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The Silent Cry of Laocoön

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Making the Case: Classroom Case Study Exposure as a Strategic Brand Touchpoint

By Alice Reininger[*]

The multi-volume "Cyclopaedia; Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, and Literature" by Abraham Rees (1734-1825), which appeared serially between 1802-1820, showed in its final edition six volumes of plates including an atlas in addition to 39 volumes of written text. Around 1814 -1815 William Blake was commissioned to copy and engrave sheets of sculptures for this edition. Two engraved sheets with several sculptures were accepted and published in 1816. Among these copies was the group of figures of the Hellenistic Laocoön, which was familiar to the public. Blake never left England in his life to travel to Italy and study and copy the sculptures and frescoes there, as was customary among artists. He, therefore had a plaster cast of the group for his engaving at the Royal Academy in London. Blake, however, did not see in this group of figures the superficial, what seems obvious to everyone, the tragic story of Laocoön, but looked in depth behind it. He is said to have later told Samuel Palmer, British landscape painter, draughtsman, and etcher of the Romantic period, that this group of figures was a confession of faith for him. Ten years later he engraved his own sheet of Laocoön, in which he framed the group of figures with his own texts. What is less known is that a pen and ink drawing with the same theme, with only a single line of text, was made by Blake, but in a free version, around 1818. My attention was drawn to this lesser-known drawing which I present here.

Keywords: *religion, Gothic Art, harmony with God, warnings, salvation*

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Prelimary Remarks

Blake's universe is incomprehensible to many; he is often dismissed as a madman, for even in Blake's day there was little tolerance for eccentrics. In the English -speaking world, his visual and literary works have been well researched, whereas on the European continent they have scarcely been studied. His excellent mastery of printmaking techniques and his prints were particularly appreciated among experts. His visions are apocalyptic.

Gothic Art: In Harmony with God and the Saints. Blake's Universe

A central focus of Gothic art was the desired conduct of people toward God and society. To this end, didactic methods were employed. It was the learned theologians who prescribed how people should behave. Later, certain segments of the population – such as the nobility and a wealthy class of citizens who distinguished themselves as patrons of churches, monasteries, chapels, and similar institutions, along with the corresponding works of art – also shaped people's behavior. These two spheres – the sacred and the social – were decisive. Faith provided the moral guidelines. Descriptions from the Bible illustrated how people should behave – first toward God and then toward their fellow human beings. The saints mentioned in the Bible served as role models. Their images evoked an emotional response. They were meant to appear realistic.

Gestures, colors, and spatial forms become artistic devices. Biblical figures are dressed in the traditional costumes of the time. A stylistic element of the visual arts was flowing, draped, loosely falling robes – not naturalistic depictions of people – rendered with clean lines. The figures are reduced to simple, beautiful, calligraphic-looking characters, just as they are depicted in sculpture. The figures often appear doll-like, are slender, exaggerated in their proportions, with mannerist, ascetic features. This style runs through William Blake's entire body of work until it is perfected.

In the transition to the Renaissance the depictions of saints began to reflect reality – featuring fashionable clothing and architectural settings and rendered with perspective. For Blake, this period is no longer relevant.

To further enhance the impact of the images, texts – mostly in Latin – were inscribed on bands that wound their way through the entire picture. It is the pursuit of a new connection between image and text that is particularly evident in English book illumination; here, the image is subordinated to the text. This is a stylistic element found in all of Blake's works.

Another defining feature was the apocalyptic threat. The Apocalypse provided the most frequently depicted scenes from the Bible. It represents the eternal struggle between good and evil, between angels and satanic forces. The depictions are dramatic and speak to every single viewer of the image. They are to serve as a warning. This style can be explained by the Christian mindset and applies to the entire era. Everything sensual and material is viewed and evaluated during this period from a purely spiritual, transcendent perspective. Blake sees

this world precisely in his visions and translates it artistically to make it powerfully understandable to us.

