

Bob Dylan's 'Jokerman' an analysis of the lyrics by Kees de Graaf.

Introduction

The album '**Infidels**' – of which '**Jokerman**' is the opening song – is usually not regarded as part of Dylan's legacy of specific Christian albums. Although the album is littered with numerous Biblical allusions, it is, unlike its predecessors '**Slow Train Coming**', '**Saved**' and '**Shot of Love**', which are generally labeled as Dylan's Christian trilogy, not seen as outspoken Christian. By some the album is seen as some sort of departure from confessed Christianity and even a tentative rapprochement to Judaism. In my opinion this is not the case. One may argue that Dylan – when he wrote these songs for this album sometime in 1983 – had gone through a mental process of change which started ever since he converted to Christianity in 1978. The process of conversion to Christianity is marked by various stages which may be regarded as natural stages and all these phases constitute an integral part of Christian conversion.

Actually, the first stage on this road was the album '**Street Legal**' (1978 which) may well be regarded as a prelude to his upcoming conversion to Christianity which became evident later on that year. The next stage was the album '**Slow Train Coming**' (1979) which already showed on the cover of the album that Dylan had a work under construction and that it was now time to exactly pinpoint where he stood at that stage of his life. The album represents the phase of dogmatism and antitheses Dylan was going through: "*Ya either got faith, or ye got unbelief and there ain't no neutral ground*" (Precious Angel) or "*He who is not for Me is against me*" (Gonna change my way of thinking'). '**Slow Train Coming**' was followed by the album '**Saved**' (1980). '**Saved**' representing the next phase in Dylan's conversion process, expresses joy and gratitude for Dylan's personal salvation: "*I'm so glad, I want to thank you Lord, I just want to thank you. You have given me everything*" '*What can I do for You?*'. '**Saved**' was followed by '**Shot of Love**' (1981). '**Shot of Love**' marks an entirely new phase. First of all, Dylan returned to what one may describe as a more secular way of writing songs. Secular themes often touched upon – like disaffected love – returned and were integrated in notions of apocalyptic deceit and formed a sort of synthesis with it. Although Dylan's new songs written for the album '**Shot of Love**' were no longer overtly Christian gospel songs or even blue grassy, yet the message was undoubtedly still the same but one had to make an effort to read between the lines to find it. In the first phase of conversion to the Christian faith there is certainty and this is expressed in overtly Christian lyrics but in the next stages there is also room for the expression of vulnerability, weakness, disappointment and self-doubt. In abundance we find this on '**Shot of Love**', particularly in one of the greatest songs Dylan ever wrote: '*Every Grain of Sand*'.

The next phase, which at the same time is the most critical part in the process of conversion, is best described by the word 'deception'. Seen from a religious point of view, conversion to Jesus evokes a spiritual war – as Dylan wrote in '**Solid Rock**': '*It is the ways of the flesh to war*

against the spirit, twenty-four hours a day you can feel it and you can hear it, using all devices under the sun. And He never gives up till the battle is lost or won'. Like in so many real wars it is deceit and deception that turns the balance. The devil is skilled in deception and addicted to deceit. The devil deploys these deceptive weapons in an ultimate attempt to turn the balance in his favor of those converts who 'are hanging in the balance of the reality of man'.

It seems obvious that the album '**Infidels**' is marked by this concept of deception and ambiguity. One of the best example of this is the lyrics of '*Man of Peace*': '*You know sometimes Satan comes as a man of peace*' which is quite clearly inspired by 2 Corinthians 11:14: '*and no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*'. We find the same phenomenon in '**Jokerman**'. Sometimes it is as if the Jokerman is Jesus, Moses or King David speaking and acting, the next time it is as if the devil or one of his companions is speaking. Just like in Dylan's song 'Tin Angel' from the album 'Tempest' it is sometimes hard to tell exactly who is who. To recognize the devil, you have to be on the alert and you must know exactly what the Scriptures tell you, otherwise you will be deceived and you will end up joking like the Jokerman. It was W.S. Gilbert (1836-1911) the famous British dramatist and librettist who wrote: "*Everything is a source of fun. Nobody's safe, for we care for none! Life is a joke that's just begun!*" That is exactly the sort of attitude the Jokerman represents and is held accountable for at the end of the song, when some sort of a conclusion is drawn when it says: "***Oh Jokerman, you know what he wants, oh Jokerman you don't show any response***". But let's first start at the beginning of the song.

'Standing on the water, casting your bread' combines two Biblical notions .First of all, one would expect the lyrics to read '*standing at the water, casting your bread*' but the lyrics deliberately say: '*standing on the water.*' By saying 'on' the water, the poet immediately draws attention to Jesus of whom the Scriptures say that he walked '**on**' the sea. (Matthew 14:25, 26). At the same time, by saying '*standing on the water, **casting your bread***' Dylan connects Jesus's walking on the water with the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes (11:1) where it says: '*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*'. Later on in 2003, Dylan has the actor John Goodman say in the movie "Masked and Anonymous": '*Does Jesus have to walk on water twice to make a point?*'. By walking on the water Jesus wanted to make a point, a statement. The same point as in Ecclesiastes 11:1 The point Jesus wants to make is: have faith in God, trust in God and anything is possible, even walking on water. As long as Peter trusted in God and Jesus, he too could walk on water. But when his faith started to waver, Peter began to sink (Matthew 14:30) and he cried out to the Lord to save him. The same idea is expressed in Ecclesiastes 11:1. The New Living Translation translates Ecclesiastes 11:1 as follows: '*Send your grain across the seas, and in time, profits will flow back to you*'. The idea is the same as in Matthew 14: trust in God, have trust in the future and invest in other people by helping them out and sharing and casting them your bread and in due course the Lord will bless you for your attitude. But no matter how faithful and sincere one may be in doing this, Dylan warns that **idolatry** may be near and is always more

on the lurk than you realize. Things are often not what they seem and that is why he adds: **'While the eyes of the idol with the iron head are glowing'**. Jesus could do miracles and walk on water but likewise Pharaoh's magicians could do miracles by turning a rod into a serpent (Exodus 7:11, 12). And what about the **idol**, the Beast coming out of the earth as pictured in the book of Revelation 13:11? We read that this beast *'had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon'*. He looks like a 'lamb' – like Jesus – but speaks like the devil. Things are not what they seem. This beast *'does great wonders, so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and he deceives them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles'*. When miracles do not glorify God, miracles turn into jugglery and self-glorifying **idolatry**. Likewise, when you are casting your bread with the purpose **not** to help your neighbor but to get richer and more prosperous than you already are, you are entering the territory of and paying tribute to **'idol with the iron head'**. The idol has an **'iron'** head. 'Iron' in the Bible stands for brutal strength: the idol *'will crush you with wealth and power'* (as Dylan wrote in 'Ain't Talking').

