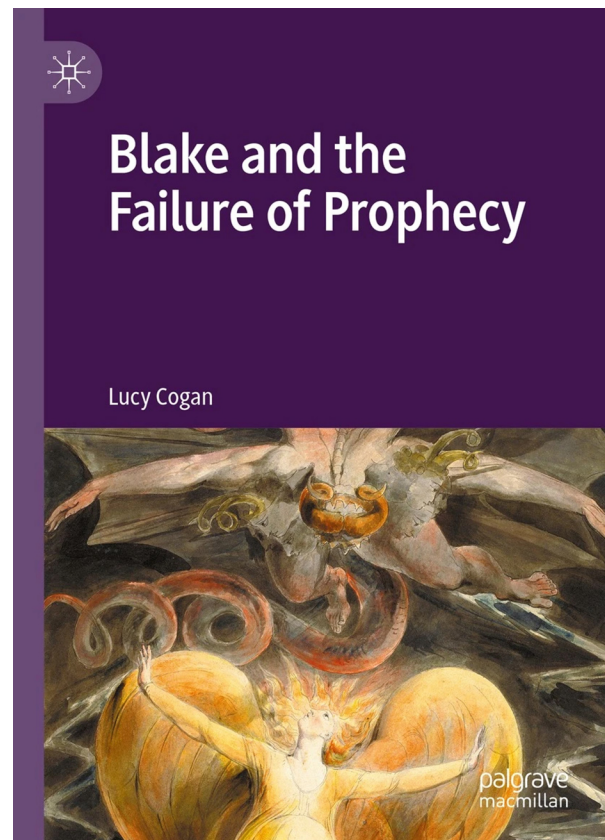


Lucy Cogan. *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan-Springer, 2021. xi + 225 pp. £89.99/\$119.99, hardcover; £59.99/\$84.99, softcover; £47.99/\$64.99, e-book.

Reviewed by G. A. Rosso

G. A. "Tony" Rosso (rossogal@gmail.com) has written and co-edited many books and essays on Blake, including *The Religion of Empire: Political Theology in Blake's Prophetic Symbolism* (2016). His essay "The Lamb's New Song: Apocalypse in Early British Hymnody" appeared in *Religion & Literature* 53.2 (summer 2021): 47-71.

- 1 THE central claim of Lucy Cogan's *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy* is that the defeat of Blake's eschatological hopes in the mid-1790s compelled him to reinvent his prophetic myth throughout his career. This claim hinges on the assumption that Blake believed himself to be a prophet whose communication of inspired truths could help instigate social change. In Cogan's view, Blake sees his role or "duty" through the lens of the pre-exilic Hebrew prophets, whose pronouncements were "a kind of action designed to bring about the future" (v-vi), a future that was "to some extent negotiable between God, [the] prophet and [the] people" (18). Cogan uses this lens to interpret the development of Blake's work in the 1790s. She argues that he moves from a politically nuanced approach in *The French Revolution*, one in accord with the pre-exilic prophetic model, to a more deterministic mode in "A Song of Liberty" and *America a Prophecy*, a mode she describes as "apocalyptic." But when the revolution is engulfed in violence and the predetermined climax of history fails to arrive (a failure depicted in *Europe a Prophecy*), he shifts to a cosmological explanation in the so-called Urizen books—*The First Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los*. These works feature Los as a fallen prophet whose complicity with Urizen in creating a flawed universe dooms prophecy to failure from the start. Blake seeks to resolve this impasse in *Vala/The Four Zoas*, but his imposition of a Christian providential scheme brings a "transcendent" solution incompatible with the original zoa-emanation narrative. He must then reinvent himself a final time, aligning the transcendent and immanent dimensions of prophecy through Los's merger with Blake himself, as depicted in the 22 November



1802 letter to Thomas Butts and later incorporated into *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

- 2 The "Introduction" (subtitled "Prophetic Failure") lays out the context of the argument, isolating Blake's oft-cited comments on the book of Jonah in the Watson annotations as "his definitive statement on prophecy" (1).¹ Writing in 1798, when the "cause" of the French Revolution was lost, Blake experiences "a repudiation of the visionary role he had claimed for himself, an experience he shared with the biblical Jonah" (2). But in Jonah's case, the failure of prophecy enhanced his credibility, for it "change[d] the fate of a people" (3), proving that his word had the power to affect the course of history. Cogan features this "performative" capacity of prophecy as a touchstone, because it allows for a level of agency in the prophet.

