Paine, Blake and Hegemony

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PAINE, BLAKE AND HEGEMONY

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This thesis is dedicated to John Plunkett, with grateful thanks for his support and encouragement.
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ABBREVIATIONS

I&E  Songs of Innocence and of Experience
H&H  The Marriage of Heaven & Hell
EUR  Europe
AM   America: A Prophecy
VDA  Visions of the Daughters of Albion
AAB  Annotations to An Apology for the Bible

All page references are from The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake Ed. David V. Erdman. Citations from Songs of Innocence and of Experience are acknowledged by page number parenthetically within the text once after the title of the work is given.

CS   Common Sense
RM   Rights of Man
AR   The Age of Reason
ASA  African Slavery in America

With the exception of Rights of Man, all citations of Paine's work are from the Thomas Paine Reader ed. Michael Foot & Isaac Kramnick. Quotations from Rights of Man are from the volume edited by Eric Foner. Please see bibliography for full details.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare the two late eighteenth-century radicals, Thomas Paine and William Blake as revolutionary writers, and to explore their reactions to the hegemony of institutions such as the Church and state. Works discussed include Paine's *African Slavery in America* (1775), *Common Sense* (1776), *Rights of Man* (1791-2) and *The Age of Reason* (1794); along with Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789/1794), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *America: A Prophecy* (1793) and *Europe* (1794).

The innovative rhetorical styles of both writers are briefly discussed and a grounding is established in the political philosophy which influenced both writers. Particular attention is paid to Locke's influence on Paine, and Blake's repudiation of the philosopher. The responses of Paine and Blake to the revolutionary periods in both America and France are explored, along with the ways in which contemporary British politics reflected anxieties regarding the changing world order. The writers' political opinions on issues such as slavery and colonialism are examined in relation to the emergent culture of radicalism.
O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa have long expelled her. --Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

Thomas Paine

*Common Sense*, 1776.
PAINE, BLAKE AND HEGEMONY
INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the attitudes of Thomas Paine and William Blake towards hegemony in its many different guises. Whilst we may locate Paine's stance against the abuse of power firmly within the Lockean tradition of individual self-assertion, Blake has all too frequently been categorized as an abstract "visionary" who is concerned with a more metaphysical concept of freedom. A great emphasis is placed upon his concern with how the artist may liberate himself from the "mind-forg'd manacles" (I&E "London" 26) imposed by autocratic institutions such as the Church and State. Blake was undoubtedly a visionary figure, yet as his minor prophecies demonstrate, he was also, like Paine, immensely concerned with the ongoing revolutionary debates of America and Europe. Their common concerns make it of interest to explore the ways in which both figures responded to the American and French Revolutions, and compare and contrast their reactions against the hegemonic power structures of the late eighteenth century.

Both writers were particularly concerned with the way in which even language could be abused as a means of enforcing hegemony. Paine endeavoured to write in what Wordsworth would later dub the "real language of men", by avoiding the elaborate rhetoric of figures like Burke. The wide circulation of works like Rights of Man may largely be attributed to the conscious accessibility of his written style (the only text he ever allowed himself to refer to was the Bible of which Blake observed in his Annotations to Thornton's The Lord's Prayer: "The Beauty of the Bible is that the most Ignorant & Simple Minds Understand it Best" [667]), and his attempts to free himself from the "Bastille of a word" (RM 228). Blake's writings were confined to a relatively limited sphere because of his complex production techniques. In addition, his adherence to a personal mythology, coupled with citations from writers such as Milton and Swedenborg, meant that his works could never enjoy the same popularity as those of Paine.
Towards the end of *Rights of Man*, Paine expresses the belief that, "man, were he not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man and that human nature is not itself vicious" (RM 208), and this view is echoed by Blake in his challenges to authority in works such as "London" and the two "Chimney Sweeper" poems. It is this conviction in the fundamental equality of all men which evoked Paine and Blake's respective challenges to different forms of authority, the ideology behind which may be discovered through a close examination of the political philosophy of the latter half of the eighteenth century.
In his introduction to *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, David Erdman remarks that William Blake (1757-1827) "lived through sixty-nine years of wars and revolutions, political, industrial, and intellectual",¹ and indeed, the latter third of the eighteenth century was a tempestuous era in world politics. The 1770s saw the rise of American discontent under British colonial rule—which had already manifested itself in the 1760s in response to the introduction of the Stamp Act—and this dissatisfaction culminated in the Revolutionary War against the British and the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The American gesture against tyranny was emulated by the French in 1789 when the Third Estate revolted against the hierarchical power structure of the Ancien Régime in an attempt to assert the more democratic ideals of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" over what was perceived as the repressive cruelty of the aristocracy.

Notwithstanding J.C.D. Clark's contention that "The theory that large masses of Englishmen were organized to rebel, and in fact, poised on the brink of rebellion, at any time between 1793 and 1815 has been rightly rejected"², in Britain the "spectre" of revolutionary activity loomed large. The new Republic of France was only twenty-two miles away from mainland Britain, and anxieties regarding the spread of revolution ran high and exacerbated the "threat" posed by British radicalism. The fear of revolt became particularly prominent when radicals such as Thomas Paine drew parallels between the English and American political situation and suggested that the logical outcome of revolution in America would be the overthrow of the British monarchy. George III viewed this possibility with alarm, and Erdman has drawn attention to the fact that whilst he referred to himself as "the sovereign of a free people"³ George responded to the turbulent political climate through an autocratic form of monarchy, achieved through the bribery of members of parliament.⁴ The rise of the urban "mob"—as evidenced by the
demonstrations in favour of John Wilkes in the 1760s and 1770s—was viewed with fear by the ruling classes, and popular agitation on British soil met with severe repression.\(^5\)

This fact is most notable in the government's response to the Gordon Riots of 1780, which although beginning as a relatively peaceful demonstration against Catholic emancipation, culminated in mob violence when Parliament refused to debate the crowd's petition. G.M. Trevelyan has stated that one of the major reasons behind the unpopularity of the cause of Catholic Emancipation stemmed from the influx of Irish immigrant labourers to growing industrial cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol, which accelerated from 1760 onwards.\(^6\)

In an attempt to flee the penury of life under Protestant rule in Ireland, the Irish workers frequently undertook employment at a fraction of the wage demanded by English workers. According to George Rude, the words "Catholic" and "Irish" became almost interchangeable in the popular consciousness at this time, and this would perhaps explain the direction of enmity against those who were specifically Catholic rather than dissenters of all denominations, and the establishment of a link in the popular consciousness between the concepts of democracy and dissent.\(^7\)

Rude describes the 60,000 people who presented the document as "the better sort of tradesmen ... well-dressed, decent sort of people ... exceeding quiet and orderly and very civil"\(^8\), yet this peaceful protest soon descended into anarchy. Thompson has noted that it is possible to view the riots as comprising three phases, the first being:

