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### *Job's Gethsemane: tradition and imagination in William Blake's illustrations for the book of job*

Penelope Minney

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# **'Job's Gethsemane: tradition and imagination in William Blake's Illustrations for the Book of Job'**

**by Penelope Minney**

**Thesis for M. Litt., University of Durham**

**1997**

Blake created two versions of his *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, and it is now agreed that about twenty years separates his first watercolour series and the final engraved set of plates. The first chapter is biographical and technical: it establishes that the Butts series of water-colours was the product of the tumultuous and creative years 1805-10, following a time when Blake experienced a strong sense of vision and Christian regeneration; whereas the engraved set was produced 1821-1826, at the end of his life. It also reviews all Blake's treatments of the Job theme. The friends-turned-accusers seem to have been a central pre-occupation.

Blake's illustrations contain important elements which are not found in the Old Testament text. I have followed Bo Lindberg's principle that explanation should be sought in the artistic tradition, and in the work itself. The second chapter concentrates on the tradition available to Blake, following and supplementing Lindberg's examination of the influence of the apocryphal *Testament of Job*, and of the artistic tradition of seeing Job as *alter Christus* and as Christian. Chapters three to five, interpreting Blake's imaginative use of this material, are new both in focussing on the Butts set, and in exploring the importance to Blake of St. Teresa, Fenélon, Mme. Guyon, Hervey and other people of prayer. Also discussed are Joseph Hallett's radical biblical commentary, of which Blake owned a copy, variant proofs discovered by Robert Essick of the first and last engraved plates, and the thirteenth century Job wall-paintings discovered in 1800 in St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster.

Blake's *Job* was unique in the corpus of his work. Previous studies have followed Wicksteed in concentrating on the engraved set, and no one has explored the implications of the earlier dating now agreed for the watercolour series. The thesis is essentially concerned with Blake's Christocentric theme, and Job's inner journey of prayer, in these illustrations. Conclusions drawn differ substantially from Wicksteed's.

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**Job's Gethsemane: Tradition and Imagination in  
William Blake's Illustrations for the Book of Job**

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**Departments of Theology and English**

**1997**



- 5 MAR 1998

### **Acknowledgements**

Above all I want to express my gratitude to my two supervisors, Mr. David Fuller of the Department of English, and Professor David Brown of the Department of Theology, for the stimulus of working under them, and for all the valuable questions asked and advice contributed. I am also most grateful to Professor J. R. Watson for his supervision during my first year, and ongoing advice and encouragement, and to Professor G. E. Bentley, Jr., who read the manuscript at an early stage with a critical eye, and gave me a great deal of encouragement.

I also want to express my gratitude to the staff of Durham University Library for all their help, and in particular to the Archivist, Mr. Roger Norris, and to Paul Scott at Prontaprint, for his skill and care in reproducing the colour illustrations from the 1987 facsimile edition of the *Illustrations*. I am grateful also to the staff of the Bodleian and Ashmolean Libraries in Oxford, and of Westminster City Library.

Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my husband, who has been an ongoing source of encouragement and support, and my son Hugo, for imaginative help to a parent educationally subnormal as regards computer technology. My thanks also to Dr. Ayaka Wada, fellow post-graduate student of Blake, to Dr. Gillian Boughton and Dr. Martin Peacock, for proof-reading and advice with the typescript, and to Dr. Marion Way, who made me welcome for so many months, and provided books, stimulus, and encouragement.

## **Job's Gethsemane: Tradition and Imagination in William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job***

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## Notes on Text and Abbreviations

1. All quotations from Blake are taken from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, newly revised edition, edited by David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom. New York: Doubleday, 1988. First published in 1965 under the title: *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Quotations are identified by the title of the poem, followed by plate and line number, and page number in Erdman, thus: *Jerusalem* 62: 18-21, E 213 (line numbers are shown only where specified in Erdman).

Where Blake's designs are discussed, the number of the design is specified as in Martin Butlin's *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, thus : Butlin 524 (Butlin's commentary is referred to thus: Butlin [text] 524).

2. The following are frequently cited references:

- BB            G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- BBS          G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books Supplement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- BIQ          *Blake: an Illustrated Quarterly*, ed. Morris Eaves and Morton D. Paley, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico (*Blake Newsletter* 1967-77).
- Bindman (1987) *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job*, 2 vols., ed. David Bindman, and others. London: William Blake Trust, 1987.
- Bindman (1978) *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake*. Ed. David Bindman and Deidre Toomey. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.
- BR            G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- BRS          G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records Supplement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Butlin        Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Damon        S. Foster Damon, *Blake's Job: William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job*. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1966.

- E            *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, edited by David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom. New York, Anchor Press, new, revised edn., 1988.
- Gilchrist    Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake, "Pictor ignotus."* With selections from his poems and other writings. 2 vols. London and Cambridge: Macmillan, 1863. All quotations are from Volume 1.
- Lindberg    *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job*, Acta Academiae Aboensis, ser. A Humaniora. Vol. 46. Åbo: Åbo Academi, 1973.
- Raine        Kathleen Raine, *The Human Face of God: William Blake and the Book of Job*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1982.
- Wicksteed    Joseph Wicksteed, *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job*. London: J. M. Dent, 1924 (revised and enlarged edn. of *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (London: 1910).
- Wright        Andrew Wright, *Blake's Job: a Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

3. In the footnotes I have given full details where a work is cited for the first time. Subsequent references are abbreviated to author, and date if more than one work by the author are cited.

## List of Illustrations

I have followed Lindberg's dating scheme except where stated, for reasons given in the discussion in Chapter 1, Section (iv). The four Butts *Job* watercolours reproduced in colour are from the facsimiles in *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job*, ed. David Bindman (London: William Blake Trust, 1987), the black and white reproductions are from Martin Butlin, *The paintings and Drawings of William Blake*. 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

1. *Job and his family*. c. 1784-8, Cincinnati Art Museum.
2. 'Urizen' Plate 1, Title-page (Butlin 378), c. 1795. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia.
3. *Sketch of Job* (Butlin [text] 201:20), probably a first study for his engraving *Job* of August 1793, in Blake's *Notebook* in the British Museum.
4. *Job, his Wife, and his Friends* (Butlin 199), pen, ink, and wash, 1793, Tate Gallery, London (Butlin dates this c.1785).
5. *Study for Job's wife* (reverse of Butlin 199), c.1793.
6. *Job* (Bindman 6), first state of engraving, August 1793 (Bindman dates to c.1788). Geoffrey Keynes Collection.
7. *Job* (Bindman 144), second state of same engraving, some time after August 1793, British Museum, and Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
8. *Elohim Creating Adam* (Butlin 388), colour print finished in pen and water-colour, 1795, Tate Gallery.
9. *The Good and Evil Angels struggling for possession of a Child* (Butlin 400), colour print finished in pen and watercolour, 1795, Tate Gallery.
- 10.i. *The Good Samaritan, with a dubious potion. Night Thoughts* 68 (II.35) c.1795-7.  
ii. *Jesus, the Creator of Man. Night Thoughts* 529 (IX.111) c.1795-7.  
Both in British Museum
11. *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting their Crowns before the Divine Throne* (Butlin 577), pencil and water-colour, c. 1803-5, Tate Gallery.
12. *Jacob's Dream* (Butlin 532), pen and water-colour, c. 1805, British Museum.
13. *The Angel of the Divine Presence clothing Adam and Eve in Coats of Skin* (Butlin 513), 1803, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
14. *The Hymn of Christ and his Apostles* (Butlin 546), c.1805, private collection, USA.
15. *Christ as creator of man, Jerusalem*, Plate 35. Copy A. Between 1804 and 1820 (paper watermarked 1818-19-20), British Museum.
16. Butts *Job* Series: (Butlin [text] 550), pen and watercolour, c. 1805, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.
17. *Laocoön*, c. 1820-1822, Keynes Collection, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
18. Proof states of Plates I and XXI with the variant readings in lower margin. (Robert Essick, *BIQ* XIX (3), winter 1985-6, pp. 96-102):  
i. Plate I, 'Prayer to God is the Study of Imaginative Art'.  
ii. Plate XXI, 'Praise to God is the Exercise of Imaginative Art'.
19. *Job* engravings, finished state, March 1826, British Museum.
20. F. H. van Hove, *The Story of Job*, from *The History of ye Old and New Testament*, engraving, 1621, British Museum.

21. Anon., *Satan Burning the Flocks of Job*, miniature, c. 1140, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
22. Anon., *Job as "Armenvater"*. From a German XVII cent. Rebus-Bible, British Museum:
  - 22 a. Full page.
  - 22 b. Detail top right shown by explanatory sketch.
  - 22 c. Detail lower left.
  - 22 d. Explanatory sketch from detail lower left.
23. Hans Weiditz, *Von der kretze* ('with Job on the dunghill'), woodcut from *Petrarcha Trostspeigel*, 1532, British Museum.
24. Albrecht Dürer, *Job and his Wife* (the *Jabach* altar), oil on panel, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt a/M.
25. Tobias Stimmer, *Job*, woodcut from a Bible printed in Strassburg, 1621, British Museum.
26. Anon., woodcut, from H. von Gersdorf, *Feldtbuch der Wundertsney*, Strassburg, 1540.
27. Jost Amman, *Job*, woodcut from *Sacra Biblia*, Frankfurt a/M, 1571. British Museum.
28. Le Petit Bernard, *Job*, woodcut from *Quadrins historiques de la Bible*, Lyons, 1555, British Museum.
29. Edward Ryland, *Job*, engraving from *An Abridgement of Scripture*, 1765, after Grignon, British Museum.
30. Augustin Hirschfogel, *Job on the Dunghill and Christ Carrying the Cross*, etching, 1549, from *Vorredt ... der Concordantzen alt und neue Testaments*.
31. Nicolaus Vissner, after Matthaus Merian, *Job on the Dunghill* (Merian's original engraving of 1670 lacks the reference to James 5:11).
32. Anon., *Job with the Cross and James 5:11*, engraving from a German Rebus-Bible, British Museum Print Room, 160 a 1.
33. James Barry, *Job*, etching, 1777, British Museum.
34. George Richmond, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, tempera on panel, 1828, Tate Gallery.
35. Anon., after J. U. Kraus, *The story of Job*. Engraving from a Bible printed in Oxford 1728. British Museum.
36. Marcus Aurelius column, *Jupiter Pluvialis*, Scene XVI, Rome, 176-193 AD.

1. *Job and his family*. c. 1784-8, Cincinnati Art Museum.
20. F. H. van Hove, *The Story of Job*
19. Title-page, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1826, British Museum.
- Butts Set. No. 11. *Job's Evil Dreams*, 1805-6, New York.
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19. Title-page, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1826, British Museum.
- Butts Set. No. 11. *Job's Evil Dreams*, 1805-6, New York.

## **Job's Gethsemane: Tradition and Imagination in William Blake's Illustrations for the Book of Job.**

### **Introduction**

When I first came on William Blake's water-colour series illustrating the Book of Job I was moved by them in a way that is difficult to put into words. I knew something of the way Blake's *Job* was usually interpreted, as showing one man's passage from self-righteousness to wisdom and humility. But these twenty-one water-colours do not point a simple contrast between Law and Gospel, a simple progress from self-righteousness and death to humility and new life: their effect is to transcend time and space altogether, showing how Job, already at the outset a man of prayer, is deepened by suffering, so that he comes at last not just to vision but to union with God in Christ. At the same time there is a passage from isolation, through death (or something very near it), to restoration and leadership. Blake's Job in this set made for Thomas Butts is shown as a man open to God and able to grow, in a way no other artist I know has succeeded in depicting, a man sometimes of strength, sometimes of weakness and vulnerability, but never self-righteous and dead.

Since 1970 there have been four book-length studies on William Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* - why yet another? There is room for a new study firstly because in Blake studies during the last twenty-five years there has been an important shift in emphasis, and there is a new respect for Blake as a student of the Bible. Blake's use of the Bible has been explored by Michael Tolley, in 'William Blake's Use of the Bible',<sup>1</sup> his use of the Bible in his early prophetic books by Leslie Tannenbaum, *Biblical*

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1974.

*Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies*;<sup>2</sup> and his knowledge of Hebrew has been explored in its eighteenth century context by Sheila Spector.<sup>3</sup> These studies suggest that we should expect the images of Blake's *Job* to be theologically focused, the outcome of a deep study of the Bible.

Secondly, there has been a shift towards studying Blake's artistic output in its historical context. The findings of the art historians, in particular the pioneering book by Bo Lindberg,<sup>4</sup> are important for revealing sources for Blake's apparent idiosyncrasies in his *Job* in the mainstream tradition of Christian art. The art-historical approach has brought about three important advances in the study of Blake's *Job*. There is now a realistic emphasis on Blake as *artisan*, as a skilled craftsman doing a dirty and monotonous and not well remunerated job, and of course expected to work within a well-established tradition. This tradition within which Blake was expected to work, this language of Christian art with its 'pathos formulae', has been explored in relation to Blake's *Job* in detail by Bo Lindberg, and the non-biblical elements (formerly taken to be all Blake's invention, and to reveal some peculiarly Blakean system, if only we can unravel the elaborate hidden clues) have been shown by Lindberg to be almost all Christo-centric, and part of the mainstream European tradition of interpreting the Book of Job. Secondly, more attention has been given to Blake's techniques, and it is from this that it has been possible to establish with a considerable degree of certainty the idea first suggested by Lindberg, that a period of fifteen to twenty years separates the Butts series of water-colour *Illustrations to the Book of Job* from the engraved series made for John Linnell in the 1820s. This would contradict Alexander Gilchrist's assumption that they

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<sup>2</sup> Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

<sup>3</sup>'Blake as an Eighteenth Century Hebraist', in *Blake and His Bibles*, ed. David V. Erdman (Locust Hill Literary Studies No. 1. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1990), pp. 179-230.

<sup>4</sup> Bo Lindberg, *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job*, Acta Academiae Aboensis, Ser. A Humaniora, vol. 46 (Åbo: Åbo Academi, 1973).

were created at about the same time as the engraved set,<sup>5</sup> and that they belong to the time when Blake was creating his illustrations to Blair's *Grave*, and his great prophetic books, *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*. This means that the original water-colour set, created somewhere between 1805 and 1810, is of prime importance, and needs to be studied for itself, and also considered in the light of Blake's artistic and literary output of the period. Thirdly, Robert Essick in his contribution to the 1987 facsimile edition describes the discovery of new proof-stage pulls of the first and last plates which hint at the need for a reappraisal of Blake's inscription under the first plate, 'The Letter Killeth/ The Spirit giveth Life.'<sup>6</sup>

Blake is always a very *narrative* artist, that is, he has a preference for rushing wind, billowing cloud, shafts of light, and his figures are either engaged in strenuous effort, or on the point of setting off somewhere difficult; and when they are not - for example when they are asleep, or dead - there is always a distraught mourning figure. Clearly the idea of a pictorial epic narrative fascinated him. His treatment of the Book of Job has its own epic unity, rather than simply highlighting dramatic points in the narrative. It also contains a number of non-Biblical elements, and it is this narrative element in his graphic work which makes it such a quarry for theological interpretation.

The purpose of this thesis is to bring a biblical and theological viewpoint to bear on the findings of the art historians. It will concentrate primarily on the Butts set of water-colours, which were created between 1805 and 1810, and will study the series in the context of Blake's work at that very productive period, before approaching the engraved version which he created in the 1820s, with its biblical quotations and marginal designs. It will argue that the usual view that Blake's Job in the first two illustrations is legalistic

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<sup>5</sup> Alexander Gilchrist, *The Life of William Blake, 'Pictor Ignotus'*. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1863), i, pp. 282-3.

<sup>6</sup> Originally published by Robert Essick, as 'Some Unrecorded Proofs and their Inscriptions', *Blake: an Illustrated Quarterly*, XIX, no.3, winter 1985-6, pp. 96-102.

and obsessed with ritual<sup>7</sup> is by no means essential to the meaning of the whole, and is in fact hard to reconcile with the natural visual impact of the first two illustrations in the Butts series. Blake's *Job* is by no means a simple visual narrative depicting one man's passage out of the Error of self-righteousness into Enlightenment. The progress is of a different kind: Job by his inner journey of suffering and prayer is united with God, and thus transformed and liberated.

The water-colour set for Thomas Butts deserves more than to be treated as of subsidiary interest to the engraved series, as has been the case in all the book-length studies. The early date established by art-historians for this Butts set, separating it from the engraved set by almost twenty years, makes it all the more imperative to consider it as a work of art complete in itself. Every commentator this century has followed Joseph Wicksteed's approach<sup>8</sup> in concentrating mainly on the engraved set, and has tackled the question of interpretation *via* the biblical quotations which accompany every design, instead of allowing priority to the visual impact of the designs. Biblical quotations are open to multifarious interpretations, and it is important to surrender oneself to the visual image, without verbal preconceptions, using *visual* perspectives derived both from Blake's sources and from other related images in contemporaneous work by Blake himself. This study therefore insists on approaching *via* the water-colour originals, and on seeing them in the context of Blake's work c. 1806-10.

## Outline

I. The thesis starts with Blake's inner life, his changing outlook, in order to provide a context for a survey of his treatment of the Job theme. His central preoccupations

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<sup>7</sup> For example Lindberg in his introduction to the plate by plate commentary for the 1987 David Bindman edition suggests that Blake's Job at the outset was 'sanctimonious, unforgiving, politely cruel; neurotically striving for moral perfection in order to save himself from divine retribution; uncreative, docile, and cowardly.' Bindman (1987) (text volume), p. 1 of 'The meaning of Blake's Job'.

<sup>8</sup> *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (London: 1910, revised and enlarged edition, London: J. M. Dent, 1924).

seem to have been Job's sufferings at the hands of his accusers, the issue of forgiveness, and the transcending of man's mortality. Thus his five variants of *Job and his Comforters* with increasing dramatic impact show Job in isolation, the object of mockery and accusation. He keeps returning to the Job theme: the size-colour painting 'Satan smiting Job' was one of a set of three on Suffering, and there is also a set of three Job drawings among his sketches for *The Gates of Paradise*. There followed the period when Blake by his illustrations was 'christianising' Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, and then made revisions to *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* which intensified an already existing Christian *motif*. Then came the set of twenty water-colours on the Book of Job for Thomas Butts. It is accepted now by all leading Blake scholars that these were certainly painted before 1810, perhaps as early as 1805. *Milton* and *Jerusalem* were also being created at this time, and *Jerusalem* especially contains a large number of parallels with Blake's *Job*, and, like *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, it is threaded through with Blake's strong sense of a religious calling, and of Christ's redemptive act. The engraved series, created by Blake towards the end of his life at the suggestion of his friend John Linnell, is also set in the context of Blake's inner life in so far as that can be known, and the variant proofs discovered by Robert Essick are described. The aim of this chapter is to give the factual background, linking Blake's treatment of the Job theme, and in particular the Butts set of water-colours, to his life and other writings. It is clear from this that Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, far from being the work of his old age, belongs essentially to the turbulent and highly creative period after he left Felpham when he was working on all three of his major later prophetic books, a period when he was empowered by a strong sense of Christian regeneration and vision.

II. There are elements in Blake's treatment that are not to be found in the Old Testament text. It is shown that already in inter-testamental times the Book of Job was being rewritten, re-interpreted, and this interpretative process continued in successive ages. Even before Gregory the Great's famous *Morals on the Book of Job* there was a

tradition of seeing the patriarch both as *alter Christus* and as a Christian, and this was strongly reflected in medieval illustrations to the Book of Job. The semi-mystical, apocryphal *Testament of Job*, well known in the East, was particularly influential on the artistic tradition, and in it too Job is seen as a Christ-like figure. There are clear signs of its influence in the six thirteenth-century *al secco*s depicting Job's story. These were dramatically discovered in 1800 in the chapel of St. Stephen's, Westminster, and Blake would have known them. It is argued that almost all the non-biblical elements in Blake's *Job* belong to the great European tradition of Christian religious art, and are not peculiarly Blakean. The presence of Druid cromlechs in the background of several of the illustrations is also based on a tradition. The recent discovery that Blake owned a copy of Joseph Hallett's three-volume *A Free and Impartial Study of the Holy Scriptures*<sup>9</sup> illuminates Blake's attitude to Scripture: Hallett's commentary is radical, yet firmly committed to the importance of revelation and the centrality of Christ.

**III.** This chapter focuses on the Butts set, looking at Blake's use of sun, moon and stars, of book and scroll, of cromlech, church and cross, and his use of 'pathos formulae', in particular the gesture of outstretched arms, and the theological meanings of this. Little has been written about his understanding and practice of the life of prayer as intercourse with God, and of what it means to be broken and remade by God.

**IV.** The fourth chapter is the most innovative and speculative. It concentrates on the central figure in the Butts set, and his descent into darkness and return. One of the few clues as to the importance of the life of the spirit, of 'prayer' in a wide sense, is his list in *Jerusalem* of five names, all of them people of prayer, and of active holiness in the world: Teresa, Fénelon, Mme. Guyon, Whitefield, and Hervey (*Jerusalem* 72:51-2); in *Milton* he names Whitefield again, with Wesley. Of the five named in *Jerusalem*, the earliest, St. Teresa of Avila, is the most important and interesting, and I have therefore

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<sup>9</sup> London: J. Noon, 1729-36.

treated her to more space. Her influence on Fénelon and Mme. Guyon is obvious, but she was also an important and lasting influence on John Wesley and the others. Samuel Palmer testifies to Blake's intense interest in her writings.

It is argued here that Blake presents Job as a man of prayer throughout the series. There are qualities of gentleness and lyrical beauty in the colouring of the first two illustrations, of attentiveness and humility in Job as we first meet him with his family gathered round him, which do not fit the usual interpretation, based only on the engraved set, that Job at the outset was unlikeable and self-righteous, obsessed with his performance of the correct rituals. Through his sufferings he becomes a Wounded Healer. David Bindman made the suggestion that one of Blake's preoccupations in the *Job* series was the theme of how pre-Christian man (and this includes all who have not had the Gospel preached to them) can achieve redemption through Vision. Vision implies a depth of prayer, however, and whereas there are now extensive studies of Blake's use of the Bible, his treatment of Prayer is still uncharted territory.

