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D I S C U S S I O N

**Bunyan at the Gates of Paradise**

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first encompassed the earth; they expected to derive great commercial advantages from this new and boldest effort of their maritime skill" (2: 398; emphases added), Urizen's comparable ambitions may come to mind: "First Trades & Commerce ships & armed vessels he buildd laborious / To swim the deep"; "the Universal Empire groans" (FZ 95:25-26, 30; emphases added). Of course, Blake is probably speaking mainly about the British rather than the Spanish empire, but none of the parallels adduced here is in any way exclusive. Moreover, if Blake is building in part on Robertson, as I suggest, his overall intent as social and political critic is not exclusive either. Rather, he wishes to show the interweaving, the mutual interinvolvement, of war and religion, victor and victim, reason and energy and imagination, in the tragic conflicts of the fallen world, thus preparing the way for Los' (and our) humbling recognition of the Spectre as everyone's own.

<sup>1</sup> William Robertson, *The History of America*, 5th ed., 3 vols. (London, 1788) 2: 389; references are indicated parenthetically by volume and page. Robertson's history went through many editions over many decades; we cannot know which edition Blake may have used, but I have cited one published well before 1796 when Blake is thought to have begun work on *The Four Zoas*. For *Zoas* dating see David V. Erdman, ed. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982) 817.

<sup>2</sup> *The Four Zoas* (hereafter FZ) 78:36. All FZ references are to Erdman.

<sup>3</sup> *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977) 346. N. 2 identifies Guatimozin as follows:

The nephew and successor of Montezuma led the Aztec defense of Mexico City against Cortes; after his capture he and a friend were tortured on a hot metal grid. In order to keep up his companion's courage, Guatimozin said, "Am I now reposing on a bed of flowers?"

<sup>4</sup> Abinger Collection, Duke Microfilms, Reel 11, cited in Donald H. Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987) 308.

<sup>5</sup> The Robertson-Keats connection is standard in criticism of that poet; see, for example, Walter Jackson Bate, *John Keats* (New York: Oxford UP, 1966) 25, 88, 476.

<sup>6</sup> See n. 1 above; Blake is fond of mentioning Mexico. In addition to the verses discussed immediately below a couple of others may be cited. Druid temples, Blake tells us, "were reard from Ireland / To Mexico & Peru west, & east to China & Japan" (*Milton* 6:22-23). And he lists "Mexico" (along with such places as "Negroland" and "Carolina") among the "Thirty-Two Nations" that wait for Jerusalem (J72:37-42). S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence: Brown UP, 1965) 271, cites all these Blakean mentions of Mexico and adds that "Plate 15 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* depicts an eagle soaring with a serpent in its talons; Blake's design anticipates Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* I (1818) and the adoption of the Mexican flag (1821)."

<sup>7</sup> David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, 3rd. ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969) 251.

<sup>8</sup> Erdman notes that "The Sacrifice of Tharmas in Mexico can be accounted for by the execution in 1811 and 1813 of Hidalgo and Morelos and other Mexican insurgents by Spanish firing squads" (*Prophet* 482).

<sup>9</sup> See my *Blake and Goethe: Psychology, Ontology, Imagination* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1988) 129-33 ("Personality Changes: Violence and the Dissolution of Character"), where I apply René Girard's principle of "conflictual undifferentiation" to help explain the Urizen-Orc standoff.

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## DISCUSSION

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*with intellectual spears & long winged arrows  
of thought*

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### Bunyan at the Gates of Paradise

John B. Pierce

In a recent issue of *Blake*,<sup>1</sup> Nelson Hilton offers some useful insights into possible sources for Blake's "The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill," the last line of "To The Accuser who is The God of This World." In particular, he remarks on the possible biblical antecedents for this concluding line from the epilogue to *The Gates of Paradise*, focusing especially on the last half as a reference to "the Sinai revelation of Exodus." Hilton's equation of the "Hill" with Sinai is supported not only by references to the Law in the prologue, as he points out, but also by the implications of the ten coils (corresponding to the decalogue) of the snake depicted below the title of the epilogue.<sup>2</sup> Yet while his discussion of "under the Hill" seems satisfactory, his identification of the "lost Travellers Dream" as a reference to Moses seems more tenuous. I believe Blake's commentary on Mosaic law is filtered through an intermediate source—John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. A reading of the episode in which Christian meets Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and passes by the burning hill in conjunction with the epilogue to *The Gates of Paradise* will strengthen the connections among Sinai, the traveler's dream, and the illustration in "To The Accuser Who is The God of this World."