The refusal of the House of commons to debate the petition—and Lord George Gordon's harangues—led on to angry scenes which introduced the second phase. This phase may be described as one of licensed spontaneity, leading on to mob violence informed by a "groping desire to settle accounts with the rich if only for one day", some of the "better sort of tradesmen" faded away, while journeymen, apprentices—and some criminals—thronged the streets.\(^9\)

It would appear that this secular demonstration soon transformed itself into a more general protest against social inequalities. Whilst initially the rioters directed their violence against specifically Catholic targets such as chapels, wealthy Catholics, and public figures who were believed to support Emancipation such as the Lord Chief Justice Masefield. However, by the final phase the uprising had lost any direction which it had
previously shown; prisons were targeted and their inmates (mainly debtors) released, and the Bank of England was also attacked. Only at this point did the civic authorities intervene—they had previously been reluctant to involve themselves for fear of inciting mass disapproval—and Wilkes, the Mayor, became actively involved in efforts to suppress the rampage. George Rudé has noted that in defending the Bank of England Wilkes "shot down rioters--composed in the main, of the same social elements who, a mere half-dozen years before, had shouted for "Wilkes and Liberty" 10.

It seems despite the assertions of some witnesses that rioters possessed lists of property to be destroyed (these lists were never located), that the violence was largely sporadic. A large number of those who were arrested and tried for participating in the uprising lived in the area in which they were apprehended. In addition to this fact, both Walpole and Bishop Newton declared that the riots--of which fewer than half of the victims were Roman Catholics--were only superficially concerned with religious issues. Rudé maintains that, "Following this lead, some historians have suggested that the riots, while originally prompted by religious fanaticism, underwent a change of character around June 6, and that, from this time on, religious enthusiasm gave way to more material considerations" 11. It is apparent that as the original participants dissociated themselves from the "mob", the ostensibly more spontaneous rioting in the capital must be construed as a manifestation of rising class tensions. Discontent of this kind led one barge-builder to aver of a non-Catholic whose property was threatened: "Protestant or not, no gentleman need be possessed of more than £1000 a year" 12, thus drawing attention to the urban workers' resentment at the unequal distribution of the nation's wealth. Rudé goes on to argue that if Gordon and the Protestant Association did not actually organize the uprising as a mode of frightening Parliament into repealing the controversial Catholic Relief Act, then they certainly encouraged the violence once it began, as a means of threatening North's administration. 13

Socialist historians such as E.P. Thompson in The Making of the English
Working Class, have emphasized the role of the crowd in late eighteenth-century politics. However, they stress that insurrections such as the Wilkes Riots were not simply the result of a spontaneous outburst against oppression, but rather that they were carefully orchestrated by radical figures such as Wilkes himself. Rudé has emphasized the fact that the main supporters of the emerging radical culture were to be found in the manufacturing cities which arose with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. However, the source of these demonstrations may perhaps be discovered in the newly emergent bourgeoisie who wished to manipulate the crowd in order to challenge the hegemony of the hereditary aristocracy. Men such as Danton in the early stages of the French Revolution incited mob violence with their powerful rhetoric, and proved to be a formidable political influence. It is therefore necessary to examine the forces which produced this middle class dissent and the impact that this had upon the writings of individuals such as Thomas Paine and William Blake.

The rise of what Isaac Kramnick has labelled "bourgeois radicalism" may be attributed to the emergence of a free-market economy and a belief in competitive individualism and equal opportunity which it promoted. Men such as Paine—whose father was a Norfolk stay-maker and who himself served as an excise inspector for several years—and Wilkes—whose father was a wealthy distiller—emerged as a result of this philosophy and took advantage of increasingly cheap printing techniques to bring their messages into the political arena. Paine belonged to a group of forward-looking revolutionaries; and whereas in the past, "Luddites, food rioters and other early critics of industrial capitalism were much more likely to be looking backward to the paternalist world they sensed passing than to the future creation of a new Jerusalem", the late eighteenth-century radicals became more progressive in their outlook, seeking to undermine the remaining privileges of the hereditary upper classes and to begin a new world order based upon the reward of industry and merit. The middle class rebels repudiated the feudal concept of an ordered "Chain of Being" whereby each person's role
in society was ascribed by a divine plan, and favoured instead greater social mobility based upon Hobbesian notions of freedom as "unimpeded movement". The idea of the chain was replaced by that of life as a race which could be won or lost, and as Adam Smith noted in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, hereditary government which privileged certain individuals simply because they had been born into a particular rank was contrary to "fair play" in this race. Indeed, the liberals became exponents of the need for political reform, as their belief in competition led to the assertion that all should at least have an equal start in life. This philosophy resulted in such campaigns as the challenge to the Test & Corporations Acts which prevented Dissenters from holding public office and thus privileged members of the Church of England above members of all other religious denominations.

In spite of this belief in equality of opportunity, Kramnick stresses, the bourgeois liberal philosophy certainly did not advocate "levelling", but instead anticipated the social-Darwinist ethos of the "survival of the fittest", based on the belief that those who worked the hardest and possessed the greatest ability would be able to come to the fore. What is now known as the "bourgeois work ethic" meant that diligence would be motivated by a fear of failing and a new elite of "self-made men" would rise through employing their talents. Such beliefs became a means of justifying the many social inequalities which were exascerbated by the economic shift from Gemeinschaft--the values of the feudal community--to Gesellschaft--the ethos of a competitive capitalist economy--and the decline of feudalist paternalism which this entailed.

Figures such as John Locke (writing in the late seventeenth century) set the precedent for such notions of competitive individualism, and Locke's ideologies are exemplified by Kramnick when he asserts that the:

unlimited acquisition of money and wealth was neither unjust nor morally wrong [but] was a move absolutely essential for the late eighteenth-century liberal agenda of competitive individualism and equal opportunity. Locke was a staunch advocate of the "race" ethos and believed that all people are born
with natural freedom which is then divested onto a figure of authority (such as a monarch) to facilitate order and government. This devolution of power is rooted solely in the consent of the people; Locke asserts that if the ruler abuses his authority by becoming a tyrant then the people are entitled to reclaim their innate freedom through rebellion.

James Tully encapsulates Locke's progressive stance when he observes:

No one was willing to grant that the people either individually or collectively had the capacity to exercise political power themselves. In positing individual popular sovereignty Locke thus repudiates 500 years of elite political holism and reconceptualizes the origins of political power in a radically populist way ... this in turn is ground work ... for reconceptualizing rebellion as a political activity of the people.20

For Locke, the right to rebel is one of our inherent rights, and the submission to autocratic rule is contrary to his perception of human nature. When Paine observes in Rights of Man that "government is arbitrary power"21 and voices his opposition to the "monster"22 of the British hereditary legislative system, he is aligning himself with Locke's belief that government is grounded solely in the common consensus. Paine repudiates the claim to power of those whom he dubs the "No-ability"23.