V. The fifth chapter turns to the engraved set, with its additional marginal designs and biblical quotations, many of them from the New Testament, unique as an original engraved series, and with strong links with earlier Christian engravers. There is found to be consistency, in spite of the gap of almost twenty years between the two versions. It is argued that Blake's intention in the first two plates of the series has been misunderstood, through excessive emphasis on certain of the biblical quotations accompanying the first two plates, which also has repercussions on the interpretation of the rest of the series. The variant proofs for the first and last plates discovered by Robert Essick link this set of engravings with what Blake wrote in his *Laocoön* about the intimate connection between prayer and art. For Blake himself the medium is the message: his art is his prayer. Wicksteed's perception that Blake depicted a progression from Error to Enlightenment was to some extent right, for Job was deepened and strengthened by his suffering. But whereas Wicksteed and others considered Blake's Job was guilty of the

sin of pride, the author of the biblical Book of Job made it clear that Job's sufferings were arbitrary. I strongly contest the view that Blake's Job at the outset was intended to be self-righteous, and argue that it is important not to take a purely individualistic view of Blake's Job. Secondly, from the outset, Job is a man of prayer. At the beginning of the series he and his family are a tiny 'faithful remnant' in an oppressive moralistic and materialistic culture. Through his sufferings and his prayer he becomes a mediator for his fellow-men, and a symbol for others of the creativity afforded by Resurrection life. Blake's *Job* is unique in the corpus of his work.

## Critical History

### a) Editions of the *Illustrations*.

In England, *Illustrations of the Book of Job* was first published in 1826, and at first sold slowly. This century it was first brought to the notice of the public by J. M. Dent's facsimiles of the engravings, the individual plates of which were fine enough to be sold separately, and by Laurence Binyon's *William Blake: Vol. 1, Illustrations of the Book of Job* (London: Dutton and Co., 1906), which also reproduced only the engraved set, but has a useful commentary. A facsimile edition of the Butts set of Job water-colours was published by Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes in 1935; in 1937 Philip Hofer published *Illustrations of the Book of Job, reproduced from the original 'New Zealand' set, made about 1823-4, in possession of Philip Hofer* (London: Dutton and Co, 1937).

### b) Studies of Blake's *Illustrations*.

The first book-length study was published in the United States, by Charles Eliot Norton, and has useful insights.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Wicksteed's *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job*,

<sup>10</sup> *William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job* (Boston: James Osgood, 1875).

published in 1910, began a new era in criticism of Blake's *Illustrations*. Wicksteed, writing at a time when neither English art nor English literature were much studied at English universities, worked with close attention to detail and boundless curiosity. Ever since this pioneering study was published, the usual approach has been to interpret them by reference to Blake's major prophetic books, endeavouring to explain all that seems non-biblical in them as aspects of Blake's personal mythology, his 'system'.<sup>11</sup> This has been the basis for all twentieth-century discussions of Blake's *Job*. But Wicksteed did not have access to the Butts water-colours, which were lying unpublished in the archives of the Pierpont Morgan library in New York, and he treats the engraved series as the only version of importance. From a close examination of the engravings and accompanying Biblical texts, he argued that though Blake preserved the narrative line of the original, his work is a separate creation, a kind of visual short epic. He presupposed that all that was unbiblical was part of a peculiarly Blakean system, to be unravelled by the discerning student, interpreting Blake by Blake.

Wicksteed emphasised the antiphonal structure, with the later plates mirroring the earlier, and counterbalancing them. This realisation that the first and last plates are visually juxtaposed made it possible for him to demonstrate the dialectic movement, grouped round Plate XI, the lowest point in the series, and the darkest. His understanding of the series as a dynamic, composite whole opened up whole fields in the understanding of Blake's aims. But his study of the hidden symbolism of left and right, and his unravelling of Blake's intention, was in order to show Job at the outset as a man already fallen, because obsessed with law and ritual. Individual aspects of Wicksteed's reading of Blake's symbolism have been questioned, but his approach had a strong appeal, and it was followed by such eminent Blake scholars as S. Foster Damon,

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<sup>11</sup> In defence of his approach Wicksteed cited Blake's much-quoted line from *Jerusalem*, 'I must Create a System, or else be enslav'd by another Man's' (*Jerusalem* 10:20 E 153). The Book of Job, wrote Wicksteed, leaves the problem of Evil unsolved, and Blake feels he has to solve it, by creating his own system (pp. 65-6).

Mona Wilson, Milton O. Percival, Sir Geoffrey Keynes, and well-known writers such as Kathleen Raine. Lindberg was ambivalent, appreciating many of his insights but disagreeing with his approach. He, by contrast, found a wealth of sources for the unbiblical elements within the mainstream tradition of Christian art.

Northrop Frye's article, 'Blake's Reading of Job' in *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*,<sup>12</sup> was original in that it did not follow Wicksteed's assumption that Blake distorted the Book of Job in order to make it a vehicle of his own system. Before approaching Blake's illustrations Frye presented a careful analysis of the biblical book. His central argument was that Blake saw the Book of Job in its literary context, i.e. he saw its function in the Christian Bible as a whole, as a different and poetic version of the Creation story, and that his *Illustrations* are of great value for showing us Blake exercising positive critical analysis as regards religion. Frye also broke new ground in interpreting Blake's treatment anthropologically, as the myth of the hero's descent to death which brings about the rebirth of the community. Frye rewrote this essay, keeping the same title, for his collection *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society*, expounding more clearly what he saw as Blake's interpretation of the Book of Job as a retelling of the Creation story.<sup>13</sup>

The other book-length study of Blake's *Illustrations* from this period is S. Foster Damon's *Blake's Job*,<sup>14</sup> based on his excellent early work, *William Blake, his Philosophy and Symbols*.<sup>15</sup> Damon sees the title-page design as depicting the Current of Creation. He considered that the design on the title-page, which he identifies as the Seven Eyes of God, is the key to the whole work. This title-plate was only created for

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<sup>12</sup> edited by Alvin M. Rosenfeld (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1966), pp. 221-234.

<sup>13</sup> Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

<sup>14</sup> Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1966.

<sup>15</sup> London: Dawsons, 1924.

the engraved set, however, and it is now known to have been executed as much as twenty years after the Butts set, whereas Damon assumed that the original water-colour set for Thomas Butts and the final engravings with title page and Biblical texts were created within a comparatively short time in the 1820s. Unfortunately, to use the Seven Eyes of God as a key to the twenty-one illustrations requires such elaborate interpretative inventiveness that we tend to lose sight of Blake's work. Andrew Wright, *Blake's Job: a Commentary*, reproduces the engraved set in fine detail, and has useful insights.<sup>16</sup>

I owe a debt of gratitude particularly to Bo Lindberg, who in 1973 produced his pioneering work on Blake's *Job* from the point of view of an art historian. Lindberg was also one of the first to suggest a much earlier dating for the Butts set of water-colours, putting them at the time when Blake was creating the designs for Blair's *Grave*, and his *Vala, Milton, and Jerusalem*. Like Wicksteed, he looked extremely carefully at the details of the designs and pointed out the numerous ways in which Blake's version differed from the Biblical version; unlike Wicksteed, he looked for explanations in Blake's artistic sources, in the traditional language of Christian art, a pictorial language which can be read by anyone familiar with the history of European religious art. He investigated the works of other artists which Blake would have known, traditions about Job different from the Biblical version, and also eighteenth century commentary. His conclusion is that, apart from the Druid cromlechs, every strange symbol can be identified as belonging to 'the traditional repertoire of Job and scripture illustration, and of biblical exegesis.'<sup>17</sup>

Bo Lindberg's study of the patristic and medieval interpretative background to this tradition is equally important and innovative. Exploring within the orthodox tradition

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<sup>16</sup> Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

<sup>17</sup> Lindberg, p. 125.

of scriptural illustration and exegesis, Lindberg has found sources for every non-Biblical element. 'Blake is established as a traditionalist painter, by which I mean to say he is a highly original one - because commonplace artists always try to be non-traditional and modern, now as in Blake's day.'<sup>18</sup>

The most recent work on Blake's *Illustrations* to follow the Wicksteed approach is Kathleen Raine's *The Human Face of God: William Blake and the Book of Job*.<sup>19</sup> Dedicated 'to those who seek spiritual knowledge', her work was a vast compendium of supposed Gnostic and Neoplatonic sources for Blake's ideas, but though in her introduction to her two-volume *Blake and Tradition* <sup>20</sup> she acknowledged the strength of Blake's mainstream Christian roots and deep knowledge of the Bible, in practice she found the Jewish Kabbalah and Neoplatonism much stronger influences, together with Immanuel Swedenborg. Kathleen Raine's book on Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job* had many strengths, but she had a tendency to ignore the findings of scholars that are inconvenient, for example the work of Bo Lindberg and other art historians, since she seems to find art that is not esoteric does not much interest her. Most other books on Blake published in the 1980s and 1990s have adopted a different approach, and agree that if the *Illustrations* were conceived and designed as early as 1805, and certainly before 1810, they belong to a period when Blake experienced a great sense of Christian renewal.

Most important of all has been David Bindman's edition for the William Blake Trust of a facsimile edition of the *Job*, reproducing all the coloured versions, the engraved version, and including several important critical essays.<sup>21</sup> This Tate Gallery facsimile

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> London: Thames and Hudson, 1982.

<sup>20</sup> Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

edition is of such value because it makes readily available the whole range of texts of Blake's *Job*. In it David Bindman sets out the technical considerations concerning the re-dating of the *Job* water-colours for Thomas Butts, and suggests new approaches to the series, and Robert Essick contributes an essay cataloguing all the stages in the development of the engraved series. Perhaps most important of all, for the first time this Butts water-colour series, published in 1935 in a limited facsimile edition by Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes from the originals in the Pierpont library in New York, is made more widely accessible in the glory of Blake's colours, so that the better-known engraved version can be viewed in conjunction with it.

David Bindman here reflects a new mood of respect for Blake's *Illustrations* as the work of someone whose Christian faith and personal experience of Christ was of central importance to him (Bindman (1987), pp. 25-33). In this facsimile edition of 1987, Bo Lindberg's interpretation of the individual plates gives useful allusions to the various views of scholars, but his own interpretation, as given in the introductory pages to 'The Meaning of Blake's *Job*: a plate by plate commentary', does not differ substantially from Wicksteed's, as he writes himself.<sup>22</sup> He has also contributed a discussion of the coloured tracings known as the New Zealand set, in which he concluded that Blake had little or no direct hand in them, an opinion held now by most scholars, though Geoffrey Keynes to the end of his life continued to believe they were from Blake's own hand.

### **c) Blake, Art, and Religion**

Other art-historians besides Bo Lindberg had charted Blake's borrowings from artistic tradition. Anthony Blunt suggested the artistic origin of the gesture of the outspread

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<sup>21</sup> *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job, the engravings and related material, with essays, catalogue of printings, commentary on the plates, and documentary record*, 2 vols., ed. David Bindman, Barbara Bryant, Robert Essick, Geoffrey Keynes, and Bo Lindberg (London: William Blake Trust, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Compare the passage from Lindberg (1987) quoted in note 7 on p. xii.

arms, so ubiquitous in Blake's work.<sup>23</sup> C. H. Collins Baker produced another pioneering study of Blake as an artist,<sup>24</sup> but neither Collins Baker nor Blunt suggested there might be essential reasons for Blake's repeated use of the same images. Janet Warner,<sup>25</sup> and most recently Christopher Heppner<sup>26</sup> developed the idea of 'pathos formulae' further.

The literature on Blake and religion this century is considerable. The first chapter of S. Foster Damon's *William Blake, his Philosophy and Symbols* sought to give an account of his inner, imaginative life in terms of the five stages encountered by the great mystics, as expounded in Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*.<sup>27</sup> This provoked a long-lasting controversy. Helen White in *The Mysticism of William Blake* reviewed Damon's evidence and ruled that Blake could not be regarded as a Christian mystic, or even as a mystic poet, both because he did not belong to the mainstream catholic tradition, and because, in her view, he did not practice asceticism.<sup>28</sup> Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, published in the aftermath of the Second World War, a period of revulsion against the nature-mysticism of Nazi propaganda, avoids discussion of the issue in the main body of his book, but writes in an appendix that he sees Blake's art as a spiritual discipline akin to Eastern yoga, which liberates man by uniting him with God.<sup>29</sup> He describes Blake's vision as the realisation in total experience of the identity of God and man in which both the human creature and the superhuman Creator disappear. Both

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<sup>23</sup> *The Art of William Blake* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>24</sup> C.H. Collins Baker, 'The Sources of Blake's Pictorial Expression', reprinted in *The Visionary Hand*, ed. Robert Essick (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1973), pp. 124-6.

<sup>25</sup> Janet Warner, 'Blake's Use of Gesture', in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David Erdman and John Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 188-94; *Blake and the Language of Art* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> *Reading Blake's Designs* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> *Mysticism: a Study in the Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Methuen, 1911).

<sup>28</sup> University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, no. 23, (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1927).

<sup>29</sup> *Fearful Symmetry: a study of Blake's Job* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp 431-2.

Blake's paradoxical humour and his devotion to his calling as artist and poet link him with Buddhist mysticism, but also with the speculative western school which began with Eckhart and continued till Boehme, and beyond.

Studies of the influence on Blake of Jacob Boehme have been made both by G. E. Bentley, Jr., in an unpublished thesis,<sup>30</sup> and Bryan Aubrey.<sup>31</sup> Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, seeks to find all Blake's sources in esoteric mystical literature.<sup>32</sup> Certainly Blake was interested in Kabbalistic symbolism, and in Neoplatonism, which he would have encountered through the recent translations of Plato's works by Thomas Taylor, but the influence of these on Blake is shadowy compared with the influence of the Bible, as Michael Tolley (1974) and Leslie Tannenbaum (1982) have shown.

Morton D. Paley in *Energy and the Imagination*<sup>33</sup> established a broad consensus that Blake's thought changed and developed throughout his working life, and that the Felpham period served as an incubation for a time of spiritual renewal and renewed sense of Christian faith, after his return to London. Other critics who saw important development in Blake's thought during the Felpham years, in terms of a Christian spiritual awakening, or increased Christo-centric emphasis, are Harold Bloom, in *Blake's Apocalypse*<sup>34</sup> and Andrew Lincoln in 'Redating the eighth book of *The Four Zoas*',<sup>35</sup> an article which has been more fully developed in *Spiritual History*.<sup>36</sup> Lincoln

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<sup>30</sup> 'Blake and the alchemical philosophers' (B. Litt Thesis, University of Oxford, 1954).

<sup>31</sup> *Watchman of Eternity: William Blake's debt to Jacob Boehme* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

<sup>34</sup> *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (London: Gollancz, 1963).

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Lincoln, 'The Revision of the Seventh and Eighth Nights of *The Four Zoas*, *Blake Illustrated Quarterly*, XII, no.2, pp. 115-133.

<sup>36</sup> *Spiritual History: a Reading of William Blake's 'Vala' or 'The Four Zoas'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

establishes that the Christian emphasis was there all along, and is not something peculiar to the revisions of the eighth book, and that it did not entail a quietist outlook on public affairs.

In the past fifteen years there has been a spate of books and articles on this aspect of Blake's work in general. Social historians such as Jon Mee, with his *Dangerous Enthusiasm*,<sup>37</sup> and E. P. Thompson's *Witness against the Beast*<sup>38</sup> have broken new ground and are both fascinating to read, but both concentrate on Blake's early years. E. P. Thompson, setting out to explore the social and historical background to 'Blake's unique notation of Christian belief', traces his inner development in detail to 1798, but then stops short, on the grounds that Blake's inner, imaginative world had become more or less fixed. By this concentration on Blake's early years he was able to reveal the influence of small anti-nomian sects, and groups of enthusiasts. Particularly in the early period there is evidence of anti-nomian attitudes and of imagery from the hymns of sects such as the Muggletonians, but it is wrong to assume this analysis is valid for the rest of Blake's working life. Leslie Tannenbaum's authoritative *Biblical tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies* has shown that even in the early period by far the strongest influence on Blake's work was the Bible. Michael Tolley's thesis, 'William Blake's Use of the Bible', is invaluable for its comprehensive listing of all Biblical texts used (including graphic allusions), and for the chapter on 'What Blake himself said about the Bible'. Jeanne Moskal, *Blake, Ethics, and Forgiveness* is a persuasive and valuable study of Blake's ethics and faith.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the cultural radicalism of the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

<sup>38</sup> *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>39</sup> London: University of Alabama Press, 1994.

Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, includes plenty of references to Blake's inner life, though some scholars suspect that the manuscript had to be made respectable in deference to the scruples of Gilchrist's publishers, and the more straight-laced culture of the mid nineteenth-century. There is room for more exploration of what Blake's Christian faith meant to him, particularly in the first decade of the nineteenth century, a period when he wrote many of his major works. The other classic biographer of Blake, Mona Wilson, gives a useful and perceptive account of Blake's inner life,<sup>40</sup> as does Blake's recent biographer Peter Ackroyd in *Blake*<sup>41</sup>.

In the seventeenth century there seems to have been a strong interrelation between techniques of meditation and the Metaphysical poets, and whereas it is unlikely that Blake had the opportunity to read the Metaphysicals, it is not unlikely that the practice of meditation survived into the eighteenth. Louis Martz wrote an interesting study of the origins of Metaphysical poetry in meditation, *The Poetry of Meditation*,<sup>42</sup> and certainly believed that it was a style of poetry that continued: he argues that the 'meditative style' is language that has been moulded to express the unique being of an individual who has learned, by intense mental discipline, to live his life in the presence of divinity. He argues that it does not only belong to the Metaphysicals, but it can be found in Robert Southwell, Edward Taylor, William Blake, Wordsworth, Hopkins, Emily Dickinson, the later Yeats and the later Eliot.<sup>43</sup>

Barbara Lewalski also has interesting things to say about devotional practices of the seventeenth century. Martz, she says, was convinced that the dominant influence lay in Ignatian and Augustinian models of meditation. Her own thesis is that the primary

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<sup>40</sup> *The Life of William Blake* (London: 1927, 3rd. edition, revised by Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

<sup>41</sup> London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

poetic influences on the Metaphysical poets are contemporary, English, and Protestant. Blake's views are in many ways typically those of an eighteenth century dissenter, but Blake *also* had his roots deep in the traditions of the distant past. Donald Allchin in *Participation in God*<sup>44</sup> classes William Blake with Julian of Norwich and George Fox, and has an interesting study of the hymns of Charles Wesley, showing how he is steeped in the Early Fathers, and in the Orthodox doctrine of 'participation in God' or *θεϊωσις*.

#### **d) Studies of Job of related interest**

Through the centuries Job has been rewritten, adapted to the sensibilities of different ages, perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, as Nahum Glatzer has shown in *The Dimensions of Job*<sup>45</sup>. We see the process of appropriation beginning within the Bible itself. St. James writes as if Job never cried out in despair, commending him as an example: 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy' (James 5:11). Many scholars think he may be referring not to the Biblical Job, but to a story version of it, known as *The Testament of Job*, which was in circulation by the time of Christ's birth, if not earlier. During the period when the Canon of Scripture was evolving, *The Testament of Job* was never considered as a candidate, but it acquired an indirect influence in some respects more powerful than the canonical book, even though for a long period it was banned in western Christendom. Meanwhile the Biblical Job was also undergoing transformation, in that great stress was laid on the spiritual, as against the literal, meaning, and Job was seen as a foreshadowing of Christ, an interpretation dating from the first century A.D., but popularised by Gregory the Great. The history of this idea of Job as the type of Christ and its expression in medieval art has been examined in Jeremy Peter Gray's Ph.

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<sup>44</sup> *Participation in God: a Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), pp. 3, 34-5.

<sup>45</sup> *The dimensions of Job: a Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967).

D. thesis for the Courtauld Institute.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile the Book of Job continues to be reinterpreted and rewritten, for example by C. G. Jung *Answer to Job*,<sup>47</sup> the central chapter of which puts forward the idea that God's answer to Job was to send his Son to suffer alongside mankind. It will be argued here that this is also the message of the Butts set, a message reinforced by the marginal quotations in the engraved set.

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<sup>46</sup> 'The Iconography of the Illuminated Medieval Manuscripts of Gregory's *Moralia in Job*' (University of London: 1992).

<sup>47</sup> Tr. R. F. C. Hull, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

## Ch. 1. Blake's *Job* in the setting of Blake's Life

### i) Blake's life known to the public

William Blake was born in 1757, and was baptised in St. James' Church, Piccadilly, the parish church, as were all his brothers and sisters apart from the youngest brother Robert, born in 1767. In about 1769 his father may have joined a Baptist Church, which would account for the fact that the youngest son was not baptised in infancy, as also for the fact that the family were buried in the Dissenters' Burial Ground.<sup>1</sup> He was apprenticed as an engraver to James Basire, and after his apprenticeship he was admitted to the Royal Academy. In 1782 he married Catherine Boucher, and with her lived in great happiness, though the marriage was childless. From 1779 onwards he was employed from time to time as an engraver to the radical publisher Joseph Johnson, and through him met Fuseli and Flaxman, and through Flaxman he and his wife were introduced to Swedenborgianism.<sup>2</sup> In these years Blake gradually realised his own abilities as poet and painter, as well as craftsman.

After Blake's father's death in 1784 he may have inherited some money, for during the next twenty years he was relatively prosperous. In 1790 the Blakes moved from Poland Street to Lambeth, where they lived till 1800, when they were persuaded by Blake's patron William Hayley to move to the village of Felpham in Sussex. Thus began a period of patronage and dependence. On their return to London in 1803 Blake determined on independence, even if it meant obscurity. The years between 1806 and 1818 were lean and difficult, but in these years Blake extensively revised his narrative epic *Vala or The Four Zoas*, produced the water-colour *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, and illuminated and engraved both *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. About 1818 Blake was

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<sup>1</sup> BR, pp. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Gilchrist, pp. 15-16.

discovered by some young painters, grouped round Samuel Palmer, and calling themselves 'The Ancients', and by John Linnell, himself an artist, who generously supported the work of Blake's final years, and commissioned the engraved version of Blake's *Illustrations*. Blake died in 1827 at the age of sixty-nine in his lodgings in Fountain Court, the Strand.<sup>3</sup>

Very little of Blake's life was known by the public of Blake's own day. They knew of him as an engraver, an artisan, and only grudgingly was he admitted to the category of minor artist. At best he was known as an eccentric, at worst dismissed, as he was for example by Robert Hunt, as 'an unfortunate lunatic, whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement.'<sup>4</sup> The accounts of Blake drawing the 'visionary heads' suggest that he thought of what he saw as not his own creation, but present in the room. But Gilchrist was at pains to put across the view that he knew perfectly well what was visible to others and what was not.<sup>5</sup>

## ii) Blake's Inner Life

An analysis of Blake's inner journey shows that his first moment of illumination, a moment that inspired all his subsequent life, was some time before 1789, when he brought out *Songs of Innocence*. It was accompanied by a time of disillusionment and heavy despair, illuminated by the burst of inspiration and creativity that produced *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but moving thereafter into a time of even greater unhappiness and darkness. This time of unhappiness came to an end abruptly in 1804.

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<sup>3</sup> J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times* (London: 1828), quoted in *BR*, pp. 475-6.