'The eyes of the idol with the iron head are glowing' means that the eyes of the idol are on fire, the idol is ready to lash out, there is just no escaping once the idol has seen you and once you have felt the *'tender touch of the beast'*. Once the idol has grasped you it will – as Dylan wrote elsewhere - *'bury you from your head to your feet, from the disease of conceit'* which it will inflict on you.

'Distant ships sailing into the mist' might have been inspired by the fact that this song was written on a boat down in the Caribbean. Dylan said in 1984: *'Me and another guy have a boat down there. 'Jokerman'' kinda came to me in the islands. It's very mystical. The shapes there, and the shadows, seem to be so ancient. The song was sorta inspired by these spirits they call jumbis'*. In the song 'Caribbean Wind' Dylan also deals with distant ships and writes: *'And them distant ships of liberty on them iron waves so bold and free, bringing everything that's near to me nearer to the fire'* where he seems to suggest that these distant ships carry everything that is near to him, what is of great moral value to him, to the fire of judgment.

'You were born with a snake in both of your fists while a hurricane was blowing'. This is an ancient mythological image. The 'You' obviously is the Jokerman which is portrayed later on in the chorus of the song. The image reminds us of the little baby Hercules. Hercules strangled two snakes which were sent to kill him by Hera, the jealous wife of Zeus. **'While a hurricane was blowing'** may draw our attention to the Greek God Poseidon who could not only create hurricanes and thunderstorms, but he could also calm the seas to glass-like placidity. He could also raise islands out of the sea as he pleased. In Greek mythology the Hekatonkheires were three giant gods of violent storms and hurricanes. They had a hundred hands and fifty heads, for handling the destructive power of storm.

Whereas in the first line **'standing on the water, casting your bread'** the Jokerman is identified with Jesus, reciting the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes, we now see ambiguity for the first time burst upon the scene because the Jokerman is now identified with the territory of

the snake, the serpent, behind which we see the devil who is a personification of all evil powers. The next line in the song: **'Freedom just around the corner for you, but with truth so far off, what good will it do'**, shows that this ambiguity of the Jokerman is nothing new. We find this ambiguity in the attitude of some of the Jews towards Jesus as described in the book of John, chapter 8:30-59. I would not be surprised if Dylan had this chapter of the gospel of John in the back of his mind when he wrote this line. In John 8:32 Jesus says that the *'truth shall make you free'*, truth and freedom are inseparably intertwined. Freedom without truth will lead to decadence and truth without freedom will lead to oppression. There was this ambiguous attitude of the Jews when they were confronted with Jesus's claim on truth. In 8:29 we read: *'Then many who heard him say these things believed in him'. But others said: Didn't we say all along that you (Jesus) were possessed by a demon?'"(8:48).* This whole passage of John 8 is about the question of truth. Jesus had claimed: *'I am the way, and the **truth** and the life'* (John 14.6) and if in John 8 Jesus had spoken these words **'Freedom just around the corner for you, but with truth so far off, what good will it do'**, it would have fitted in very well, because in other words this is exactly what Jesus is saying there. It is as if Jesus were saying: *'Freedom, that is me!, I will set you free. I am not far away, in fact I'm standing right in front of you, or haven't you looked? Freedom is close by, just around the corner for everybody here in this town of Jerusalem. But near as I may be, to find me you have to accept that I speak the truth, that I am the truth, but you are not willing to accept the truth about me and **with truth so far off, what good will it do?.***

Within the context of the lyrics of the song, it now seems obvious that the 'Jokerman' in the chorus: **'Jokerman dance to the nightingale tune, bird fly high by the light of the moon'** is a highly controversial, deceptive, ambiguous personality, a wolf in sheep's clothing, who sometimes looks like a savior, as *the* Savior, but who in reality belongs to the satanic realm of darkness. The 'Jokerman' may have some connotation with the Joker card in card playing. In card playing the Joker card is often some sort of a wild card which may represent other existing cards in the game. The Joker card may be very beneficial or it may be very harmful and one does not know beforehand how it will work out. No wonder that the 'Jokerman' is portrayed here as a very deceptive and ambiguous personality.

Another aspect of the 'Jokerman' is mockery. It is a main feature of human existence that when times are strenuous, people may do two quite different things. They either start joking, mocking or slandering or they start praying. An example of the first is the joking, mocking thief who was crucified next to Jesus. For more details on this subject please go to my analysis of ["All along the Watchtower"](#) . But in times of strain and crisis, people also may act in the opposite way. Instead of mocking and joking they start praying. Dylan gives us an example of this in the song *'Shooting Star'*. Amidst the crisis of the Last Account Dylan writes: *'As the last fire truck from hell goes rolling by, all good people are praying'*.

The attitude of the Jokerman is: the show must go on, just like when the Titanic was going down, the band played on. Likewise the Jokerman keeps on dancing on the ruins of Babylon: **"Jokerman dance to the nightingale tune"**. A nightingale used to be a symbol for a poet or a

singer. When the Jokerman dances, it seems the Jokerman is much more focused on the nightingale's tune, on the poet, the sing and dance man, than on anything else. In times of crisis, when people are crazy, entertainment has always been a way of distracting attention and moving away into the land of oblivion. By seeking entertainment the Jokerman secludes himself from all the serious things, from all the hardships, that go on all around him. At a time when it really matters, the Jokerman is unwilling to take any responsibility and *'laughs in the face of what sorrow brings'* (as Dylan wrote in "What Good am I?").

Like a bird that flies high in the sky, the Jokerman tries to get away as far as he can from all crazy sorrow in this world, that is why he now adds: ***"Bird fly high by the light of the moon"*** High up in the sky the Jokerman shuts himself off. The moon in Dylan's work – an also in the Bible - is often an omen of approaching apocalyptic disaster, but the Jokerman does not care.