J.C.D. Clark has commented that "Classical radical expositions like Paine's Rights of Man achieved a substantial circulation, but whether their influence extended far beyond the minor tradesmen and the skilled worker may be doubted"24. However, such an assessment deceptively understates the circulation of Paine's tract, which is estimated to have sold over 200,000 copies when it was first published. Clark's evaluation also underplays the disruption that may be caused by 200,00 minor tradesmen or skilled workers once they were incited to protest. This is not to suggest that Paine was a dangerous subversive who revelled in the prospect of anarchy, for just as Locke stresses the need to invest power in somebody for the sake of order and stability, so Paine proposes that it should be delegated to those who have proven their ability and merit in the race of life: implicitly the "bourgeois radicals".

Notwithstanding their challenge to aristocratic preeminence, the bourgeoisie never vehemently attacked the systems of land tenure or the inheritance laws, and this enabled
the perpetuation of the landed gentry. The stance of the middle class was, then, to assert their own dominance rather than to assault the status quo, and it is essential to observe that many prominent members of the bourgeois classes sought to validate their own social and economic rise by incorporating their families into the aristocracy through marriage. Indeed, as E.P. Thompson has argued, by the 1790s the manufacturing middle classes had come to fear what they perceived to be a threat to their property posed by revolutionary figures (many belonging to the middle class) such as Tom Paine, whose tracts aimed at agitating the urban proletariat. Instead, they aligned themselves increasingly with the upper echelons of society, resorting to contact with the "mob" only when their agitation was needed to convince the aristocratic governing classes to instigate reform. In many ways the bourgeoisie were a displaced people; they had emerged from the urban workforce through their industry and merit and sought to dissociate themselves from their origins, yet the hereditary aristocracy regarded the source of their wealth as vulgar and prevented them from entering its ranks. As Kramnick has observed, a new social group emerged from this dilemma and asserted itself by adopting two separate approaches to the already existing classes:

On the one hand, it sought to liberate men and women from all forms of restraint, political, economic and religious. On the other hand, bourgeois radicalism preached order, discipline, and subordination, whether in the workhouse, factory, prison, or hospital. Bourgeois radicalism directed its emancipatory message to the aristocracy, its authoritarian one to the poor.

Certainly, whilst the emphasis placed upon personal achievement allowed the industrial labourers to aspire beyond their station, it also enabled the middle classes to justify the continued exploitation of their labourers and to insist upon compliance.

Thomas Paine was undoubtedly an advocate of such middle class radicalism, but Anthony Arblaster has commented that his attempts to incite the masses in both America and England to rebel against the evils of hereditary monarchy mark him as a socialist leveller. Arblaster argues:

On the one hand in many respects we can place [Paine] as a radical who does not finally move beyond a liberal outlook. On the other, in his militant "levelling" egalitarianism, his concern for the economic condition of the people, and the
welfare measures he proposes in Part II of *The Rights of Man* he points towards a radicalism which is specifically working class and even socialist. 27

Such views are due largely to Paine's popularity throughout the nineteenth century with Chartists and Trade Union movements, to whom his accessible rhetoric of "common sense" was highly appealing. However, this view is contested by Kramnick's assertion that Paine was the epitome of the "self-made man" who believed firmly in both private property and business enterprise:

[Adam] Smith's and Paine's is the most basic liberal vision. The social order and the economy are spontaneous and self-regulating mechanisms, peopled by rational, self-seeking individuals ... At most, [government] is the umpire that enforces the rules, the most important of which is the right of the individual to the "secure enjoyment of the fruits of his own labour".28

It is my opinion that, as Kramnick suggests, Paine indeed regarded government of any kind as an oppressive restraint upon individual liberty; yet he was certainly not a proto-socialist. Many of his ideologies were rooted in those of Locke, particularly the notion of a limited government and a belief in individualism as opposed to the mid-nineteenth century socialist nostalgia for communal values. Paine was an exponent of individual self-assertion within a system of laissez-faire economics rather than the government-regulation of industry propounded by mid-Victorian socialists. Admittedly, he was an early advocate of a fairly minimal version of the welfare state, yet this was only as a means of allowing equality of opportunity. Perhaps the most significant factor in my rejection of the notion that Paine anticipated socialism is that he was extremely interested in industrial advancement and believed that no corporation should be subject to regulation on the part of the government. This view, of course, was highly dangerous since such a laissez-faire approach would fail to address the threats posed by factory owners, finance capitalists and monopolists to that individual freedom which he had championed for so long.

If Paine's philosophy was firmly entrenched in the rationalism of Locke, William Blake--although heavily influenced by Paine's views--rejected the opinions of Locke. As Stevenson has observed:
eighteenth century rationalist dissent had a strong appeal for young Blake not only because it was "radical and anti-authoritarian", but also because he was drawn to the young rationalist who broke with established educational practices ... Blake was able to see Paine as a physical manifestation of the Romantic poetic principle that imagination, that blend of heart and mind, should triumph over repression.29

Indeed, it is Paine's ability to see beyond the status quo that made him appeal to the visionary Blake. Erdman has drawn attention to the fact that Blake was by no means a political activist and that his primary allegiances were to artistic liberty and freedom of the imagination.30 As Thompson has illustrated, Blake felt "Contempt & Abhorence" towards Locke, Bacon, Newton and Burke because they "mock Inspiration & Vision", and he expresses a particular disdain for Locke's pragmatic utilitarianism 31 when he refers to him as "An enemy of the imagination".32 Whilst Paine was a staunch advocate of industrialism for whom "Material and technological progress was as integral a part of the world-wide advance of reason and enlightenment as the sweeping away of feudal privileges, superstition and bigotry"33, Blake was in many ways more concerned at the threat posed to individual liberty and creativity by the emergence of the "Dark satanic mills" of industry, coupled with the hegemonic forces of Government and Religion.
CHAPTER II
RELIGION & THE STATE

The writings of both Paine and Blake assume a definite link between the authority of the Church and that of the State. When Blake contemptuously exclaimed, "The Beast and the Whore rule without controls" (AAB 611), he implicitly equates the two institutions and demonstrates that state tyranny has become inextricably bound to that of religion. This connection occurred since the monarch was the head of the Church of England and was thus invested with both secular and religious power. On a more immediate scale, parish churches were, at the end of the eighteenth century, still responsible for civic amenities such as education, road repairs, policing and street lighting, so that the authority of the Church extended to all areas of life.¹

Both Paine and Blake concerned themselves with the discourses of freedom which resulted from the Enlightenment, and as Stevenson has commented, they were "part of an artisan milieu which bred independence, self-reliance, reformism and creative activity"². The two writers differed greatly in theological outlook as Blake was a Christian visionary who adhered to his own personal religion based on the "divine inspiration" with which he believed all men were born³. Paine, on the other hand was a deist and a rationalist, and Blake's thoughts on this stance are encapsulated in his observation, "He can never be a Friend of the Human Race who is the Preacher of Natural Morality or Natural Religion"⁴. Yet in spite of these divergences Blake was a staunch admirer of Paine. The two writers opposed any institution of authority as hegemonic, and it is of interest to explore their attempts to undermine the Church and State through their writings.