1. "Prophets in the modern sense of the word have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense for his prophecy of Nineveh failed. Every honest man is a Prophet; he utters his opinion both of private & public matters/Thus/If you go on So/the result is So/He never says such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. a Prophet is a Seer not an Arbitrary Dictator" (E 617). All citations are from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988).

Since ... Blake does not envisage an outside force guiding prophetic action, he ascribes to the prophet the powers ... of one who partakes in the divine nature itself. The prophet's demonstration of this divine power did, however, rely for legitimisation upon the success of the prophetic text in inducing action in the real world. (19)

Of course, Blake's work did not exert any influence on the events of his time. Cogan clarifies the kind of action she means by stating that "if prophecy is action then the revelation of truth is the purpose of that action" (22). She draws on the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricoeur, for whom literature does not simply express something about the world but also is "*doing something*" in it—namely, expanding the reader's self-understanding and thus enabling the text to convey "a transformative truth." More specifically, Blake's prophetic works are said to enact change in the reader through the "subversive potential" (quoting Susan Wolfson) of his texts' "formal experimentation" (22), especially through their use of multiple perspectives, which accords with Ricoeur's sense that "no single interpretation can uncover *the truth*" because it is conditioned by the exigencies of time and place (22-23). Although she does not define "*the truth*," Cogan argues that it is not only "multi-valent" within each work but must be rediscovered with the creation of each new work.

From this position, each of Blake's efforts to perceive the truth is necessarily different since his perspective on the central problem of prophecy—how to trigger a liberatory revelation that produces action—evolves due to changing personal, professional and historical circumstances. Failure is thus an integral part of this process. (24)

Cogan believes that in his major illuminated works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake learns to "integrate failure as the condition of prophetic action" (26). Recognizing the "inability" of society to foster the development of prophets, he had continually to re-envision "the effect and significance of prophecy in the world" (26, 4).

- 3 Chapter 2, "Calling All Prophets," is among the strongest in the book. It explores the key concept of "prophetic apotheosis," the transformation of a person into a prophet, and examines the forces arrayed against it, especially for female characters. Cogan presents one of the best readings of the Lyca poems to date, arguing that Blake uses the "familiar structure of the children's tale of self-development to dramatise the process of revelatory liberation" (46). The call visions in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1-3 are her model because these prophets undergo a personal transformation before they are commissioned. Although neither Isaiah nor Ezekiel becomes divinized, as implied in the idea of apotheosis—the *OED* defines it as the "glorification or exal-

tation of a person" and "elevation to divine status"—Cogan redefines the term to account for what she describes as "the precarious path from visionary to prophet" (24) or "the transition from immature to adult visionary" (50). In *Thel* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, this transition overlaps with "a sexual awakening in the young visionary." Young women, particularly, are "vulnerable to corruption at the onset of sexual maturity" (24) because social institutions seek to "inoculate" themselves "against prophetic disruption" and female sexuality at once (24, 53). While "The Little Girl Lost/Found" poems "express a confidence that prophetic power can bring about change" in "futurity," initiated by Lyca's vision of independence from parental control, Blake leaves it open whether she emerges from the cave and completes the transition to adult prophet (46-50). When they are combined with *Thel* and *Visions*, however, it becomes clear that Blake expresses a "growing uncertainty" about a "positive outcome" for female figures, who "come to embody ... some of the more problematic aspects of visionary and prophetic authority" (60-61, 12). Cogan's nuanced analysis of Oothoon's experience reveals the complex mix of visionary power and failure that comes to characterize Blake's conception of prophecy in the mid-1790s.