'So swiftly the sun sets in the sky, you rise up and say goodbye to no one'. These words seem rather obscure and hard to unravel. The setting sun is of religious significance within Judaism. Sunset is the time for the evening prayers to start; sunset marks the transition to, or from, the Sabbath or any other holiday. Sunset is the time for a Jewish ritual called 'Havdalah' which takes place at the end of Shabbat. Some analysts see the Jokerman mocking this ritual by not taking part in it and breaking up the community of this ritual without even saying goodbye. This explanation however, seems a little farfetched. There is more likelihood in assuming that the Jokerman again wears the cloak of Jesus. Although his coming to the earth was predicted by the prophets, Jesus suddenly appeared in public life and only after a few years he was crucified at the age of 33 but he rose from the dead. Prior to his crucifixion he was abandoned by everyone, even by his closest disciples. (Mat. 26:56). ***'So swiftly the sun sets in the sky'*** may also be a vague reference to the *'darkness at the break of noon'*, the three hours of darkness which fell all over the land during the crucifixion of Jesus and which is described in Matthew 27:45. But the best explanation of the words ***'you rise up and say goodbye to no one'*** seems to be found in the story of the ascension of Jesus into heaven as pictured in the book of Acts, Chapter 1:9-11: *"After saying this, he (Jesus) was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"* From these words we learn that Jesus did not really say goodbye to his disciples, nor to the world for that matter, in fact the disciples were quite taken by surprise by the scene of the ascension which took place before their very eyes. Jesus just rose up and disappeared on a cloud.

'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread, both of their futures so full of dread, you don't show one' 'Fools rush in...' is a precise quote from the English poet Alexander Pope's ***'An essay on criticism'***, 1709, where it reads: *"No Place so Sacred from such Fops is barr'd, nor is Paul's Church more safe than Paul's Church-yard: Nay, fly to Altars; there they'll talk you dead; for Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread'*. A number of writers like Edmund Burke,

Thomas Hardy, E.M. Forster and James Joyce have repeated this quotation in their literary works. The expression also has some Biblical connotation and Alexander Pope may well have been inspired by this. The book of Jude first speaks of wicked angels *'who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great Day of Judgment.* (verse 6). But there are also good angels like Michael, the archangel and his companions, who act in a very prudent way. Michael has fear to judge and fears to tread in field of Judgment which only belongs to God. We read: *'Michael did not dare accuse the devil of blasphemy, but simply said, "The Lord rebuke you!"* (This took place when Michael was arguing with the devil about Moses' body.) No matter how prudent and full of fear Michael the angel is, in the book of Jude we see **'Fools rush in'** ready to *'scoff at things they do not understand. Like unthinking animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and so they bring about their own destruction'* (verse 10).

Now Dylan goes on to say that **'both of their futures so full of dread'** indicating that not only the future of the 'fools' but also the future of the 'angels' is full of dread, both the fools and the wicked angels are in great fear of impending evil, in the same way as Shakespeare wrote: *'The dread of something after death'*. However, the word 'dread' has also a more positive meaning. 'Dread' may also mean: reverential or respectful fear, awe. We see both meanings of the word reflected in the book of Jude and also incorporated the Jokerman. On one hand we see the wicked angels, chained in the prisons of darkness, waiting for the great Day of Judgment, and they are full of dread for this day. We also see the fools and the book of Jude says of the fools and the scoffers: *'Woe to them!'* (verse 11). The fools and the wicked angels have every reason to be full of dread for the future. But on the other hand, there is Michael, the good angel, he is also full of dread, but he is dreadful in a positive way, he is full of respect and awe for God.

The Jokerman is an ambiguous character, therefore it now says: **'You don't show one'**, the Jokerman does not show which kind of dread he inhabits. He does not show his evil intentions. He looks like an angel of light, in the same way as Satan does (2 Corinthians 11:14: *'even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light'*).

'Shedding off one more layer of skin' makes the Jokerman hard to detect. The Jokerman looks like a chameleon which changes color all the time, the Jokerman is a person who changes opinions, ideas, or behavior to suit the prevailing social climate; an opportunist. Reptiles, like snakes, shed off their skins. The snake, the serpent, is in the Bible the equivalent of the devil, the Satan. The devil, in the shape of a serpent, stealthily comes to Adam in the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam to disobey God's commandment. Therefore, when it says **'Shedding off one more layer of skin'** Dylan once again deposits the Jokerman in the realm of Satan and of all evil but the Jokerman does so in a disguised way with the purpose of **'keeping one step ahead of the persecutor within'**. Kevin Bloom applies this couplet to Dylan personally as if Dylan were the Jokerman himself and writes: *"And if there's any couplet to quote back at him, any piece of rhyming verse that could conceivably be inscribed as an epitaph on his tombstone, it's from the biblical track "Jokerman," specifically*

the last two lines of the second verse: "Shedding off one more layer of skin/ Keeping one step ahead of the persecutor within." Somehow Kevin Bloom's interpretation just does not feel right. His interpretation is too negative; it does not fit in with Dylan. Although over his career Dylan has had a wide variety of styles, he has often been the opposite of a chameleon. As said a chameleon changes opinions, ideas or behavior to suit the prevailing social climate. But Dylan has always ventured to act against popular culture and public opinion, making turns where nobody would expect him to do so. In many ways Dylan is the opposite of an opportunist.

'A persecutor' is someone who torments other people, he is a tormentor. When this persecutor is **'within'** you, it means that your own body and your own mind is torn apart by this persecutor. No matter how defiled demons can be, and no matter how much relish demons take in doing evil and setting up wicked schemes, there is always a persecutor inside these devils and demons which tells their conscience that what they are doing is wrong and this voice torments and destructs them as long as they exist. Satan has this self-destructive power, this tormentor, within him. This self-destructive power is, however, restrained by his will to do as much evil as he can, till at last, at the Latter Day, the game is finally over. Through metamorphoses – shedding off layers of skin - Satan is able to avoid not only detection but also avoid total destruction and annihilation and to start all over again in a new deceptive body. In this way Satan always keeps one step ahead of the persecutor, the destructive power, within him. We see these satanic metamorphoses throughout the Bible and specifically in the Book of Revelation. In chapter 12 the devil is first pictured as a great red dragon (verse 3) and next as a serpent (verse 15) and in chapter 13 as a beast with ten horns and seven heads. But in the end the devil – the Jokerman – will not be able to keep one step ahead. We see the devil – and his incarnations the Beast and the false prophet – thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where they will be forever tormented. The persecutor, the tormentor, will end up being persecuted and tormented (Rev. 20:10). Justice will get the better of him in the end.

