

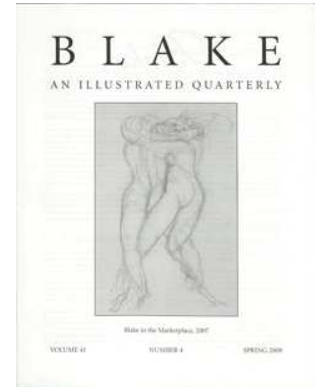
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

D I S C U S S I O N

The Dates of Jerusalem

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 41, Issue 4, Spring 2008, p. 166



With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought

The Dates of *Jerusalem*

BY G. E. BENTLEY, JR.

AILEEN Ward, "Building *Jerusalem*: Composition and Chronology," *Blake* 39.4 (spring 2006): 183-185, concludes that the "new Prophecy" of Blake with "60 Plates" referred to by George Cumberland in 1807 (*BR*[2] 246)¹ "cannot have been *Jerusalem* [as we have it], and can therefore only have been *Milton*." However, *Milton* as we have it consists of a maximum of only 50 plates, not the 60 of Cumberland's reference.

She places "*Jerusalem* firmly in the decade of the 1810s" and dismisses the plain "1804" on its title page as merely evidence of Blake's "desire to link the two poems" *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, which are both dated 1804 on their title pages.

Her evidence that there cannot have been 60 plates of *Jerusalem* finished in 1807 derives chiefly from internal evidence of a post-1807 date on more than 50 of the 100 plates of *Jerusalem*. The character "Hand" appears on 26 *Jerusalem* plates,² and Hand, with his "Three Brains in contradictory council" (*Jerusalem* pl. 70, l. 5) and his three pointing hands (pl. 93), is generally agreed to represent Robert, John, and Leigh Hunt in whose *Examiner* Blake was anonymously and recklessly attacked on 7 August 1808 and 17 September 1809 (*BR*[2] 258-61, 282-85). These 26 plates must have been finished after 1807. Further, *BB* p. 228 cites 37 *Jerusalem* plates³ which are anomalous (in terms of size, density of errata, erroneous catchwords, etc.) as suggesting lateness. However, the connection of odd plates with lateness is not very secure. Perhaps the 26 plates with Hand and 14 of the odd plates were finished after 1807.

There is a good deal of evidence that *Jerusalem* as presently constituted differs from previous versions. The simplest evidence is the title-page reference to a work "In XXVIII Chapters" (rather than the present four chapters) and the "End of the 1st Chap:" on plate 14, whereas the last words of chapter 1 are now on plate 25.

Further, watermarks on some proofs suggest an early date: EDMEADS & [PINE] on *Jerusalem* plate 9 and EDMEADS & PINE 1802 on *Jerusalem* (F) duplicate plates 28, 45, 56, plus a loose plate 28. These two watermarks also appear in *Songs of Innocence* (Q), which Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (1993) 243, 378, dates c. 1804.

1. *BR*(2) refers to *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), *BB* to *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977), and citations of Blake are from *William Blake's Writings*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978).

2. *Jerusalem* pls. 5, 7-9, 15, 17-19, 21, 26, 32, 34, 36, 42-43, 58, 60, 67, 70-71, 74, 80, 82-84, 90 have references to Hand.

3. *Jerusalem* pls. 8, 10-11, 16, 19, 33-34-35, 42-43, 46-47, 53, 55-56, 59-60-61, 63-66-67, 70-71-72, 77-78, 82, 89, 92-96, 99-100 (pl. numbers in italic boldface also have references to Hand).

Is there evidence for *Jerusalem* before 1807 aside from the title-page date of 1804 and vague references in his letters to "My long Poem" (e.g., 25 April 1803)? Well, some of the events in it were of 1790-1803:

I heard in Lambeths shades [where Blake lived 1790-1800];
In Felpham [1800-03] I heard and saw the Visions of
Albion[.]

I write in South Molton Street [1803-21] what I both see
and hear (*Jerusalem* pl. 38, ll. 40-42)

Some characters in *Jerusalem* derive from his trials for sedition of 1803 and 1804, particularly the references to Privates Scofield and Cock who accused him, Lieutenant Hulton who preferred the charges, and Justices of the Peace Brereton, Peachey, and Quantock who heard the charges.⁴

There is clear evidence that *Jerusalem* depicts some events of 1790-1804, and the "1804" on the title page clearly implies that the work was written and probably at least partly etched then. It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain what *Jerusalem* consisted of in 1804 or even in 1807, but it is very likely that some of it was committed to paper and to copper in 1804.

4. Brereton, Cock, Hulton, Peachey, Quantock, and Scofield appear in various spellings on *Jerusalem* pls. 5, 7-8, 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 32, 36, 43, 51, 58, 60, 67-68, 71, and 90.

Reply to G. E. Bentley, Jr.

BY AILEEN WARD

FIRST, I wish to thank G. E. Bentley, Jr., for his careful reading of my paper and his thoughtful reply. However, I must respectfully disagree with a number of his points. Though he states it is "exceedingly difficult to ascertain what *Jerusalem* consisted of in 1804 or even in 1807," he stands by his earlier argument that George Cumberland's 1807 memorandum stating that Blake "has eng[rave]d 60 Plates of a new Prophecy!" must refer to *Jerusalem*, the only poem by Blake of over 60 plates (*BR*[2] 246 and fn), and dismisses my conclusion that it refers to *Milton* ("Building *Jerusalem*" 185), which, as he notes, "consists of a maximum of only 50 plates" in its final form.¹ Rather, he concludes from the evidence of the 1804 date on the title page and other considerations that *Jerusalem* as a whole "was written and probably at least partly etched then," that is, by 1804.

However, the 1804 title-page date is not plain evidence for the composition of *Jerusalem*, as Bentley implies, but prob-

1. Yet Bentley has previously stated the possibility of a longer form of *Milton* in a composite version with *Jerusalem* in draft c. 1803-05 (*BB* 307; see also Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi, eds., *Milton a Poem*, Blake's Illuminated Books, vol. 5 [Princeton: Princeton UP/Blake Trust; London: Tate Gallery/Blake Trust, 1993] 36), a possibility explored by David V. Erdman (*Blake: Prophet against Empire*, 3rd ed. [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977] 423-24). See also "Building *Jerusalem*" 184 and n19.