- 4 In chapter 3, "Prophetic Action," Cogan identifies "a series of shifts in quick succession in Blake's prophetic strategy" (67) as he strives to keep pace with political changes triggered by the French Revolution. While she continues to pursue sex-gender themes, particularly in relation to Orc's "sexual entitlement" and violent masculinity (83), her primary aim is to trace several "competing models of prophecy" that displace one another, beginning with *The French Revolution* and moving through "A Song of Liberty," *America*, and *Europe* (67-68). Echoing David Erdman's preference for the plain style of *The French Revolution* (*Prophet against Empire* 152-53), Cogan regards the poem as "unique among Blake's works" because it reveals "the prophetic potential inherent in the democratic process to turn vision into action" (70). She refers in particular to Blake's portrayal of the republican leader Abbé Sieyès, whose pamphlet *What Is the Third Estate?* (1789) led to the formation of the French National Assembly. This event represents for Cogan "the successful transformation of a prophetic text into a collective revelation of prophetic action" (70-71), one that avoids the violent, "predestined future" of apocalyptic prophecy (68).
- 5 While Cogan provides an incisive reading of *The French Revolution*, her account of Blake's shift to a different prophetic model in "A Song of Liberty" and *America* is less effective. The issue stems in part from her multiple uses of the term "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic." In the chapter's opening paragraph, we read that *The French Revolution* employs "apocalyptic imagery to set out an oracular model of

prophetic action”; “A Song of Liberty” expresses hope in “an explicitly apocalyptic conception of global change”; *America* “presents violent revolution as an apocalyptic convulsion that will bring an end to history itself,” while *Europe* “subjects this claim to satirical subversion.” Cogan states that these “divergent visions of apocalyptic transformation” reveal “the various ways in which Blake responded to the shifting significance of the tumultuous ... events of the early-1790s” (67-68). In these examples, the term “apocalyptic” takes on various meanings and referents, none of them clearly defined. Most instances could be replaced with the term “eschatological” to improve clarity, since the primary referent is to history and the end-time rather than to “revelation.” The problem, however, is not only the semantic conflation of apocalypse and eschatology but also the conceptual reduction of “apocalypse” to a deterministic mode of prophecy, one said to be rooted in mythical rather than historical categories.

- 6 This perspective, made popular by Paul D. Hanson’s widely influential book *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975), is featured in Cogan’s key source, Samuel A. Meier’s *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy* (2009), which offers a peculiar theory about the “deterioration” of Hebrew prophecy in the Second Temple period (516 BCE–70 CE).² Cogan seems to accept Meier’s thesis that Old Testament prophecy declined in the post-exilic era with the emergence of apocalyptic texts, which he says are marked by a loss of access to the “divine council” and thus a loss of intimacy with God. He asserts that “the distinguishing criterion for separating genuine prophets from their counterfeits” is participation in the divine council (Meier 19-21), an assertion based on the view of Jeremiah (23.16-22). Meier contrasts Jeremiah with the post-exilic prophet Ezekiel, whose vision he downgrades because Ezekiel “no longer sees nor participates in the deliberations of the council,” which reduces him to a mere spectator who receives God’s plan “as a *fait accompli*” (23-24). The fact that the divine throne-chariot must swing low so that Ezekiel can see it is, for Meier, grounds to regard his unique visionary experience as a “deterioration” in the prophet’s relation to God. Faring even worse are Daniel and “later apocalyptic visionaries,” who may embark on heavenly journeys but who “do not appear in heaven ... to assist, or even observe, the decision-making process” (26), and thus “regrettably” are “no more insightful than most humans” (46). Indeed, they suffer a “decline” in their “ability to respond to divine questions” and must rely on angelic intermediaries to answer

2. In *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, Hanson locates the roots of apocalyptic in the early Second Temple prophets—Third Isaiah, Zechariah, and Haggai—who lost power to the priestly faction and sought “a direct intervention from God as the only basis of hope,” gradually abandoning history “as the arena of divine activity” (194-95).

their own increasingly obtuse questions, which Isaiah and Jeremiah grasped intuitively because of access to the heavenly court. Having lost the capacity to understand—let alone negotiate with—God, the apocalyptic prophet takes refuge in an “exceedingly predictable” view of history: “The future in apocalyptic is already determined in its entirety” (36). For Meier, this recourse to the predictive element of prophecy is tantamount to “abdication ... responsibility to God and Israel” (49).