"You're a man of the mountain, you can walk on the clouds, manipulator of crowds, you're a dream twister. You're going to Sodom and Gomorrah, but what do you care? Ain't nobody there would want marry your sister, friend to the martyr, a friend to the woman of shame, you look into the fiery furnace, see the rich man without any name"

When Dylan says: ***"You're a man of the mountain, you can walk on the clouds"*** he seems to portray the Biblical person of Moses, the man of God, who may in fact be called **the** man of the mountains. To the Biblical writers 'mountains' are symbols of eternity, they are strong and steadfast, but they too are the creation of God, and they manifest His power. The scene Dylan describes here comes close to what can be found in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 24 verse 15-18 where it says:

"Then Moses climbed up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. And the glory of the Lord settled down on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud to the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the glory of the Lord appeared at the summit like a consuming fire. Then Moses disappeared into

the cloud as he climbed higher up the mountain. He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights". Moses walked on the clouds and received the Ten Commandments from God when he was up on the mountain.

In the lyrics of Dylan's masterpiece 'Dignity' Dylan speaks of *'the sons of darkness and the sons of light'* whom he met in the border towns of despair. Also, that he *'Heard the tongues of angels and the tongues of men'* and it wasn't any difference to him. In 'Jokerman' Dylan basically dwells on the same subject. From a 'son of light' like Moses, who **'walks on the clouds'** Dylan in one breath shifts to a 'son of darkness' who is portrayed as **'a manipulator of crowds'** and a **'dream twister'**. 'Who is who' is not easy to detect by the naked eye. It all adds up to the ambiguity of the song. **'A manipulator of crowds'** takes us to the world of usurpers, oppressors, dictators and demagogues like Pilate, Nero or Hitler. You'd better watch out when these manipulators enter the scene, like Dylan warns us in the song 'Political World' because – as Dylan writes in this song - these manipulators of crowds *'Climb into the frame and shout God's name but you're never sure what it is'*.

'A dream twister' again takes us to the world of deception. A 'Twister' is a localized and violently destructive windstorm occurring over land and characterized by a funnel-shaped cloud extending toward the ground. Somebody wrote that *'Twister dreams can be a type of intuitive warning that conditions exist in either the inner or outer world that must be addressed and quelled before devastation results'*. Here, however, when it says here that the Jokerman is **'a dream twister'** the Jokerman again wears the cloak of the devil, who is the ultimate dream twister. In his manipulative work the devil had access to the throne of God where he continually falsely accused the children of God, twisting words and questioning their integrity and their commitment to God, - like e.g. the devil did to poor Job. Ever since the devil was defeated at the cross, he lost access to the heavens and the throne of God and was flung on the earth where he has continued his manipulative work as a dream twister. The work the Holy Spirit does is quite the opposite to that of the devil. Whereas the devil as a dream twister works had on the downfall of God's children, the Holy Spirit pleads for them at the throne of God, (Romans 8:26,27), making sure that all prayers and dreams are heard in heaven and become effective.

The line **'You're going to Sodom and Gomorrah, but what do you care? Ain't nobody there would want marry your sister'** focusses on the two Biblical towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Book of Genesis, chapter 18 and 19, says that the inhabitants of these towns were so defiled and their sins so grave that these towns were destroyed by brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven (Gen. 19:24). From these chapters we also learn that it was Abraham's nephew Lot who lived in Sodom. Therefore, it seems obvious that Lot is addressed here. Lot was the one who went to Sodom. The problem however is that the lyrics say: **'Ain't nobody there would want marry your SISTER'**, this is odd because Lot is not known to have a sister in Sodom. Lot does have two daughters and to protect his guests he decides to hand them over to the men of Sodom to have them abused, rather than have his guests abused. (Gen 19:8). So it would have made perfect sense if the lyrics had read: ***Ain't nobody there would want marry your DAUGHTER'***. There must be an explanation why Dylan

deliberately says 'sister' where one would have expected 'daughter'. We feel there is a good explanation available. It shows that Dylan has a very detailed knowledge of the Bible and he uses this in the song.

The fact is that *not* Lot is addressed here but Abraham himself. The Jokerman disguises himself as Abraham. This needs some clarification. To plead to God for these two towns, in an attempt to prevent their total destruction, also Abraham went to Sodom and Gomorrah – that is to say he went to the vicinity of Sodom and Gomorrah, to a place where he could overlook the two towns (Genesis 18: 16 and 19: 28) - . **'What do you care?'**, seems to suggest that it was not that difficult for Abraham to go to Sodom and Gomorrah, personally Abraham had nothing to fear there. When Abraham went to Egypt (Gen 12:10) and to Gerar (20:2) he had to fear for his life, but not in Sodom. Why not? Well, it all has to do with Abraham's beautiful wife Sara, who was at the same time his half-sister. The Bible states this on two occasions (Genesis 12:3 and 20:2). On these two occasions Abraham feared that his wife –because she was so attractive and beautiful - would be dishonored by the Egyptians and the Canaanites and Abraham subsequently killed. To save his own neck, Abraham attempted to prevent the Egyptians and the Canaanites from dishonoring Sara by stating that Sara was his sister, he passed Sara off as a sibling, which was half the truth and a half truth is a lie..

To save his life in Egypt and Gerar Abraham said: 'She (Sara) is my sister' but when Abraham went to Sodom and Gomorrah there was no need to take refuge to such an excuse and he needed not to worry about his wife being proposed or being sexually assaulted. That is the reason why the lyrics say: **'What do you care?'**. Why should Abraham no longer care? Well, because Genesis 19:4-6 seems to suggest that the entire male population of Sodom was gay. So in going to Sodom and Gomorrah and in its vicinity Abraham had nothing to fear, because the gay population (contrary to Egypt and Gerar) was not at all interested in his wife and half-sister Sara; in Sodom – because all men were gay – there was nobody there who wanted to marry his (half) sister Sara, who was at the same time his wife.