The spiritual outlook of the Gothic period gave rise to a new relationship with art. The interplay between the physical elements of the artwork and the spiritual principle was transformed in the Gothic era and elevated to a radical, spiritual perspective which Blake, too, adopted. This is evidenced in the architecture. Walls are broken open; they are no longer solid and heavy, but permeable, thanks to a kind of latticework. One enters different spaces. This alters the sense of space, for one suddenly experiences different spheres, constantly reaching upward. The spaces are flooded with light and offer a new perspective. Colorful stained-glass windows reinforce this aspiration toward heaven. The heavenly Jerusalem is rendered as fully as possible. The boundaries between reality and imagination blur. The heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, which is the center of the world to come. It emerges at the end of the Apocalypse, after the clearing away of the old heaven and earth. The Book of Revelation clearly shows the goal. The heavenly Jerusalem is heaven itself, a symbol of God's immediate presence.

The visual arts drew inspiration from the heroes of antiquity or the Old Testament. These depictions were carved in stone on secular buildings. They often served as an admonisher. In religious art, acts of weeping and mourning – such as in the Lamentation of Jesus Christ – were always depicted in an exemplary, controlled manner.

Through the suffering depicted, the viewer was meant to understand what it means to endure suffering and hence change one's life and lead a life pleasing to God. This profound sense of perception was intended to bring about self reflection and a transformation in one's attitude toward God. The sacrifice that God made for humanity – sacrificing his own son – was the core of it all. That is why places were set aside in medieval towns where people could pause and reflect. So-called "Men of Sorrows," representing the suffering Christ, were erected. These Men of Sorrows depicted Jesus Christ with his stigmata. People did not shy away from demonstrating their piety in public. They wanted to show how close they were to God and how good they were. This attitude based on outward demonstrations naturally also drew critics. Thus, in many a Passion depiction, the scenes depicted on the panels were reduced to a spectacle, and the self-portrayal of many a viewer in the image became a farce.

William Blake sees Gothic art as a source of spiritual inspiration. It is the "longing for heaven," the urge to rise upward toward the light, which he regards as a natural human desire. It is humanity's unconditional and humble devotion to faith in God. Humanity looks into the depths; it sees reality and nature – God and the world, the earthly and the otherworldly, the universe and the individual self, the human body and the soul.

As an apprentice, and at the behest of his master, Blake undertook endless studies of medieval sculpture and architecture. The high vaulted ceilings, and opulent tombs – particularly in Westminster Abbey and other churches –, resonated deeply with Blake and gave him a way into the sacred mysteries of

that era, He felt at home in the intellectual world of that time; it moved him. He believed in morality and in the cultural superiority of medieval Britain.

In antiquity, by contrast, the focus was on earthly will and the pursuit of power; this esteem for earthly life that shaped the artistic creation of works remained a foreign conception to William Blake.

The turbulent age in which Blake and his contemporaries lived was a propellant for the search for inner values. It was the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. It was a time of great upheaval on many levels. Europe was in flames; the political ramifications of the French Revolution had swept through Europe like a fireball, and the Napoleonic Wars were to take their toll. Afterwards, a new order, a reorganisation of this world. was hoped to bring improvements.

Laocoön is an Expression of my Creed

William Blake shared this deep conviction with Samuel Parker in a conversation. (Hamburger Kunsthalle 2024, p. For him, Laocoön is a sacred work. Blake must have been grappling with the subject of Laocoön for quite some time. From the last years of his life, we know of three drawings related to this famous group of sculptures: Laocoön. The Antique Group, Laocoön [or יהוה Jehovah] & his two Sons Satan & Adam, and finally, a little-known version: Laocoön: Blake's free Version.

a) The Laocoön for Rees's Cyclopaedia

Around 1814/15, William Blake was commissioned to engrave figures, or groups of figures, from ancient art for "The Cyclopaedia, or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, and Literature," edited by Abraham Rees. Blake found models for his engravings in casts of ancient sculptures at the Royal Academy in London and in various printed publications available to him in libraries and through private individuals. Seven plates were compiled into two sheets for this encyclopedia.