<sup>4</sup> Hunt, review of Blake's exhibition in his brother's shop in Broad Street, in *The Examiner*, September 17th, 1809, quoted in *BR*, pp. 215-8.

<sup>5</sup> See Gilchrist, pp. 319-20.

Within this period there are important polarities in Blake's perception of the inner world. William Blake was, according to Evelyn Underhill, the last of the great Christian mystics, a man who 'shines like a solitary star in the uncongenial atmosphere of the Georgian age.'<sup>6</sup> An early attempt at an analysis of Blake's spiritual life in this dark and prolific period, is made by S. Foster Damon, in *William Blake, his Philosophy and Symbols*.<sup>7</sup> Damon too neatly divides Blake's inner life into temporal periods. If, however, we see Damon's paired stages as co-existent polarities, his analysis has some usefulness. Damon divides Blake's inner life into five stages, following the outline of Evelyn Underhill: (1) the awakening to a sense of a divine reality (2) the consequent purgation of the Self, when it realises its own imperfections (a state which St. John of the Cross calls 'the Active Night of the Senses') (3) an enhanced return of the sense of the divine order, after the Self has achieved its detachment from the world (4) the 'Dark Night of the Soul', or the crucifixion of the Self in the absence of the divine (5) the complete union with Truth, the attainment of that which the third state had perceived as a possibility.<sup>8</sup> This account provoked an emphatic retort from Helen White, *The Mysticism of William Blake*,<sup>9</sup> and the debate has gone on ever since.

### **a) Poland Street and Lambeth - 'dark but very profitable years'**

The years when the Blakes were living first in Poland Street, then in Lambeth, were extraordinarily fertile; during them Blake produced twelve books of poetry in Illuminated Printing. There was the first burst of inspired vision which produced *Songs*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>7</sup> repr. London: Dawsons, 1969, pp. 1-11, especially p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Mysticism: a study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness* (London: Methuen, 1911), repr. 1949, pp. 169-70.

<sup>9</sup> See p. xxiii.

of *Innocence*, but following it there is a 'sense of betrayal, of being trapped beneath a weight of earth, and their images are of death and imprisonment.'<sup>10</sup> Blake's 'London', in *Songs of Experience* (1794), the design for which shows a crippled old man being led by a child through gloomy tenement streets, gives a sense of his disillusionment:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear (*Songs of Experience*, Song 46, 1-8, E 26-7).

The most agonising aspect is the grip of these 'mind-forg'd manacles', which Blake has illustrated in the title-page of *Urizen* (1794) (fig. 2). Here the Creator sits huddled in despair, hands and ankles bound in fetters, eyes closed to the world around him. In this poem the faculty of man's Reason is in chains, his light-giving divinity bound down to earth, and he shuts his eyes and does not see that he is his own prisoner. Some of the same symbolism of despair appears in Blake's *The Good and Evil Angels* (1795) (fig. 9), where the Evil Angel has sightless eyes, and a fetter round his foot, even though he is in full flight.<sup>11</sup> A parallel can be drawn with the tortured, despairing expressions of the two figures in *Elohim Creating Adam* (1795) (fig. 8), where the wings of the Creator are of heavy bronze, and his expression of abstracted pain is echoed by the tensed-up, prone body of Adam with its tortured face, entwined in the worm of mortality: the outspread arms of Elohim, with down-drooping hands, are also echoed by the outspread arms of the Evil Angel in the picture mentioned above. Adam seems to be lying on seaweed, on the bed of the sea: the bottom of the sea is used by Blake as

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<sup>10</sup> BRS, p. xxviii. I am indebted to Professor Bentley's material in pp. xviii-xl for much of what follows here.

<sup>11</sup> Butlin 405, showing the evil angel younger and with open eyes, seems to be the first pull (Butlin [text] 324), and this version with sightless eyes is the second pull (Butlin [text] 323).

a symbol for temporal existence. The green-brown seaweed background adds to the impression that Blake's mindscape at this time was dark and tormented.

I am not trying to argue that Blake passed through a time of innocent and radiant happiness into a period of dark despair, and that *Songs of Innocence* represents this first period, and *Songs of Experience* the later period; for I would agree with Morton D. Paley, who argues that by the time Blake published his *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 he had already arrived at his doctrine of contraries, and both the title and some of the poems in it imply a sequel about Experience.<sup>12</sup> He writes that it is mistaken to suppose that each set represents Blake's actual view at the time of publication: clearly the 'innocence' is in the speakers and their attitudes, not necessarily in the subjects themselves. On the contrary, the ecstatic visions of the Old Testament prophets are always accompanied by a sense of a grief at all that is wrong in their world: after mystical joy follows reaction, a sense that the world is evil and full of pain. The two states are inseparably linked.

Damon notes that Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1777), finished when he was twenty, show practically no sense of the transcendent. The one poem which might be expected to do so, 'The Couch of Death', seems like a literary exercise. Nor does there seem to be much transcendence in the satirical, unfinished *An Island in the Moon* (c.1784-1785), with the important exception of some of the songs which Blake put into the mouths of his absurd characters. But the *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *The Book of Thel*, which Blake published in the same year, are inspired by a radically different mood. What Blake called 'Innocence' - the sense of God within and the sense that God is in everything - became for him one of the permanent 'states' through which souls pass.

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<sup>12</sup> *Energy and the Imagination: a Study of the Development of Blake's Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 30.

What brought about the complete change between *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence*? Between these two works came the death of Blake's beloved brother Robert, whom he was teaching to draw and paint. Blake nursed him in his illness, and for the last three days was awake continually beside him. And then he died, and Blake 'beheld the released spirit ascend heavenward through the matter-of fact ceiling, 'clapping its hands for joy' - a truly Blake-like detail.'<sup>13</sup> Damon quotes words which Blake wrote under Plate 13 in *The Gates of Paradise*, the central plate in the series, 'Fear and Hope are - vision.' (E 33, and 266).<sup>14</sup> Blake abandoned the satirical prose piece, *An Island in the Moon*, and put together the poems of *Songs of Innocence*.

The impression made by this moment of illumination never left him. Yet this sense of transcendence was accompanied by a period of disillusionment with the world, a state of prophetic dis-ease. Blake matched his 'Little Lamb who made thee?' song by his 'Tyger Tyger, burning bright' poem, his 'Infant Joy' with 'Infant Sorrow', and called the collection *Songs of Experience*. Somewhere in these dark years came a renewed burst of inspiration and illumination, which found creative expression in Blake's highly original *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* - we do not know when because we cannot date *The Marriage* more precisely than somewhere between 1790 and 1793. Blake by now was rejecting Swedenborg (Pl. 21, E 42-3), whose 'New Church' was becoming more and more ritualised and institutionalised, abandoning its emphasis on energetic works of charity for an emphasis on individual morality.<sup>15</sup> Instead he embraced Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme, rebels and mystics whose works he could have obtained from the same bookshops that stocked Swedenborg. These shops were stacked with pamphlets and epitomes explaining and describing Boehme's works, as well as with the

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<sup>13</sup> Gilchrist 59. The story, apparently with verbal elaborations, came from Linnell (BR, p. 32, n.1).

<sup>14</sup> *The Gates of Paradise* was created and etched around 1793-4, at the time Blake was putting together and publishing *Songs of Experience*. Damon's analysis only makes sense if we see the mood of mystic joy and the mood of grieving as inseparable.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), p. 147, citing Robert Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church* (London: Hodson and Son, 1861), p.142.

works themselves, and Blake's acquaintance Cosway even owned an original Boehme manuscript.<sup>16</sup> But Blake continued to use frequent Biblical imagery.

### **b) Felpham (September 1800 to October 1803)**

When the Blakes first moved to the sea-side village of Felpham, Blake had moments of vision. He described one such in his letter to Butts of 2nd October 1800 (E 712). But Blake's sense of spiritual and material contentment was followed by a more terrible period of darkness, intensified by their isolation, and Blake's sense of frustration at the attempts of the well-meaning but obtuse Hayley to dominate his artistic output, unhappiness which in a letter dated 22nd November 1802 he confided to Butts :

... But You will justly enquire Why I have not written All this time to you? I answer I have been very Unhappy and could not think of troubling you about it or any of my real Friends (I have written many letters to you which I burned and did not send) & why I have not before now finished the Miniature which I promised to Mrs. Butts? I answer I have not till now in any degree pleased myself ... (E 719)

This mood of unhappiness was even worse than the sense of darkness and near despair which had been inseparable from his early visions.

### **c) Blake's sense of renewal, after leaving Felpham**

After twenty years of bondage, as he himself described it, Blake suddenly broke free.

We have an ecstatic letter from Blake to Hayley of 23rd. October 1804:

Now! O Glory! and O Delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours for the last passed twenty years of my life...Nebuchadnezzar had seven times passed over him, I have had twenty...I was a slave bound in a mill among beasts

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 147; Bryan Aubrey, *Blake, Watchman of Eternity* (New York: University Press of America, 1986), pp. 6-10.

and devils...[but now] my feet and my wife's feet are free from fetters ... Suddenly ... I was again enlightened with the light I enjoyed in my youth and which has for exactly twenty years been closed from me as by a door and window-shutters ... Dear Sir, excuse my enthusiasm or rather madness, for I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver into my hand, even as I used to be in my youth, but as I have not been for twenty dark but very profitable years' (E 756-7).<sup>17</sup>

The 'twenty years', three times repeated, is a literary approximation, unless Blake wants us to suppose that even *Songs of Innocence* is the work of a period of darkness. After 1804 Blake's designs and poems are works of joy and of hope, and the figures in his designs look outwards and upwards. Now God is seen in everything, and everything leads to vision, as Blake writes at the end of his long description of his painting *A Vision of the Last Judgement* (1809):

I assert for My Self that I do not behold the Outward Creation ...it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me. What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not See a round Disk of fire something like a Guinea? O no no, I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying 'Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty!'... I look thro... [my eye] and not with it (E 565-6).

Many of Blake's designs of this period, to which also belongs the Butts water-colour Job series, are illustrations of men's visions. One of the most haunting is the pencil and water-colour, *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting their Crowns before the Divine Throne* (c.1803-5) (fig. 11). The winged heads of a line of angels before the throne are evocative of the angels in Plate XIV of Blake's *Illustrations* (though there they are full-length). This is an illustration of Revelation 4:2-11, and Blake used the same passage in the Ninth Night of *The Four Zoas* (123:33-8, E 393), which he was working on at about this time; what is most striking is the softness and lightness of the colouring, and the

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<sup>17</sup> The words omitted after the word 'Suddenly' are as follows, 'on the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery of pictures'. Many critics regard the visit to the Truchsessian Gallery as Blake's chief reason for his burst of enlightenment. Critics are puzzled as to why Blake was so ecstatic about this huge collection, containing the work of at least fifty artists, among them Rubens, van Dyk, Holbein, Correggio, Watteau, and Lorrain, none of these of interest to Blake - see, for example, Damon (1988), p. 412, who decides this marked his break for good with Classicism. A description of the gallery can be found in Richard Phillips, *The Picture of London for 1805* (London: 1805), pp. 255-6. Bentley (private communication, 6th Dec 1996), said that the *temporal* connection between this visit to the Gallery and Blake's sudden sense of renewal and new life does not give us license to assume a *causal* connection also.

mild face of the throned figure of the Deity, radiant in light, with forked light springing from his outstretched hands. Another vision is *Jacob's Dream* (c.1805, fig. 12), showing a stairway between Heaven and Earth, with angels already ascending and descending: the connection of man to heaven is complete in imagination, for two of the angels coming down are carrying gifts, a basket of bread and a pitcher of wine, a second pair descending carry a scroll and a closed book, and one of the angels ascending leads a little child.<sup>18</sup> Another visionary illumination belonging to this time of renewal is Blake's dedication-design for Blair's *Grave*, in itself a gloomy, earth-bound poem. Blake's design brings an atmosphere of hope: he shows Christ floating upwards, with two keys to release mankind from the captivity of Sin and Death.

If we can interpret the gifts of bread and wine carried down the stairway to man by the angels in *Jacob's Dream* as symbolising Christ's self-giving, then in each of these visions Christ is the key. Blake's theme is now reconciliation and forgiveness, for Christ has ended slavery to the law. But though in the design for Blair's *Grave* Christ bears the keys, they are also in our own hands. As Blake wrote later, in *For the Sexes: the Gates of Paradise* (sometime between 1806 and 1818):

Mutual forgiveness of each Vice  
Such are the Gates of Paradise (E 259)

In *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, Damon writes of the vividness of Blake's moments of ecstasy. *Milton* is focused on one such moment. Blake's *Job* shows Job saved from despair by just such a moment of vision, and Blake dwells on the intensity of these experiences in the opening lines of *Jerusalem*:

This theme calls me in sleep night after night, & ev'ry morn  
Awakes me at sunrise, then I see the Saviour over me  
Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song ...  
I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend;

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<sup>18</sup> BBS, p. xxxiv, aptly contrasts this design with Blake's satirical illustration of *For Children* (1793) showing a man vainly trying to set up a ladder to climb up to the moon.

Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:  
 Lo! We are one; forgiving all Evil; not seeking Recompense!  
 (Plate 4, 3-5, 17-19, E 146)

In *Jerusalem* as in his *Job*, Blake sees rebirth in very practical, earthly terms, in that it must find its expression in love for one's neighbour, in forgiving and accepting forgiveness.

#### **d) Blake's later years and death**

Blake's magnificent engraved *Illustrations* were created in the last years of his life. He achieved an extraordinary degree of serenity in these later years. One story illustrates Blake's attitude of acceptance and rejoicing in his later years, though his outward circumstances were increasingly characterised by poverty, and there was little in the way of glory to compensate for it. At a fashionable party a little girl was presented to him, because of her unusual beauty. He looked at her a long time without saying anything, and then, stroking her hair, said, "May God make this world to you, my child, as beautiful as it has been to me." (*BR*, p. 274-5).

Crabb Robinson writes of his dignity and grace in the ill-furnished little rooms in Fountains Court, overlooking the Thames:

There was a natural gentility about and an insensibility to the seeming poverty which quite removed the impression. Besides, his linen was clean, his hand white, and his air quite unembarrassed when he begged me to sit down, as if he were in a palace. (E 542)

Many writers have declared that we carry within us the Godhead, but few have lived as if they actually believed it, as Blake lived. And Blake died as he had lived.

Allan Cunningham described the day of his death,

On the day of his death, August 12th, 1827, he composed and uttered songs to his Maker so sweetly to the ear of his Catherine, that when she stood to

hear him, he, looking upon her most affectionately, said, 'My beloved, they are not mine - no - they are not mine.' (*BR*, p. 475)

George Richmond wrote to Samuel Palmer of his death:

Lest you should not have heard of the death of Mr. Blake I have written this to inform you - He died on Sunday Night at six O'clock in a most glorious manner[.] He said He was going to that Country He had all His life wished to see & expressed Himself Happy hoping for Salvation through Jesus Christ - Just before he died His Countenance became fair - His eyes brighten'd and he burst out in Singing of the things he Saw in Heaven[.] In truth He Died like a Saint as a person who was standing by Him Observed - (*BR*, 346-7).

Clearly the death of Blake had made a strong impression on the eighteen-year old Richmond. In many ways Blake's personality is as interesting as his works.

### iii) Christian vision in *Night Thoughts* and in the reworking of *The Four Zoas*

In trying to assign an approximate date to the earlier stages of Blake's re-awakening we have the problem that there is no solid evidence in the form of correspondence till he and his wife moved to Felpham, in 1800. But on the back of the title-page of Bishop Watson's attack on Thomas Paine, published 1797, Blake wrote, 'To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life/ The Beast and the Whore rule without controls/ ... the perversions of Christ's life & acts are attacked by Paine and also the perversions of the Bible; Who dare defend [*them*] either the Acts of Christ or the Bible Unperverted?'<sup>19</sup> I have suggested there seem to have been times, earlier, when he experienced a polarity of feelings, with both a sense of re-awakening and a sense of profound despair. This is shown particularly in his illustrations for Young's *Night Thoughts*, on which he worked between 1795 and 1797, and in the Christian revisions

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<sup>19</sup> Blake's private annotations to his copy of R. Watson, Bishop of Landaff, *An Apology for the Bible ... addressed to Thomas Paine, the author of ...the Age of Reason* (London: 1797), notes on the back of the title-page.

to *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*. David Grant, a member of the team of scholars working on a definitive commentary, would place his reawakening between 1795-7, or just after that time, so strong is the presence of the figure of Christ in the *Night Thoughts* illustrations.<sup>20</sup> His treatment of Young's poem certainly does not make sense as the work of someone who is not a Christian.

Christ's first clear presence is in *Night the Second*, Plate 35:

Can gold find friendship? Impudence of Hope!  
As well Meer Man an Angel might beget ...  
All like the Purchase, few the price will pay;  
And this makes Friends such Miracles below.

Blake illustrates by depicting Christ as the Good Samaritan, kneeling and tenderly offering a drink to the wounded man. But the wounded man is rejecting the drink in surprise and horror; for on the side of the cup he offers Blake has clearly drawn the emblem of the Serpent (fig. 10.i). It is a disturbing image: choose Christ, Blake says, and you are embroiled from then on in a struggle with the Evil One.<sup>21</sup> In the engraved version, the look of surprise and rejection on the face of the victim has been greatly toned down, but there is still the same serpent emblem, symbolising the Evil One.

At the end of Young's long poem there is an attempt to image the Trinity, focused mainly on the Father. But Blake focuses on the Son: it is he who is the Creator. In his accompanying illustration Adam is coming into being on a bank of red earth just above the sea, and Christ, striding vigorously upwards, is holding in his right hand a lump of marl from which to complete the moulding of him. Just as he breathed the Spirit into the disciples, when he appeared to them in the locked room after his Resurrection, and

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<sup>20</sup> David E. Grant in 'Jesus and the Powers That Be in Blake's Designs for Young's *Night Thoughts*', Erdman (1990), pp. 71-116.

<sup>21</sup> John E. Grant, Edward J. Rose, Michael J. Tolley, eds., *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts: a complete edition*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), no. 68.

sent them out into the world (John 20:21-2), so he is breathing the Spirit into Adam (fig. 10.ii). The design is in all ways the antithesis of the dark and gloomy colour-print, *Elohim creating Adam* (fig. 8.). In the illustration to *Night the Ninth* he is clear of the sea, reawakening into a new life as the breath of the spirit is breathed into him by Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Blake's illustrations were commissioned by the leading bookseller Richard Edwards, who was an admirer of Blake's work. Of the 547 water-colours, only 43 were engraved and published; the project failed, due to the financial crisis in that year.<sup>23</sup> Blake used the proof sheets from these engravings, however, for his poem *Vala or The Four Zoas*, and it is indicative of the emphasis he intended, that he incorporated all five of the engravings for the *Night Thoughts* that show Jesus in action, some of them more than once. As an epigraph to set at the head of his poem Blake transcribed St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians 6.12 in the original Greek (in a somewhat anglicised version), as if he was not satisfied with the King James rendering, 'spiritual wickedness in high places', which does not make it clear whether these are earthly or heavenly high places. Paul is writing that we are struggling not against flesh and blood, but against the forces of evil, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the *heavenly* places. This theme is a central element in Blake's *Job*, as will be explored both in Chapter 3 (the Butts set) and Chapter 5 (the engraved set).

Blake's torments of spirit in the late 1790s and his later overwhelming sense of release are also reflected in the rewritings of this long epic. In 'The Role of Christ in *The Four Zoas*' Charles Sugnet traces Blake's internal struggles as he worked on his revisions of the manuscript, which he began writing in the 1790s, and substantially revised in the first few years of the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Sugnet argues that the

<sup>22</sup> *id.*, no. 529 (*Night the Ninth*, Plate 111).

<sup>23</sup> David V. Erdman, *Blake, Prophet against Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 265.

revisions of *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* are closely related to Blake's disillusionment with political revolution, and his emergence from a period of deep despair. These major revisions show the introduction of Christ as a directly operative figure in the myth, and not a mere *deus ex machina* whose presence destroys the artistic unity of the poem.<sup>25</sup> The original *Vala* in many ways resembled the Lambeth prophecies of Blake's dark but prolific years. There is a good deal of satire on Urizen, and 'devastating references to an inhuman God, as when man worships his own shadow, saying "O Lord, thou knowest I am nothing"'(III 55, E 327).<sup>26</sup> Yet even in the earliest version there is need for an external unfallen redeemer, for Sugnet argues that when Urizen hurls himself into the abyss, even at the earliest stage of the poem the plot requires an external redeemer, the 'ever-pitying one' of Night the Sixth(70: 25 E 348). It was not just Blake's disillusionment with historical events that caused him to rewrite so substantially, but his sense of the centrality of God's revelation in Christ. In *Jerusalem* Plate 3 (E 145), Sugnet continues, we have a confident expanding on this theme: 'he who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body; will never enter there', making it clear that he is writing not of Life after Death, or final Apocalypse, but of participation in the Godhead here in this mortal life.

Blake has a poetic, mythological approach, and yet still remains deeply Christian.<sup>27</sup> For in *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* he is writing myth, and is not trying to write discursive theology: the poem is something told from the viewpoint of imperfect understanding, a

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<sup>24</sup> *Essays in Literature*, part 111 (Illinois, 1976), pp. 167-80.

<sup>25</sup> Sugnet used H. M. Margoliouth's reconstruction of the original *Vala*, (*William Blake's 'Vala'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), the Keynes and Erdman-Bloom editions of *The Four Zoas*, and G.E. Bentley, Jr., *William Blake, 'Vala' or 'The Four Zoas': A Facsimile of the Manuscript, a Transcription of the Poem, and A Study of its Growth and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). His method, as described pp. 178-9, n. 6, was only to cite instances where Margoliouth and Bentley were in agreement about the revisions.

<sup>26</sup> Sugnet, p.168.

<sup>27</sup> For this reason I do not agree wholly with Bentley's comment, 'Blake's Christianity was of course only related by marriage to any other known example...its [*Vala's*] demonic, misguided and tormented Giants bear no kinship to a benevolent and omnipotent Trinity.' (*BB*, p. 175).

dream dreamt by fallen man. 'To Blake poetry (or religion, or myth - the terms are interchangeable for him) is clothing for a truth which cannot be grasped in strictly rational terms.'<sup>28</sup> Sugnet concludes that the role of Christ in the latest version of the poem is much larger than has been recognised hitherto, and that in the revisions to *The Four Zoas* we can trace Blake's transition from the social prophet of the early 1790s, inveighing against worldly empire, to 'the Blake of *Jerusalem*, shaking the dust of the world off his feet.'<sup>29</sup>

Limits of space prevent me from discussing Andrew Lincoln's two important contributions to the discussion.<sup>30</sup> Blake's letter to Butts of 22nd. November 1802 shows that he himself did not consider his embrace of Christianity to be something new (E 720). Lincoln disputes Sugnet's view that Blake after his spiritual awakening was concerned only with inner regeneration, not with action in the world.<sup>31</sup> This model for Blake's frame of mind in his reworking of *Vala* or *The Four Zoas* throws useful light on his lists of guardians of the gate of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and of faithful witnesses, spiritual heroes among whom were St. Teresa and Wesley, both people of prayer yet active in leadership (see below, Chapter 4).