In later years (2003) Dylan may have felt a little uncomfortable about these lyrics because these words may be interpreted – but not necessarily - as a bit homophobic. It may have been a reason why Dylan changed the lyrics in concert to read now: **'You've been to Sodom and Gomorrah, way out west, looking for somebody who will love you the best and call you Mister'**. This is quite striking because this line is taken from a lyric of a song called 'Go away from my window'; by John Jacob Niles (this song at least partly inspired Dylan's "It Ain't Me Babe"). The lyric in Niles' song reads "Go on your way be happy, go on your way out west, remember dear that you're the one I really did love best, I really did love best". The question is, if and how Dylan made these alternative lyrics match with the Sodom and Gomorrah words. If he did, the following explanation may make some sense.

Abraham and his nephew Lot originated from a place called Ur in Chaldea. Seen from the position of Ur, Sodom and Gomorrah was **'way out west'**. The towns of Sodom and Gomorrah were situated in a valley just south of the Dead Sea. Because there was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham, Abraham and Lot decided to separate. We can

read this in Genesis 13. Abraham modestly let Lot the first choice which way to go. Lot selfishly chose and took the best and most fertile part of the land, the valley south of the Dead Sea and eventually settled down in Sodom. **'Looking for somebody who will love you the best'** is just another way of expressing that Lot took the best part, the part which would yield him the highest profit. It was supposed to make Lot even wealthier than Abraham, and a good reason to call him Mister. Later on it appeared that Lot made a huge mistake. Settling down in Sodom may have brought him a lot of wealth and luxury but at the same time his settling down was nearly at the cost of his own life.

The line **'friend to the martyr, a friend to the woman of shame'**, marks another change in position and personage of the Jokerman. It is Jesus who may be called a friend both to the martyr and the woman of shame. This martyr and friend of Jesus' is John the Baptist, who was imprisoned by the evil king Herod (Luke 3:20) and subsequently beheaded at Herod's birthday party (Mat. 14:11). It was John the Baptist himself who called himself 'the friend of the bridegroom Jesus Christ (John 3:29). Jesus is also called **'a friend to the woman of shame'**. By his opponents Jesus was accused of being a *'glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!'*(Mat. 11:19). In John 8 we see Jesus stand up for a woman of shame who had been caught in adultery. Jesus refuses to condemn her and let her go but at the same time warns her not to sin again (John 8:11). Jesus is a sinner's friend and at the same time he hates sin.

The Jokerman is now challenged and rebuked when Dylan goes on to say: **'you look into the fiery furnace, see the rich man without any name'**. It looks as if Dylan says: *'You Jokerman, who doesn't care or worry about anything, mockingly and arrogantly dancing to the nightingale tune, aloof like a bird that flies high to the light of the moon, look up Jokerman and see how it will all end up, look into that fiery furnace and see how the rich man without any name ends up in the flames of fire'*. Undoubtedly this passage is inspired by the parable of the poor Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). The heart of the matter of this parable is the need to do justice here on earth, before it's too late, and to feed the hungry who lay at your doorstep. The rich man refused to help poor Lazarus who lay at his gate. Both poor Lazarus and the rich man died. Lazarus ended up in heaven in Abraham's bosom but the rich man ended up in hell, in the fiery furnace. Lazarus was a poor man on earth, but he had a name: 'Lazarus' which means 'The Lord helps'. Lazarus's name will stay on forever, because God knows him. The rich man made a name for himself on this earth, but he ended up without a name in the hereafter, he became a 'masked and anonymous', his name deleted from the Book of Life because he refused to do justice here on earth. *'Jokerman, life is not a joke, please come to your senses while you still can!'*

"Well, the Book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the law of the jungle and the sea are your only teachers. In the smoke of the twilight on a milk-white steed Michelangelo indeed could've carved out your features. Resting in the fields, far from the turbulent space, half asleep near the stars with a small dog licking your face". One wonders why the poet only mentions the **Book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy** as his only teacher and why not the whole

Pentateuch or the whole Old and New Testament? The Pentateuch consists of the five books of Moses of which Leviticus is the third and Deuteronomy the fifth book. The obvious reason may be that the Book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy –and also the Book of Numbers - are predominantly legalistic Books. However, these books not only deal with the specific laws, commandments and cultic prescriptions for the people of Israel but especially the book of Deuteronomy also emphasizes God’s love and mercy (Deut. 4:31) and His continuous protection and commitment if the people of Israel obey and keep His commandments laid down in the Covenant. So in this verse we note dualism, controversy and ambiguity in the mind of the Jokerman between trust and faith in the laws of a righteous and merciful God as shown in the Book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy on the one hand, and belief in the harsh reality of **‘the law of the jungle and the sea’** on the other hand. The **‘the law of the jungle and the sea’** reflect the Darwinian thesis of the ‘survival of the fittest’. In this thesis only the strongest and fittest of any specimen or organism survive whereby all others are eliminated. In the next line Dylan describes two separate scenes or notions – King Jesus Christ and his predecessor and forefather king David – and in a certain way he combines both notions into one picture. First Dylan draws our attention to **‘a milk white steed’** which looms large **“in the smoke of the twilight”**. Horses generating smoke during twilight is an apocalyptic sign representing conquest and war. In Revelation 19: 11-13 we find Jesus Christ riding on a white horse, ready to judge and to conquer. When Dylan goes on to say that **“Michelangelo indeed could've carved out your features”** he refers to the statue of the biblical King David (see picture on the left) which Michelangelo made between 1501 and 1504 and it seems obvious that Dylan sees Michelangelo carve out the features of Jesus Christ in the statue of his predecessor King David of Israel. The Bible states that in a lot of ways the temporary kingdom of David resembles and foreshadows the eternal kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Matthew 22: 42, 43 not only says that Jesus Christ is David’s Son but also that David calls Jesus “LORD”. When we take a closer look at the statue, we see king David with his head turned to the left while his left arm is raised to his left shoulder with his sling flung down behind his back, ready to attack Goliath (I Samuel 17:40). Michelangelo’s David certainly is one of the most famous works of Renaissance sculpture, and it is a clear symbol of both strength and youthful determination. So if you take a close look at this statue, and although you do not literally see David riding this milk white steed, you may nevertheless discern the carved out features of King Jesus Christ, ready to conquer his enemies, in the same way as his predecessor, the righteous king David, combatted and conquered the Philistines and in particular the mighty giant Philistine Goliath. A studio outtake of “Jokerman” at this place has different lyrics: **‘No crystal ball do you need on your shelf, Michelangelo himself could've carved out your features’**. These alternative lyrics seem to confirm that the features which Michelangelo has carved out here are indeed the features of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ does not need any fortune telling crystal ball but He has direct insight into the future through His Father in heaven.

