

JERUSALEM

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Jerusalem by William Blake

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WILLIAM BLAKE

JERUSALEM

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THE PROPHETIC BOOKS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

JERUSALEM

EDITED BY E. R. D. MACLAGAN AND A. G. B. RUSSELL

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TO
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

PREFACE

"JERUSALEM," the longest and the most splendid of the Prophetical Books engraved by WILLIAM BLAKE, was first published in the form of one hundred pages of text and illustrations, dated from South Molton Street, 1804, though this date represents rather the beginning than the conclusion of its composition. It has been twice reproduced in *facsimile*, once separately, and once (much reduced), in the three volume edition of Blake's works by Messrs. Ellis and Yeats in 1893, but it has never hitherto been printed in ordinary type; and those who have tried to study the Prophetical Books will realize the need for such a text if reading and reference are to be possible without the inordinate strain and fatigue involved in the use of a *facsimile*. It is only when the complete works of Blake are readily accessible and legible that we may hope that the greatest of English mystics will be adequately studied and appreciated; and if this is to be, the divorce of the poem from its illustrations is an imperative, though none the less regrettable necessity.

It has been our endeavour in the present edition to produce a text which shall be above all else scrupulously faithful to the original, for easy reference to which we have retained the division and numbering of its pages. The text, down to the very eccentricities and inconsistencies of Blake's spelling, is as accurate as we have been able to make it. In the very few instances where we have inserted a necessary word or letter it has been inclosed in square brackets; while the accidental repetitions (marvellously few, when we consider the difficulties of the reversed writing entailed by Blake's process) have been marked by round brackets. In what is practically the *editio princeps* we have felt this scrupulosity to be essential, even at the risk of incurring the accusation of confusion and pedantry.

We would acknowledge our indebtedness, in common with all students of Blake, to the patient and sympathetic labours of Messrs. Ellis and Yeats, and our personal obligation to the latter for his ready help and kindness. Our gratitude to Mr. Swinburne for the brilliant essay in which he was the first to divine the sanity as well as the splendour of the poet, has been further increased by his gracious acceptance of the dedication of this book.

July, 1903.

E. R. D. MACLAGAN.

A. G. B. RUSSELL.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT would obviously be impossible to explain in a few pages so complex a symbolic system as that of Blake's works; and when it is remembered that any explanation has to be gathered from the books themselves, with no further key than their casual hints afford, and that of these books the larger part has been destroyed by Tatham and other admirers of the poet, it can hardly be supposed that each line of the Prophetical books will ever be interpreted in a manner entirely satisfying. Nor can a simple significance be attached to each symbol, by which it may be translated in whatever context it may occur; for symbolism, whether it be that of Ezekiel or of the Apocalypse, of Dante or of Blake, necessarily deals with truths too universal to be comprehended in a literal formula, and confounds the commentator by its infinite application. But it may be useful to put together, however imperfectly, some of the clues and correspondences contained in "Jerusalem," reserving for a further volume which the editors have in preparation any attempt at a complete exposition with justificatory references.

Man is at once the stage and the protagonist in the drama with which Blake is concerned,—the Fourfold Man, called symbolically by the name of Albion, "our ancestor, in whose sleep or Chaos creation began"; and his state depends on the union and agreement of the four elements that are met in him. Beside the Humanity, or central personality of the individual, stand the Spectre, the reasoning power, and the Emanation (a word sometimes abridged into Eon,) the emotional and imaginative life, with the Shadow, which seems to be desire, restrained and become passive, "till it is only the shadow of desire." When these are united, and especially when the Spectre and the Emanation, contraries in whose interaction all other contraries are involved, are balanced and at peace, Man is in the state of salvation, which Boehme called temperature; when Spectre and Emanation have parted, Man is in a fallen state, and can only be redeemed by their reconciliation. This fall into division, and resurrection into unity, is the main subject of "Jerusalem" and indeed of most of the Prophetical books; for the part-

ing of Reason and Imagination is the great tragedy, through which the Spectre becomes cold and the Emanation weak, the Shadow turns cruel, and the Humanity is overcome by deadly sleep (15, 6). A sleep, too, full of dreams, in which Man wavers between evil and good, drawn alternately by the male Spectre and the female Emanation, and so called by Blake hermaphroditic: a sleep from which only Christ, the Divine Imagination, can save the fallen Man, by reuniting him with Jerusalem, his Emanation, and saving him from the dominion of his Spectre, the great selfhood, called Satan.

But man is not left to struggle unaided or unopposed; around and within him is ranged an infinite host of spiritual powers, headed by the four Zoas, the living creatures in the vision of Ezekiel and of Saint John, who are the chief characters in Blake's mythology, standing somewhat in the place of Boehme's seven Fountain-spirits. These are named Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas, and Urthona, and their influence extends through a vast system of fourfold correspondences in macrocosm and microcosm alike. Urizen is the Intellect; he is called a Ploughman, and rules in the Zenith, in the South, in Air, in the Head and Eyes of Man. Luvah is the Emotional life; he is called a Weaver, and rules in the Centre, in the East, in Fire, in the Heart and Nostrils: when "generate" he is called Orc, the child who resumes in himself all children born in the myths and shorter poems. Tharmas is the life of the Senses; he is called a Shepherd and rules in the Circumference, in the West, in Water, in the Loins and Tongue: in his region is the door of perception, and it is when this Western gate is closed that man believes himself to have a body apart from his soul. Urthona, the fourth Zoa, is that power known in its highest form as Inspiration and in its lowest as Instinct; he is called a Blacksmith, and rules in the Nadir, in the North, in Earth, in the Womb and Ears: he has a "vehicular form" named Los (the vehicle, that is, of inspiration), the spirit of Prophecy, and in a certain sense the prophet, Blake, himself. But it must always be remembered that while it may be convenient to set down the four Zoas as the lords of intellectual, emotional, sensual, and instinctive life, these words are mere shadows of their true significance, which belongs to every plane of interpretation: so that