As a rationalist who stated, "My own mind is my own church" (AR 400), Tom Paine believed in the ethos of Newtonian harmony whereby, "every human institution could and should be brought to the bar of reason for judgment"⁵. and in Rights of Man -- his scathing response to Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France-- he scrutinized the English constitution and exposed it as being illogical and oppressive.
Paine's basic argument was that the people of England, instead of being possessed of the three rights expounded by Burke—"1) To choose their own governors. 2) To cashier them for misconduct. 3) To frame a government for ourselves" (RM 40)—had become enslaved by posterity and a system of hereditary leadership which Paine compares to original sin, in that it taints the lives of all. This notion is illustrated when he demands, "The genealogy of Christ is traced to Adam. Why, then not trace the rights of man to the creation of man" (RM 66), a question which also points to the fundamental equality of all men.

Paine was of the belief that all governments should be formed to serve men, but it was evident that the reverse was happening in Britain. He also cites the French Revolution as the example to be followed by the British populace. Just as Burke "holds up the English government as a model in all its parts to France" (RM 77), so Paine draws upon the new French Republic as a standard against which to measure social inequalities—such as high taxation and a limited franchise—in England. Paine describes the British system of hereditary legislation as archaic and points to the absurdities of a nation which places no emphasis on the abilities of its rulers when he states:

the idea of hereditary legislation is as inconsistent as that of hereditary judges, or hereditary juries; and as absurd as an hereditary mathematician, or an hereditary wise man; and as ridiculous as an hereditary poet-laureate... a body of men holding themselves accountable to nobody, ought not to be trusted by anybody. (RM 83)

He also reveals a particular concern at the links between the Church and the State, and draws upon the Spanish Inquisition along with the persecution of Dissenters in England as "the strongly marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law" (RM 87). Paine continues by suggesting that in moving towards an egalitarian society, the example of the recently-emancipated America—where an official state religion no longer existed—should be observed.

In The Age of Reason, Paine asserts that much of the authority of the Church is grounded in superstition, as he demonstrates when he rejects the Book of Revelation as an indecipherable riddle. He focuses upon the deception of the Church when he asserts
that,

With the assistance of some old stories, the Church has set up a system very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

(AR 417)

Paine continues to attack the system whereby pardons and prayers are bought and sold, and most significantly, he focuses upon the "invention of a purgatory" (AR 417), thus drawing attention to his perception of the Church's employment of fear to oppress its congregation, particularly those who are unable to purchase absolution.

William Blake commented of Paine that he "is either a Devil or an Inspired Man. Men who give themselves to their Energetic genius in the manner that Paine does are no Examiners. If they are not determinedly wrong they must be right or the Bible is false". This somewhat ambiguous statement emphasizes Blake's dilemma in interpreting Paine's work. Blake's views do not entirely converge with those of Paine, but his allusion to him as a "Devil" is not necessarily a condemnation. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake's devil is a highly charismatic figure whose passion and vitality far outweigh those of the angel. Like Paine, Blake opposed the Church's system of indoctrination, which in his view robbed individuals of their autonomy, and as Stevenson has suggested: the reason that he could view Paine, a deist who hoped for an after life, as a better Christian than Watson [Who wrote an Apology for the Bible to counter the "heresy" of the *Age of Reason*) was that Paine acted from profound moral concern and with rebellious creativity. Paine's deism, rationalism, Lockeanism, and mechanistic world view were merely cloaks which Blake cast aside to detect a man divinely inspired.

It was, then, Paine's energy, enthusiasm and commitment to causes which appealed to Blake, who was himself angered by the influence of the established Church over individual lives. He emphasizes his fascination with the revolutionary impulse when he asserts that, "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction" (H&H 37). Blake thus demonstrates his favour for spontaneous demonstration against the tyranny of a Church and Government who endeavour to control through fear.

The poem "Holy Thursday" of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (13) focuses on the
ostentation of staged social occasions (such as the compulsory procession of poor children to St. Paul's Cathedral in order to display their "gratitude") designed to display Christian philanthropy. These children with their "innocent faces clean" may be compared to "multitudes of lambs", yet the harmonious "thunderings" of their voices which are compared to a "mighty wind" suggests that they may have the potential to revolt against the "aged men wise guardians of the poor" who require them to exhibit their piety in this way. The parallel to this poem in Songs of Experience (19) exposes the reality of the lives of these ironically-described "radiant" infants who are "Babes reduced to misery / Fed with cold and usurious hand", so that the "rich and fruitful land" of Britain appears to be a "land of poverty". The final stanzas of this poem show that only through dying may the child achieve a state of happiness, away from the "eternal winter" of human misery inflicted upon them by the Beadles who represent the authority of the Church.

"The Chimney Sweeper" (10) also reflects the theme of the maltreatment of children. Tom, the sweep of the Innocence poem recounts how he was sold by his father as a matter of fact, and without resentment. Yet the simple manner in which he relates his plight stimulates the reader's outrage on his behalf. Tom's vision of the "Angel who had a bright key" typifies Blake's insistence upon the transcendental power of the imagination to liberate those entrapped in body. However, as modern secularist readers we challenge the idea of passivity in this world to secure happiness in the next which was instilled in members of the agrarian and industrial workforces by doctrines such as, "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm". The poem's counterpart in the Experience (22) section expands upon this theme by stressing the bitter irony of the fact that the parents of this young sweep "are both gone up to the Church to pray", because the ideology of duty they have interiorized compels them to, yet this false consciousness leaves them oblivious to the harm that they have done their son. The parental figures are aligned with "God & his Priest & King / Who make up a heaven of our misery," and implicit in this statement
is a criticism of the oppressive abuse of religious imagery and terminology. The polarities of Heaven and Hell are almost reversed, so that one may only attain a place in the heaven of orthodox religion through submitting to the evil of exploitation.