- 7 Beside the odd bias against post-exilic literature, there are two fundamental problems with this devaluation of apocalyptic prophecy that bear on Cogan’s study. One is Meier’s lack of engagement with eschatology as a thread of continuity between pre-exilic and post-exilic prophecy, especially in relation to the “Day of the Lord” or Day of Judgment, a key motif shared by Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah, as well as Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Joel, as several major studies have shown (von Rad 2: 112-25, 185-86, 288-300; Petersen 2: 577-79; Sweeney 216). The second is Meier’s more traditional position that apocalyptic writing steers away from present history and politics and is defined by a deterministic eschatology. This view, a staple of early to mid-twentieth-century scholarship culminating in Hanson, is now largely contested. A counter perspective emerged in the 1970s-80s with the publication of three key studies—Klaus Koch’s *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (1970), John J. Collins’s *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (1984), and Christopher Rowland’s *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (1982).³ These texts have shaped the direction of subsequent scholarship and should be acknowledged as an alternative to Meier’s view.⁴
- 8 I mention this scholarly history because Blake’s work aligns with the counter perspective—as the influence of Ezekiel and Daniel on him indicates—and because it relates to sev-

3. Rowland’s scholarship is particularly applicable to Blake, as evident in *Blake and the Bible* (2010), though his landmark study *The Open Heaven* and subsequent work are equally important. Two points are especially salient. The first is Rowland’s distinction between eschatology and apocalypse: the former refers primarily to “the future hope of Judaism and Christianity,” while the latter’s primary focus is “the unveiling of the counsels of God directly to the apocalyptic seer and thence to his readers.” Rowland asserts that to “speak of apocalyptic ... is to concentrate on the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity,” not to isolate eschatology as its main feature, as Hanson and others tend to do (*Open Heaven* 2-14, 196). A related idea is Rowland’s emphasis on the experiential dimension of apocalyptic writing, specifically the seer’s conviction that “the God who is revealed in ... the sacred writings may be known too by vision and revelation” (*Mystery of God* 22), a mode of accessing the divine that Meier demotes.

4. See, for a recent example, the essays in John J. Collins, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

eral of Cogan's claims. One is that when Blake shifts to "an explicitly apocalyptic model of prophecy," he "align[s] his vision of revolution with an ideology" that ties salvation to "a violent and inevitable remaking of the world, and one within which the political process [is] largely irrelevant" (Cogan 74-75). She acknowledges that in *America*, Blake combines myth and history in "a hybrid mode in which the two sides seem, at times, to pull against one another." But she adds that as Orc comes to dominate, he "seems to draw the work ever further towards the mythic and [thus] to displace human agency within the historical narrative" (76-77). One wonders where in the text or designs Blake draws the line between myth and political history. Cogan is willing to grant that in Orc's millenarian speech that begins "The morning comes," Blake "gestures towards the model of Old Testament prophecy," but she feels that the "prospect of the ultimate, final apocalyptic battle" allows for the "freeing [of] history to become myth" (78), as though myth were inherently ahistorical or not used in pre-exilic prophecy. One also wonders what Cogan makes of Saree Makdisi's argument in *Impossible History*, which she cites in part, that revolutionary action in *America* is carried out by ordinary citizens inflamed with Orc's mythic rage, a collective action of democratic change that radically departs from the liberal model of Abbé Sieyès. Is "the political process" confined to institutions of representative democracy? And when she contends that the final scene of the work "seems to leave the setting of the American Revolution entirely behind" and is divorced from "any particular historical context" (78-79), what are we to make of the role of these same citizens in spreading Orc's fires across the Atlantic to France twelve years later, linking the two revolutions? Her theoretical model seems to block a consideration of these possibilities.

- 9 Fortunately, these drawbacks do not sabotage the entire chapter, as Cogan returns to sex and gender themes in a discussion of the Preludium to *America*. In an incisive analysis of Orc's disturbing relationship with the Shadowy Female, she argues that as Blake printed and altered the various copies of the poem, he reassessed the role of Orc, adding the Preludium to suggest that "Orc's libidinous energy ... is tainted from the beginning" (87). Focusing on Orc's self-corruption through acts of war and violence, especially rape, Cogan puts into question "Blake's equation of sexual energy and imaginative liberation as the twin signs of prophetic self-actualisation" (89). This insight about self-corruption leads into her treatment of Los in the next chapter, for me the sharpest and most persuasive in the book.
- 10 In chapter 4, "The Origins of Loss," Cogan leans into a pun on the possessive noun form of Los's name to emphasize that his origins are associated with loss, especially the loss of contact with eternity during his and Urizen's co-creation