“Resting in the fields, far from the turbulent space, half asleep near the stars” most likely refers to King David as well. Before David became king of Israel, he had been persecuted by

King Saul for many years. We read of this in the first book of Samuel. To avoid being captured, David was constantly on the run and forced to leave the **"turbulent"** villages and towns and to take refuge in the open fields and in the caves. **"Half asleep near the stars"** indicates that he could not find any enduring rest; he was always on the alert and in danger of being captured. **"A small dog licking your face"** brings in a new element and at first glance this dog has nothing to do with King David but the image of this dog is presumably used to reintroduce ambiguity and uncanniness into the song. Again we are taken to the Tarot cards. On some of these Fool Tarot's cards we see a small dog licking the elbow of the Fool. This Fool looks like a beggar or a vagabond, like David once may have looked when he was on the run for Saul **"far from the turbulent space"**, to the times when David took refuge to the land of the Philistines and acted like a lunatic in front of the Philistine king Achish. Even in great men like King David, an act of bravery may soon be followed by an act of utter cowardice. The alternative studio outtake of 'Jokerman' – which unfortunately has not been released up till now – has the following lyrics: **'So drunk, standing in the middle of the street, directing traffic with a small dog at your feet'**. Again we see these ambiguous elements. When it says **'directing traffic'** we see the positive characteristics of leadership, but this positive image is immediately neutralized by negative and contradictory and even preposterous elements when it says: **'So drunk, standing in the middle of the street'**. When you are drunk, the last thing you should do is directing traffic.

"Well, the rifleman's stalking the sick and the lame, preacher man seeks the same, who'll get there first is uncertain. Nightsticks and water cannons, tear gas, padlocks, Molotov cocktails and rocks behind every curtain. False-hearted judges dying in the webs that they spin, only a matter of time 'til the night comes stepping in". The first part of this verse can only be grasped if we read it against the background of what it says in the Gospel of John, Chapter 5:1-10. In Jerusalem there was a pool. Around this pool lay a multitude of **sick**, blind, and **lame** waiting for the moving of the waters. Sometimes an angel of the Lord went down into the pool and stirred up the water of the pool. Whoever then **first got** into the water, after the stirring up of the water, was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. (Verse 4). That is why it now says: **"Who'll get their first is uncertain"**. Now there was a **lame** man at the pool who had been disabled for 38 years. Jesus came up to him and asked him if he wanted to be cured. The man answered that whenever the water was stirred up; there was no one around to help him to reach the water of the pool first. Then Jesus cured him and ordered him to pick up his pallet and walk (verse 8). The Jews however, (verse 11) **stalked** and rebuked the cured lame man because he had been cured by Jesus on the Sabbath and on the Sabbath it was not permitted to carry a load (his pallet). Actually the Jews were persecuting Jesus for what Jesus had done on Sabbath (verse 16). Now the **'rifleman'** may be a metaphor for the Jews and the Pharisees who were **'stalking the sick and the lame'** to find pretexts to persecute and kill Jesus. The **'preacher man'** may be a metaphor for Jesus. A preacher man is a person who brings the good news of the gospel and that is exactly what Jesus did. But there is a major difference between the **'rifleman'** and the **'preacher man'**. The **'rifleman'** has evil intentions because he is **'stalking the sick and the**

lame' in order to persecute and kill Jesus, whereas the *'preacher man'* has nothing but good intentions. Jesus *'seeks'* the sick and the lame in order to cure and heal them, even if this takes place on a Sabbath. *'Who'll get there first is uncertain'* may be an allusion to the healing pool in Jerusalem. The *first* sick, lame or crippled man who is able to step into the pool is healed and no sick or crippled man is sure that he will ever reach this water. However, whoever meets Jesus will certainly be healed, either physically or spiritually. Between the lines Dylan makes us feel the ambiguity in this world. The Jews and the Pharisees, pretending to defend a good course, the Sabbath rest, play a deadly cat and mouse game with Jesus with the purpose of preventing Jesus to *'seek the sick and the lame'* so that their own authority is maintained, even if their attitude is at the expense of the sick and the lame. During the lifetime of Jesus we see the intensity of the *'stalking of the sick and the lame'* increase. Because Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, the Sanhedrin not only planned to have Jesus killed (John 11:53) but they also tried to murder Lazarus himself (John 12:10).

From a biblical image the focus suddenly shifts to a modern 20th century picture as Dylan goes on to say: *"Nightsticks and water cannons, tear gas, padlocks, Molotov cocktails and rocks behind every curtain"*. All these words are related to oppression and show that nothing will ever change in this world. This world is a violent world full of oppression and this is of all times and will never stop. The dictionary says that a *"nightstick"* is a short stout club used primarily by policemen, *"tear gas"* is a gas that is used to combat riots and disperse crowds, a *"padlock"* is a detachable lock and has a hinged shackle that can be passed through the staple of a hasp or the links in a chain and then snapped shut, and a *"Molotov cocktail"* is a crude incendiary bomb made of a bottle filled with flammable liquid and fitted with a rag wick. When it says that these things are *"behind every curtain"* this means that this weaponry is concealed to the eye. This is a typical trait of the Jokerman, to be intentionally ambiguous about his real intentions. An ostensibly peaceful status quo may, with a flick of the wrist, turn into war. For the same album 'Infidels' Dylan wrote the song 'Neighborhood Bully' which deals with the harassment of the Arab countries against Israel. Dylan writes in this song: *"Well he's surrounded by pacifists who all want peace, they pray for it nightly that the bloodshed must cease. Now they wouldn't hurt a fly. To hurt one they would weep. They lay and they wait for this bully to fall asleep"*. It is therefore not at all unlikely that at the time when Dylan wrote this song, he may have had in mind the precarious situation Israel had been in for quite some decades.