The Church that Blake depicts is indeed the "blackning Church" of "London" (26) which requires obedient conformity. Notwithstanding this fact, "London" itself is an indictment, not so much of the established Church, but rather of the mindless compliance of those who are prepared to accept unquestioningly the "manacles" of constraint. This fact is accentuated by Blake's emendation of his original "german-forg'd links" (which implicated the Hanoverian monarch, George III) to "mind-forg'd manacles", a phrase that heightens our awareness of the individual's repression of his or her true self. The streets of Blake's London are described as "charter'd", as is the river Thames, and E.P. Thompson has suggested that the word is loaded with connotations regarding a number of late eighteenth-century political evils:

Charter'd is more particularly associated with 'cheating'. It is clearly a word to be associated with commerce: one might think of the Chartered Companies which, increasingly drained of function, were bastions of privilege within the government of the city. Or, again, one might think of the monopolistic privileges of the East India Company, whose ships were so prominent in the commerce of the Thames, which applied in 1793 for twenty-years' renewal of its charter, and which was under bitter attack in the reformers' press.9

These suggestions are all plausible explanations for Blake's choice of word; however the most significant charter suggested by Thompson is the "Magna Charta"10, cited by Paine in Rights of Man as the "manuscript [responsible for the] assumed authority of the dead" (RM 42). According to Paine, the charter had its origins in tyrannical government and was used to uphold debased regimes. Although the Magna Carta was upheld by British writers like Hume and Burke as the foundation of British liberty, Paine viewed the document as complicitous with tyranny, for whilst it seemed to curtail the powers of the Monarchy and the Government, it actually reinforced them. 11

For both Paine and Blake the notion of a charter evoked images of the oppression and social inequality which for Paine was epitomized by hereditary leadership, and for
Blake pointed to a Fallen tendency for individuals to replicate the oppression of the state within their own minds. Harold Bloom has argued that, "in the poem, 'London', Blake presents himself as a prophet or prophetic figure, akin to Ezekiel, with the people of London only roughly akin to those of Ezekiel's Jerusalem, in that they are shown as suffering beneath the counter-revolutionary oppression of the regime of William Pitt". However, this reading detracts from the collective responsibility for the imprisonment of minds, for which Blake castigates all of humanity. His London is not Jerusalem, the City of God; it is only too evidently Babylon, the City of Man in which "every voice" tightens the manacles of subjugation imposed by religion and government.

Blake was particularly concerned with how established religion upheld social divisions, and the ways in which it imprisoned the mind. He explicitly equates religious and governmental authority with the forces of entrapment in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell when he avers, "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion" (H&H 36). Blake rejected the idea of a Christ of reason in favour of a view of Jesus as an energetic revolutionary who broke the Ten Commandments and was "all virtue and acted from impulse: not from rules" (H&H 43). Mark Schorer has asserted that "Blake's version of Christianity focused on the character of Jesus and the ideal of the primitive church" 13, and this observation obviously has its source in Blake's comment, "All deities reside in the human breast" (H&H 38). Indeed, the poet strongly believed that all men are born with divinely-inspired imaginative traits which, if they are allowed to burgeon, will allow them to achieve a state of the imaginative sublime. Blake may have been a prophet of revolution, yet poems like "The Chimney Sweeper" (of Innocence) affirm a conviction that it is only the imaginative faculties which can ever truly liberate us.

Paine's view of a revolutionary Jesus corresponds in many ways to that of Blake. Paine regarded Christ as a "virtuous reformer [who had] in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans" (AR 415). He too was appalled by
the way in which the Church sought to subjugate its congregations through terrifying them into compliance. Paine stresses the oppressive nature of established religion when he describes the existence of one who is subservient to its doctrines:

he consumes his life in grief, or the affectation of it; his prayers are reproaches; his humility is ingratitude; he calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill; and all the blessings of life by the thankless name of vanities; he despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavoured to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungratefully calls it human reason, as if man could give reason to himself. (AR 419).

In this passage, Paine rejects 'devotion' as mere hypocrisy, thus demonstrating a belief in divinely bestowed reason, comparable to Blake's sense of a divine element inherent in us all. Paine reinforces his belief that all men should be considered equal at birth by suggesting that Christ was, "the Son of God in like manner that every person is--for the Creator is the Father of All" (AR 415).

William Blake was an ardent admirer of Paine's egalitarian stances against hegemony, as is demonstrated by his implicit alignment of the writer's achievements with Christ's miracles. In his Annotations to an Apology for the Bible, Blake defends Paine against charges of heresy by enquiring:

Is it a greater miracle to feed five thousand men with five loaves than to overthrow all the armies of Europe with a small pamphlet. look over the events of your own life & if you do not find that you have both done such miracles & lived by such you do not see as I do True I cannot do a miracle thro experiment & to domineer over & prove to others my superior power as neither could Christ. But I "can & do work such as both astonish & comfort me & mine." (AAB 611).

Thus Blake exemplifies his own focus upon the creativity of man. He also rejects the idea of an ostentatious Messiah who dominated others by making an exhibition of his power. However, implicit in his annotation is the notion that the Church has constructed for itself a tyrannous and domineering Christ in order to frighten parishioners into submitting to its rule.

Paine shared Blake's belief that all people are inherently good, but that we are corrupted by institutions of authority which force us to act in ways contrary to our nature. This view is revealed in his indictment of religious hegemony, The Age of Reason. Whilst rejecting the tyranny and unreliability of the Old Testament, which he argues is
based on hearsay alone, Paine does express a reverence for Christ when he observes that, "He called men to the practice of moral virtues and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy" (AR 415). Like Blake, Paine is drawn to the idea of a benevolent Christ, and he rejects established religion, arguing that "the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system" (AR 432). In other words, for Paine, the discipline of the Church is founded on a regime of fear instilled by myths which will not withstand scrutiny. He points to the essential tyranny of the deity when he recalls being repelled from Christianity as a young boy by the impression that God was "like a passionate man who killed His son when He could not revenge himself in any other way" (AR 435). This notion of the domineering father is also expounded by Blake's Devil in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell when he states that "God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies" (H&H 34), since the state religion taught a compliance to the law, based on a regime of fear.
CHAPTER III
REVOLUTION

Paine and Blake were both, in their separate ways, exhilarated by the notion of revolt. It is of interest to observe that whilst in Rights of Man Paine seeks to focus attention on the flaws inherent in the British political system, he never once openly demands a complete revolution. In Common Sense, however, he suggests to the American colonists that, "A government of our own is our natural right" (CS 92), and subtly insinuates that the republican example of Oliver Cromwell should be followed. The difference in these two approaches may be attributed to the diverse audiences for whom Paine was writing. Although Tom Paine is believed to have been the first person to envisage full American independence from British rule, the citizens of America had already proven themselves to be ripe for revolution through their refusal to adhere to the taxes imposed upon them by the mother country and thus heeded his message more readily. The rhetoric that he employed to address a British audience was far more tentative though, and consisted of simple illustrations of the failings in the British political and social systems. By pointing out the undemocratic nature of hereditary leadership to people like the industrial labourers, many of whom had never thought to challenge the status quo, Paine effectively incited indignation and thence action. The influence of his work was to reverberate throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, culminating in the Chartist activity of the 1840s.

William Blake, on the other hand, was writing retrospectively about the American Revolution and was animated by the energy and violence of the uprising. The character Orc, who represents the forces of revolt in both America and Europe, demonstrates Blake's total rejection of the existing power structures on both continents. Blake's prophetic voice offers no remedial advice to figures like Lord North or Louis XVI, and Orc is simply unleashed in all his fury. This fact demonstrates Blake's radical belief that both colonial rule in America and the Ancien Regime in France were beyond redemption.
and needed to be completely overthrown.