of the world. She begins with the astute point that the Urizen books represent an "expansive exercise in introspection through which Blake confronts the twin suspicions that were to reshape his prophetic vision": first, that global revolution "had always been destined to fail" and, second, "that the prophet was implicated in that failure" (100). While continuing to posit a dichotomy between prophecy and apocalypse, and to conflate the latter with eschatology, Cogan views the Urizen books as Blake's admission of "the failure of his apocalyptic prophecy *as prophecy*" (101). More insightfully, she argues that by refocusing attention in these books "from eschatology to cosmogony," Blake effectively displaces eschatology from the center of his myth, "an important methodological innovation" (100). This innovation draws on developments in the historical-critical study of the Bible, especially the two-source hypothesis applied to the Genesis creation story by Alexander Geddes and others. Blake utilizes the dual creation accounts to "scrutinize" what went wrong, exposing Los's complicity with Urizen in creating a fallen universe in which prophecy can only fail.

- 11 Chapter 5, "Delusive Visions," offers an informed and perceptive but ultimately limited reading of *Vala/The Four Zoas*. Developing her analysis of Blake's "crisis of prophetic action" in the Continental prophecies and Urizen books, Cogan argues that the problem "grows to encompass the visionary faculty itself" (135). She shows that the poem's various "competing and contradictory" accounts of the fall present a more complex exploration of Blake's "visionary ontology" than earlier poems, culminating in the question, "If visionary experience is proof of the divine nature immanent in man," then how and why did it fail? Blake's response is to "reconstitute" his concept of prophetic action and his visionary ontology by relocating the disjunctive narratives of the earlier illuminated books "within an overarching narrative of spiritual disorder and recuperation," one that moves toward "a final ... apocalypse" (138-39). But his misgivings about the viability of containing vision within "one grand mythic narrative" lead to a major revision of the manuscript, a "psycho-mythological reorganisation" in which the "fall of vision" is "resituated into the mind of Albion" (140). The "deterioration" of vision dramatized in the conflicting accounts of the fall induces, however, a "pervasive uncertainty regarding the very possibility of a foundational truth," which cannot arrest the "centrifugal force of fragmentation" (140-41). This uncertainty is likened to Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" in that Blake deploys it to uncover the "self-deception" of his characters, whose compromised visions are said to be "closely associated with a femininity that both figures and induces this state" (142).
- 12 Echoing feminist perspectives from the 1980s, Cogan asserts that fallen vision in the poem is attributed to female rather than male characters. The emanations embody the

“inimical relationship between visionary integrity and womanhood in the text” and represent “visionary subjects of a peculiarly debased and self-reflexive kind” (142). Indeed, their versions of the fall infect the males with “a contagion” that is said to be “destructive of masculine vision and thereby, implicitly, of prophecy itself.” This narrative strand “comes to a head in the rival Nights VII,” whose place and relationship in the manuscript Blake left undecided (146). Cogan provides a typically shrewd reading of the sexual dynamics in both VIIa and VIIb, developing her analysis of the *America* Preludium. And she acknowledges that in Night VIIa both Los’s Spectre and Enitharmon’s Shadow contribute to the low point in the narrative, when their “contrasting versions of the fall ... crystallise the disastrous effect of the conjunction between deceptive female vision and masculine self-delusion” (153). But she does not pursue this crucial development, which is significant because the “disastrous effect” of the “conjunction” is the birth of the Shadowy Female form of Vala, whose alliance with Urizen against Orc, Los, and Enitharmon becomes the major theme of Night VIII. Further, this alliance morphs into the hermaphroditic union of Satan and Rahab, whose “triumph” in Night VIII can be viewed as the culmination of Blake’s “hermeneutics of suspicion.”