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<sup>28</sup> Sugnet, loc. cit., p.177.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 177-8.

<sup>30</sup> 'Redating the eighth book of *The Four Zoas*, *BIQ*, XII, no. 2, summer 1978, pp.115-133, and *Spiritual History: A Reading of William Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 223-79.

<sup>31</sup> id., pp. 289-90.

#### iv) Blake's single Job illustrations in the context of his life

Biblical illustrating was one of the staples by which Blake earned money, but the Book of Job seems to have held a fascination for Blake throughout his working life. He came back to the 'Job' theme again and again. Lindberg provides a detailed catalogue of all the individual illustrations done by Blake on the Job theme, or thought to be on the Job theme, with a discussion of their likely dates. Butlin also has a systematic account of all the variants. Almost all Blake's Job illustrations fall within three clear periods: c. 1793 (which is during the period Blake labelled as 'dark but very profitable years', when he was working on the Lambeth prophecies, and on *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*); 1800-1810 (which is the time when he felt a strong sense of renewal); and 1821-1827, in the evening of his life, when he enjoyed the friendship of John Linnell, and the admiration of Samuel Palmer and 'The Ancients', but suffered from repeated illness, which often kept him from engraving-work.

***Job and his family (c. 1788).*** The earliest Job illustration is probably a water-colour presented in 1977 to the Cincinnati Art Museum by John Warrington, known as *Job and his family*, (fig. 1).<sup>32</sup> Lindberg puts the painting c. 1788 for stylistic reasons, the work being classed as early because of the absence of mannerisms or anatomical peculiarities, the lack of character and expression, and the classicised drawing of the noses and chins.<sup>33</sup> He also points out that Job's wife is veiled, unlike all Blake's other drawings of her. Butlin would put it even earlier, c. 1780 (Butlin [text] 146). This scene was used by Blake for the lower part of no. 2 of his *Illustrations*, with some compositional changes. The painting has the same sort of radiant iridescence and serenity as the designs for *Songs of Innocence*. Both Job and the youth standing on Job's

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<sup>32</sup> Butlin [text] 146 tentatively labels this water-colour *Enoch walked with God*, linking it to the much later lithograph of Enoch (1807), because of the presence of books and scrolls.

<sup>33</sup> Lindberg, p. 10.

right hold books lightly in their hand, and are listening to the angels. There is nothing heavy and judgmental about the patriarch.

*Job in distress* (c. 1793). In the second group of illustrations of the Job theme, executed in and around 1793, are seven different illustrations showing Job isolated, accused by his friends.<sup>34</sup> In the earliest, a sketch in the notebook in which Blake was writing the poems for *Songs of Experience*, the five figures sitting on the ground, the pointing hands, Job's lifted head and open palms, are all there (fig. 3).<sup>35</sup> Job's wife, however, sits next to one of Job's friends, while the other two sit the other side of him, suggesting that she too is accusing him, whereas in Butts set no. 10 the three friends sit together, their outstretched arms are even more threatening, and Job's wife seems to be more protective. Here there is a clear change in outlook: the greater loyalty of Job's wife in the Job series than in the first sketch suggests Blake decided that he wanted to stress Job's innocence. Lindberg notes that Blake followed traditions established by James Barry's engraving *Job Reproved by His Friends* (fig. 33), but Blake's depiction of Job's wife has nothing in common with Barry's engraving of with the toothless old hag cursing God.<sup>36</sup> Blake's 'wife of Job' is young and beautiful, as in his 1788 water-colour, and as in Dürer's *Jabach-altar* (fig.24). Blake made two other illustrations using this sketch.

Blake used these for his large engraving *Job* (fig. 6), published in August 1793, and advertised for sale in October of that year. There is only one known copy of the first

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<sup>34</sup> Lindberg, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Butlin [text] 201:20 disagrees with Lindberg's dating, and therefore does not agree that it has any connection with the large *Job* engraving. He agrees with Keynes in dating the first state of this engraving 8 years earlier. I find Lindberg's arguments for dating the first state to 1793 more convincing.

<sup>36</sup> Lindberg, pp. 11-14, and n. 34.

state of the engraved *Job*, and the date and part of the inscription are missing from it.<sup>37</sup> The second state (fig. 7), of which three copies are known (British Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum, and Keynes Collection) which bears the same date but is clearly later, shows changes so radical as to suggest a gap of several years between first and second state.<sup>38</sup> The earlier *Job* was stoic, monumental, now Blake has subtly changed the lighting so that his hands are no longer palms upward in injured innocence, but outstretched in grief, and tears glisten on his harrowed cheeks. Forked lightning rends the sky behind him, and there is a troubled ominous half light, the light immediately before a fierce storm. The engraving is inscribed 'What is Man, that thou shouldest Try him Every Moment?' Blake's pre-occupation with this particular scene in the story of *Job* is also interesting, perhaps suggesting that he saw *Job*'s distress as his own.

David Bindman points out the similarities in composition between this and Blake's engraving *Ezekiel*, where Ezekiel, in spite of the disapproval of the mourners around him, accepts God's bidding and stoically refuses to mourn the death of his wife, because he had been forbidden by God to do so. Bindman suggests that Blake paired *Job* with *Ezekiel* because he saw them both as men of Divine knowledge, set apart and misunderstood by their fellows.<sup>39</sup> This runs counter to the accepted view that Blake's *Job* was deeply in error, because of self-righteousness, and leads one to conclude that Blake's *Job* throughout was a man close to God. This *Job* series is important to interpreting Blake's *Illustrations*.

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<sup>37</sup> Keynes Collection. When Sir Geoffrey Keynes died in 1982, most of his collection went to the Fitzwilliam Museum, but I have not found any positive statement that this unique first state *Job* engraving went too.

<sup>38</sup> Lindberg's dating of the first state for this engraving rests on the fact that when Blake reworked an engraving he seldom bothered to alter the original date: the revised version of *The Gates of Paradise*, printed on paper watermarked 1818-25, still bears the date 1793, for example. Lindberg suggests that the date 'August 18th 1793' on the second state is actually the date for the first state, and we should date the second state some 5 years later, c. 1797, and link it with Blake's ownership of the 1796 edition of Young's *Night Thoughts*, which included a paraphrase in verse of the whole central section of the Book of *Job*, and Blake's illustrations for this work, which are similar in style.

<sup>39</sup> *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), p. 209.

**'Job' themes in *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793)**

In the same notebook as the sketch for *Job and his Friends* are the sketches for Job's emblem-book *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*. The sketch described above (fig. 3) was probably originally intended for the emblem book. In his sketch here for the frontispiece Blake quotes the same verses from the Book of Job as on the *Job* engraving, 'What is Man that thou shouldest Magnify him & that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him / Job' (7:17-18) The final plate of the emblem series also quotes from the Book of Job. In this little line-engraving, a huddled hooded figure sits staring in contemplation, and round the figure's feet is coiled an earthworm, rearing up its head. The inscription is 'I have said to the Worm thou art my mother and my sister' (Job 17:14). If Blake had merely shown the devouring worm, the meaning would have been despair, but he has shown the huddled figure wrapt in thought, and the fact that Man is conscious of his condition and has had a vision of Resurrection is all-important.<sup>40</sup> These illustrations are designed to show what Job thought about death, not to illustrate any event from the Book of Job. This little book of etchings is bleak and uncompromising in its approach to earthly life. It belongs to the same period as the terrible figures of a self-blinded Urizen in fetters.

From the seventeen illustrations discussed by Lindberg, I have found that, in terms of their mood, a general survey shows that their putative dates fit well with the outline given above of the different stages in Blake's inner journey. Paintings of c.1803-5 show a serenity and radiance quite absent from work of the previous decade. And the group of Job studies c. 1793, with the possibly later second state of the *Job* engraving, suggest that Blake saw Job's sufferings at the hands of his Comforters as central to the meaning of the story.

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<sup>40</sup> In an earlier drawing (Butlin 149 (c.1780-85)), which Butlin suggests may be the model for it, the face of the figure is definitely a woman, who is young and beautiful and serene, with large dark eyes (Butlin [text] 133)..

**v) Dating Blake's water-colour *Illustrations to the Book of Job* for Thomas Butts**

Blake made a set of twenty-one exquisitely drawn water-colours to illustrate the Book of Job for Thomas Butts. Gilchrist writes that Blake borrowed them from Butts and showed them to John Linnell, who ordered a set of replicas in water-colour, and eventually commissioned a series of engravings, in an agreement dated 25th March 1823.<sup>41</sup> These Butts drawings were formerly dated between 1818-1820. Lindberg, however, gives strong reasons for dating them to the first decade of the nineteenth century. Firstly, the Blake-Butts accounts end by 1810, and there is no record of any commissions in the next fifteen years. Gilchrist tells us that the two men had probably quarrelled - certainly they seldom met. Lindberg points out that the style of the Butts set is that of the smooth, thin washes of 1805-10. The Butts accounts for 1810 show a payment of £21 to Blake, which could possibly be the payment for the 21 water-colours, since Butts used to pay Blake about £1 a drawing.<sup>42</sup> Lindberg surmises that drawings 17 and 20, which are tinted in a different style and are on different paper, betray additional work by Butts and his son, whom Blake began teaching to draw and engrave in 1806.

Most scholars agree with Lindberg, for many reasons, and are reluctant to accept Gilchrist's assumption that the Butts set were only made shortly before the Linnell set.<sup>43</sup> The arguments are technical, and are well set out in Butlin's monumental *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*,<sup>44</sup> and in David Bindman's article in his edition of the *Illustrations* for the Blake Trust (1987). Butlin assigns most of them to the period 1805-6, following Blake's trial for sedition in Chichester. Bindman adds that the Biblical

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<sup>41</sup> Gilchrist, pp. 282-3.

<sup>42</sup> Gilchrist, p. 282. Receipts for 29th January 1807, 7th April 1809, 16th January 1810, and 14th April 1810, printed in *BR*, p. 575-7.

<sup>43</sup> Kathleen Raine, *The Human Face of God: William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 25, acknowledges the early date for the Butts set, but she ignores the consequences of it, writing only about the engravings.

<sup>44</sup> Butlin [text] pp. 409-11.

water-colour, *By the Waters of Babylon* (Butlin 451), which can be firmly dated to 1806, has resemblances to the first plate made for Thomas Butts: in both, the visual focus is on a great oak tree with musical instruments hanging in it, while below it sits a group of figures. In further support of this date c.1805 Butlin points to the fact that two of the drawings, nos. 5 and 11, are signed *WB inven*, i.e. 'invented' or 'discovered' by WB, not 'painted'. This was an inscription which Blake ceased to use after 1806, replacing it by his signature, *W. Blake*; and this is one of several reasons why scholars now tend to date the Butts set to before 1806.

Bindman links this *Job* set with the set of 32 water-colours of the life of Christ for Thomas Butts that were completed by 1805. The *Job* series is smaller, and in his view carries the story through to the New Testament, for Job is finally redeemed by Christ (the evidence for and against this interpretation of drawings 16 and 17, an interpretation which is also Lindberg's, will be set out below in Chapter 4).<sup>45</sup> The question of date is important, because if this early dating is right, the Butts set belongs to that period of a sense of renewal and Christian vision after the Blakes' return from Felpham to London. Blake's whole visual conception for the series was worked out in the Butts set.

#### **vi) The engraved set, and the versions immediately preceding it**

About 1821 John Linnell persuaded Blake to use the designs of his water-colours for engravings so that, according to Gilchrist, they could be marketed, and appreciated by a wider public. The various preliminary versions of Blake's *Illustrations* are described by Lindberg (pp. 22-32).

**The Linnell watercolour set and the half-size sketches.** There is another set of twenty-one water-coloured Indian ink drawings, almost identical with the Butts set, and

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<sup>45</sup> Bindman (1987), p.28.

it is agreed that this duplicate set were the tracings of the Butts set, made in 1821 by John Linnell himself, with some help from Blake in putting the finishing touches. Linnell's pencil tracings can still be seen under Blake's Indian ink and water-colour washes. The traced lines are stiff and dead. In nos. 13, 17, 18, and 20, however, there are no traced lines. These four were created by Blake afresh for the engraved series, and the scenes differ substantially from the corresponding drawings in the Butts series. Blake made improvements to each of these scenes, especially to drawing 18, as will be discussed later. The second group is a set of twenty-two half-size sketches which Blake made from the Linnell set, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

**The New Zealand coloured set.** In 1928 a considerable stir was caused when there suddenly turned up, in New Zealand, in the hands of the descendants of Albin Martin, Linnell's pupil, a complete coloured set of Blake's *Job*. These are now in the Paul Mellon collection. The sellers were descendants of Albin Martin, who was known to have emigrated to New Zealand - the provenance is faultless. But it is not at all clear how he could have commissioned Blake to make him such a set, since he was only fourteen years old when Blake died. This complete set were not printed, however, but painstakingly drawn by hand. The designs are the same size as the designs on the engravings. For some years it was believed that these must have been the designs for the engravings, and that they formed an essential intermediate stage between the John Linnell tracings and the finished design. Even the colouring was thought to be by Blake himself, since it corresponded so exactly not just in details in the drawings, but also in the colour-scheme of the Linnell collection. But this very exactitude gave rise to suspicion. So strongly sceptical is the consensus of opinion now, concerning Blake's direct involvement, that Butlin did not include them in his 1981 Catalogue, and for practical purposes I shall ignore this version also.<sup>46</sup> Butlin argues that Blake himself

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<sup>46</sup> The scholars who believed them to be by Blake himself are Lawrence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes (1935), vol. 1, pp. 12, 47-50; Philip Hofer, 'Drawings by William Blake for the Book of Job, in *The Connoisseur* XCVII, 1936, pp. 185-7, and *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1937), pp. 7,9, though he writes that designs 5, 6, 11, 21 are 'open to suspicion'. Doubts were first expressed by Anthony Blunt, p. 31 n.; Lindberg, pp. 33-6 sets out the case against them in detail; David Bindman in a letter

tended to experiment, not copy slavishly. Where there are significant changes of detail between various states of the engraving the New Zealand set follows the final version: this is particularly noticeable in the case of Plate XVI, where Blake has widened the print in two stages, so as to show more of the extremities of the figures, and the New Zealand version copies the final state. Butlin concludes that the provenance and 'general prettification' of Blake's original images suggest an origin in the circle of John Linnell (Butlin [text] 409-10). The Blake Trust facsimile edition of 1987 includes them, but the work is titled *William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job' from the circle of John Linnell*, in order to catalogue their existence without commitment to their being by Blake himself.

**The engravings.** The set of engravings which are the end result of these tracings are a magnificent composite creation. They form a kind of commentary on the water-colour series from which they were developed, in that the pictures themselves are framed in highly stylised symbolic designs, with, for example, the peacock and the parrot to represent an Edenic innocence.<sup>47</sup> Above and below the designs there are explanatory quotations from scripture, partly, as would be expected, from *the Book of Job*, but also from other parts of the Bible, particularly from the New Testament.

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in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 23rd. March 1974, and *Blake as an Artist* (1977), agrees that they are not genuine.

<sup>47</sup> Lindberg suggests the peacock and the parrot are to suggest the luxurious delights of Job's table in the days of prosperity, but in his commentary on Plate II in Bindman (1987) retracts, and says the peacock represents pride. But the only instance cited is 'The pride of the peacock is the glory of God' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 8, E 36). I do not agree, because both imply a judgement against Job which is not appropriate. The peacock was commonly a symbol of Eden in medieval illuminated manuscripts.

**vii) 'Prayer' and 'praise' in Blake's *Job*: the Discovery of Variant Proofs of Plates I and XXI.**

In the catalogue for an auction on 9th December 1936, by the American Art Association/Anderson Galleries Inc. of New York, Robert Essick discovered that Lot 62 was a group of 21 pre-publication *Job* proofs.<sup>48</sup> Several copies of proofs are listed by Essick for the 1987 Blake Trust facsimile edition, and his verdict is that this set, auctioned on 9th December 1936, represent the first states after the addition of the border designs, and are therefore of considerable importance. These proofs differ from the final version in two major ways - the lack of several of the Biblical inscriptions, and the presence of a quite different inscription in the lower margin of Plates I and XXI. Plate V lacks the Biblical inscriptions 'And it grieved him at his heart / Who maketh his Angels Spirits, & his Ministers Flaming Fire', words which appear as the second and third lines of text on the earliest known proofs with border-designs. Plate XVI is described as lacking 'The Accuser of our Brethren is Cast down / who accused them before our God day & night'. But by far the most significant differences occur in Plates I and XXI, and fortunately both plates were photographed for the 1936 catalogue (figs. 18:1 and 18:2).

In the proof for Plate I, in the ground beneath the altar in the lower border, is inscribed 'Prayer to God is the Study of Imaginative Art'. The final plate has a parallel inscription, 'Praise to God is the Exercise of Imaginative Art'. Robert Essick writes that as far as he can see from these reproductions, the letters were scratched into the copperplates in drypoint, not written in pencil or pen on the individual impressions, and there can be little doubt that they are in Blake's own hand. In the next known proof state of Plate I, the ground has been completely cleared of writing and 'The Letter

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<sup>48</sup> Robert N. Essick, 'Blake's *Job*: some unrecorded proofs and their inscriptions', *Blake: an Illustrated Quarterly*, XIX no. 3, winter 1985-6, pp. 96-102.

Killeth / The Spirit giveth Life' has been added to the upper part of the altar. In the case of Plate XXI, the next recorded state shows that the ground has been cleared of all letters, additional tongues of flame have been added above the altar, and the lettering on the altar has been recut more clearly. Both in Plate I and in Plate XXI, subsequent proofs show these features remaining unchanged. Perhaps Blake made the changes because these two aphorisms on the first and final plates are the only words (other than signatures and imprints) which are not Biblical quotations, or at least closely based on the Bible. Blake used them instead, in a slightly shortened form, on his *Laocoön*, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

'Praise to God is the Exercise of Imaginative Art' presents no problems of interpretation, but the paired inscription in the lower margin of Plate I, 'Prayer to God is the study of Imaginative Art' seems to Essick to present problems. The dilemma as he sees it is this: either Blake radically changed his mind about the meaning of the series at a late stage in the engraving process (as Essick suggests), or we need to reconsider what he intended by the words 'The Letter killeth, the Spirit giveth Life', at the foot of Plate I in the final version. This thesis takes the second alternative, and questions the received interpretation of the series as showing Job's progress from the 'Error' of self-righteousness. I shall therefore return to the questions raised by these variant proofs again in Chapter 5 (which looks at the overall meaning of the engraved set) after examining the Butts set.

## Ch. 2 The Job tradition available to Blake, in words and art

### Introduction

'To learn the Language of Art Copy for Ever. Is my rule.' (E 635)<sup>1</sup>

Blake writes of 'the Language of Art' as if it is self-evident that a good artist needs to learn it. Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* are full of unexpected elements. But Lindberg argues that they are not based on some peculiarly Blakean perspective, and that almost all that is unbiblical can be traced back to the tradition of Christian religious art.<sup>2</sup> This in its turn he traces back to the interpretations of the early Fathers, or to the alternative Job story which grew up some time in the first century BC or AD, known as *The Testament of Job*, which in Eastern Christendom was for a time revered on a par with Scripture. In this chapter and the next the intention is to summarise the detailed evidence from Bo Lindberg and other art historians concerning this tradition, contrasting it with the biblical Book of Job from which it sprang.

Blake has a large number of motifs and properties which are not in the biblical Book of Job. There is a Gothic church and the Lord's Prayer inscribed on the disk of the setting sun, the dream of Satan masquerading as God, the Greek gods Helios and Selene, the vision shown to Job of the last judgement, the writing down of his story by his daughters, and the rejoicing in the final plate, in which Job is depicted praising God by singing and making music with all his family. There is no event in the Book of Job as source for drawing no. 11, which depicts Job's evil dream, Job perceiving that the Power he wrestles with has a cloven hoof. Blake's versions differ from the scriptural version in other important respects. The role of Job's wife is more prominent in

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<sup>1</sup> Annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1798), on the page of contents, against 'Much copying discountenanced'.

<sup>2</sup> Lindberg, p. 5.

Blake's version than in the Biblical story, and this indicates a whole shift in emphasis. The role of Elihu, the younger friend who arrives later on the scene, is also more positive. And the Bible has no mention of the casting down of Satan and his angels, so dramatically depicted in no. 16. Moreover Blake embellishes the engraved version with quotations, many of which are not from the Book of Job but from the New Testament.

### **i) The Bible and its interpretation**

In a Christian household, such as Blake grew up in, the Bible would have been the focal point of everyday life. Passages from it would have been read daily, and the young Blake would have been imaginatively stimulated by its illustrations. The licence to interpret as well as represent was not only granted to the great masters; even biblical illustration of the most naive and popular kind normally included the artist's interpretation: the tradition of re-interpreting as well as 'telling' was well-established in Blake's day. A depiction of the Fall, for example, would probably include a visual detail reminding us of Redemption, while pictures of the sufferings of Job would include half-disguised crosses, and symbols representing the Law and the Gospels. There were even traditional subjects without Biblical basis, such as 'The Finding of the Body of Abel', with Adam and Eve depicted discovering the body of their murdered son. Indeed, many of Blake's illustrations, far from being original, are typical examples of this popular tradition.<sup>3</sup>

It has recently come to light that Blake owned the three volumes of Joseph Hallett's *A Free and Impartial Study of the HOLY SCRIPTURES recommended: being notes on some peculiar texts, with discourses and observations*.<sup>4</sup> They are recorded in the

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Tannenbaum, pp. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hallett, Jnr., 3 vols., (London: J. Noon, 1729-36). BBS, pp. 317-18.

catalogue of a sale at the Anderson Gallery on 6th April 1920, but are at present untraced. Each volume has Blake's autograph, and the date, 1799. The price he paid for the work, £1.1s., is written in the first volume. Hallett does not hesitate to make radical interpretations, interrelating linguistic studies with sectarian and political ideas. For example, in the chapter entitled 'The Meaning of the word 'God'', in vol. 2, he argues 'the word *God* is by *sacred* as well as by profane authors actually applied to *different* persons: to the Most High, to the Mediator, to angels, to men.'<sup>5</sup> He selects examples from the Old Testament to demonstrate this argument. Nor is Hallett afraid to discuss errors he has discovered in the Hebrew copies of the Old Testament, and notes on texts of Scripture, arguing, for example, that 'He leadeth *princes* away spoiled' (Job 12:19), should have been translated 'priests'.<sup>6</sup> Hallett's radical approach to exegesis would have attracted Blake. It is interesting that he should have owned such a radical Christian work, so critical in its approach to the sacred text.