As in the Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Blake once again implicates established religion in the upholding of the hierarchical social stratum. Blake focuses on the perversion of Christianity as a means of control in his "minor prophecy", Europe, when he asserts:

Go! tell the human race that Womans love is Sin!
That an eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come:
Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female
Spread nets in every secret path. (EUR 62)

This excerpt emphasizes the way in which natural urges are distorted to appear as sinful, thus leading people to practice repression and preventing them from truly knowing themselves. As the poem progresses to a vision of contemporary Britain, the sense of alienation felt by the workforce (particularly the urban manufacturing classes) is heightened. Blake shows us a people who have been reduced to the status of cowering animals by the rise of industrialism and the physical and metaphorical pollution that came in its wake:

Every house is a den, every man bound; the shadows are fill'd
With spectres, and the windows wove over with curses of iron:
Over the doors Thou shalt not; & over the Chimneys Fear is written:
With bands of iron round their necks fasten'd into the walls
The citizens: in leaden gyves the inhabitants of the suburbs
Walk heavy: soft and bent are the bones of villagers... (EUR 64)

As Bloom has stated, this section may be compared to the poem, "London" which also draws attention to the evils of the industrial setting and the demise of any spirit of community. Blake rejects the bleak and moribund urban existence as yet another form of oppression; one which resulted from the rise of a mercantilistic society. Blake's vision of England shows only discontent and decay, and it is for these reasons that he is stimulated by the hope offered by the sheer energy of Orc.

As in America, Orc embodies the dynamism and passion that are required to defeat both the old order of the aristocracy and the new commodity culture which had reduced the workers to mere cogs in the machinery of mass-production. As Orc moves destructively through Europe, he seems to personify the statement of Blake's Devil in
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "The Road of Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom" (H&H 35). Such an assertion is, in itself highly subversive in its opposition to the moderation advocated by the established Church, and alerts the reader to Blake's contrary stance against the established order. Blake envisaged revolution as a force which would grow and spread, and indeed, the notion of Orc's power sweeping across Europe is a development of the prophecy at the end of America, illustrating the writer's apparent need to attack all systems of hegemony. Orc's progress is charted in extremely vivid and violent imagery:

Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France & Spain & Italy,
In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues
They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven
Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of despair
With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the fires of Orc;
But the five gates were consum'd & their bolts and hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens & round the abodes of men. (AM 58)

The language in this closing scene is akin to that of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, which again exemplifies Blake's view of the overthrow of aristocratic rule as the fulfilment of a prophecy, rather than the unleashing of anarchic forces.

Paine, of course, repudiated the authority of Revelation and refused to accept St. John's prophecies. As a Deist, Paine would not trust any figure who claimed to be recounting a communication from God. In The Age of Reason he argues that revealed religion is no more than an unreliable account of an incident which may not have occurred and which may not be true. Paine states that in reading any kind of revelation one must treat the author with scepticism:

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication -- after this it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to me and I have only his word for it that it was made to him. (AR 402)

Whilst Blake may have associated the revolution with the Apocalypse, Paine's refusal to accept the prophecy's validity would suggest that he was incapable of viewing any revolt
in such terms. However, as an adherent to Natural Religion who stated that, "THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD" (AR 419), it is possible to suggest that Paine may have regarded the actuality of insurrection as part of a divine plan, as well as the natural result of oppression.

Rather than thinking in Apocalyptic terms, Paine instead equates the revolutions with the Deluge in that they offer an elect few the opportunity of a new start. He demonstrates this belief at the end of Common Sense when his language echoes that of Milton:

We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the present has not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birth-day of a new world is at hand, and a race of men perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the events of a few months. (CS 109)

Paine, in the 1790s even considered the possibility that the English could join the elect. The fact that he wrote Rights of Man in 1791/2 demonstrates that, like Blake, he too believed that the revolution which had already spread from America to France could soon take place in the United Kingdom if the British urban workers could be made aware of the basic inequality of their social system. Even William Pitt is said to have remarked to Lady Hester Stanhope, "Paine is quite right, but what am I to do? As things are, if I were to encourage Tom Paine's opinions I should have a bloody revolution"\(^3\). Pitt instead retaliated by introducing the Proclamation Against Seditious Writing (1792) under which Paine was tried in absentia for libelling the British Constitution in Part II of Rights of Man. He was found guilty and, having fled the country (unsubstantiated myth suggests on the advice of William Blake) he was burnt in effigy in the streets of London.\(^4\) Such adverse reactions to what was seen as Paine's "subversive" rhetoric perhaps offer one explanation for Blake's obscure personal mythology, which he may have employed as a method of avoiding similar allegations. However, his elaborate production techniques meant that Blake's readership was extremely limited, thus undermining any threat which he could otherwise have posed.

Blake himself viewed Pitt's undemocratic attempts to stifle any writing which the
government deemed to be seditious with extreme contempt. David Erdman has convincingly argued that Europe was an allegory aimed at Pitt and his parliament: It traces the steps leading to Britain's declaration of war in February, 1793 [against the new Republic of France], and it describes the effect of the "gagging acts" of the following year. And its warning is that the trumpet of British power has marked the end of all royal power, for the war now raging is Armageddon, and the bloody sun now rising in France is the light of Christ's Second Coming. The peaceful child of 1789 seemed easy to wrap in swaddling clothes, but the "terrible Orc" of the embattled Republic will brook no counter-revolutionary attempt to crucify him.5

Erdman encapsulates the devastating and uncontrollable energy of the revolt and emphasizes the religious typology which for Blake represents the conviction that the revolution is just, because it fulfils a biblical prophecy. While regressive figures like George III (in the cancelled plates of America) may make futile attempts to withstand the "earthquake" of change (AM 59), Blake's employment of thunderous imagery demonstrates that the uprising is a natural force which none may resist. Only progressive figures like the "terrible" men, "Washington / And Paine and Warren with their foreheads reard toward the east" (AM 54) are able to withstand the torrent of insurrection, and offer sanctuary in their robes to the ordinary citizens of America. Indeed, while Harold Bloom may identify the revolutionary Orc with Christ, it is also possible to view him as a textual personification of the views of Tom Paine.6 Just as Paine was involved in agitating in both the American War of Independence of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789, so Orc is a figure who moves across continents --he is featured in the prophecies of America, and Europe, although he is not explicitly named in the earlier work, The French Revolution-- and attacks hegemony. As Wright has stated, Orc is articulate and "inflames the rebels that free the American colonies"7, and this behaviour bears some similarity to Paine's conduct, since he was known to occasionally rouse American troops by reading extracts of Common Sense to them.8

Orc enjoys a reign of terror, during which he is described as being, "like a comet, or more like the planet red" (AM 53), and in this extract he symbolizes not only the Terror, but also the revolutionary war against Britain. When the period of anarchy is over
we are informed that, "Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease" (AM 53), an assertion which suggests not only an end to British rule, but also the liberation of those "others" who were subjugated; namely the Native Americans and the African slaves. Ore's pronouncement is paralleled by Paine's conclusion to *Common Sense* when he addresses the British constitution:

> Sincerely wishing, that as men and Christians, ye may always fully and uninterruptedly enjoy every civil and religious right; and be, in your turn, the means of securing it to others; but that the example which ye have unwisely set, of mingling religion with politics, may be disavowed and reprobated by every inhabitant of AMERICA. (CS 115)

Whether we accept the similarities between Ore and Paine or not, it is irrefutable that Paine and Blake did share a similar outlook on the usurpation of colonial rule.

