



Michael binding Satan

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William Blake's literary and artistic work is part of the Western esoteric tradition. His symbolism is complex and rich and, although belonging to the *catena aurea* of the West, his language is universal, with an easily perceptible Oriental fragrance of the symbols.

The title of the painting above has an alchemical resonance, and it is not risky to consider a comparison to the Far-Eastern Yin-Yang aspect for the whole composition.

If we replace the Hebrew names with those belonging to the Far-Eastern tradition we obtain Yang binding Yin. In Aristotelian terms this is the actualization of the prime undifferentiated substance (*hyle*) and, in Hermetic terms, it is the fixation of the volatile or the embodiment of the spirit.

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We know that the Principle of the two primordial complementary elements is Tai-ki or Ishwara, and also the Logos or Christ. In its feminine hypostasis, He takes two forms: a superior one – Shakti or Shekinah, and an inferior one – Prakriti or Malkuth. Jesus appears from this viewpoint equivalent to Janus, the king of the Gates and of the Keys as well.

In a certain respect, Prakriti corresponds to the Adversary. On the other hand, Shekinah, as Saint Sophia, can be assimilated to Christ, and Guénon alluded to an identification of Mikael with Jesus.

Metatron, as *paredre* of Shekinah, contains two aspects, Mikael and Samael, somehow similar to Tai-ki, which comprises Yang and Yin.

In this painting, the Archangel holds a key in his right hand, so, besides the fact that he binds, he is the one who rotates the axle (Chakravarti), because the key is an axial symbol. We suggest, although from a rather individual point of view, that not only a double spiral can be perceived in the form of the painted figures, but also a swastika; anyway, all the above appears to offer us enough elements to attempt such an interpretation.

After all, these two functions, are not *principal* different from each other as long as only the one placed in the centre has the power to bind and unbind.

We shall also mention that, in the Hermetic tradition, Satan is equivalent to Saturn. Samael, as the Angel of Death, is depicted carrying Saturn's scythe. Samael is also the venom of God and we might wonder whether we are dealing with *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*.