"The Laocoön, for Rees's Cyclopaedia"[1], depicts the single sheet of the famous group that was used for the encyclopedia. Today, this work is housed at the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund.[2]

Gilchrist recounts an anecdote about the origins of this pencil drawing in his biography of William Blake, describing how Blake entered the Royal Academy's premises at Somerset House in London to view the group of figures:

[1]Date; 1815; material and techniques: graphite on medium, slightly textures, beige laid paper; dimensions: sheet: 12 5/8 x 9 inches (32,1 x 22,9 cm); Accession Number: B1985.14

[2]When Geoffrey Keynes published the book „William Blake. 92 Pencil Studies" in 1970, this work was still in the private collection of Henry J. Crocker, USA. Keynes called this drawing – Nr. 58 – „Laocoön: the Antique Group".

> One example selected was the Laocoön, which carried our artist to the Royal Academy's antique school, for the purpose of making a drawing from the cast of that group. ´What! you here, Meesther Blake?´said Keeper Fuseli; ´we ought to come and learn of you, not you of us!´ Blake took his place with the students, and exulted over his work, says Mr Tatham, like a young desciple; meeting his old friend Fuseli´s congratulations and kind remarks with cheerful, simple joy. (Gilchrist 1942, p. 261)

In Blake's depiction, Laocoön's missing right arm is stretched out, its hand clasping the snake's body. He also added the missing arms of the two sons to the right and left of their father.[3] The drapery below the buttocks of the son on the right is missing from his drawing.

Frederick Tatham (1805-1878), one of the followers of William Blake, was the original owner of this drawing, as he added the following information at the end of this studie "The Laocoon, for Rees's Cyclopaedia", thereby also providing the text for the preceding anecdote:

> This drawing was made by W. Blake in the Royal | Academy Somerset House for a small plate he made of the | Laocoon for the Article in the Encyclopedia. The article itself was | on sculpture being written by Flaxman. When W. B was drawing | this his old friend Fuseli came in & said ' Why Mr. Blake you a student you | ought to teach us' in my possession from Mrs Blake F. Tatham[4]

Two plates engraved by William Blake were published in "The Cyclopedia, or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences and Literature".

The first plate depicts: the Medici Venus, the Belvedere Apollo, and the Laocoön Group. Each of the illustrations on the plate is labeled with its name. At the bottom center, the following inscription: Published as the Act directs, Oct. 1st, 1815 by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, Paternoster Row. Above the prints, also centered, "Sculptures." To the right, beneath the base of the Laocoön sculpture: Blake del. & sc.[5] This print featuring the three sculptures exists in two known copies. Originally, one belonged to Samuel Palmer (1805–1881) and the other to John Linnell (1792–1882).

The second sheet contained six illustrations: Durga Slaying Mahishasura, An Etruscan Patera, A Colossal Statue in Thebes, Persian Sculpture in Persepolis, and A Chinese Statue. Below them was the inscription: Published as the Act directs, March 1, 1816, by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, Paternoster Row. Slightly above, on the right margin: Blake del. & sc., centered: Sculptures.[6]

John Flaxman wrote an article on the history and chronology of sculpture in which he argued that ancient Greek art should be given preference over that