- 13 It is curious that Cogan ignores this narrative strand in Night VIII, since she critiques its counternarrative concerning the “Divine Vision,” the Jesus story that Blake attempts to incorporate into the poem during a late phase of revision. In her view, Blake’s insertion of the Christian paradigm fails because it imposes “an external source of organisation onto the work,” one that offers a “new way of understanding visionary being” (140-41) but that replaces divine immanence with transcendence. While the Jesus narrative enables him to traverse the “visionary impasse” of the previous decade (25), it forgoes the “active hermeneutic model of visionary apotheosis” for one based on “renunciation of the self and surrender to a higher power” (156-57). The result is a loss of the poem’s “hermeneutic drive” toward “a multivalent truth” discovered through “iterative” reinterpretations of the fallen creation. Moreover, “since the Divine Vision is, by definition, pre-eminent,” it allows Blake to “circumvent the strand concerning Vala and false feminine vision,” “contain[ing] and neutralis[ing]” the “threat of rebellious visionary womanhood” and thus “re-centring ... the masculine visionary experience” (157). This reading of the poem’s revisions and gender dynamics is skillfully crafted and shows a keen intellectual engagement with Blake’s difficult manuscript, but it ultimately is limited by Cogan’s neglect of developments in Night VIII—namely, Vala’s ritual metamorphosis into Rahab and her collusion with Urizen in the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. Though Blake does not integrate this material successfully, it remains of fundamental narrative and thematic importance

and complicates the use of gender as the primary lens for interpretation of the poem.

- 14 At the end of the *Vala/Four Zoas* chapter, Cogan transitions to chapter 6, “Prophet of Eternity,” by stating that Blake’s late revisions to the poem sought to emphasize the “prominence” of Los but that he “remains stubbornly outside the text’s centre of influence.” For Blake to restore agency to “the prophetic subject,” he needed to “endow Los with far greater power than he ever enjoyed before” (161). She traces this change to two visionary experiences at Felpham that Blake describes in poems that he sent to Butts on 2 October 1800 and 22 November 1802. The first recounts a “Vision of Light” [Blake] had experienced while walking by the sea,” in which beams of sunlight expand into human form and become “One Man,” giving him the impression of “yielding up of self to a higher power” (167). The second poem includes an account of Blake’s merger with his prophetic persona Los, from which he develops his concept of “fourfold vision” (E 722). Cogan claims that this second vision serves as “a preview of an entirely new paradigm for ... prophetic experience in Blake’s ideology, one which is both more developed and more personalised” than previous models (174). This “personal apocalypse” is defined as a “*parousia*,” an individualized second coming in which Los is said to displace Jesus from the center of the “revelatory process” (173-74). Rather than a “mere” epiphany in which a prophet passively witnesses the divine manifesting itself from above, *parousia* refers to a visionary experience “in which the prophet becomes one with the divine source of inspiration” (21, 167). While one might respond that witnessing a manifestation of the divine renders it present, as Blake indicates in annotations to Berkeley’s *Siris* (E 663), Cogan asserts that *parousia* is “at once divine and embodied, transcendent yet immanent” because Christ returns “in the physical form of the ‘Son of man’” (187). She finds this “embodied incarnation of divinity” not in the New Testament but “by mapping it onto the Old Testament model of the prophetic encounter,” the model from which she takes her concept of “prophetic apotheosis.” She argues that by transferring the account of the merger with Los in the Butts letter to book 1 of *Milton*, Blake renews his sense of “divinely-ordained prophetic purpose” and recovers his “seemingly discarded ... earlier construction of the prophet’s power as immanent.” This recovery allows for a “new understanding of prophetic apotheosis” (187).
- 15 While the claims that Los displaces Jesus from the center of Blake’s myth and that the “Son of Man” returns in a “physical” form of divinity are debatable, Cogan’s analysis of the Los-Blake union in *Milton* and the 1802 Butts letter constitutes one of the book’s high points. The high point in effect. For despite the brilliance of her reading of the passage in which Los descends to Blake and becomes “One Man” with