The studio outtake of "Jokerman" has: *"Well, the preacher man's talking' about the deaf an' the dumb and a world to come that's already been pre-determined. Nightsticks an' water cannons, teargas, padlocks Molotov cocktails an' rocks can't drown out his sermon. You let the wicked walk right into the trap. You're giving' away all good things that fall in your lap"*. These alternative lyrics confirm that the message of the preacher man – Jesus – cannot be wiped out. Dylan seems to refer to the Sermon of the Mount here (Matthew 5-7). *"A world to come"* is the pre-determined Kingdom of God (Mat 6:33). Blessed are not only the *"deaf and the dumb"* (Mark 7:37) but blessed are also the poor in spirit, those who

mourn, those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart, those who are peacemakers and those who are persecuted for righteous' sake (Mat 5:3-10). The Jews and Pharisees at the time tried to **"drown out"** the message of Jesus. However, also in our days modern combat means like **"Nightsticks an' water cannons, teargas, padlocks Molotov cocktails an' rocks"** cannot drown out the Sermon of the Mount. Dylan would later on warn us in *'Shooting Star'* that one of these days it may be *'the last time you might hear the Sermon of the Mount'* before the Latter Day finally arrives. **"You let the wicked walk right into the trap"** may refer to Matthew 22:15 where we read: *"Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be arrested"* (NLT). The outcome was that the Pharisees walked right into their own trap and from then on no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any questions. (Mat 22:46). However, Jesus goes on doing the right thing: **"Giving' away all good things that fall in your lap"**. The good things fell into His lap – the gifts he received from the Father – and He gave the good things away to the sick and the poor, the deaf and the dumb, in fact the whole world could have fallen into his lap, if only Jesus had given in to the temptations of the devil (Matt 4: 8-10).

When the 'official' lyrics conclude: **"False-hearted judges dying in the webs that they spin"**, this expresses basically the same idea as **"You let the wicked walk right into the trap"**. As so often in this song, things are not what they seem and take an unexpected turn. Jesus was convicted to death by the **"false-hearted judges"** of the Jewish Sanhedrin, but in the end they were not able to withhold Jesus and the good news of the Gospel spread all over the world. **"Only a matter of time 'til the night comes stepping in"** takes us to Judgment Day when these false-hearted judges will be condemned and forever sent into the eternal night. Dylan's song *'Foot of Pride'* was also recorded for the album *'Infidels'* and was written about the same time as *'Jokerman'*. This song says about false-hearted judges: *"Well, there ain't no going back when your foot of pride comes down"* and also: *"Sooner or later you gonna meet them coming down"*. As the Book of Judas (verse 13) says these false-hearted judges are *"Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"*. Biblical and at the same time very much Dylanesque language.

"It's a shadowy world, skies are slippery gray, a woman just gave birth to a prince today and dressed him in scarlet. He'll put the priest in his pocket, put the blade to the heat, take the motherless children off the street and place them at the feet of a harlot. Oh, Jokerman, you know what he wants, Oh, Jokerman, you don't show any response". Also this final verse breathes an atmosphere of ambiguity and at the same time makes an ultimate but fruitless appeal to the Jokerman to respond and to show his real intentions and to put his cards on the table. Who is who, who this prince really is, can only be determined by the way this prince is dressed and by what this prince is doing. Things are again contrary to what they seem at first glance. **"It's a shadowy world"** indicates that the picture which is drawn here lacks clarity and distinctness and at the same time this **"shadowy world"** is a sign

that the real event, which the shadow foreshadows, will be coming up soon. The prince is borne under a sky which is denoted as *“slippery grey”*. The clouds and the color of sky often foretell what is coming, what the weather will be like (Luke 12:54, 55). This sky however, is *“slippery”* grey. *“Slippery”* may have the connotation here of the word “wanton” or “unchaste” or “loose in morals” (Shak). This slippery sky is *“grey”*. Grey is said to be any color of neutral hue between white and black. The word *“slippery”* seems to foretell that something “wanton” or “unchaste” is about to happen but at the same time the word *“grey”* somehow neutralizes the picture of what is coming up.

“A woman just gave birth to a prince today and dressed him in scarlet” is an important line in this verse. *“A woman just gave birth to a prince today”* first seems to take us back to the days when Jesus was born, to what it says in Luke 2:7: *“And she (the Virgin Mary) brought forth her firstborn son”*. In many a place in the Bible this “Son” Jesus is called a *“Prince”*. Centuries before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah already prophesied the coming of this “Son” and called Him a *“Prince”*. Isaiah 9:6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”*. Deception and confusion comes in when the poet goes on to say that the woman dressed this prince *“in scarlet”*. This seems confusing because Luke 2:7 says: *“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn”*. From a different viewpoint also Revelation 12 speaks of a woman who is about to give birth to a male-child (Christ) of whom we are told that he will rule the nations with an iron rod (verse 5).

However, to dress the Son of God in scarlet would in itself be very appropriate because usually only the noble and very rich were dressed in scarlet. Scarlet is a vivid red color, sometimes with an orange tinge, and just like purple was typical of the exuberant lifestyle and clothing of the rich and the wealthy (see also Proverbs 31:21). However, the Son of God, when he came to this earth, chose to be dressed in swaddling clothes, the clothing which was typical of the poor. Therefore, the point the poet wants to make is the contrast between the humble and poor appearance on earth of the Son of God – wrapped in swaddling clothes but with the purpose of making us rich – and the exuberant and wealthy appearance of his opponent, the anti-Christ – who *“dressed in scarlet”* leaves us bereft of our children at the feet of a harlot.

To further understand in what direction the poet may have been thinking when he wrote *“A woman just gave birth to a prince today and dressed him in scarlet”* we have to realize that in the Bible, the title *“Prince”* is not only given to Christ but also given to God’s and Christ’s opponent the devil, the beast; for instance John 12:31 says: *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out”*. When it says that this prince is not dressed in swaddling clothes but *“in scarlet”* it is at this point where deception and ambiguity bursts upon the scene and where we are led to think in a completely different direction. The word *‘scarlet’* combined with the word *‘harlot’* – a word which will follow later on in the verse – makes us no longer think about the *“prince”* of peace Jesus but about

his opponent, the **“prince”** of this world, the realm of the devil, the realm of darkness, the evil, spiritual empire of Babylon described in the Book of Revelation Chapter 17 and 18. However, the lyrics of the studio outtake of “Jokerman” have: **“She’s dressed in scarlet”**, in that case the woman who gave birth to the prince is dressed in scarlet and not the prince. Either way, the combination **“scarlet”** and **“harlot”** resonates in the Book of Revelation Chapter 17:3-5: *‘So the angel took me in the Spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a **scarlet** beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and blasphemies against God were written all over it. The woman wore purple and **scarlet clothing** and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality. A mysterious name was written on her forehead: **“Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World.”** I could see that she was drunk—drunk with the blood of God’s holy people who were witnesses for Jesus. I stared at her in complete amazement’.*

The same word combination **“scarlet”** and **“harlot”** comes back in Dylan’s song “Soon after Midnight” from the album “Tempest” where Dylan writes: *“Charlotte is a harlot, she dresses in scarlet”*.