Blake's approbation of Bunyan's work is evident in his comments on "A Vision of the Last Judgment." While distinguishing between the "Fable" as "a totally distinct & inferior kind of

poetry" and "Vision . . . as a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really & Unchangeably," Blake remarks that "Fable or Allegory is seldom without some Vision. Pilgrim's Progress is full of it" (E 544).<sup>3</sup> He also adopted ideas such as "Beulah" from *The Pilgrim's Progress*<sup>4</sup> and late in his career Blake made 29 water color illustrations and several sketches for *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it should not be surprising that in addition to these direct references to Bunyan's work, Blake includes an indirect allusion to *The Pilgrim's Progress* in his epilogue to *The Gates of Paradise*.

*The Pilgrim's Progress*, as its title page announces, is "Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream," following in the tradition of the medieval dream vision.<sup>6</sup> While traveling through "the wilderness of this world" (PP 8), the narrator stops to rest and dreams the story of Christian's journey to the city of heaven. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is this "lost Travellers Dream" in which Christian acts as a surrogate for the narrator's quest for spiritual enlightenment while in the physical world. The final line in Blake's epilogue to *The Gates of Paradise* pinpoints a special moment of Vision in the dream.

Within the dream vision, Christian encounters Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, who persuades him to go to the Village of Morality where Mr. Legality will free him of his burden of sin. The road to Mr. Legality's house leads directly by a "high Hill" which the marginal gloss identifies as Mount Sinai in Bunyan's allegory (PP 16). The description of Christian's journey by this hill may have been the source for Blake's "lost Travellers Dream under the Hill":

So *Christian* turned out of his way to go to Mr. *Legality's* house for help: but behold, when he was got now hard by the *Hill*, it seemed so high, and also that side of it that was next the way side, did hang so much over, that *Christian* was afraid to venture further, lest the *Hill* should fall on his head: wherefore there he stood still, and wotted not what to do. Also his burden, *now*, seemed heavier to him, than while he was in his way. There came also flashes of fire

out of the Hill, that made *Christian* afraid that he should be burned. . . . (PP 17)

Bunyan's commentary here on religion, morality, and the law bears comparison with central ideas in Blake's work. The pilgrim's passage under the hill represents the threat of life lived under Old Testament law. Bunyan argues (and Blake would be quick to agree) that the direction of the Christian soul by Morality leads only to death under the Law. The Evangelist who saves Christian from this threat points out that "by the deeds of the Law no man living can be rid of his burden" (PP 19-20). The fearful spectacle of Mount Sinai fails to offer redemption for the Christian soul in Bunyan's and Blake's theologies.

Yet the connections between Blake's and Bunyan's texts do not stop here. The encounter between Christian and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman seems to have represented a visionary moment in the work for Blake since it records a moment of division in the soul between spiritual and corporeal paths. At this crossroad, Christian is torn between the advice of Evangelist and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman from the town of "Carnal Policy" (PP 14). The powerful impact of this conflict emerges in Blake's illustration for "To The Accuser" which externalizes and dramatizes the moment of worldly temptation and places it within the context of an artistic crisis. The design accompanying the text depicts a bat-winged figure hovering over a reclining figure at the foot of a hill radiating light. In the light of Blake's reading of Bunyan, this image seems to represent Bunyan dreaming *The Pilgrim's Progress* at the moment when Christian encounters Mr. Worldly-Wiseman and the vision of Mount Sinai. The reclining figure holds a pilgrim's staff, connecting him with Christian and by synecdoche with Bunyan; the bat-winged Spectre acts as a counterpart for Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, another of the many names Satan is known by. Blake's water color illustration of

"John Bunyan Dreams a Dream," possibly conceived as a frontispiece to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, depicts a recumbent figure in a posture similar to that of the sleeping figure in "To The Accuser . . . of this World" and helps reinforce the connection between the two reclining male figures. The bat-winged figure is similar to Blake's other depictions of the spectrous life of man which attempts to direct him away from his true spiritual path. Both Satan and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman are Gods of this World tempting man from a spiritual path by advocating an adherence to law, morality, and a corporeal spirituality. Both confuse the fleshly garment with the spiritual man. And, as a result, both Satan and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman are dunces: the former through delusions of godhood; the latter through the complacent certainty of his own moral sanctity. In both Blake and Bunyan these events take place in the shadow of Sinai. Blake's illustration includes Sinai in the background, not hiding "dawn . . . bursting on all sides" as Erdman suggests,<sup>7</sup> but bursting forth with "flashes of fire out of the Hill, that made Christian afraid that he should be burned" (PP 17).