Northrop Frye writes that one of the most striking features of the Bible is its capacity to rewrite itself.<sup>7</sup> God is a God of the future, for ever unfolding, forever disclosing Himself in new ways. Frye argues that God's reply to Moses, when asked what is his name, is translated in the Authorised Version, as 'I am that I am', but more properly it should be translated 'I will be that I will be'. Frye shows how the Bible rewrites itself within its own corpus of writing: from Genesis to Esther we are concerned with objective things - law, history, and ritual, but Job initiates a section concerned with poetry, prophecy, and wisdom. This process of rewriting does not stop when the books of the Bible are organised into a canon. The important thing is that there are constantly new prophets, new 'Bibles': the Bible must not be regarded simply as

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<sup>5</sup> Hallett, vol. 2 (1732), p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: the Bible and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 225.

literature, for the Bible is a mirror of God Himself. Its reason for existing is that through it man should grow more like God, and this *imitatio dei* is at its core. So the Bible continues to be rewritten, as it was when Milton wrote his epics of the Fall and of Redemption. Blake too is constantly rewriting the Bible, but not so much by imitating, repeating, and honouring, as by denying, contradicting, and making new.<sup>8</sup> The basis of Blake's quarrel with Bishop Watson - and ultimately with Paine also - is on the issue of canonicity. For the Bishop the Bible is a closed system: it is complete, and there to be obeyed, the canon or standard against which a man must measure his conduct, whereas for Blake 'I am that I am' entails a continual process of re-creation. Many of the quotations used as part of the marginal embellishments for the final version of *Illustrations to the Book of Job* are from the New Testament, and by means of them Blake has found a way of expressing the kernel of his own Christian faith. In his *Illustrations to the Book of Job* Blake is employing a new medium for detailed re-telling, and in a sense is making a new departure, but the urge to "re-write" has been there all along.

## ii) The canonical Job seen as a developing text

The Book of Job begins with a brief narrative introduction, in which almost all the incidents in the story take place (1:1 to 2:13). At the end of the forty-two chapters there is a brief epilogue in the same prose style. Between the two halves of this folk-story, however, is a long poetical dialogue which is philosophy rather than narrative. Job rails against his comforters' shallow solutions to the problem of suffering and against the injustice of God's world with passionate conviction, and he is answered by God himself. There is magnificent poetry in the dialogues between Job and his three accusers -

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Mark Trevor Smith, *Blake and his Bibles*, ed. David V. Erdman (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1990), p. xi.

friends they can hardly be called - in the newcomer Elihu's angry rebukes, and in the intercourse between Job and his Creator. Job rails against the flourishing of injustice, against the power of evil in the world, against the way God seems to be deaf and blind to the sufferings of his faithful servants, while each of his mourners in turn affirms the conventional Jewish view that suffering is always the result of sin. Finally God appears to Job in a whirlwind, and speaks with him. God does not convict Job of sin, in failing to keep his Laws, but only of folly, in wanting to understand his *ways*.

For many centuries the outspokenness of this central section of the Book of Job was an embarrassment to both Jewish and Christian commentators, as Nahum Glatzer has shown.<sup>9</sup> He shows how commentators found the central, poetic section of the book too unorthodox, too radical and threatening. These commentators were able to find a way out of their embarrassment by concentrating on the folk-story motif at the beginning, and interpreting the body of the book in the light of it, or by interpreting the text typologically, as foreshadowing the passion of Christ. Blake made his uniquely original pictorial epic by using to the full this tradition of exegesis, which he received mainly through the heritage of religious art, and reshaping it for his own purposes.

**Septuagint and Vulgate additions.** Already in the Septuagint (before 132 BC) we see the text being subtly altered to meet the sensibility of the age. Firstly, there is a subtle change concerning the part played by Job's wife. She has been given a thirteen line speech of her own :

'And after much time had passed Job's wife said to him, 'How long will you continue to say, "let me wait a little time, watching for the hope of my salvation."? Behold, your memory is vanished from the earth, you have lost the sons and daughters whom I brought forth from the womb in pain and grief, and for whom I have toiled in vain. You pass the nights under the

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<sup>9</sup> *The Dimensions of Job: a Study and Selected Readings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967).

open sky, sitting among decay and worms. As for me, I am become a beggar and a wanderer, going from place to place and from house to house, longing for the sun to set, that I may get relief from the toils and sorrows that beset me. I beg you, say some word to God, and die.'<sup>10</sup>

In the Hebrew version she clearly says 'Curse God and die' (2:9), but in the Greek of the Septuagint there is ambiguity. 'Say some word εἰς God, and die', and whether this word is to be taken as 'against', and is a weaker version of the Hebrew 'curse', or whether it means 'towards', and the advice is 'Commend yourself into God's hands, and die', her words are not as strong as in the original. Job looks her full in the face, ἐμβλεψας εἶπεν αὐτῇ, and replies in a personal way, rather than with a cold generalisation. Similarly in the Septuagint God does not name Leviathan at all, but only refers in the plural to beasts, Θηρια, (Septuagint 40:5) and in 41:14 the text literally translated means 'This one is the chief of all God's creations; made to be played with by his angels', (αὐτὸ ἔστιν ἀρχὴ πλάσματος Κυρίου, πεποιημένον ἐνγκαταπαιδεύεσθαι ὑπο τῶν ἀγγελλῶν αὐτοῦ (Septuagint 40:19). In Jerome's Vulgate this is transformed into a promise to Job that God will throw them down, and cast thunderbolts onto them (41:14-16). The text here is clearly corrupt and problematic, but the process of making God's speech less fearful is apparent. For in the Authorised Version, which tries to be faithful to the original Hebrew, this was to be translated quite differently, as 'Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them.' Here there is no mention of any punishment for God's monsters. Finally, the canonical book ends 'So Job died, being old and full of days', but the Septuagint adds 'and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up' (Septuagint 42:17a).

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<sup>10</sup> *Septuaginta*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche bibelgesellschaft, 1935), vol. 2, p. 275, for text in Greek. Translation is my own. All subsequent references to this work are cited in the main body of the text.

**Job as viewed in the New Testament.** In the lower margin of Plate VII the Epistle of James is quoted by Blake, 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord' (James 5:11). Plate VII, which will be discussed in more detail below in the section on the exegesis of Job in the early Fathers, shows Job almost dead, and supported in a way that strongly suggests a foreshadowing of the Christ of Michelangelo's Pietà. St. James is here drawing a parallel between Job's sufferings and the sufferings of Christ which ended in his Resurrection. For the Old Testament Job is far from patient in the central, poetic part of the biblical story, and it seems that St. James is drawing on sources other than the Book of Job, sources well known to his readers.

### iii) *The Testament of Job*

The traditional belief in God as benevolent, and in God's providence, was too strong for Job's railings against his Maker not to shock and outrage. A separate *midrash* narrative tradition grew up, in which Job actively provoked the anger of Satan, and so drew his troubles upon him. Within both the Jewish and the Christian communities, the saintly figure who refuses to complain against his Maker has attracted a whole collection of folklore. The earliest known manifestation of this is the apocryphal *Testament of Job*. Unfortunately the Hebrew original is lost, and we have only two Greek versions - if indeed there was a Hebrew original, for on this also scholars seem divided. Most scholars think that it originated in the first century BC or AD, though some would place it much earlier, in the fifth century BC. Some scholars think that James 5:11 shows its influence.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For discussion of *The Testament of Job* see James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, rev. ed., with supplement (Chicago: Scholars Press, for Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), pp. 134-6; for the text, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1983), pp. 839 ff.

It is not only the Jews and St. James who found the Book of Job too unorthodox, and who preferred the *midrash* version of a man of unshaken faith. Clement of Alexandria, writing about 100 AD, held up Job to his flock as 'righteous and blameless, true worshipper of God'. Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia, who died in 428 AD, mentions an 'outstanding and much esteemed story of the saintly Job, retold orally by everyone in a similar form, not only among Israelite people but also by others'. This tradition Bishop Theodore accepted as of greater value than the biblical book of Job, and the speeches attributed to Job by the biblical author were dismissed as unbecoming for a man 'who mastered his life with great wisdom and virtue and piety'.<sup>12</sup> This version was attractive because it reinforced the popular belief that Job was a real man, but also because in this version Job actively provoked Satan's anger, instead of being the victim of a frivolous wager entered upon by God and Satan.

#### **a) History of transmission**

**Literary versions.** This *Testament* was banned in the West from 496 AD when it was condemned by Pope Gelasius.<sup>13</sup> It continued to be read, however, by Eastern Christians, and by Jews and Muslims, and in the twelfth century knowledge of it spread to the West through poems and folk-tales. Some of the incidents from the story have been preserved in German and English poetry, and in a French mystery-play. Blake would have been familiar with this tradition, even though he could not have read *The*

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<sup>12</sup> Glatzer, p.15.

<sup>13</sup> Lindberg, p. 137 considers that from the orthodox point of view there was a danger that if it were interpreted anagogically - that is, to encourage hope in happiness to come - Job's prosperity so vividly described at the beginning of the tale would be used as a secret symbol of the life-before-life about which the Gnostics claimed knowledge. For this and other reasons in 496 AD it was banned.

*Testament of Job* itself, since it was not available in the West till it was published by Angelo Mai in 1833.

**Pictorial Versions.** It was in religious art that the *The Testament of Job* was chiefly handed down. Paintings and woodcuts representing scenes from it are frequent, particularly in the fifteenth century. At the outset of the story, Job on his deathbed gathers his children. This scene of Job on his deathbed relating his trials to his daughters is on a fresco at Pisa, of which an engraving was published in 1776 in a collection of Pisan works, by C. and P. Lasinio. A. H. Palmer writes that his father Samuel Palmer while still a schoolboy spent hours laboriously copying from this collection, which suggests the collection was well known and accessible.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, in August 1800 a set of six original thirteenth century paintings on the life of Job, together with two on Tobit and some New Testament subjects, were discovered behind the wainscotting of St. Stephen's chapel in Westminster, when the wall had to be pulled down in order to enlarge the House of Commons to accommodate the Irish members. These also show clear signs of the influence of *The Testament of Job*. Because they were painted direct onto a gesso base on the stones of the wall itself, there was no possibility of transferring them to safety intact. Blake's friend J. T. Smith obtained permission to copy them, however, before they were demolished, provided he left work at 9.a.m. each day to make room for the workmen. He describes how the workmen were in such a hurry that what he had copied in the morning was often destroyed later the same day. In September the Society of Antiquaries commissioned Robert Smirke Junior to take over from J. T. Smith, and he was provided with better facilities. J. T. Smith tells us that Smirke was able to trace the outlines from the designs themselves, and as the wall was taken down the stones were brought to him in a room adjoining the

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<sup>14</sup> A. H. Palmer, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer, Painter and Etcher* (London: Seeley and Co., 1892), p. 6.

Commons, and he was able to fit them together from his tracings.<sup>15</sup> His halfsize colour copies of the Job series were presented by the Society of Antiquaries to the British Museum in 1814.<sup>16</sup> Blake had worked for the Society of Antiquaries since he was a boy, and could hardly have failed to know of these *al secco* paintings, in view of the excitement and publicity, not to mention the rivalry between J. T. Smith and the Society of Antiquaries, both of whom published large illustrated volumes describing the finds in 1807.<sup>17</sup>

Topham gives us an exhaustive account of the paintings, the interpretation of which is assisted by the captions in rhyming Latin hexameters. The first shows Job, seated left, addressing his sons, and exhorting them to serve God, 'He who gives breath, and form, and feeling'. This could be the inspiration of Blake's first drawing, showing Job at prayer with his family, an open book on his lap, as if he has been instructing them. The second shows Job's daughters asking his permission to go to feast with their brothers, and he blesses them, 'Go well, and may ye return even better.' The third shows the family seated at a table, spread with a white cloth, and above their heads a grinning, crouching Satan is pushing the beams of the house onto them to crush them. Blake has made the scene more dramatic, by depicting Satan as larger, and darker, than any of the human figures, who are depicted either as dead or dying, and the house already in flames (no. 3). The fourth shows Job and his wife, seated, receiving news of disaster from two kneeling messengers; Blake's two messengers are running (cf. no. 4). The last two show Job naked, covered in blotches, in company with his comforters: in the first, a very youthful and feminine Elihu reproves the other friends, as we are informed

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<sup>15</sup> J. Topham, *Some Account of the Collegiate Chapel at Westminster*, with engravings by Basire (London: Society of Antiquaries, April 1807), p.viii.

<sup>16</sup> *Catalogue for an Exhibition of British Art* (London: British Museum, 1934), p.11.

<sup>17</sup> J. T. Smith, *Antiquities of Westminster* (London: J.T. Smith, June 1807); J. Topham, loc. cit.

by the rhyming hexameters below, which follow *The Testament of Job* in emphasising Job's courage and piety ('Set pius et rectus; gerit insuperabile pectus', 'He sits, godfearing and upright; his courage is indomitable')) Blake (no. 12) also shows Elihu as youthful and almost feminine. The final *al secco* shows Job with Zophar, who is sitting with one well-shod foot crossed over the other, his right hand raised in argument, his face self-confident, his brows knit in disapproval ('nolens audire, nec quivit plurima scire', 'Being unwilling to listen, he could not have knowledge').<sup>18</sup> Blake's biblical quotations, added when he created the engraved set, emphasise Knowledge and Understanding (see below, in Chapter 5).

Indeed, the fact that there were six illustrations devoted to the Book of Job may have given him the idea for his own series. There are aspects of the *Testament* in the St. Stephen's Chapel Job series. But whereas this thirteenth century work concentrates on Job's sufferings, particularly at the hands of his friends, almost half of Blake's series is concerned with Job's recovery, his visions and final unity and participation in God.

#### **b) Traces of the *Testament* in the Butts set**

**Job in Prosperity.** In *The Testament of Job*, Job is not merely a prosperous owner of flocks and herds, but is King in the land of Ausitis (Uz). Job used to play before the widows and strangers he fed at his table, to remind them that 'they should give praise to the Lord'. Job in the *Testament* recalls, 'I used to have six psalms and a ten-stringed lyre.'<sup>19</sup> We see an echo of this in the instruments hung up on the oak-tree behind Job in drawing no.1. Job not only gives freely to the poor of his own city, but sends caravans

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<sup>18</sup> Lindberg, p. 139.

<sup>19</sup> Charlesworth (1983), p. 844.

to other regions as well, and as in the Book of Job he makes sacrificial offerings on behalf of his children. In the first of the *al secco*s from St. Stephen's Westminster, Job is seen addressing his seven sons and three daughters, and it could be that this reflects the opening scene of *The Testament of Job*, when Job gathers his offspring to address them before his death. Blake's opening drawing follows the *al secco* in *not* showing Job rising early to sacrifice, as in the biblical version.

**Job angers Satan.** Job provoked the anger of Satan by destroying an idol of Satan, because people were worshipping it as an image of the Creator. An angel of the Lord appeared to Job in a dream, warning him that if he destroyed the idol, Satan would demand 'the warfare of God' against him for this deed. Could this perhaps be the source for Job's nightmare in drawing no. 11? If so, it is at this point in Blake's pictorial epic that Job realises that God's people have been worshipping an idol, and that he must destroy that idol, if they are to live. Their God at this point is revealed as having a cloven hoof. In the *Testament* version, Job is visited in his sleep by a bright light and a voice, 'And the light answered me and said...

But if you are patient I will make your name renowned in all generations of the earth, and you shall be raised up in the Resurrection...For you will be like a sparring athlete, enduring pains and winning the crown'.<sup>20</sup>

**Satan's repeated attacks on Job.** In Blake's *Illustrations* Satan figures repeatedly, appearing in nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 16, unlike the biblical Satan, who does not re-appear after the brief narrative which ends at 2:13. Again, in *The Testament* Satan keeps coming back to attack Job. He disguises himself as a beggar and visits Job but Job immediately unmasks him. So Satan swears he will get power from heaven and take revenge. With God's permission, for seven years Satan makes him suffer. Throughout the story Satan comes to him in disguise - again as beggar, as a serpent,

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 841.

then as the baker who demands Sitis' hair as the price of three loaves of bread. He disguises himself as the King of Persia, with an army under his command, and it is he, not 'a wind from Heaven', that destroys the house in which Job's children are feasting, crushing them to death in the ruins, as in Blake's no. 3, which shows a grinning Satan throwing down the house on Job's children and crushing them. In *The Testament of Job* Satan then attacks him 'like a mighty hurricane', hurling him down on the ground, a scene Blake illustrates in no. 6. The motif of Satan attacking Job with scourges was popular in mystery plays, and illustrated in woodcuts.

**Satan disguised as a beggar.** While Job suffers, sitting on a dung-hill outside the city because he is a leper and so an outcast, his wife Sitis provides for him by hard labour. In *The Testament* Job's share of bread is withheld by the baker for whom she works, and though she shares her own, they do not get enough to eat. Medieval legend elaborates on *The Testament of Job*, saying that Satan then appeared to Job disguised as a beggar, and it may have been this which gave Blake the idea for no. 5, in which Job shares his last crust with a beggar, but nevertheless gives with his left hand, 'kack-handed'. In the Book of Job it was only during his prosperity that he was generous to beggars. Lindberg lists four illustrations of this incident, among them a woodcut by H. S. Beham, which Blake would almost certainly have known, since he mentions him in his prospectus of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (E 567).<sup>21</sup> In Blake's illustration Satan is shown in the world above, separate from the beggar, but the meaning of Blake's illustration is the same as the medieval woodcut, that Satan can destroy us through our virtues, if he cannot corrupt us by our vices. Lindberg also finds a very close parallel in a design in a 17th century German-Rebus Bible, so close that he is sure Blake must have seen it (fig. 22). In it Job sits in *erneuerte herrlichkeit* ('in restored bliss'), his bow renewed in his hand,

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<sup>21</sup> '...those original Copper Plates of Albert Durer, Lucas, Hisben, Aldegrave, and the old original Engravers, who were great Masters in Painting and Designing...' 'Hisben' is an old nickname for Hans Sebald Beham, made up from his monogram (E 567, Lindberg, p. 140, and n. 193).

with many beggars in his care, among them a one-legged man with a crutch and a blindfold, entering from the right. Job sits beneath the radiant triangle of the Trinity. Job is called *armenvater* (a reference to 'I was father of the poor' (Job 29:20)).<sup>22</sup> As in Blake's version, Satan comes between God and Job, but the little prancing devil in the German Bible bears no relationship to the rushing energy of Job's Satan. In the Butts series, the female angel on the left watching Job's almsgiving has her hands parted in a theatrical gesture of astonishment. In the engraved version the angels witness the almsgiving in a more sombre mood, as if well aware that Satan is rushing down upon Job, and no good deeds can save him from what is in store. The two versions in Blake's sources seem to have been jostling together in his mind. The German Rebus-Bible version is similar in mood to *The Testament of Job* in showing the spiritual Job, his bow renewed, not the despairing sufferer.

**Music and mysticism.** In *The Testament* kings come to mourn with Job, bringing soldiers with them, and they lament Job's wretched state, whereas he remains steadfast. 'Kings perish and rulers vanish, and their glory and pride is as the shadow in a looking-glass', he tells them, 'but my kingdom lasts forever, and its glory and beauty are in the chariot of my Father'. Job rejects his accusers' so-called knowledge, "Who understands the depths of the Lord and his wisdom, to be able to accuse God of injustice?" he tells them, and refuses the help of their physicians, saying that God himself will cure him, God who is the Maker of physicians. These four kings when they appear sing a royal song of lamentation over Job, the whole army joining in the chorus. This, and the bequeathing by Job of the magic girdles, which enable the wearer to hear the music of the spheres, is the origin of the artistic tradition showing Job comforted by musicians, and of Blake's final design, showing Job and his family praising God with many instruments. *The Testament* ends with Job bequeathing to his three daughters

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<sup>22</sup> Lindberg p. 141.

mystic girdles, and when they put them on they can understand the music of the spheres.<sup>23</sup> This is the origin of the persistent medieval tradition that Job - though an Old Testament figure - was the patron saint of singers and musicians. Lindberg lists five instances of Job with musicians, among them the musicians comforting him on the Cologne altar, and a miniature in a Coptic Bible in Naples showing Job and his daughters with the mystic girdles.

**The beauty of the serpent.** In *The Testament of Job* Elihu is the villain, 'imbued with the spirit of Satan', and when God appears at the end, he pardons the three kings but accuses Elihu of 'loving the beauty of the serpent'. Blake does not follow this condemnation of Elihu, but the writhing coils of the serpent fill the lower margin of Plate V, and his two tails reach a third of the way up the side-margins as well. And in the Butts version, no. 11, the figure of Satan hovering close above Job in his dream is entwined by a serpent, whose head glitters with bright colour, even though the rest of the plate has very sombre colouring. Lindberg finds many parallels in art for the motif of Satan tormenting Job, noting that in the lost Job altar by Rubens Satan torments Job with a serpent, as seen in engravings - three contemporary engravings are known. It is interesting that this Job altar was commissioned from Rubens by the *Confrérie des Musiciens* - presumably because Job was popularly regarded as their patron saint.

**The role of Job's Wife.** In the *Testament* Job's wife makes a loving speech at this point, though in the Book of Job she does not figure again after telling Job to curse God and die. It is close to the long passage in the Septuagint replacing Job 2:9, and softening the picture of Job's wife. Blake's treatment of her is very different from the

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<sup>23</sup> Some scholars think there are allusions to the mystical tradition here, and the girdles are related to Merkabah (chariot-mysticism): 'My kingdom is for ever and ever, and its splendour and majesty are in the chariots of my Father', says Job. See Charlesworth (1981), commentary on 33.9, p. 856.

