

10. *Europe a Prophecy*

London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1969

Europe a Prophecy was first printed in 1794, following closely on the heels of *America a Prophecy*. Unlike uncolored copies of *America*, copies of *Europe* are color-printed or include blocks of color-printing mixed with watercolor. The book also includes three striking full-page illustrations, the best known being the frontispiece of the "Ancient of Days."

Like *America*, *Europe* is retrospective in its direction, and includes negative, positive, and prophetic ingredients. It is a complex mixture of events past and events obliged to come. It is replete with images of plague, sickness, ignorance, and subservience. Assembling and organizing images and symbols into one system, Blake invokes in prophetic tones his own version of the myth of civilization since the birth of Christ. The elusive, devilish "Angel of Albion" oversees a mass of humanity bound in slavery since the finite, physical world displaced the infinite. All Europe has been so bound for 1800 years. Only with devilish, revolutionary, serpent energy can these bands of binding life be loosed, clouds opened, shadows dispersed.

The prophecy builds to the moment of apocalypse. The world experiences convulsive change: bonds are broken, energies unleashed, "Angelic hosts" fall, the Angel of Albion is unable to blow "The Trump of the last doom." Enitharmon awakes and attempts to defuse the revolution, but she cannot. A song of liberation, though a violent one, is being sung. Blake begins this prophecy by invoking "elemental strings" and now a trumpet blast announces the apocalypse, a song of experience echoing a song of innocence. In France, "terrible" Orc and Los lead a "strife of blood," but their success questionable.

--- Peter Gorvitz '04