[3]In order to make sculpture groups of art from Greek and Roman antiquity accessible to a wider audience, collections initially consisted exclusively of plaster casts. This was also the case with this marble sculpture group.
[4]Incribed in graphite lower center; Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund, B 1985.14
[5]Published in: fascicle 66, July 1816; Blake del. & sc. = Blake delineat & sculpsit
[6]Vol. 4, fascicle 69, February 1817

of any other culture. In his view, the perfection of antiquity in the realm of art is unsurpassed. Blake, however, disagreed. He applied different standards. He categorically rejected any such hierarchy. He continued to favor Hebrew art, which was linked to his deep religiosity. Edward Moor's book "The Hindu Pantheon", however, caught William Blake's attention. From it, he took the illustration of Devi Durga slaying Mahishasura, which appeared in the appendix of the publication. For him, the goddess represented that mystical being who would deliver Britain from the embrace of evil and thus restore the country to peace and tranquility. (cf., Hamburger Kunsthalle, p. 113)

The publications of the Indologist William Jones also made a deep impression. The Bhagavad Gita, the dialogue between Arjuna and his teacher Krishna, was translated in its entirety from Sanskrit into English by Charles Wilkins (1749–1836) in 1785. In general, the teachings of the Brahmins made a deep impression on Blake, for in 1809 he presented a drawing titled "The Brahmins" in his exhibition. In "A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures,"[7] he wrote about it:

> Number X The Bramins. – A Drawing. The subject is, Mr. Wilkin translating the Geeta; an ideal design, suggested by the first publication of that part of the Hindoo Scriptures translated by Mr. Wilkin. I understand that my Costume is incorrect, but in this I plead the authority of the ancients, who often deviated from the Habits to preserve the Manners, as in the instance of Laocoön, who, though a priest, is represented naked. (Keynes 1984, p. 583)

Blake´s knowledge of foreign cultures and religions, as well as his visions, ultimately led to his conviction that "All Religions Are One." All religions have the same source. It was clear to him that the philosophy of Eastern cultures taught the fundamental principles of human perception.

b) Laocoön [or יהוה Jehova] & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact, or History of Ilium[8]

> Art Degraded / Imagination Denied / War Governed the Nations
> If Morality was Christianity Socrates was the Saviour.

In 1766, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) published his essay "Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie." (Laokoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry), which sparked a debate with the archaeologist and art critic Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). Lessing

[7]A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures, Poetical and Historical Inventions, painted by William Blake in Water Colours, being the Ancient Method of Fresco Painting Restored: and Drawings, for Public Inspection, and for Sale by Private Contract, London: Printed by D. N. Shury, 7, Berwick-Street, Soho, For J. Blake, 28, Broad-Street, Golden-Square. 1809

[8]Etching, copperplate engraving and drypoint, 1826-27, 328 x 275 mm; The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Inv. Nr. P 398-1985, from the collection of Sir Geoffrey Keynes

argued that literature and the visual arts could not be more different. The two genres cannot be compared. According to Lessing, poetry arranges words chronologically, that is, sequentially, whereas in painting, as well as in sculpture, colors and forms are arranged side by side in space. Poetry can depict actions; pain can be shrill and screaming, for here there are no limits to embellishing this with words; the visual arts, on the other hand, can only depict objects. The tension of the event is recreated. According to Lessing, however, this would be an ambivalent situation. He even contradicts Winckelmann, who holds the view that in Greek poetry, physical pain and suffering are always depicted calmly and measuredly. In this regard, there is plenty of evidence where suffering is expressed loudly, screaming, and expressively. The pain endured is not nobly suppressed.

For Winckelmann, suffering – in this case, the suffering depicted in the Laocoön – both physical and psychological, represents the strength of the spirit. He is beyond it. For the archaeologist Winckelmann, this gives rise to a new approach, which he vehemently advocates: Greek culture and art form both an aesthetic and an ethical foundation upon which the people of that era lived. They served as his model. In his "Gedanken" (Thoughts) he writes:

> The defining characteristic of Greek masterpieces is, ultimately, a noble simplicity and a quiet grandeur, both in composition and in expression. Just as the depths of the sea remain calm no matter how turbulent the surface may be, so too do the expressions on the faces of the Greek figures reveal a noble and composed spirit, even in the midst of intense emotion. (Winckelmann, 1969, p. 20)

Self-control is the triumph of the spirit over nature. For Winkelmann, Laocoön preserves calm and composure even in death. He possesses the "tested spirit of a great man," struggles in his distress, and suppresses the outburst of emotion. He does not cry out in his greatest agony; not a single sound is heard from his slightly parted lips. The beauty of the depicted group transcends everything.