Old Testament version, for she is with Job throughout, apart from in nos. 3 and 11, and she partakes in his visions, as his loving companion and friend. Lindberg's explanation here is that (as with Job and the beggar) Blake was heir to two traditions, in one of which his wife torments him with her mockery (as in the first state of the engraving *Job, his wife, and his friends*, in which she sits on the same side as the friends and her sharply turned face is at the same angle as his accusers' faces).<sup>24</sup> In the other tradition, based on *The Testament*, and reflected in Dürer's *Jabach-altar* (fig. 24), she earns money at a bakery to support him, and tries to soothe his sores by pouring hot water on them. This act of compassion is also reflected in a woodcut by Hans Weiditz (1532), which shows the treatment of sore boils with water in a bath-house, while Job, patron saint of sufferers from diseases of the skin, sits on his dunghill outside the window (fig. 23). We know that Dürer was one of Blake's favourite masters; and we know from Gilchrist that Blake had discussed these Weiditz woodcuts with Samuel Palmer, who owned the German translation of Petrarch in which they appear. However, his friendship with Samuel Palmer began many years after the Butts set was completed, so he may not have known them when he was composing the Butts set.<sup>25</sup> In Blake's *Illustrations* both traditions seem to feature, for in nos. 5, 7, and 10 she is an uncertain friend, whereas in nos. 13, 17, 19, and 21 she is loyal. Job's conversion is shown in no. 11, and hers in no. 13, and from then onwards she shares his vision and supports him.

**Job and his daughters.** When the kings arrive, Job's wife comes running to them, begging them that the soldiers should dig in the ruins of the house and give their ten children proper burial. But Job forbids this, saying that their souls are in paradise. Lindberg suggests that Blake reflects this in the margin-decoration of Plate XIX, where

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<sup>24</sup> Bindman, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Lindberg, pp. 143-4; Gilchrist i, p. 88.

ten spirits, three of them female, frame the two upper corners of the design, representing the seven sons and three daughters whose souls are alive in Heaven.<sup>26</sup>

In drawing no. 20 Job is telling his experiences, while his daughters, in accordance with the *Testament*, are either collecting and recording his words on scrolls, or they are singing angelic hymns using the scrolls as texts. Job dies and God himself descends from Heaven with his angels to collect his soul, welcomed with music and singing by Job's daughters, a scene represented on the Cologne altar. 'It is written that he will rise up with those whom the Lord will reawaken. To our Lord be glory. Amen.' In this finale all the themes of *The Testament of Job* are gathered up: the themes of the final defeat of Satan, the immortality of the soul, of future bliss, and of the divinity of music and the arts; all these themes have been shown by Lindberg to feature in Blake's Job. None of them come from the biblical Job.

### **Evaluation**

Behind this Jewish tale lies an almost dualistic picture of the world, with Satan a powerful ruler, yet still unable to destroy the relationship between God and his rare Chosen Ones. We see traces of this 'rule of Satan' in Blake's no. 3, for example, where Satan is shown throwing down the house and crushing to death Job's children, whereas in the Biblical version the damage was done by 'a wind from God'. Lindberg considers that we see it also in no. 16 (Job's vision of the Last Judgement),<sup>27</sup> but the *Testament* has no such apocalyptic casting out of Satan, though Job tells his daughters that after many unmaskings of Satan's disguises, 'then he left me, ashamed'. But there is another possible precedent for Blake's scene of the casting down of Satan. Glatzer goes on to

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<sup>26</sup> Lindberg, p. 146.

<sup>27</sup> Lindberg, p. 145.

trace this same tradition of Job as the man of perfect, unquestioning faith in an Addendum to the midrashic work *Abot de-Rabbi Nathan*, compiled in the early middle ages.<sup>28</sup> In this work Satan, having failed to corrupt Job, is finally cast down from heaven, a tradition on which Blake possibly draws for no. 16.

Towards the end of *The Testament of Job* the devil describes his struggle with Job exactly as Blake depicts it in no. 11: 'I became like one athlete wrestling another, and one pinned the other. The upper one silenced the lower, by filling his mouth with sand and bruising his limbs. But because he showed endurance, the upper one cried out in defeat. So you also, Job, were the one below, but you conquered my wrestling'.<sup>29</sup> *The Testament of Job*, with its more sustained and aggressive role for Satan, here seems to have influenced Blake's rendering. We have no evidence, however, apart from this, that Blake had access to the written text of *The Testament of Job*.

To sum up, Blake's *Illustrations* nos. 20 and 21 illustrate non-biblical incidents which have their origin in *The Testament of Job*, and its influence is apparent in nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 14, and 19, and possibly also in no. 11 (Job's evil dream), though this is more speculative.

#### **iv) Gregory the Great: Job as Christian and Job as Christ**

The theological problems posed by the Book of Job and the inconsistencies within it led to commentators from an early date interpreting it typologically, as a foreshadowing of

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<sup>28</sup> This Addendum is in an MS in the Vatican library, published as *Abot de Rabbi-Nathan*, Addendum II to Version I, ed. S. Schechter, (Vienna, 1887), pp. 150-66.

<sup>29</sup> Charlesworth (1983), vol. 1, p. 851, Chapter 27: 2-5.

Christ's passion and resurrection. Examples are enumerated by Jeremy Peter Gray in his thesis 'The iconography of the illuminated medieval manuscripts of Gregory's *Moralia in Job*':<sup>30</sup> This tradition of Job as prefiguring Christ was popularised mainly by the *Morals on the Book of Job* of St. Gregory the Great,<sup>31</sup> but it began many years earlier. Zeno of Verona (died 371 AD.), for example, in his *Tractatus XV: de Job*, found thirteen parallels between Job and Christ. St. Jerome's etymological interpretation of Job's name as 'grieving',<sup>32</sup> already mentioned, and his interpretation of Job's suffering as a prefiguring of the Passion of Christ, were adopted both by Gregory the Great and by Isidore, and became a focal aspect of the veneration of Job throughout the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly Gregory (c. 540-604) was the commentator who did most to establish the interpretation of Job as a foreshadowing of Jesus, *alter Christus*. His *Magna Moralia*, or *Morals on Job* originated in lectures given in Constantinople. He expounded the literal, but also the 'mystical' and the moral meanings, and of these the mystical was far the most important, for to him everything in Scripture spoke of Christ: Scripture 'holds out in promise the Redeemer of the world in all its statements.'<sup>33</sup> His allegorical interpretation demonstrates how the Book of Job is always referring forward to Christ, 'The blessed Job, who uttered those high mysteries of His Incarnation,' was by his life 'a sign of Him, whom by voice he proclaimed, and by all that he underwent, showed forth what were to be his sufferings.'<sup>34</sup> In the twelfth century several spiritual writers reiterated the typological teaching, for example Hugh of St. Victor in *De scripturis et scriptoribus sacris*, 'Job, qui interpretatur dolens, Christum significat, qui

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<sup>30</sup> Thesis for the degree of Ph.D., 2 vols., Courtauld Institute, University of London, 1992, pp. 213-14.

<sup>31</sup> *Morals on the Book of Job*, 3 vols., tr. James Bliss (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1844-50).

<sup>32</sup> 'Job, qui 'dolens', vel 'magnus', interpretatur, figuram Christi portavit.' Jerome, *Commentarii in Librum Job*, Latin Fathers, XXVI, sections 619-802, cf XLII, 'Per multa ergo sanctus Job domini nostri passionem quoque et patientiam figuravit'.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory, vol. 1, Section 6:1, p. 312.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory, vol. 1, Preface, section 14, p. 26.

prius in divitiis gloriae Patris eidem coaequatis, condescendit nostrae miseriae, et sedit humiliatus in sterquilinio huius mundi, omnibus nostris defectis pariter peccatum, communicans.<sup>35</sup> (Christ allowed his body to be defiled by the passion just as Job allowed his body to be defiled by sitting on the dunghill). The association of Job with the hope of Resurrection became a well-known theme in Christian art even earlier. He appears on the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, and in paintings in the catacombs.<sup>36</sup>

### a) Job as prefiguring Christ

It is clear that the artistic tradition that Blake inherited had a very different approach from modern exegesis. It did not attempt to interpret how the original writer might have meant the work to be understood, but interpreted it in order to illustrate the teaching of the church and the liturgy. A variety of services for the burial of the dead draw heavily on the Book of Job, because of the passages there which assert a confident hope in Resurrection, and this theme of Resurrection becomes an important theme in the illustrations. Blake in his handling of the Job story is drawing on a strong popular tradition that Job was a foreshadowing, a type of Christ. This tradition persisted in works of art, even after Higher Criticism's increasingly rational approach to the scriptures and greater stress on historical readings had shifted *written* interpretation away from Christo-centric readings. Popular tradition persists also in the use of quotations from the Book of Job in the Burial Service of the Church of England: three of the passages quoted from the Book of Job in the margins of Blake's *Illustrations* (1:21, 14:1 f., and 19:25 ff.) are used in the Burial Service in the Book of Common Prayer.

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<sup>35</sup> *The Latin Fathers*, CLXXV, section 12.

<sup>36</sup> Gray, p. 92, with note 10 on p. 355.

In Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, Job's story foreshadows Christ's passion in several ways. In addition to the Resurrection theme, so strongly echoed in the 'The Order for the Burial of the Dead' in the Book of Common Prayer, there is the Deposition (no. 7, which reflects Michelangelo's Pietà), the mocking (no. 10), and half-hidden symbols of Christ's cross (also in no. 7, but also probably in nos. 4, 8, and 12, as discussed below), and the Lamentation (again no. 7). No. 11, *Job's Evil Dream*, has complex layers of meaning, but at one level it seems to be a reflection of Christ's Harrowing of Hell. For St. Gregory, Job was a foreshadowing of Christ, but he was also a foreshadowing of Christ's church, a tradition which Blake reflects right at the beginning of his series, by the presence of a Gothic cathedral in the distance, behind the seated family.

For Gregory, Job on his dunghill outside the city has visual echoes with Christ on the Hill of Golgotha. This dunghill does not figure in the Authorised Version, which merely says that Job sat down among the ashes. But the parallels between Job and Christ are so strong that the dunghill is consistently found in Job illustrations. G. von der Osten has shown how in the fifteenth century the influence became reciprocal, and the suffering Christ began to be shown seated on a kind of small knoll, strongly evocative of Job's dunghill.<sup>37</sup> The iconography of Job also becomes strongly evocative of Christ. A print from an engraving by Matthäus Merian shows a group of excited and accusing townspeople (they are too many to be simply Job's wife and his Comforters) moving towards a naked Job seated on a heap of old straw, scraping his leg with one hand, while with the other (the left) he makes Christ's sign of blessing, the sign of Christ as *salvator mundi*, by folding all but three fingers. Above him hovers a winged devil. Beneath Job is written, 'Jak 5:11' (James 5:11).

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<sup>37</sup> 'Job and Christ', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. XVI, 1953, pp. 153 ff.

In his distress Job takes a broken potsherd to scrape himself with. God is the potter, man the potsherd, and both Elihu and Job remind their hearers that God made them out of clay (Job 10:9; 33:6). Gregory interpreted it as follows, 'For what is the potsherd in the hand of our Lord, but the flesh which he took of the clay of our nature? For the potsherd receives firmness by fire. And the Flesh of our Lord was rendered stronger by His Passion'.<sup>38</sup> This potsherd features prominently in the lower margin of Blake's Plate VI as a broken pot, and in Plate XII as a potsherd that has been thrown away, signifying that Job has been restored to new life. Likewise in Gregory's interpretation of Job's outcry against God in 9:24: 'The earth is given into the hands of the wicked: He covereth the faces of the judges thereof' is for Gregory a reference to Christ, taking 'earth' as the equivalent of 'flesh', 'the hands of this wicked one were they who were the aggressors in the death of our Redeemer...His flesh, he, by means of his ministers, did deprive of life for three days.' Lindberg suggests that the death of the biblical Job is symbolised by the silence the friends maintained for seven days and seven nights, the time of mourning over the dead among the Jews, and this death is symbolised by Blake in no. 7, with its echoes of Michelangelo's Pietà, an extremely popular work, reproduced many times in engravings.

### **b) Prefiguring Christ's Resurrection and Last Judgement**

But Job is also a type of Christ's resurrection, and in no. 18 the risen Job signifies the risen Christ, his arms echoing the position of Christ's on the cross in paintings that show him reigning from the cross, rather than realistic depictions of his death, where the hands droop, and the figure slumps forward, all the weight suspended from them. Here Job, like Christ, can forgive sins: in the margin of the engraved version Blake has

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<sup>38</sup> Gregory vol. 3, section 33, p. 153.

quoted from the Sermon on the Mount, 'I say unto you Love your Enemies bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you & pray for them that despitefull[y] use & persecute you' (Matth. 5:44-5). Lindberg argues that in having these words of Christ's in the margin, in the first person, Blake wants us to understand Job as the mouthpiece of Christ, able to forgive sins.

In the Vulgate, God at the end of his speech (41:14-15) tells Job how he will cast down Behemoth and Leviathan. Gregory the Great interprets this allegorically as God foretelling the destruction of Satan at the Last Judgement. Gregory tells us that God becomes Christ, for it is in Christ, his Son, that God will triumph over Satan. In the print from Matthäus Merian described above, the folded three fingers signifying Christ as *salvator mundi* are a reference to the Last Judgement, rather than to the Resurrection, and it is for this reason that Lindberg interprets the figure of the Deity in no. 16 as 'God become Christ', though there are no obvious tokens of it in Blake's depiction of God.

### **c) Job as a Christian**

**The hope of Resurrection.** The belief that Job is a prototype of Resurrection Hope stems from a very early Christian source. The Apostle James saw the meaning of Job's suffering as a prophetic sign that God would give eternal life - not material prosperity in the present life - to those who endured. For James writes:

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy...And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.  
(James 5:8-15)

James is here quoting Job as an example of how those who call upon God will be raised up in the Last Day.<sup>39</sup> Lindberg argues convincingly for the existence of a belief in Job as a Christian, as well as in Job as a prototype of Christ. He lists nine passages from Job used in the Office of the Dead from the ninth century onwards, showing how the Book of Job was central to Christian consolation, and quotes the authority of Walter Hodges, *Elihu*, based on Felix Cerebri Bolducius and Schultens, that Job was a bishop of a Cathedral.<sup>40</sup>

**The presence of symbolic crosses.** For many centuries before Swedenborg the tradition had been to represent half hidden symbols of the cross when painting Job's sufferings. The most obvious example of a half-hidden cross is in drawing no.7. At the extreme right-hand side stands a stone cross, almost concealed as a mere play of shadows. Charles Eliot Norton noticed that Job's eyes are turned towards it, not merely turned away from the overwhelming friends who have come to mourn with him.<sup>41</sup> Lindberg demonstrates that in depicting the masonry as in the form of a cross in these illustrations, Blake was working in a well-established tradition. Job's sufferings were his cross, therefore artists, particularly sixteenth century artists, used to show hidden crosses. Lindberg gives a number of interesting examples, the clearest of which are a falling cross at the extreme right-hand side of a small oval woodcut of 1571 by Jost Amman, showing Job being scourged by a winged fiend (fig. 22),<sup>42</sup> and a woodcut in the following century by Tobias Stimmer, in a Bible printed in Strasbourg in 1621,

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<sup>39</sup> Lindberg, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp. 126-7; Walter Hodges, D.D., *Elihu, or an enquiry into the principal scope and design of the Book of Job* (London: James Hodges, 1750), pp. 223-4.

<sup>41</sup> *William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job* (Boston: Osgood, 1875), commentary on Plate VII.

<sup>42</sup> Lindberg, p. 129, and fig. 100. The woodcut was used for several Bibles and frequently copied.

where there is a conspicuous wooden cross in the top right-hand corner among the debris of the fallen house (fig. 20).<sup>43</sup> These Christian elements and the quotations from the New Testament show Blake in his *Illustrations* interpreting the Book of Job typologically, as a prefiguration of 'Christ. These examples justify Lindberg's view that crosses are also represented by the heavy masonry behind the figures in other drawings also, notably nos. 4, 8, and 10.

#### v) Medieval mystical writers and the visions in the second part of the Blake's *Illustrations*

Blake's *Illustrations* differs from the Book of Job in terms of overall structure in an important way. Whereas the Biblical Job has only one vision, in Blake's *Illustrations* nos 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 there are visions, and nos. 12 and 20 allude to visions. What is Blake's source for this change, or is it entirely a matter of Blake employing his imagination? This section is more speculative than the preceding sections, where it was possible to draw on the accumulation of artistic evidence amassed by Bo Lindberg, but in view of the importance of visions in Blake's *Illustrations* it seems worth the attempt.

**Maimonides and the *Zohar*.** Most original and profound of medieval Jewish commentators is Moses Maimonides' *The Guide for the Perplexed*,<sup>44</sup> in which he discusses the Book of Job at some length, and in particular the knowledge of God that can only come through vision. He notes that God commends Job, and not his friends, even though Job complained bitterly against God's apparent contempt for the men of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. , p. 128, and fig. 98.

<sup>44</sup> Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by M. Friedländer (New York: Routledge, 1904, 2nd., rev. edn.), pp. 296-303.

innocent and upright lives. He notes that though Job was perfect in uprightness and in moral virtue, he was not perfect in knowledge, and from this lack of knowledge derives his sense of the disorder and cruelty of God's world. 'The words of God are justified, as I will show, by the fact that Job himself abandoned his first very erroneous opinion, and himself proved that it was an error'. Maimonides goes on to argue that Job only held this view for as long as he was without true wisdom, and knew God only by tradition. Once he had acquired the true knowledge of God, he confessed there was true felicity in that knowledge, felicity that nothing could disturb. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent because of dust and ashes' (42: 5-6). Maimonides interprets this as meaning that he was sorry that he had sat down in the dust and covered himself in ashes, now that he had true knowledge of God.<sup>45</sup> Job the man without knowledge is transformed by his ordeals into the intellectually mature Job, ready for the knowledge of God; he is ready to receive the 'prophetic revelations' of the Lord's speeches to him. 'They communicate to Job the radical difference between divine creation and human production, between God's rule, providence, and purpose, and the things men rule over, provide for, and purpose. True wisdom, true knowledge, is obtained only when man has freed himself from 'the error that His knowledge is like our knowledge, or His purpose like our purpose.' With such knowledge of man's position in the universe 'every misfortune will be born lightly by him', and such humble recognition...will 'add to His love.' Alone among medieval Jewish commentators Moses Maimonides does not attempt to prove an assertion of Providence in God's speeches, but takes the issue away from providence altogether.

Glatzer distinguishes perhaps too sharply between Maimonides and the *Zohar* ('Book of Splendour') which he takes as a representative example of Jewish mysticism, for Maimonides borders on mysticism also, in what he says about true and false

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 300-301.

knowledge, and about Job at the beginning of the story not 'knowing' God in the sense of first-hand knowledge, which is love. The *Zohar* is interesting in its comment that Job 'failed to be cognisant of both good and evil'. Job should have allowed a portion of his sacrifice to go to Satan, 'the other side'. Had he given Satan his due, Satan would not have had power over him. Taken literally, this is patent heresy. But the *Zohar* goes on to say that men should be cognisant of both evil and good, and turn evil itself to good.<sup>46</sup> This has affinities with the mystical tradition Blake received through Jacob Boehme and developed as his doctrine of Contraries.

**Routes for transmission.** It is still necessary to show how this tradition could have been transmitted through the centuries to Blake. Mention has already been made of Walter Hodges' *Elihu* (1750). Hodges discusses two different meanings of the word 'righteousness' in the Old Testament. Under 'righteous in his own eyes' Hodges says that this is 'commonly taken to mean Conformity of Conduct to the Precepts of the Moral Law. In Psalm 57 however the sense must be applied to Christ's righteousness, which saved the penitent psalmist.' Hodges points out that in Hosea 10:12 'righteousness' is used in both senses, 'The former Righteousness is that sort which we are to sow and endeavour to cultivate to our utmost - but the latter, viz. the Lord's righteousness, must be poured down upon it like rain upon Ground when tilled and seeded, before the former will be able to produce any fruit, or turn to any Account.'<sup>47</sup> Walter Hodges also has interesting discussions about the way the Book of Job foretells the coming of Christ, though this Lindberg has not pursued. In his commentary on 'ceased to answer' (Job 32:1), he notes: 'the original word for answering signifies likewise "tormenting, afflicting", and he compares 'I am poor and afflicted' in Psalm 70:5 (Authorised Version has 'I am poor and *needy*'): 'a prediction of what was to happen to our Saviour in his

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Hodges, p. 83, sections 54-5 (on different meanings of righteousness).

State of Humiliation'. Hodges certainly knew Maimonides, for on p. 62 he quotes and discusses him. Any intelligent biblical commentator in the eighteenth century drew on Maimonides.

Matthew Henry's *Biblical Commentary* drew on the Early Fathers, and on the commentary of Maimonides. In his introduction to the second volume there is an interesting discussion about authority. Recognising that the Bible is composed of very different sorts of literature, he subdivides into three categories, of which the Pentateuch is to be regarded as directly inspired by the Spirit, since it was written by Moses: 'For with him God spoke mouth to mouth, even apparently; knew him' (Numbers 12:8); Moses was made partaker of divine revelation *while awake*, whereas God manifested himself to all the other prophets in a dream or vision. Scholars supposed the writers of the Hagiographa (i.e. the Wisdom literature) to be inspired 'in a degree somewhat below the other prophets'. But Matthew Henry quotes David himself as proof that the writer of the Psalms also spoke with God: 'The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue, the God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me' (2 Samuel 23:2,3).

This interest in the nature of inspiration is central to any study of how Blake perceived his own role, particularly in the years after his return from Felpham, when there was a tremendous burst of creative output, and yet recognition and appreciation of him was at its lowest point. Matthew Henry then reminds us 'Our Saviour divides the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and The Psalms, and thereby teaches us to distinguish those books that are poetical, or metrical, from the Law, and the Prophets' in order to give himself more latitude in interpreting, as indeed is essential.<sup>48</sup> In his

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<sup>48</sup> Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 4th edn., 5 vols. (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1737), vol. 2, 'Preface to the Poetic Books', signature 12R (section 4).

introduction to the Book of Job he shows no doubts about the existence of Job. He aligns himself firmly in the interpretive tradition of St. Jerome and St. Gregory the Great:

It presents us with *an illustrious type of Christ* ... In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself that he might be exalted ... The learned Bishop Patrick quotes St. Jerom more than once speaking of Job as a type of Christ.<sup>49</sup>

We do not know, however, whether Blake came in contact with Hodges' *Elihu*, or with Matthew Henry's commentary, whereas we do know now that Blake owned his own commentary, by Joseph Hallett, described at the beginning of this chapter. Hallett contains much of the same material as Hodges, being preoccupied also with the question of Providence. Hallett's Introduction, as already described, treats in detail on the theme of the inadequacy of Natural Religion, and the need for Revelation, though with a less colourful metaphor than the metaphor of the seed and the rain used by Hodges. Hallett is politically radical, but he is far from being a free-thinker. He is a vigorous advocate of Revelation, writing in volume 1:

As long as they knew him not, they could not hope to receive anything from him. From hence it appears, that if human Reason, without the Assistance of the Bible, can discover a future state of Rewards for Penitent Sinners, yet it is of very little Use....I observe these things, to let the Magnifiers of human Reason see, how little we should have made of it, if God had not vouchsafed us the Blessed Gospel.<sup>50</sup>

Blake stands near the beginning of the modern era. In Calvin's day Christian interpretation of the Book of Job still meant reading it as an allegory, seeing Job's misfortunes as a prefiguring of Christ's.