We conclude that the **“Prince”** here represents the beast, the devil, the spiritually evil empire of Babylon and that this prince of darkness is out there to oppose the coming of the Kingdom of God. As outlined in the Book of Revelation, the devil does this in a variety of ways. The first weapon the devil, the beast, the dragon, deploys is temptation and deception through false prophecy. This weapon looks peaceful but does more harm than brutal force because it is ideological warfare. Therefore, when it says: **“He’ll put the priest in his pocket”** this expression may be a metaphorical expression for the attempts of the devil – **the prince of darkness** - to wipe out the influence of his opponent **“the prince of peace”** through false prophecy, through false priests and prophets. We read of this in Revelation 16:13, 14: *“And I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs leap from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. They are demonic spirits who work miracles and go out to all the rulers of the world to gather them for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God the Almighty (NLT)”*. **“He’ll put the priest in his pocket”** means that devil is in full command of those false priests and prophets, he has them in his pocket, to deceive not only individual believers but also to deceive whole nations and stir them up into ideological and spiritual warfare against the kingdom of the prince of peace.

The second weapon this prince of evil deploys is brutal force; this is expressed by the words: **“He’ll put the blade to the heat”**. A hot blade is said to be an edged weapon that heats up, adding the thermal energy of its temperature to the kinetic energy of its blow to achieve extreme cutting power. Think of a flaming sword, in our imagination we see – as Dylan would write later on in his song ‘Shooting Star’- *‘the last fire truck from hell rolling by’* –the devil heating up his sword by taking fire from the last fire truck to destroy as much and as many as he possibly can, in a sort of scorched earth policy (Rev. 13:13). In Revelation 11:7 we read that the beast managed to kill the last two witnesses, these were the last two prophets or priests left, fully realizing Dylan’s metaphorical words: **“He’ll put the priest in his**

pocket and put the blade to the heat”.

For young children, to lose their father is a tragedy, but it is even a greater tragedy for young children to lose their mother and be left wandering in the streets ***“motherless”***. That is exactly what this prince of evil, dressed in scarlet, has been doing for so long. He has been stirring up all those nations to make war, culminating in the final battle of Armageddon (Rev. 15:16). Throughout the centuries these wars have caused a continuous stream of blood shedding, devastation, destruction, destitution and poverty. These wars literally leave many children out on the streets of big Babylon, orphans, fatherless and ***“motherless”***. But what does this prince of evil do? Help those ***“motherless”*** and helpless children? On the contrary: ***“He takes the motherless children off the street and places them at the feet of a harlot”***. He abuses those motherless children for his own purpose in a morbid cycle of sexual abuse, whereby victims become perpetrators and end up in prostitution at the feet of harlots. In a metaphorical way those ***“motherless”*** children represent people without any direction, stability or proper guidance in their lives. These people make no choices in their lives just like Dylan wrote in “Man in the long black coat”: *‘But people don't live or die, people just float’*. In an ideological way they become easy victims to the beast who places them at the feet of ***“a harlot”***, so that they become servants of this harlot. The word ***“harlot”*** is metaphorically used in Revelation 17 to represent the antagonistic spiritual empire of Babylon. The word “Babylon” is in itself a metaphor for all the big evil powers in this world who try to oppose the coming of the kingdom of God (Rev. 17:5).

The studio outtake of Jokerman has: ***“He'll turn priests into pimps and make all men bark, take a woman that could have been Joan of Arc and turn her into a harlot”***. This verse line basically expresses the same idea. A pimp is someone who procures customers for whores or arranges sexual partners for others. When it says: ***“He'll turn priests into pimps”*** this may not be meant literally but is a metaphor for the continuous efforts of the devil, through false prophets, to deceive entire nations through erroneous doctrines, theologies and ideologies into becoming advocates and servants of ideologically evil empires and having those nations commit idolatry in a spiritual way. ***“Take a woman that could have been Joan of Arc and turn her into a harlot”*** refers to the kind of woman who resembles Joan of Arc. Joan of Arc – ca. 1412-1431 – was nicknamed “The maid of Orléans” and is regarded as a French folk heroine and a Roman Catholic Saint. At the time she saw it as her mission to support Charles VII in his attempts to recover France from English domination. She was eventually captured by the British and put on trial. She was convicted to death on charges of heresy and was burned at the stake when she was about 19 years old. The poet may have intended to say that the deceptive power of the prince of evil is so great that he successfully turns people who were meant to be saints into the opposite, into becoming harlots.

Having said all this, it is now finally time to confront the Jokerman with the dreadful consequences of all this. Therefore the words: ***“Oh, Jokerman, you know what he wants, Oh, Jokerman, you don't show any response”*** may have been intended to draw some sort of a conclusion. The Jokerman is now put on the carpet. It seems as if he now says to the Jokerman: ‘oh come on Jokerman, stop mocking and joking, you know exactly what this

prince of evil, the devil, the beast is up to! You know exactly **“what he wants”**. All this prince wants is evil; in fact this prince is the incorporation of all evil. His purpose is total destruction of this world through a scorched earth policy. As the end of times approaches, he does his utmost – **he puts the blade to the heat** - to inflict as much pain and destruction and agony as he possibly can. Like it says in Rev. 12:12: *‘Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short’*. So Jokerman, although **“You don’t show any response”**, you *must* respond now, you cannot have your cards in your sleeve any longer, you must put them on the table. You cannot play the joker card any longer to hide your real intentions. When you see all those innocent motherless children being abused you Jokerman must stop *‘laughing in the face of what sorrow brings’*. You Jokerman, you’ve said all along that *‘there must be somewhere out of this’* but this time you will not get away with this. Although **“you don’t show any response”** I must ask you again *“which side are you on?”* You cannot delay your response forever. The poet of *“Changing of the Guards”* was once on the same cross roads and concluded the following: *‘Eden is burning, either brace yourself for elimination, or else your hearts must have the courage for the changing of the guards’*.