Blake was likely aware of the translations of these controversial statements, as well as the discussions about them in England's art circles. Around 1818, he reused the drawing "Laocoön: The Antique Group." This time, however, he expressed his own opinion, which he reinforced in the drawing with radical statements. The texts frame the group of figures like a bracket. They are warnings, brutally revealing reality, yet at the same time these aphorisms resemble prayers. Blake aims to shake humanity awake with these texts, for the spoken word can be distorted and reinterpreted. The written word, on the other hand, remains on the page. Blake seeks to educate. The sheet is strikingly reminiscent of Gothic devotional images. One can look at them over and over again, read them, silently absorb the words, meditate on them, and ultimately recognize the truth.

It also seemed important to the artist Blake to use the Latin name "Ilium" for Troy – "λιον" or "λιος" in Ancient Greek – as the title of the print. He was also familiar with the Latin text by Pliny, which described this group of figures. For this reason, he included the three artists from Rhodes in the title of the print

as well. Cherubim[9] – whose appearance, in Blake's view, must have been known to the three sculptors – was also the deciding factor in the creation of the monumental ancient group of figures.

It is clear to him that the central figure – Laocoön – is now, in his view, Jehovah. He gives his own names to the two sons at his side, who according to Greek history are Antiphas and Thymbraios: Satan, the Evil One, on the right, and Adam on the left.

Blake increasingly turns against classical art – against the Greeks and the Romans. For him, it carries negative connotations, tied to intellectual mind and devoid of any spirituality. He makes this clear in this work as well.

Below the pedestal, barely legible, is the sentence: "If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was the Savior." Socrates and his simple truth, his modesty! His teachings: grist to Blake's mill! Socrates explored the questions of the people – the everyday questions that preoccupied them. They were the opposites: pious versus godless, moral versus beautiful – ugly, right versus wrong, prudence versus passion, bravery versus cowardice, etc. One question of paramount importance to Blake: Can virtue be taught? The answer: yes, virtue can be taught. Here he agreed with Socrates. [10] Likewise, there is no doubt that a connection exists between the physical and the spiritual; however – and this is of great importance – the two are of a different nature. The body and the mind must never outweigh the spiritual, the mental. Blake therefore also rejected the philosophy of Descartes. For him, there was no distinction between the spiritual and physical self. For him, the body is a part of the soul that is perceived by the five senses. The whole constitutes the self.

c) Laocoön: Blake's Free Version

According to Geoffrey Keynes, this large-format drawing, measuring 533 x 438 mm, was completed around 1818, while the exhibition catalog of the Hamburger Kunsthalle lists the year of completion as around 1825. [11] The pen-and-ink drawing in gray over graphite and watercolor is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in the Sir Geoffrey Keynes Collection. In the lower left half of the sheet, the title of the work is added in a foreign hand in pencil: "The Laocoön."

The drawing differs fundamentally from the well-known Hellenistic group of figures and Blake's earlier depictions. What makes it unconventional is that all three figures are standing upright. The literary basis for this illustration is the text of Virgil's "Aeneid."

[9]In Solomon's Temple, two cherubim stood side by side, their inner and outer wings forming the throne of God. Cherubim are depicted in many of Blake's works. They are God's constant companions and guardians.