Ore himself is indeed a multifaceted figure who represents a number of different uprisings. He embodies the anger and energy which are generated by oppression. Whilst Ore appears in *Europe* and implicitly in *The French Revolution* to inspire the Third Estate to revolt, his presence in *America* is more complex, as the colonists rebelling against British rule are not the only subjugated figures of Blake's prophecy—they themselves have tyrannized over the Native Americans. Julia M. Wright draws attention to the problematic nature of Ore's character when she observes:

> The [American] revolutionaries were thus in the ideologically contradictory position of trying to conquer one group [the indigenous Americans] while crying liberty from another. Ore is placed in a similarly contradictory position, identifying himself with animals engaged in violent activities and seizing another against her will, and then speaking on behalf of the oppressed Americans of European descent... Blake recognizes in *America* that the revolutionaries are implicated in violence and conquest. 9

While Ore, as the force of revolution, is on the one hand endeavouring to free America from the "heavy iron chain" (AM 52) which has entrapped the colonists, the phrase, "Brothers & Sons of America" (AM 52) is ambiguous, since the country's true "sons" are the Native Americans. Blake's utopian vision of freedom for all is reiterated by his declaration, "Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field: / Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;" (AM 53), thus demonstrating Ore's need to shatter the bonds of hegemony wherever he may encounter them. Wright continues to
comment that, "Unlike Europe and the other poems in which Orc appears, America is
cconcerned specifically with oppression as imperial rule" 10, and for Blake the hegemony
of colonialism was a product of the European autocracies that he rejected, and was,
therefore, equally abhorrent.

Blake expands upon his repudiation of Empire in the Visions of the Daughters of
Albion when he represents America as having been metaphorically raped and plundered
by the forces of colonization. Oothoon, the "soft soul of America" (VDA 45) is "rent" by
Bromion who seems to be analogous to the British colonial powers. When Oothoon is
referred to as a "harlot" (VDA 46) it would appear that Blake is condemning the passivity
of the American people. Through complying with their oppressors the colonized
Americans are not simply being violated, but are prostituting themselves and the
resources of their land. However, as David Erdman has expressed, to diminish Oothoon
to a single interpretation is reductive in the extreme as she represents Europe, Africa and
America:

Oothoon is not a person but a "soul". Pictured in chains she is the female slave,
but she does not have the black skin and tight ringlets of the Africa of the
emblem [ie Blake's engraving]. Only in the picture of the exhausted worker is
the Negro slave directly represented. Allowing for the difference in media,
Oothoon is the American Indian of the emblem with the same loose black hair,
sad mouth, and angular limbs ... As Africa she is urging the London citizen to
ignore color differences. As America she is urging British law-makers to rescue
her from the muddy feet of the slaver.11

Yet Oothoon offers no resistance to figures such as Bromion, who as Erdman continues
to point out upholds slavery and oppression as the keystones of empire by demanding, "Is
not fear of Hell necessary to keep the laborious poor from pursuing eternal life"12. As
Oothoon does not actively reject Bromion's advances he and his kind are able to continue
to take advantage of her and leave her to "wail" (VDA 51) every morning; because of her
mental passivity and inertia she condemns herself to remain enslaved. On an allegorical
level, Oothoon's plight is analogous to the continued frustration to which the European
immigrants, the Native Americans and the African slaves will sentence themselves if they
continue to be passive in the face of exploitation. For Blake, imperial rule was a system
which constructed artificial barriers between people, based on arbitrary factors such as birth and race. Blake may not have been an exponent of the notion of equality of opportunity at the beginning of the "race of life", yet he was an early advocate of the idea of a universal right to freedom.

Tom Paine shared Blake's vision of a common humanity and frequently referred to himself as a "universal citizen". Like Blake, he was opposed to the subjugation of any people, regardless of their race, and he too was not merely concerned with the plight of the white immigrant population of America. Shortly after his arrival in the colony he produced the pamphlet, *African Slavery in America* which advocated the abolition of the trade in human flesh which he refers to as an "unnatural commodity" (ASA 52). The pamphlet admittedly displays the tendencies of a cultural imperialist in that Paine demands of the American people:

Are we not, therefore, bound in duty to [God] to repair these injuries [inflicted by slavery], as far as possible, by taking some proper measures to instruct, not only the [emancipated] slaves here, but the Africans in their own countries? Primitive Christians laboured always to spread their divine religion; and this is equally our duty while there is a heathen nation. But what singular obligations are we under to these injured people! (ASA 56)

In the light of Paine's subsequent rejection of a state-imposed religion in *The Age of Reason* (1794) these comments convey a somewhat supremacist attitude which privileges Christianity over any other religion. Notwithstanding his italicized reference to Christianity as a "divine religion" Paine's tone in the pamphlet does not appear to be ironic, since he actually aligns himself with Christian people by referring to the religion as "ours" (ASA 55). Nevertheless, Paine's pro-abolition stance was in itself for 1775, an enlightened position stemming from his Lockean belief that all are equal and that, "no one by birth could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever" (CS 75). Paine also refers in passing to Britain's treachery in abusing "Indians and Negroes" (CS 93) in *Common Sense*, although he does not address the issue of the natural right to self-government of the Native American people.

Ultimately, Paine and Blake's concern with revolution was by no means cultural
or class-specific. Both writers strongly believed that all men should be born into a state of freedom and equality, and whilst Paine believed in a process of "natural selection" through ability, Blake was a more staunch derider of such notions. It is evident from their respective writings that both men regarded contemporary institutions of authority, particularly established religion and non-democratic governments, with contempt, since they sought to curtail the liberties of individuals. However, while Paine viewed revolution as a necessary step to be taken in order for the oppressed to regain their liberty, Blake was fascinated by the concept of uprising in any form and welcomed it as a dynamic gesture against tyranny.
CONCLUSION

Paine and Blake were extremely progressive figures, both of whom believed in the natural rights of man. It is of interest to note that it was Paine, the writer who was literally in the "New World" who inspired revolutions, whereas Blake, writing from the "Old", was inspired by them. Tom Paine wrote from the belief that all men had a right to reclaim their natural entitlement to freedom when it was abused by corrupt governments, and he also concerned himself with the aftermath of revolution. As works such as Common Sense and Rights of Man attest, Paine aspired to create a state in which all men were able to at least begin their lives in equality. He hoped to achieve this by radically reforming government and implementing a number of welfare schemes such as employment for the "casual poor" and taxation according to income (RM 258). Blake, on the other hand was stirred by the sheer energy and destruction of the forces of revolt. He envisaged an existence in which the imagination as well as the body could be liberated from tyranny, yet his vision did not extend to the practical measures towards reconstruction offered by Paine. For Blake the very act of rebellion was a dionysian means of giving vent to repressed desires which would in itself lead to a paradoxical harmony of oppositions.

