

THE SONG OF LOS

William Blake

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Africa

*I Will sing you a song of Los, the Eternal Prophet:
He sung it to four harps, at the tables of Eternity,
In heart-formèd Africa.
Urizen faded! Ariston shudder'd!
And thus the Song began;*

Adam stood in the garden of Eden,
And Noah on the mountains of Ararat;
They saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations
By the hands of the children of Los.

Adam shudder'd! Noah faded! Black grew the sunny African
When Rintrah gave Abstract Philosophy to Brahma in the East.
(Night spoke to the Cloud:
'Lo! these Human-form'd spirits, in smiling hypocrisy, war
Against one another; so let them war on, slaves to the eternal elements.')

Noah shrunk beneath the waters,
Abram fled in fires from Chaldaeae;
Moses beheld upon Mount Sinai forms of dark delusion.

To Trismegistus, Palamabron gave an abstract Law;
To Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato.

Times rollèd on o'er all the sons of Har: time after time
Orc on Mount Atlas howl'd, chain'd down with the Chain of Jealousy;
Then Oothoon hover'd over Judah and Jerusalem,
And Jesus heard her voice a Man of Sorrows! He receiv'd
A Gospel from wretched Theotormon.

The human race began to wither; for the healthy built
Secluded places, fearing the joys of Love,

And the diseasèd only propagated.

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So Antamon call'd up Leutha from her valleys of delight,
And to Mahomet a loose Bible gave;
But in the North, to Odin, Sotha gave a Code of War,
Because of Diralada, thinking to reclaim his joy.

These were the Churches, Hospitals, Castles, Palaces,
Like nets and gins and traps, to catch the joys of Eternity,
And all the rest a desert;
Till, like a dream, Eternity was obliterated and erased,

Since that dread day when Har and Heva fled,
Because their brethren and sisters liv'd in War and Lust;
And, as they fled, they shrunk
Into two narrow doleful forms,
Creeping in reptile flesh upon
The bosom of the ground;
And all the vast of Nature shrunk
Before their shrunken eyes.

Thus the terrible race of Los and Enitharmon gave
Laws and Religions to the sons of Har, binding them more
And more to Earth, closing and restraining;
Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete:
Urizen wept, and gave it into the hands of Newton and Locke.

Clouds roll heavy upon the Alps round Rousseau and Voltaire,
And on the mountains of Lebanon round the deceased Gods
Of Asia, and on the deserts of Africa round the Fallen Angels.
The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent.

Asia

The Kings of Asia heard
The howl rise up from Europe,
And each ran out from his Web,
From his ancient woven Den;
For the darkness of Asia was startled
At the thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc.

And the Kings of Asia stood
And crièd in bitterness of soul:

`Shall not the King call for Famine from the heath,
Nor the Priest for Pestilence from the fen,
To restrain, to dismay, to thin
The inhabitants of mountain and plain,
In the day of full-feeding prosperity
And the night of delicious songs?

Shall not the Counsellor throw his curb

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Of Poverty on the laborious,
To fix the price of labour,
To invent allegoric riches?

And the privy admonishers of men
Call for Fires in the City,
For heaps of smoking ruins,
In the night of prosperity and wantonness,

To turn man from his path,
To restrain the child from the womb,
To cut off the bread from the city;
That the remnant may learn to obey,

That the pride of the heart may fail,
That the lust of the eyes may be quench'd,
That the delicate ear in its infancy
May be dull'd, and the nostrils clos'd up,
To teach Mortal Worms the path
That leads from the gates of the Grave?'

Urizen heard them cry,
And his shudd'ring, waving wings
Went enormous above the red flames,
Drawing clouds of despair thro' the Heavens
Of Europe as he went.
And his Books of brass, iron, and gold
Melted over the land as he flew,
Heavy-waving, howling, weeping.

And he stood over Judaea,
And stay'd in his ancient place,
And stretch'd his clouds over Jerusalem;

For Adam, a mouldering skeleton,
Lay bleach'd on the garden of Eden;
And Noah, as white as snow,
On the mountains of Ararat.

Then the thunders of Urizen bellow'd aloud
From his woven darkness above.

Orc, raging in European darkness,
Arose like a pillar of fire above the Alps,
Like a serpent of fiery flame!
The sullen Earth
Shrunk!

Forth from the dead dust, rattling bones to bones
Join. Shaking, convuls'd, the shiv'ring Clay breathes,
And all Flesh naked stands: Fathers and Friends,

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Mothers and Infants, Kings and Warriors.

The Grave shrieks with delight, and shakes
Her hollow womb, and clasps the solid stem:
Her bosom swells with wild desire;
And milk and blood and glandous wine
In rivers rush, and shout and dance,
On mountain, dale, and plain.

The Song of Los is ended
Urizen Wept.