[10]The example with the woolen thread is inserted: water can be transferred from one full glass to another using a woolen thread. Gilchrist 1942, p. 94: „…'I am Socrates', „ or 'Moses', or'the prophet Isaiah" he [Blake] would widly say; and always his glowing enthusiasm was mirrored … "

[11]The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; inv.- nr.: PD 29-2020; Keynes 1970, Illustration Nr. 59; Hamburger Kunsthalle 2024, p. 114;

> See, a pair of serpents with huge coils, snaking over the sea
> from Tenedos through the tranquil deep (I shudder to tell it),
> and heading for the shore side by side: their fronts lift high
> over the tide, and their blood-red crests top the waves,
> the rest of their body slides through the ocean behind,
> and their huge backs arch in voluminous folds.
> There's a roar from the foaming sea: now they reach the shore,
> and with burning eyes suffused with blood and fire,
> lick at their hissing jaws with flickering tongues. (Virgil, Aeneid II, verse 195-227)

The central figure in this drawing is striking; it dominates the overall image. According to Geoffrey Keynes, it could represent Urizen-Jehovah. However, if we return to Blake's statement that "Laocoön is the expression of my creed," it represents Blake's unshakeable faith.

Unlike the other depictions, Laocoön is clothed. The long, flowing robe reveals his strong, powerful physique; his legs and arms are muscularly defined. His right leg is firmly planted on the ground, while the heel of his left foot is slightly raised. It appears that this man, Laocoön, is unflappable. His arms are raised, his hands clasping the snakes' bodies. A snake's body winds twice around his waist and twice around his neck: "... wreathe him in massive coils: now encircling his waist twice, twice winding their scaly folds around his throat …"[12]

The figure's head is tilted to the right, his mouth open, "… while he sends terrible shouts up to the heavens …", his eyes turned upward. His hair and beard are slightly wavy. Above his head, the two deadly reptiles rise up: "… their high necks and heads tower above him …". One snake's head is lowered to the right, the other to the left. The monsters' eyes are wide open. The left snake is flickering its tongue. Both bear flame-like crests on their backs. Blake renders the reptiles with just a few pencil strokes. They seem to have receded into the background, no longer important.

On either side of Laocoön stand his two sons. They, too, are fighting the monsters. If we were to stick with the title "Jehovah and His Two Sons" for the Laocoön sculpture, we could assign the same names: Satan on the right and Adam on the left. However, the attentive observer of the two figures notices a small, barely perceptible difference in the figure on the left, which raises the question: could this be a woman?

The figure on the right presses itself against Laocoön with all its might. It stands with its back to us, slightly offset behind the muscular leg of the central figure; it might be clad in a light, translucent robe. This is not clearly visible. The right hand grasps the upper part of the serpent's body, which winds around Laocoön's waist. The left arm is stretched upward, but the palm faces outward. Is the hand reaching out to grasp something? Laocoön's strong arm? Below Laocoön's armpit, the figure's head is raised toward him, its mouth open in a questioning gesture. A reptilian body also winds around the waist. We do not know whether this creature represents Satan or whether it depicts Adam.

[12]Virgil, Aeneas; following quotations were also taken from it

To the left of Laocoön, the second, slender figure, also standing, faces the viewer. It leans against the thigh of the central figure. Its gaze is not directed upward toward Laocoön, as with the counterpart, but rather it stares at an event invisible to the viewer. The expression conveys sheer horror. The outstretched left arm grasps Laocoön's left arm. Likewise, the mouth is slightly open, yet the scream is stifled. This figure bears the features of a woman –could she represent Adamah? Her right hand is clenched into a fist and pressed against her chest. Likewise, a serpent's body winds around this figure's hips and outstretched arm. That figure, too, appears to be unclothed.

For Blake, woman should be acknowledged as a human force in her own powers and rights. Years before, in 1810 he painted "Eve Naming the Birds", where the woman is shown in her beauty, pureness, and innocence surrounded by birds. Here Blake refers to following lines in Genesis: "… male and female he created them. And God blessed them". In a second painting – as a counterpart – Adam named the beasts. The relevant passage from Genesis: "And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field."