Blake's vision of an ideal state was based on a new "hierarchy" of producers and consumers as depicted in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Like the industrial system, Blake's new order is one of mutual dependency of the "Prolific" artists and the "Devouring" consumers of their work. Blake wished to maintain a state of friction between them in order to heighten the creative impulse of those who produce. He demonstrates this tension when he proclaims, "These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies: whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence" (H&H 41). In a stance not dissimilar to that of the upholders of the Ancien Regime, Blake argues that such a state of discord has been divinely imposed.
Observations such as, "Opposition is true Friendship" (H&H 42) and "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (H&H 44) reveal that in artistic matters, Blake was not such a firm advocate for equality. The dilemma experienced by Blake stems from his belief in the need for all minds to express their impulses, as opposed to the priority which Blake the artist wished to give to the creative imagination. Blake may have asserted in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires" (H&H 38), yet in this instance it would appear that his desire to abolish hegemony in the political sense is at odds with his desire to privilege the imagination of the artist above all else.

In spite of the many flaws within their respective ideologies, Paine and Blake were both exceptional writers due to the fact that they dared to conceive of a different world order. Notwithstanding this fact it must be concluded that while both writers represented an affront to the prevailing social hierarchy, Paine --who was viewed by the British government as a dangerous anarchist-- wrote in the belief that his observations were indeed "common sense", the logic of which alone posed a challenge to hereditary leadership. Blake may have been the greater subversive in his violent repudiations of any authority, yet his limited readership, combined with an absence of feasible solutions meant that it was Paine who would be considered the greater revolutionary, whilst he would be passed over as an impractical idealist.
NOTES


3 Clark. 13.

4 In his essay, "Of the Independency of Parliaments", David Hume draws attention to this long-established method of ministerial control. Hume asserted that bribery is the result of a shortcoming in a parliamentary system which places the power of the monarch in one person, thus allowing him/her to pursue personal ambition. In an argument which anticipates Paine's Republicanism, Hume observes that:

   In pure republics, where the authority is distributed among several assemblies or senates, the checks and controuls [sic] are more regular in their operation; because the members of such numerous assemblies may be presumed to be always nearly equal in capacity and virtue; and it is only their number, riches, or authority which enter into consideration. (46)

Hume concludes his essay by suggesting that a limited monarchy offers no stability for the nation since the monarch does not possess sufficient power to enable him to "form a counterbalance to the other parts of the constitution" (46), thus he is compelled to resort to financial inducements in order to exercise some control over the government of the country. Thus, given the nature of Britain's constitution, Hume sanctions this Parliamentary "corruption".

5 Rudé has suggested that the term "revolutionary crowd" is perhaps more appropriate than that of the "mob" (with its derogatory connotations) and this differentiation is endorsed by Thompson's observation that, "In eighteenth-century Britain riotous actions assumed two different forms: that of more or less spontaneous popular direct actions; and that of the deliberate use of the crowd as an instrument of pressure, by persons "above or apart from the crowd". (The Making of the English Working Class, 67) Thompson goes on to assert that the London mobs of the Wilkes and Gordon Riots were in a process of becoming a "self-conscious Radical crowd" as a result of an increase of political awareness. The heightened sensitivity of "the crowd" to political issues may be traced to the dense conglomeration of people in cities, and the poor living conditions which stemmed from the rise of an industrial economy. Thompson rightly stresses that the emergence of debating clubs and tavern societies played an important role in educating and organizing "the crowd".

As the Gordon Riots demonstrate, it was specifically Catholic Emancipation which aroused civil disorder. This fact is accentuated by Rudé's observation that by 1780 "Britain found herself at war, not only with the American Colonists --for whom there was much sympathy-- but with the Catholic Powers of France and Spain, the traditional enemy, who had joined the coalition against her at a moment of acute national peril" ("The Gordon Riots" 112). Evidently, fear of the Catholic minority was widespread and in this respect, the ideology of the liberals was at odds with the common anti-Papist consensus. As a result of these anxieties, emancipation did not come about until 1829.
25 E.P. Thompson. The Making of the English Working Class. 120.

26 Kramnick. 34.

27 Anthony Arblaster. The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism. (Oxford & New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 228. In Part II of Rights of Man Paine posits many progressive social reforms such as the education of all children under the age of fourteen, which would be financed by a state benefit. Subsidies of this nature would be facilitated through a redistribution of four million pounds worth of surplus taxes. Paine also advocates a lowering of taxation and the abolition of Poor rates, as well as condemning the method of indirect taxation whereby a levy is "disguised" by being included in the price of an item (Rights of Man 240). Paine justifies all of his remedial methods in practical economic terms by claiming that, "when taxes were very low, the poor were able to maintain themselves; and there were no poor rates (240), thus drawing attention to the way in which overtly high taxation has led to a spiral of poverty.

28 Kramnick. 147.


30 Erdman. 9.


Locke believed strongly that creative pursuits such as music and poetry should be discouraged as they did not contribute to the greater good of society. Arblaster draws attention to this shortcoming when he recounts that "It was a sign of this poverty of spirit that Locke should have thought that the ability to play a musical instrument was a waste of 'a young man's time'--although it was a good enough pastime for women--and believed that if children showed a taste for poetry it should be 'stifled and suppressed as much as may be'" (Arblaster 167). Evidently Locke's views regarding self-assertion did not extend to self-expression.

32 Arblaster. 82.

33 Arblaster. 82.

CHAPTER II

1 Terry Eagleton stresses the importance of religious life in upholding the status quo when he comments that, "Religion ... is capable of operating at every social level: if there is a doctrinal inflection of it for the intellectual elite, there is also a pietistic brand of it for the masses. It provides an excellent social "cement", encompassing pious peasant, enlightened middle-class liberal and theological intellectual in a single organization ... Its ultimate truths ... are conveniently closed to rational demonstration, and absolute in their claims. (Terry Eagleton. "The Rise of English". Falling Into Theory. Ed. D.H. Richter. Boston: Bedford Books, 1994. 44)
As Jon Mee has stated (Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. 49), "It is important to emphasize that there is no clear proof that Blake was ever a member of the Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem", although he is known to have met a number of Swedenborgians and even to have attended one of their conferences.

Thompson. Witness Against the Beast. 184.


Mark Schorer. cf. Stevenson 64.

Blake, of course, vehemently rejected Paine's deism, arguing in "There is No Natural Religion" that, "Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover" (2) and his rejection of the limitations of Deism is accentuated when he declares, "He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only..." (3)
CHAPTER III


2 Bloom. 82.


8 Foner. 189.

9 Wright. 27.

10 Wright. 27.


12 Erdman. 240.

13 Wilson. 82.
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