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<sup>49</sup> Id., 'Exposition of the Book of Job with Practical Observations'.

<sup>50</sup> Hallett, vol. 1, pp. 311-12.

## vi) Supposed connections between the Old Testament Patriarchs and the Druids

In Blake's day Job was believed to have been a historic figure, who lived in the time of the Patriarchs, and the Book of Job was considered to be the oldest book of the Bible, written in Egypt before Moses gave the Israelites the Law at Mount Sinai. Well known to Methodists but also to Dissenters generally was the commentary of Matthew Henry already mentioned, which dealt with all the books of the Old Testament, and as far as John Chapter 7 of the New. Matthew Henry in his introduction to the Book of Job conjectures that Job was descended from Abraham's brother Nahor.<sup>51</sup> He repeats Origen's suggestion that Moses may have written the prose beginning and end, in order to throw light on the main body of the book. This tradition that Job was a historic figure is reflected in art: in the High Gothic cathedral at Amiens Job figures, next to Moses, as last in a procession of the patriarchs (tympanum in the south transept).<sup>52</sup> But it is the supposed links between Druids and Avebury and Stonehenge, and between the age of the Patriarchs and the age of the Druids which provided food for Blake's poetic and artistic imagination.<sup>53</sup>

The backgrounds of nos. 5 and 6 show clear druid cromlechs, while in those of 7 and 10 there are ruins of a Stonehenge type. In the second half of the series there is no obvious presence of them, though in the background of Plate XVIII on Job's left is something that could possibly be identified as an oak-grove, and Lindberg claims that cromlechs can also be identified in the background of nos. 13 and 18 in the Butts set. In none of these three cases is the identification obvious, and it is safer to state only that there is a clear presence of cromlechs in the drawings and plates of the first half of the series.

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<sup>51</sup> Matthew Henry, vol. 2, signature 12R (3).

<sup>52</sup> Lindberg, p. 65, n. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley, an Eighteenth-century Antiquary*, revised and enlarged edn. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), pp. 156-8.

Among these eighteenth-century antiquarians Blake mentions Jacob Bryant by name, and the evidence is strong that he had read William Stukeley and Edward Davies.<sup>54</sup> Stukeley as a young doctor first visited Stonehenge in 1719. He had already seen and made notes from a copy of the manuscript of Aubrey's *Monumenta*, which suggested a link between the Druids, as described in classical authors, and the megalithic roofless temples of Avebury and Stonehenge.<sup>55</sup> Others thought that these temples were either of magical origin, Roman, or perhaps Danish.<sup>56</sup> Stukeley's impressively careful field-work has preserved records of Avebury and Stonehenge that are invaluable to archaeologists, and established Aubrey's theory. Stukeley's practical skills, however, were linked with wild theories about the religion of the Druids being the religion of the Old Testament Patriarchs, and the oak-groves where they worshipped being the 'oaks of Mamre' which figure in the story of Abraham, and moreover, that the religion of the Patriarchs was an early version of Christianity. His 'List of Contents' summarises his views. Here in his outline of Chapter 2 he writes that 'the first religion was no other than Christianity, the Mosaic dispensation, as a veil, intervening; and that all mankind from the creation had a knowledge of the plurality of persons in the Deity', while the theme of his Chapter 5 was that the Druids were a Phoenician colony who had preserved unspoilt the religion of Abraham:

The patriarchal history, particularly of Abraham, is largely pursu'd, and the deduction of the Phoenician colony into the island of Britain, after his time; whence the origin of the Druids, of their religion and their writing ... they

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<sup>54</sup> Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City: William Blake's Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983), p. 198. Blake's debt to Stukeley is discussed in detail by Paley in 'The Fourth Face of Man: Blake and Architecture', *Articulate Images: the Sister Arts from Hogarth to Tennyson*, ed. Richard Wendorf (Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press, 1983), pp. 184-215.

<sup>55</sup> Stuart Piggott, *The Druids* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pp. 130, 134-8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-50.

had the notion and expectation of the Messiah, and of the time of year when he was to be born, his office and death.<sup>57</sup>

Stukeley believed that Stonehenge and the cromlechs were all part of Druid culture, and we find the same belief in Blake's writings. Cromlechs and Druids figure strongly in the climax to *Jerusalem*, they are present also in *Milton*, and Blake has a good deal to say about them in the entry in his *Descriptive Catalogue* describing his painting *The Ancient Britons*.

### a) Common language and culture

Blake is reflecting widely current Anglo-Israelite theories that originated in the seventeenth century when he writes in the account of his painting, *The Ancient Britons* 'Adam was a Druid, and Noah' (E 542). In the preface to the second chapter of *Jerusalem* (Plate 27) he expands on this: 'Was Britain the Primitive Seat of the Patriarchal Religion? ... It is True, and cannot be controverted. Ye are united O ye Inhabitants of the Earth in One Religion ... Your Ancestors derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids' (E 171).

Controversy raged over a theory that the language of Eden was the parent of all other languages, and Sheila Spector estimates that by the end of the eighteenth century theories could be found for and against Hebrew being the language of Eden, and for and against the common origin of English and Hebrew.<sup>58</sup> Deists like Voltaire regarded the language of the Bible as reflecting the debased character of the barbarians who spoke

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<sup>57</sup> Rev. William Stukeley, *Stonehenge, a Temple Restored to the British Druids* (London: Innis and Manby, 1740), p. 66.

<sup>58</sup> 'Blake as an eighteenth Century Hebraist', *Blake and his Bibles*, ed. David Erdman (West Cornwall CT: Locust Hill, 1990), p. 188.

and wrote it. The mythologist Jacob Bryant, on the other hand, believed that all languages derived from a single parent-language:

There was once but one language among the sons of men. Upon the dispersal of mankind this was branched out into dialects; and those again were subdivided: all which varied every age; not only in respect to one another; but each language differed from itself more and more continually.<sup>59</sup>

The traditionalist view, held by Bryant, was that Adam was taught Hebrew by God, and therefore Hebrew was the language of Eden, and the Old Testament an authentic text delivered by God. Blake agreed: 'All had originally one language.' (E 543).

#### **b) The traditions on which the antiquarians drew**

This subject has received much less attention than the antiquarians themselves, and the work of Peter Fisher is particularly valuable in exploring this field.<sup>60</sup> A remark in Milton's *Areopagitica* illustrates how widely the belief was held in Britain that the Druids were in fact the original source of the culture of the Mediterranean world:

Writers of good antiquity and ablest judgement have bin perswaded that e'en the school of Pythagoras, and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old Philosophy of this Island.<sup>61</sup>

Edward Davies cited Diogenes Laertius as authority for his belief that Druid culture had a strong influence on the culture of the Mediterranean basin. Fisher has an interesting

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<sup>59</sup> *A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, 3 vols. (London: 1774-6), vol. 1, p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> 'Blake and the Druids', *Blake: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Northrop Frye (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 156-78.

<sup>61</sup> Milton, *Areopagitica*, in *Works* (Columbia ed.), IV, 339.

footnote on the other classical authors he might have cited also, among them Pliny the Elder.

Fisher also explores a little-known source of traditional information about early history for eighteenth-century antiquarians, the large body of folklore containing the remains of Welsh Bardism. There is a puzzling reference in Blake's introduction to his *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 to 'Welch Triades' (E 528). Fisher argues that when Blake wrote in *Descriptive Catalogue* V: 'Mr. B has in his hand poems of the highest antiquity' (E 542), and referred in his introduction to the exhibition to 'Welch Triades' he was referring to a group of poems included in the poetic collection published by Edward Williams in 1794, in the appendix of which was a collection of 'triads', a traditional form of verse arranged in groups of three lines, which Williams claimed to have transcribed and translated from the collection made by Llewelyn Sion, a bard of Glamorgan, in 1560. Triads were supposed to be the most common form of verse used by the Druids for handing down the body of Druidic religious lore, which they refused to commit to writing. Blake himself wrote a pair of 'triads', two groups of three-line verses, for the first page of his advertisement of the 1809 exhibition (E 526). Fisher took this as an indication that Blake would not have been put off by the fact that Williams' collection of triads were of motley origin historically.<sup>62</sup> Morton D. Paley quotes interesting parallels from Owen Pugh's translations of Welsh heroic elegies.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Fisher in Frye, pp. 156-7.

<sup>63</sup> Paley (1983), pp. 54-7, quoting from Owen Pugh, *The Heroic Elegies and Other Pieces of Llawarc Hen* (London: 1792), pp. xxxi, 19,23).

### c) Blake's attitude to cromlechs and Druids

In view of the unexpected prevalence of Druid ruins in the background to so many of the drawings in the first half of the series, it is important to try to assess what Blake intended them to signify. Stukeley and Davies emphasised all that was thought to be good about the Druids, and we find this romanticised attitude echoed in Blake's description of his painting *The Ancient Britons*. Davies wished to prove that the Druids were primitive Christians, and to do so he passed lightly over their teaching about re-incarnation, and various polytheistic beliefs. Blake himself was more ambivalent. S. Foster Damon discusses romantic beliefs about the Druids current in Blake's day. But Damon argues that to Blake Druidism symbolised Deism, a religion of Natural Law, a cruel and moralistic set of beliefs which included human sacrifices, but 'the whole Druid Law [Jesus] removes away' (*Jerusalem* 69:39, E 223).<sup>64</sup> Damon's is too simplistic a picture: there are also passages where Blake praises the Druids. He could equally have quoted *Descriptive Catalogue* no V, 'Adam was a Druid, and Noah' (E 542) or the praise of 'the flush of health in flesh, exposed to the open air, nourished by the spirits of forests and woods, in that ancient happy period' (E 545).

Peter Fisher's analysis of Blake's ambivalent attitudes to the Druids throws light on Blake's own particular vision of human history, and is central to our understanding of Blake's work around the time he was creating the Butts set of Job water-colours. He writes that for Blake history was the field of recurrent attempts to wake up human conscience, both individual and social. Each attempt was a new vision, finally reduced by the dead weight of self-interest and misunderstanding to some system of accepted beliefs, with its conventional morality and its sacrificial rites.<sup>65</sup> Bardic tradition

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<sup>64</sup> Damon, rev. Eaves (1988), pp.108-110.

<sup>65</sup> Fisher, p. 156.

provided a prime example of this cycle for Blake, hence his ambivalent attitude towards the Druids. On the one hand, he saw them as representing the original unspoiled patriarchal religion, their temples unroofed in order not to pen in the living Deity; on the other, he saw a degeneration into living by rule, refusing to accept paradox, refusing to respect the individual conscience. In *A Descriptive Catalogue* IV and V Blake places Gray's bard, last of the Druids, beside a description of the last "Battle of King Arthur" (Albion), and the rout of his forces (the disintegration of his faculties, the 'zoas'). Blake is here associating divine vision and prophetic inspiration with the Druid culture. Nevertheless, in his view the Druid culture lost its vision and became repressive. The victimisation of man, in Blake's opinion, followed the pattern of degeneration from internal discipline to external pressure, and finally, to the Deists' demand for submission to the presumed indivisible Natural and Moral Order. As in Swedenborg, Blake found in Druidism a deep-rooted tendency to eliminate one contrary in favour of the other, and to regard this process as the moral triumph of good over evil.

In discussing this inability of mankind to sustain living with paradox, Fisher writes of man's tendency to submission to the 'cloven fiction' of two exhaustive alternatives to every problem.<sup>66</sup> The phrase evokes Blake's depiction of Job's nightmare in the eleventh drawing of the *Job* series, where a clearly cloven-footed Deity is hovering threateningly over Job on his bed, and pointing with one hand to the fires of Hell, with the other to the Tables of the Law. It is usually thought that Job in his nightmare realises that the God he has been worshipping, the God of the Moral Law, is a figment of his own narrow mind, and Satanic. But this insight of Fisher's suggests that Job realises that the religion of *the culture within which he lives*, which is now threatening him, is Satanic. This interpretation has several advantages. First, it harmonises with the opening paragraphs of *The Testament of Job*, in which Job, perceiving that all men

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 165.

were worshipping Satan as their Creator, angered Satan by destroying his idol. Second, in the Butts version of no. 11 the head of the serpent is beautifully tinted, with red-gold scales, as if Blake wanted to emphasise the danger of 'loving the beauty of the serpent,' a striking phrase from the *Testament*.

The discussion in Peter Fisher's essay is too detailed to give here, but his findings are of great importance to understanding the *Job* series, because of the contrast between living according to the Moral Law, and living according to one's inner conscience. Those who hated what was commonly called moral virtue were those whose morality was within them, a matter of conscience. 'Conscience in those who have it is unequivocal. It is the voice of God' Blake wrote in his annotations to Bishop Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*. Watson's book was published in 1797, and Blake wrote on the back of the title-page of his copy, 'To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life / The Beast and the Whore rule without controls' (E 611).

Fisher's analysis of Blake's picture of the degeneration of Druidism is relevant to an understanding of Blake's *Job*. In the 1790s Blake made five studies of Job's distress, oppressed by the censures of his friends. He seemed to be obsessed with Job's isolation from the rest of humanity. There is the same theme in his companion engraving *Ezekiel* (studies in Butlin 202-3,[text] 164-165). Ezekiel was forbidden by God to mourn for his wife, and he therefore refuses to surrender to his grief (Ezekiel 24:19). His isolation is emphasised by his figure forming a strong vertical, among the huddled figures of the mourners, and in contrast to his wife's dead body, laid out flat. A comparison of the first and second states of his great *Job* engraving (figs. 6 and 7) shows Blake's preoccupation with conveying Job's sense of his own innocence. For Job was a man whose conscience was clear, oppressed by conventional friends who insisted that he must have committed some evil, otherwise he would not be suffering as he was. If

Peter Fisher is right in his analysis of Blake's ambivalent attitude to the Druid civilisation, then these ruined cromlechs represent a decadent religious culture. Job's uncertain friends are its representatives, Job's sufferings are apparently arbitrary, not a punishment for his abominable self-righteousness, and we are returning to a more biblical interpretation of the meaning of the opening section of Blake's *Job*.

### Chapter 3: The Butts set: some sources for the imagery

#### Introduction

Blake was certainly fortunate in having a patron as generous and as self-effacing as Thomas Butts, a clerk in the War Office, who filled his house in Fitzroy Square with Blake's work. Not only did he commission a large number of paintings and drawings, often buying as much as a drawing a week, but he also engaged Blake for a salary of £26 a year to teach drawing to his son. Mona Wilson, in *The Life of William Blake*, gives a detailed account of the friendship between the Butts family and the Blakes.<sup>1</sup> The friendship lasted till the end of Blake's life, for a visit by Thomas Butts is mentioned by Blake in 1827. And Blake's letters to him from Felpham are some of the most valuable as biographical material. As Blake struggled to re-establish himself as an artist in London, and put behind him the resentment he had felt at Hayley's will to dominate and direct him into supposedly more lucrative work, Thomas Butts' discriminating encouragement and lack of interference must have been very important to him. After Felpham the correspondence peters out, because they met face to face, but the patronage continued.

This chapter and the next will explore some of the visual imagery in Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job* in the set commissioned by Butts. In the final chapter I will concentrate on the engravings and the relationship between central design, marginal embellishments, and text, for interpreting this work in its final version.

It is necessary to preface this account by some brief notes on Blake's techniques for his water-colours, and about the durability or otherwise of the colours he used, because in interpreting the Butts set it is important to bear in mind that what we see may not be

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1927. 2nd. edn., revised by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 95-6.

what Blake painted, particularly as regards the brightness of his colours.<sup>2</sup> Gilchrist describes how he worked:

He ground and mixed his water-colours himself on a piece of statuary marble, after a method of his own, with common carpenter's glue diluted, which he had found out, as the early Italians had done before him, to be a good binder. Joseph, the sacred carpenter, had appeared in vision' and revealed *that* secret to him. The colours he used were few and simple, indigo, cobalt, gamboge, vermilion, Frankfort black freely, ultramarine rarely, chrome not at all.<sup>3</sup>

Neither gamboge nor chrome produce a permanent yellow, unfortunately. Most of the yellows in Blake's water-colours have faded, mainly during this century.<sup>4</sup> It is important to bear in mind that the yellows used by Blake are particularly prone to fading, and some of the colours in the Butts set would have been brighter, and warmer, than they seem now.

### **i) Book and Scroll - Law and gospel?**

'In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' (Psalm 40: 7-8).

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<sup>2</sup> Lindberg, pp. 177-8. Blake's method was to keep drawing and painting separate. He first drew the scene, filling in light and shade by using a pen, Indian ink, and a grey wash. Then he applied transparent washes of colour over it, which requires a steady, confident hand, or the underlying wash will be mixed with the new one being applied. In colouring the violet dress worn by Bildad, for instance, he first applied a reddish tone, then overlaid it with a final blue layer, creating a richness of colour not obtainable by other means. The same technique was used for faces and other naked parts. The first tints were reddish, and these Blake overlaid in places with ochre, to tone it down. The effect is of blood shining through skin, an effect of living spirit which could not be obtained by blending the colours together before applying them. This final layer has been omitted in some of his unfinished drawings, so that the figures all look like Amer-Indians, as in some of the Linnell set of water-colour *Illustrations*, revealing his technique.

<sup>3</sup> Gilchrist, pp. 69-70.

<sup>4</sup> Lindberg, pp. 177-8 points out that W. Graham Robertson, in describing the water-colours *Job and his daughters* and *Job and his wife receiving money*, mentions yellow dresses and green grass. The dresses are now colourless and the grass is blue. The same fading can be seen in many of Blake's illustrations for Dante, but in some the foliage is still green, because Blake has mixed the blue with a permanent ochre instead of with gamboge. The result is dusky, but the green durable. Likewise, the blue used for the water in the foreground of the painting *The River of Life* has entirely faded, except where it was covered by the frame until recently.

Books and scrolls are prominent in Blake's Job illustrations, and it is important to examine carefully the role they play to see whether there is a contrast between books as bad, a sign of legalism and self-righteousness, and scrolls as good, the vehicle for the thoughts of angels. Blake approved of book-learning, for he wrote in the forceful prose introduction to the fourth section of *Jerusalem*. 'Expel from among you those who pretend to despise the labours of Art & Science! ... To labour in knowledge is to build up Jerusalem, and to despise knowledge is to despise Jerusalem & her builders' (E 232). In the climax at the end of *Jerusalem* even Bacon Newton and Locke are redeemed, and are found numbered with Milton, Chaucer and Shakespeare (*J* 97:9, E 257).

**Drawing nos. 1 and 2.** In no. 1 Job and his wife have heavy books open on their laps. The scene in this Butts drawing is reminiscent of a much earlier design, the title-page of *Songs of Innocence*, where a woman sits under a tree with an open book, and two children stand beside her reading from it. Binyon in 1906 commented on 'the feeling of unity and peace that is created by gathering the composition together in the centre of the space'.<sup>5</sup> Almost all later commentators, however, assume that these are the books of the Law, and provide a detailed set of rules that must be kept, basing this judgement on the words inscribed on the altar below, in the engraved version. Lindberg's guiding principle is that explanations should be sought within the work itself, respecting its integrity as a work of art. The intention here, therefore, is to approach the interpretation of the Butts set with an open mind, using other earlier or contemporaneous designs by Blake, and the tradition of illustrating the Book of Job available to Blake. There is no indication here in the Butts set that we are to understand Job as in error. There is nothing of Urizenic dominance in this gentle old patriarch, surrounded by his children. These books on the laps of Job and his wife could be Bibles, being used for reading psalms or passages from Scripture as part of evening worship. What strikes the viewer

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Binyon, *William Blake*, vol. 1, *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (London: Methuen and Co., 1906), p. 56.

in this first drawing is the symmetry and formality of the composition, creating a sense of harmony and deep peace, and the importance of radiant light, a light which seems to emanate from all the figures in the group, for if Blake had struck to strict naturalism, the figures would have been in silhouette against the setting sun. David Bindman, describing the biblical paintings for Butts, writes that the shift towards an 'Early Christian' style led Blake to rely more on compositional symmetry and the representation of light, a remark applicable also to the Job water-colours.<sup>6</sup> By 'Early Christian' Bindman presumably means works such as the mosaics in the cathedral church of St. Appolinare in Classe in Ravenna, with which nos. 1 and 21 of the Butts set have clear compositional affinities, in gathering the composition in the centre of the space, and thereby creating a sense of harmony and serenity. It was argued in detail in the previous chapter that Blake in this first drawing is making out of Job a Christian icon, and in doing so is identifying himself with a tradition going right back to the early Fathers.

In Drawing no. 2 the scene is divided into three, and the most important section, for this discussion, is the lowest. In the upper third we see God the Father, a radiant blaze of white light emanating from Him, with a heavy book on his lap. Spirits bring both scrolls and books and lay them at the foot of the throne. The central part of the design is dominated by the leaping fiery figure of Satan. About both these figures there will be more in the final section of this chapter. At the bottom of the design we see Job with his reclining family, studying the Scriptures.

Commentators point out the link between the heavy books held by Job and his wife, and by the Deity who is Job's mirror-image in heaven, and say that at the outset Job's God is a God of rules and of vengeance. Wicksteed writes: 'The angels are reading the life-books of Job and his family, and carrying up the records to judgement. The accuser

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<sup>6</sup> David Bindman, *William Blake: his Art and Times* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 38.

too rushes forward to bring his charge.<sup>7</sup> Damon draws a contrast between books (signifying deadly rules) and scrolls (signifying spiritual life): 'The Almighty has no scroll: he does not consider such trifles. On earth angels minister to Job with scrolls of song, although Job himself holds upright the book of Law on his left knee.'<sup>8</sup> Wicksteed also states, 'Job himself is conceived at first as deeply in error, which is the meaning attached to his being put into the power of Satan.'<sup>9</sup>

If these commentators are right, then Blake has radically altered the message of the biblical text, which is concerned with the arbitrariness of suffering. In the first place, however, they are wrong in thinking that throughout the *Illustrations* books are bad, scrolls good. Secondly, we have a striking parallel for this family scene, in the drawing dated by some to 1788, by others even earlier, known variously as *Job and his family*, and *Enoch walked with God* (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> Job is talking to a group of angels and showing them a book. One of the angels holds an open scroll. His wife reclines behind him, also engrossed in the conversation, and a grown-up daughter reclining behind her mother rests her arm affectionately on the shoulders of a young boy and girl,;all three of them are intently listening to the angels. On Job's right stands a boy of twelve or fourteen, a closed book held lightly in his hand, as he also listens to the angels. The whole impression is of an affectionate family group who have easy intercourse with the angelic visitors, an impression enhanced by the presence of the children, two of whom hold books lightly and lovingly, in their hands, while two others hold scrolls.<sup>11</sup> It

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<sup>7</sup> W (1924), p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Damon, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> W (1924), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> The composition is much closer to this second drawing in the Butts series (12:2) than to the *Enoch* lithograph, and the first title, which is Lindberg's, seems preferable. Whether the central figure is Job or Enoch, the impression conveyed by the whole group is of easy intercourse between angels and men.

