplexing phrase is hardly "close" (literal), though it is viable enough working *backwards* from a knowledge of Blake's Proverb; and, while the apocalyptic concerns of *The Marriage* invite an astute reader to find a *parallel* in the Daniel passage (and in many other Biblical passages as well), they do not, of themselves, justify a derivation.

Second, a much less elliptical possibility lies closer to hand. Much more likely that Blake's Devil is having corrosive fun with one of Milton's angelic interpreters, Andrew Marvell, whose poem, "On Paradise Lost," typically prefaces Milton's poem and concludes with the lines:

Thy verse, created like thy *Theme* sublime,
In Number, weight, and measure needs not rime.

Blake's Devil may be thought of as mocking Marvell for being cowed by Milton's resonances into accepting Milton's Deistical Trinity of Destiny, ratio of the five senses, and vacuum. He agrees with Marvell that "number, weight, and measure" is a fit description of Milton's poem--though not of the verse only.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

MARTIN BUTLIN: KEEPER OF THE BRITISH COLLECTION, THE TATE GALLERY, LONDON

An Extra Illustration to *Pilgrim's Progress*

I am sure that the picture referred to as "A Warrior with Angels" in Robert Essick's *Finding List*, *Blake Newsletter*, 5 (Summer-Fall 1971), 141, figure 9, is an extra watercolour from the series of illustrations to Bunyan in the Frick museum. The dimensions and watermark tally, as does the style if one disallows Mrs. Blake's work on the Frick watercolours. The subject of the Rosenwald design, which retains all its original Blake freshness, is "Christian descends the hill from the Pilgrim's House" (Sir Geoffrey Keynes has suggested the title "Christian with the Shield of Faith"). An additional support for this identification is the number "20" inscribed in the upper right-hand corner of the sheet; this corresponds with similar numbers on the Frick drawings and places the subject of the design in its correct sequence. Incidentally, the inscriptions on the Frick drawings raise additional complications in that they do not seem to be by Blake and are not