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## **Work toward Knowing: Beginning with Blake**

By JIM WATT

“Alongside Blake, Watt writes convincingly of Art’s “eternal source and ecstatic end,” and as a bonus, he describes his strategies for teaching Blake to undergraduates—strategies that are truly revolutionary.”

– Alicia Ostriker, author of *Vision and Verse in William Blake*

Finally a book has arrived that beginners as well as discriminating scholars can agree on. *Work toward Knowing: Beginning with Blake* [Kinchafonee Creek Press; Date: Jan. 5, 2016; ISBN: 978-1-312-99040-1; Price: \$17.00 paperback] reads like a memoir—and it is, to a certain extent. It is also a (re)discovery of the visionary poet/artist and a brilliant insight into his work.

In 1992, Jim Watt offered a Seminar in the Prophetic Poetry of William Blake, about which he knew almost nothing despite having written a Master’s Thesis on Blake’s poem *Milton*, a radical re-vision of *Paradise Lost*. The experience of finding a way into Blake along with his students was so profound he offered the seminar five more times between 1995 and 2005. *Work toward Knowing* is his effort to capture the perils and joys of this on-going adventure.

**The book includes black and white illustrations from students in the Blake Seminars with a link to a website that features all the artwork in full-color and commentary by Watt.**

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Watt and his students, as he writes in his introduction, were “building Jerusalem.” What does that mean? Anyone casually familiar with the Bible would say that Jerusalem is a metaphor for Heaven or a place of universal love and peace. But Blake’s idea of the building of Jerusalem is probably more true to what artists and poets are actually doing because, rather than yearning for some eternal resting place, they are continually creating Jerusalem here on earth with us — and in our (and their) bodies. Jerusalem, then, for Blake, is neither the heavenly paradise promised redeemed sinners, nor the city in Israel. It is, instead, the divine imagination revealed and human liberty restored to the makers of art and the builders of freedom. Rather than what Blake calls the “single vision” of teachers, priests and politicians in the pay of empire, he offers in the image of building Jerusalem, a “four-fold” vision of eternity.

And this is precisely why *Work toward Knowing* is an essential book for students, teachers, and anyone interested in learning what a “four-fold” vision is and developing it in order to experience reality in a richer, more exuberant fashion.

Tristanne J. Connolly, author of *William Blake and the Body*, writes: “It is a wonderful gift that [Watt’s] legendary Blake seminars now take the form of ‘a book that all may read.’ Blake enthusiasts, and experimental, caring teachers, will find inspiration in his commitment to learning with the body and spirit, with emotion and creativity, as well as with the mind.”

**Jim Watt** is a professor emeritus at Butler University. He taught literature and writing as well as courses in the History of Science, the Gothic Cathedral and playwriting. Three of his full-length dramas were produced in Indianapolis: *Taken Literally*, *Sour Noodles: A Koan for Americans*, and *Help From a Man*. Watt’s seminars in Blake’s Prophetic Books, which led to *Work toward Knowing*, are of a piece with his efforts in the classroom, and in his life, to capture the perils and joys of our “on-going” adventure here on this mysterious planet.

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**AUTHOR: Jim Watt**

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