It is possible that William Blake – in this case –gave the woman the same status as the man. He was foremost in ackknowledging the unique role and power of the female as an equal part in the forces of nature. Therefore he depicted her in his own free version.

A Multifaceted Explanation

This unusual depiction raises questions and lends itself to multiple interpretations. No explanation by Blake – or even a brief note from him on the subject – is known to exist. It seems Blake wanted to compel each viewer to form their own thoughts on this subject.

When viewed from the perspective of its movement, the depiction of Laocoön suggests that Blake captured the very moment when Jehovah – or unshakable, personified faith – seeks to destroy evil. That is why the powerful figure stands upright, one foot firmly on the ground, the other slightly raised, gathering strength to hurl the two monsters to the ground with tremendous force. That is why Blake did not render them with graphic precision.

The imposing central figure, Jehovah, is painfully aware that everything he has created is being destroyed at this very moment: "He repented that he had made Adam (of the Female, the Adamah) & it grieved him at his heart. What can be created can be destroyed. Adam is only the natural man & not the soul or imagination." Blake writes these lines in the Laocoön version "Jehovah and his two Sons" about the figure of Jehovah.

Recognizing and seeing what lies behind the surface is the central focus and challenges each of us. If we take the classical version of Laocoön as our starting point, his facial expression shows that he sees the end approaching and recognizes his wrongdoing toward God. In the case of the ancient Laocoön, a promise he had broken. Yet no sound can be heard from his open mouth.

Laocoön has recognized the truth and, with tear-filled eyes, beholds the glory of God and prays: "In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum."[13]

Upon closer examination of this illustration, it becomes clear that Blake has put his creed down on paper. Nothing can shake his faith. For him, there is no doubt. He knows what the truth is. He has known it from the very beginning. "... while we are in the world of Mortality we Must Suffer …" (Keynes, 1984, p. 616) he writes in his vision of "The Last Judgment." Suffering, the fate of every individual, is part of life. How one deals with it depends on ones attitude.

If we assume that William Blake intended Urizon to be depicted in the form of Laocoön, then Urizon represents reason, rationality, and the ego, constantly craving adoration. This Urizon embodies the antithesis to the immeasurable grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has surrendered to the negativity of reason and materialism. The consequences are felt by humanity in the form of war and misery. In later works, the figure of Urizon undergoes a transformation. He unites with Albion after its redemption and becomes Imagination in a world of light. Jesus Christ is "… Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists. … Eternal Image & Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed; just so the Imaginative Image returns by the seed of Contemplative Thought …" (Keynes 1984, p. 604)

Evil, to refer to Blake's texts based on an earlier depiction of Laocoön, cannot reach his arm and is thus finally destroyed. Adam / Adamah, the human being – formed from the earth, "… earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes…" – still reaches out to grasp the saving arm. He is now once again aware of his transience, of becoming dust from which he was created. "… For he [God] knows what we are made of; he remembers that we are dust…" (Psalm 103) He is now fully conscious of God's grace and hopes for salvation.

Summary

Nothing can shake faith or truth. Both stand firm as a rock. Evil, negativity, the ego, all those temptations, that make life difficult, are ultimately shattered with unimaginable force. It is understandable that all creation likewise perishes, for what follows is – the eternal Jerusalem. And hence the circle closes once more; that which William Blake experienced from the depths of Gothic art in its mystery. Blake's visions represent eternity; they are real and unmistakable. In his prophetic work "The Emanation of the Giant Albion," Blake wrote about the resurrection of the divine Jerusalem: "That to Labour in Knowledge is to Build up Jerusalem, and to Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem and his Builders."

William Blake is a voice of warning. Through his visionary works, he seeks to make us aware of all of life's pitfalls and human failings. It is also his silent cry to rouse humanity. „I see Every Thing I paint in This World ..." he wrote later. His works tell óf truth, and absolute knowledge.

[13]Into your hand, Lord, I commend my spirit.

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