The fact that Blake ultimately centers his text and design on the artist and his internal conflict reflects his reappraisal of Bunyan's puritan text in terms of romantic aesthetics. Bunyan becomes an Albion figure, experiencing the temptation to turn away from his spiritual quest for the gates of heaven through his dream of Christian's encounter with Mr. Worldly-Wiseman.<sup>8</sup> To give up on the quest would be to abandon the artistic impulse that drove Bunyan to create a work like *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In a sense the encounter is not unlike that in Albion's dream of *The Four Zoas* in which Los is tempted by his Spectre to give in to worldly concerns and abandon his quest to create (and recreate) the city of Golgonooza while awaiting the Last Judgment.<sup>9</sup> In reworking Bunyan's allegorical tale, Blake trans-

forms it into a moment of Vision and redeems Bunyan's work from the same moral reductivism that Milton's work became subject to. As with the Bible and as with Milton, Blake approaches Bunyan reading black where most read white and liberating the visionary aspects of art. Thus Christian's journey becomes a Sublime Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers about the conflict between physical and spiritual, rational and imaginative, aspects of the life of man. Such a Sublime Allegory equates the life of man with the world of art. The text of *The Gates of Paradise* ends on this union of art and life leaving the reader with the Keys to the Gates which open the world of Vision.

## "Under the Hill": Tyndale or Bunyan?

Christopher Heppner

In a recent note,<sup>1</sup> Nelson Hilton has suggested William Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch as a context for the last line of the epilogue of Blake's *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*. That poem, addressed "To The Accuser who is The God of This World," calls him, in its last line, "The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill."<sup>2</sup> Tyndale's translation uses the phrase "vnder the hyll" in Exodus 19:17, and the term "the hyll" elsewhere, in referring to Sinai, and Hilton argues that Blake knew and made use of that phrase. The argument is put rather challengingly—"does anyone imagine Blake limiting himself to 'the Authorized Version?'" I wish to gently answer that challenge, and then continue by suggesting what I consider a more likely context for Blake's phrase,

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Hilton, "Under the Hill," *Blake* 22 (1988): 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Keynes, ed. *The Gates of Paradise: For Children, For the Sexes*, 3 vols. (London: Trianon P, 1968) 22. Keynes points out that "The heading is separated from the poem by a coiling serpent, emblem of priesthood and organized religion. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the coils are numbered from 1 to 10, these being evidently a reference to the Decalogue. The numbers were faintly engraved and can be best seen through a magnifying glass."

<sup>3</sup> All references to Blake's works are taken from David V. Erdman, ed. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, newly rev. ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982), hereafter referred to as E followed by a page number.

<sup>4</sup> G. E. Bentley, Jr., ed., *Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, A Transcript of the Poem and a Study of Its Growth and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1963) 174. Bentley discusses the derivation of Beulah from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

and the design that illuminates the poem.

There is no evidence that Blake ever used other translations of the Bible,<sup>3</sup> and he does once, though a little playfully, make great claims for the Authorized Version: "astonishing indeed is the English Translation [of the Greek New Testament] it is almost word for word & if the Hebrew Bible is as well translated which I do not doubt it is we need not doubt of its having been translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost" (E 727). The Authorized Version is here simply "the English Translation," as if there were no other. Like many of Blake's statements, it might be a mistake to understand this one too literally. But it is also true that Tyndale's *Five Books of Moses Called The Pentateuch*, first published in 1530 and reprinted in a second edition in 1534, was not reprinted thereafter until the edition of 1884 which Hilton cites. The *Short Title Catalogue* makes it clear that both early editions are now rare, and they cannot have been much more common in Blake's time. Much of Tyndale's version was absorbed

<sup>5</sup> See Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1981) 1093-1125.

<sup>6</sup> All references to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* are taken from the edition by N. H. Keeble (New York: Oxford UP, 1984) and are cited in the text as *PP* followed by a page number.

<sup>7</sup> *The Illuminated Blake*, annotated by David V. Erdman (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1974) 279.

<sup>8</sup> The illumination to *Jerusalem* 33[37] bears comparison with the illustration for "To The Accuser." It depicts a recumbent Albion lying underneath a less anthropomorphic bat-winged spectre.

<sup>9</sup> The illustration to *Jerusalem* 6 depicts this dialogue between self and spectre in a fashion similar to that used in "To The Accuser." In *Jerusalem* the illustration shows Los sitting at his forge, looking up at the bat-winged, hovering Spectre of Urthona as he attempts to compel his spectre to help the sleeping Albion.

into the so-called Matthew's Bible, editions of which appeared in 1537, 1549, and 1551,<sup>4</sup> but these too were not common books. It is at least possible that Blake had seen a copy of Tyndale's translation, but extremely improbable that he had one at hand to consult.

An altogether likelier conjecture is that Blake was thinking of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book that he described as "full" of "Vision" (E 554). In one letter he identifies himself with "Poor Pilgrim" (E 758), and of course he made a series of illustrations to the work, and the separate plate of *The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour*. In a broader context, E. P. Thompson has written well of the centrality of Bunyan's allegory to dissenting culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> It was clearly a work that had deep roots in Blake's consciousness.

*The Gates of Paradise* is a kind of pilgrimage, whose title, with the emblem of "Death's Door," remind us that Christian's whole progress is towards a Gate. The recurring motif of the pilgrim's staff, present in the illumination