him (22[24].5-14, E 116-17), the rest of *Milton* receives only twelve pages and *Jerusalem* three and a half, much of it qualifying her primary insight. Beyond the account of Blake's merger with Los, the chapter does not provide enough evidence or analysis to substantiate her central claim that the sublime experience at Felpham "presages the coming tectonic shifts in Blake's imaginative landscape in the following decade" (174). And considering Cogan's nuanced treatment of Los in the *Urizen* books, one wonders why his failures get a pass in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. His flawed behavior in the Bard's Song leads to the ascendancy of Satan and the birth of Rahab, whose power is contained only by the visionary capacity of Enitharmon, who creates an ontological "space" for the appearance of the Seven Eyes of God, the main eschatological framework in *Milton*. Finally, Cogan downplays a key apocalyptic moment in the poem, Ololon's descent and appearance as "One Man even Jesus," whose second coming is said to occur "in the Clouds of Ololon" (21[23].58-60, E 116). This pronouncement, a major innovation in messianic expectation, would seem to merit comment and analysis. But for Cogan, while the descent-merger of Ololon and Milton may be, "strictly speaking, the climax of the narrative," the "visionary union" of Los and Blake is "the most significant" (184-85). Thus, even if the conclusion of *Milton* presents the "glorious climax" of "the transformative power of *parousia* in the work"—"the highpoint of Blake's hermeneutic reworking of the Christological schema"—it is disappointing because Blake's narrative persona does not participate or "share in this final revelatory joining" (189).

- 16 This last point links Cogan's reading of *Milton* with her brief but negative assessment of *Jerusalem*, which, she claims, presents "a surprisingly conventional Christological interpretation of the Second Coming" and thus "retreats ... from the radical expansion of revelatory experience" in *Milton* (190). Focusing primarily on Los's relationship to Jesus and Albion in the last plates of the poem, she argues that the merger or "revelatory communion of Los and Jesus" also is disappointing, not just because it takes place "entirely off-screen," but also because Los becomes a "mere covering for Jesus' divine presence" (190-91). When Albion encounters Jesus and is "lost" in contemplation of his "Creator & Redeemer," Cogan feels that Los has, in effect, lost contact with divine immanence and "passed beyond the veil" in "a pure transcendence of self." As he "recedes into [the] background," focus shifts to Albion's "final death," which is said to initiate the "apocalypse" (191). From this truncated account of the poem, Cogan concludes that "the connection between prophetic apotheosis and apocalypse" in *Jerusalem* "differs from Blake's earlier portrayals of ... universal liberation in that final, physical death is the ultimate cause of the rebirth of creation" (194). This is a re-

markable statement. It seems to turn Blake into Edward Young and *Jerusalem* into *Night Thoughts*.

- 17 It also suggests that, as in many studies of Blake, his embrace of an overtly Christian paradigm in the long poems induces a critical reaction that precludes the possibility of his developing a contrary or dialectical approach to Christianity. This reaction stems in part from Cogan's decision to ground Blake's treatment of prophecy in the Old rather than the New Testament, whose traditions of eschatology and apocalypse are largely missing from her study. This omission may owe to her preference for the model of pre-exilic prophecy that she applies to Blake. But it's a problematic move, since Blake deems Los the "Spirit of Prophecy" and links him with "the Testimony of Jesus," an association that he draws from the book of Revelation (19.10), a text whose influence on Blake is, arguably, second to none in either the Old or New Testament. Revelation also is a key text in the radical Protestant tradition that Blake inherits, and its central motif of the two churches (Jerusalem and Babylon) underpins the dramatic confrontation that he stages in the penultimate scenes in each of his long poems. The difficulty that his characters experience in distinguishing the true "Religion of Jesus" from its false institutional simulacra, or state religion, suggests how deep the contraries of doubt and faith go in Blake. His critique of Christianity, his hermeneutics of suspicion, remains in creative tension with his hermeneutics of belief.
- 18 Despite these limitations, Cogan's book does an exceptional job of exploring such tensions across the range of Blake's corpus. None of the caveats above lessens my admiration for its daring and innovative engagement with Blake's treatment of prophecy.

Bibliography

Erdman, David V. *Blake: Prophet against Empire*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Hanson, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Meier, Samuel A. *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Petersen, David L. "Eschatology." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman. Vol. 2. New York: Doubleday, 1992. 575-79.

Rowland, Christopher. *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

Rowland, Christopher, and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones.
The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Sweeney, Marvin A. *The Prophetic Literature*. Nashville:
Abingdon Press, 2005.

von Rad, Gerhard. *Old Testament Theology*. Vol. 2, The
Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions. Trans. D. G. M.
Stalker. New York: Harper, 1965.