<sup>11</sup> Keynes dated this water-colour to c. 1807, but this needs revision: the Hebrew characters on the scroll held by the angel are absolute nonsense, which puts it well before 1803, for on 30th. January 1803 Blake wrote to his brother, 'Am now learning my Hebrew', followed by an accurately-formed Hebrew letter.

seems as if Blake is here working within the tradition that goes back to Gregory the Great, which depicts Job as a type of Christ. In drawing no. 2 Blake has moved the angels so that they are on Job's right instead of on his left, has reduced them to two, and has given them wings, but the mood of the family group has not been changed. The Butts set was composed in or around 1805, at a time when Blake felt a strong sense of Christian renewal: there is deep love and devotion seen in the faces of the members of Job's family at prayer in the first drawing, and in the second Blake depicts an atmosphere like Milton's Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost*, with angels and men in easy conversation.

Bindman later wrote 'A central theme of the *Job* series is the ability of pre-Christian man - a state shared by all who have not found Christ in any age - to achieve Christian redemption through vision.'<sup>12</sup> He maintains that the role of Christ as true God in the *Job* series reflects Blake's faithful attention to the biblical text, with its assertion of confidence in a redeemer. Books are the stimulus to that vision, and hence the presence of books in both the first and the second half of the series. Job's vision was all-important to his regeneration. Job at the outset is a good old man, he and his family a type of 'faithful remnant', radiating light in a world growing dark. By a terrible journey through suffering, he passes through death into new life in Christ.

**No contrast between books and scrolls.** Blake's contrast is not between Old Testament Law and New Testament total freedom, but between Law alone, and Law *and* Gospel. This point is very important for interpreting Job's state of mind at the outset of the series. A precedent for Blake's Job can be found in a German Rebus-Bible which illustrates the passage from the Epistle of James that speaks of Job: Job, with a cross in his hands, is sitting on his dunghill, and behind him are the tables of the Law,

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From 1803 Blake shows he can transcribe Hebrew perfectly, and when he errs (for example in the reversed *alephs*), he has his reasons.

<sup>12</sup> Bindman (1987), p. 28.

upon which a burning heart is engraved (fig. 27, upper right hand quadrant of figure). We are to understand that the cross and the law are united in the sacrifice of the burning heart, i.e. the burnt offering of the heart. He also draws attention to the quotation in the disk of the rising sun in no. 21, 'Great & Marvellous are thy Works' The full text runs, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty Just and True are thy Ways O thou King of Saints'. This is a quotation from Revelation 15:3, and it is the Song of Moses, the Servant of God, and of the Lamb: it is the song of the union of Moses and Christ, the union of Law and Gospel.

Blake himself loved his Bible, according to his contemporaries, and there is need for more caution than Wicksteed employed, in seeking to understand his attitude to it. Frederick Tatham writes that among Blake's books bequeathed to him by Blake's widow Catherine, the Bible was the most thumbed.<sup>13</sup> But Blake also told Crabb Robinson that he understood the Bible in a 'Spiritual Sense.' Crabb Robinson records a conversation on 19th February 1826 with Blake, in which Blake declared that the Bible is the word of God and all truth is to be found in it; but then, so it seemed to Crabb Robinson, wholly nullified all he had said by declaring that he understood the Bible in a Spiritual Sense[.] As to the natural sense he said, "Voltaire was commissioned by God to expose that."<sup>14</sup> This conversation took place near the end of Blake's life. If it is legitimate to use it to interpret this early drawing of a family group with books and scrolls, in easy converse with angels, then it shows a good man reading the scriptures and being helped by the angelic visitors to understand Scripture in its spiritual sense. The two youths who hold scrolls have already understood it so.

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<sup>13</sup> BR, p. 527, c.f. J.T. Smith, who wrote that Blake's greatest pleasure was derived from the Bible (BR, p. 467), and that 'the Bible was everything to him' (BR, p. 455).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 547.

Books and scrolls also appear in several other drawings in the series. In no. 5 God has closed the book and holds it in one hand, a scroll in the other. God in this Butts drawing is so full of pity and sorrow He has laid aside his book and scroll. Blake told Crabb Robinson he did not believe in the Omnipotence of God, 'The language of the Bible is only poetical or allegorical on that subject.'<sup>15</sup> Blake told him there is sorrow in Heaven, for where there is joy, there also must be sorrow. In no. 16, showing the casting down of Satan, God again has an open book on his lap. And in the Butts set both books and scrolls figure prominently in no. 20, which shows Job with his daughters. Job's arms are outspread and his hair disturbed with inspiration as he tells his daughters of his experience. One daughter holds a scroll and listens, one holds a small book in which she is writing, another seems to hold a large book in which she is drawing, and an even larger book, closed, leans against the leg of the couch on which they are sitting.

It would be hard to maintain that there is a contrast in any of these later drawings in the series between book and scroll, with the book representing repressive Law, and the scroll Inspiration. When Blake wants to show repressive Law, as in no. 11, he shows two stone tables, shaped like tombstones, with the Decalogue clearly inscribed on them. I do not find a significant emphasis on repressive Law in the first two drawings in the series. Nevertheless Law and Gospel, and death and immortality, are bound up with each other in the Book of Job, and in all Blake's illustrations of the Job theme; for without a conviction of immortality Job cannot begin to live this present life to the full.

## ii) Job as priest and leader

'Blake's hatred of 'mystery'. Wicksteed's contention that Blake's Job as shown at the outset of the series is deeply in error is important to his central argument, which is that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 543.

Blake hated *mystery*, and therefore set out to 'unriddle the universe', to impose his own solution to the mystery of evil.<sup>16</sup> To back his contention he quotes from 'The Human Abstract':

Soon spreads the dismal shade  
Of Mystery over his head;  
And the Catterpillar and Fly  
Feed on the Mystery. (*Songs of Experience*, E 27)

and from *A Vision of the Last Judgement*: 'Beneath these is the seat of the harlot, named Mystery in the Revelations' (E 558). But from the words that follow it is clear that this harlot represents 'Vegetable Life & Death with its Lusts'. The kind of 'mystery' he had in mind is perhaps shown by these words from *Jerusalem*:

Go tell them this, & overthrow their cup  
Their bread, their altar-table, their incense, & their oath,  
Their marriage & their baptism, their burial & consecration. (J 91: 12-14, E 251)

This reflects Blake anger against sacraments, which give a special place to the priest. Blake is too Protestant for this: every man is king and priest in his own house. 'Jesus supposes every Thing to be Evident to the Child & to the Poor & Unlearned Such is the Gospel. (Anno. Berkeley, E 664). I do not agree with Wicksteed's view that Blake hated mystery, and that Blake's solution to the *mystery* of suffering was the *subtlety* of error, i.e. the best man in terms of outward acts may actually be as complete a victim of Satan as the worst, because in his thoughts he errs, and 'thought is act'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 'But there is something still deeper in the original which Blake could not do anything less than "correct" away. "Mystery" is for him anathema, although the soul of the book of Job is its quite unsolved mystery, the mystery of suffering goodness...Blake's business as a thinker and an artist was to unriddle the universe.' W (1924), p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> W (1924), pp.63-4.

**Contrast between study and direct experience.** 'Job is ignorant of all that gives life - eternal life' writes Bo Lindberg.<sup>18</sup> In a section central to his study of Blake's *Illustrations*, he writes of Blake's own experiences of death, in particular the death of his beloved brother Robert, who died in 1787 at the age of nineteen. Blake nursed him for a fortnight, sitting up with him continuously, and when he died, Blake saw 'his released spirit ascend heavenward through the matter-of-fact ceiling, clapping its hands for joy'.<sup>19</sup> Lindberg writes:

Thus Blake knew from experience that there is not only survival but also liberation after death. Many people *believe* that those are wrong who hold that death means a total extinction of the personality. But Blake *knew* that the atheist opinion of death, which he met with in the Paine set of radicals, was positively false. He had watched the resurrection of Robert's spiritual body, and he was too empirically minded to doubt what he had seen with his own eyes. In Blake's opinion you had to be dogmatically unrealistic to doubt that man is immortal.<sup>20</sup>

In the year of his mother's death, 1792, Blake engraved the plates of *Job* and *Ezekiel*, and the emblem book *The Gates of Paradise*, which contains quotations from the Book of Job. Lindberg shows how death and immortality is an important theme in Blake's work in and around 1793. The cocoon with the sleeping baby on the frontispiece of *The Gates of Paradise* is a symbol of transition from the caterpillar, through cocoon, to butterfly. In the tomb, which he entered willingly, he finds that the worm is his mother and his sister. Man is a worm, but this worm is a worm that will be transformed into another and more glorious being: he is a larva, and will become a winged creature: on one copy of *For Children*, after quoting 'What is Man?' from Job 7:17, Blake wrote 'Noi jiam' verme,/ nati a formar l'angelical forfall', quoting from Dante *Purgatory*, canto X, ll. 124-5 ('we are worms, born to form the angelic

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<sup>18</sup> Lindberg, p. 75.

<sup>19</sup> Gilchrist, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Lindberg, p. 74.

butterfly').<sup>21</sup> Blake's Job at the beginning of the series would not have understood these words of Dante. In June 1793 Blake wrote in his note-book, 'I say I shant live five years And if I live one it will be a Wonder'.<sup>22</sup> Twelve years later, at the time he was working on the illustrations to Blair's *Grave* and the set of Butts water-colours, Blake had much contact with unexpected death, with his engraving of a portrait of Hayley's dying son (1800), and with his designs for Malkin's memoirs of his dead child (1806). Yet the Butts water-colours still glow with gentle colour, even though some of the colours are faded and insipid, conveying a sense of peace and freedom such as one does not often find in the prophetic books of the Lambeth period.

Bo Lindberg considers that, at the beginning of the series, Job is not self-righteous and arrogant, but nevertheless he is serving God by keeping only to the letter of the Law. He believes that God is righteous, and since this is the only world there is, and there is no hope of recompense in any world but this, God must reward the good and punish the unrighteous in this present life. 'Job's sin is that he does not believe that man has any part in the spiritual world...this lack of belief in the spirit is the beginning of atheism.'<sup>23</sup> In this I would disagree with Lindberg. In Lindberg's interpretation Job has a preference for ceremony and outward service when he prays, using the form of the Lord's prayer from the book, rather than praying from the heart; he is zealous for moral perfection, consulting the angels on the moral code contained in the book he has open on his knee; and he confidently expects that in the present life virtue will be rewarded and vice will be punished.<sup>24</sup> It will be argued, however, in the next chapter, discussing Job's prayer, that in the first drawing of the series Job is shown as the captive of the society in which he dwells, just as the children of Israel in exile in Babylon were captives, and hung their

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<sup>21</sup> Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 3 vols., tr. John Sinclair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), vol. 2, p.137. *For Children: the Gates of Paradise*, Plate 9, copy B. (BB, p. 189).

<sup>22</sup> BB, p. 47; *Notebook*, p. 4, E 694.

<sup>23</sup> Lindberg, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> See note 5 on page xii, quoting Lindberg.

instruments unused in the trees, 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' Job through his great obstinacy came to learn the error of *that society* - not his own personal error only, as in Lindberg's account.

**Job as wounded healer.** In no. 18 Blake shows us Job with his arms outspread in blessing over his wife and his three friends, in front of an altar on which burns a sacrifice. This illustrates God's command to the comforters that they must offer bullocks in sacrifice and ask Job to pray for them. The next two drawings have no biblical counterpart. In no. 19 Blake shows us a bearded man and two well-dressed women, presumably Job's friends' wives or family, bringing precious gifts to Job and his wife. Commentators have suggested that it may have been included as a gesture of gratitude to Thomas Butts and his family. It is also important that Job in all the four final drawings is shown in the role of leader, and is shown healing his people by his readiness to accept their generosity, and to share with his daughters his harrowing experiences, as much as by praying for them, or leading them in hymns of praise.

### iii) Sun, moon, and stars

In the Butts set, sun, moon and stars do more than simply provide a source of light. In no. 1, the sun is on the horizon on the left, and on the right a single star and a thin sliver of moon occupy a darkening sky. In the following pictures the scene will become progressively darker, and it is therefore assumed that the sun is setting, and rises again in the final picture in the series. Corroboration for this assumption is found in the fact that the illuminated designs for *Jerusalem* also depict a sunset at the beginning, and a sunrise at the end. Though strictly the connotation of the sun in relation to the moon in drawing no. 1 would suggest sunrise not sunset, Blake does not aim for naturalistic representation (compare the stars in drawing no. 12, which are no known constellation). Blake disrupts the natural sequence by showing the sun on the horizon again in no. 6,

and only just below the horizon in no. 7. Whether or not the sun is setting in the first Butts picture, there is certainly a contrast between the right hand horizon, where a tall rocky crag, perhaps representing Mt. Sinai, is almost lost in the gathering darkness, and the left-hand side, where the cathedral is bathed in light from the sun behind it. The contrast would have seemed even stronger when the painting was first made, before the yellows faded. And the general movement of the series is a descent into darkness, with its nadir at drawing 11, Job's nightmare, and a gradual ascent again into regions of light.

In the first drawing it is evening. Kathleen Raine notes that there are signs that Job is in a state of spiritual sleep: the dog which should be on guard is resting his chin comfortably on the woolly back of one of the sheep, and the two rams are also sleeping.<sup>25</sup> In Blake's vision of mankind, man's Fall meant a fall into torpor and oblivion, not into sin: throughout his prophetic writings, Blake called mankind not to repentance but to awakening. This is a useful insight, especially for interpreting the Butts set, since the idea is central to the poems Blake was working on at around this time.<sup>26</sup> It seems to Kathleen Raine, however, that 'the apathy of Job and his family' suggest that Job is self-righteous and unawakened, in spite of the virtuous life he leads; and for Blake self-righteousness was the supreme sin, because it set the human ego above God, the 'empirical' self before the spiritual. It would follow that Job at the beginning of the series is most unlovely and unloved, guilty of hidden sin. But it is clear in Butts no. 1, though not so clear in Plate I of the engraved set, that it is only the sheep and the dogs, not Job and his family, who are sunk in torpor. Job the pastor dwells among an unenlightened people, and is soon to become a victim of their narrowness.

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<sup>25</sup> Raine, pp. 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Albion's deathlike sleep dominates *Jerusalem*; Milton in his descent sees him in his deathlike sleep (*Milton* 15:36, E 109), and plunges into the Sea of Time & Space that churns around his sleeping form.

In no. 14, Blake's great picture depicting the Creation, 'when the stars of the morning sang together', he has shown a pagan sun-god, and moon-goddess. The sun and moon are shown in their physical aspects as a disk of fire and a sceptre of light, and in their spiritual aspects, as the two winged deities Helios and Selene. Helios drives the horses of the sun, as regularly shown on Greek vases. The dragons driven by the Moon-goddess occur also in Blake's illustration to Milton's *Il Penseroso*, for there Cynthia is said to drive a dragon yoke. Blake took it from Milton; Milton seems to have taken it from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In Book VII Medea prays to the moon and a chariot pulled by dragons comes down to carry her away, but these dragons belong to the sun. The horses and the dragons are commonplaces of classical mythology.<sup>27</sup> Blake emphasises that the sun and moon are inferior to their Creator, by the way the parts which should be lit by the sun's rays are still in shadow, whereas the pure white light issuing from the throne of God the Word illuminates the whole of the lower part of the three-fold design.

But why has Blake introduced classical mythology into this vision of Genesis? Why does he show earthly existence like Plato's Cave? Jacob Bryant put forward a theory that the art of the Romans and Greeks was copied from much superior Hebrew originals. The plates for his *New System of Ancient Mythology, or Plagiarism of the Heathen Detected* were cut at James Basire's in 1776, when Blake was an apprentice there, and he may have helped with some of them. Blake's friend Flaxman believed Bryant's theory, and in his day he was a respected scholar.

What then do the symbols of sun, moon, and stars in the final picture in the Butts set represent? In the first drawing in the series, the moon was in its last quarter and the star

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<sup>27</sup> There is also an interesting reference to 'sun and moon' in Blake's letter to Hayley of 28th December 1804, on the death of Rose, the lawyer who had represented him at the court hearing in Chichester. Blake wrote of the hope of Resurrection, and refers to the consolations of 'Religion, the Sun & the Moon of our Journey', emphasising apparently the contrast between the natural light of sun and moon and that other light, of Eternity.

was setting. Here the moon is in its first quarter, and the sun is on the right - which would be the East, were we looking at a map. Most commentators infer the sun is just rising, 'eternity's sunrise' of which Blake wrote in 1793 in his notebook:

He who binds to himself a joy  
 Does the winged life destroy  
 But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
 Lives in eternity's sunrise (E 470).

Sun, moon and stars are used by Blake to provide a setting for Job's spiritual journey into night, and rebirth to new life.

### iii) Blake's use of cromlech, church, and cross

In his deployment of architectural features Blake follows tradition in using ruins to signify the end of a culture, but breaks with tradition in introducing a Gothic church and druid cromlechs into his *Job*. For there are clear cromlechs in the background of nos. 5, 6, and 7, and perhaps also the heavy stone masonry in nos. 4 and 8 are supposed to represent Druid architecture. Equally anachronistic, in nos. 1 and 4 there is a Gothic cathedral in the background. There are also hidden crosses in several of the drawings in the first half of the series, notably in drawing no. 7, in which Job's gaze is averted from his comforters, and directed towards the outline of a cross, at the extreme right-hand edge of the picture. We would expect that Blake would depict Job as belonging to the age of the patriarchs, before Moses gave Israel the Law. In drawing no. 1 the huge flocks and the dwelling tents in the background on the right indicate a nomadic way of life; moreover the outdoor setting, with Job seated beneath an oak tree, is reminiscent of the day when God came to visit Abram, and found him sitting outside his tent beneath the oak at Mamre.

### a) Druid features

Blake in introducing Druid cromlechs in the background of several of the Job drawings in the first half of the series was being startlingly original. The eighteenth-century belief in links between the Patriarchs and the Druids has been discussed briefly in the previous chapter. Davies in *The Theology of William Blake* warns against labelling Blake as a British Israelite because he shared these theories. Blake accepted the theories, but his main concern was to adapt them for symbolic purposes. British Israelites believed the use of military force was justified in order to achieve their aims, whereas Blake, after his first romantic enthusiasm for revolution had subsided, was a pacifist. Secondly, British Israelites interpreted the Bible literally, or at least claim to do so, and Blake did not.<sup>28</sup>

The scale of the megalithic monuments in Britain has suggested to others since Stukeley that Britain was the centre from which the religion of Stonehenge was diffused, rather than the westernmost point it reached. Raine had some interesting observations on Blake's view of the Druids, who in his day were thought to have been the creators of Stonehenge, though they are now known to be separated by many centuries. She writes that Blake is not entirely consistent, but he seems to represent the original purity of the Druid religion by oak-trees and oak-groves, and the cruel, ritualistic phase into which the religion degenerated by megaliths (stone being symbolic of the lifeless hardening of all things under the domination of a materialist philosophy).<sup>29</sup> The crumbling Druid temples in the background of drawings nos. 5 - 8, perhaps also of 10 and 12, indicate a religious culture that is in decay. In the career of any great idea, after triumph and maturity, there is decadence and over-ripeness, and a

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<sup>28</sup> Davies, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Raine, p. 38.

gradual transformation, under new conditions, into another idea. 'The Mental Traveller' would corroborate and fill out this view.

On the whole this distinction by Raine is born out by the references to Druid practices in *Jerusalem*, though in places the oak groves also are condemned. At the end of the first chapter a lament is heard in Beulah:

Why did you take Vengeance O ye Sons of the mighty Albion?  
Planting these oaken groves, erecting these dragon temples?  
Injury the Lord heals but Vengeance cannot be healed: (J 25:3-5, E 170)

There is a reference to the cruel phase in the description of the sacrifice of Luvah in *Jerusalem* 65:9-10, 'They staid him with poisonous blue, they inwove him with cruel roots' (E 216), where the 'poisonous blue' is woad. In the same poem Blake describes the building of Stonehenge:

They build a stupendous Building upon the Plain of Salisbury; with chains  
Of rocks round London Stone, of Reasonings: of unhewn Demonstrations  
In labyrinthine arches. (Mighty Urizen the architect.) thro which  
The heavens might revolve and Eternity be bound in their chain ...  
The Building is Natural Religion, and its altars Natural Morality,  
A building of eternal death, whose proportions are eternal despair.  
(J 66:2 ff., E 218)

Druid megaliths symbolised for Blake a culture of tyranny, of revenge and despair. All this fascination with the remote past was too much for the poet Robert Southey, who replied to a query about Blake from Caroline Bowles in 1830 as to what he knew of Blake as follows:

Poor Owen [Pugh] found everything he wished to find in the Bardic system, and there he found Blake's notions, and thus Blake and his wife were persuaded that his dreams were old patriarchal truths, long forgotten and now re-revealed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> BR, p. 399. See Morton D. Paley, *The Continuing City: Blake's Jerusalem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 241-2, for a discussion of the influence of William Owen Pugh.

Southey writes that he was so saddened by the visit to the Blakes that he never repeated it. But Blake made use of these ideas for symbolic purposes to good effect in his *Job*, deploying the heavy stone cromlechs in the background of the first half of the series to convey a sense of the ossified culture in which Job lived, and which, through the comments of his Comforters, was oppressing him with its Deist moral certainties. In the long months during which Blake waited for his trial in Chichester he himself must have experienced painfully the oppression of a culture of revenge and moralism; for so great was the fear of France, and of traitors at home, that if he were convicted he would certainly have been fined, and might have had to serve a prison sentence also. In *Jerusalem* Plate 94 the glow of dawn illuminates the Druid trilithons in the upper part of the design, as the epic sweeps towards final Redemption, but in *Job* the oppressive megaliths simply vanish as the light of vision grows strong, in the second half of the series.

### **b) The Gothic Church**

It has been customary to say that the cathedral or church in the background in drawings nos. 1 and 4 represents True Art. Wicksteed suggests that in Plate I the left side with its Gothic cathedral represents the 'spiritual' or artistic side, quoting from *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, 'A Gothic Church is representative of true Art' (E 559).<sup>31</sup> Kathleen Raine (1982, p.39) finds parallels in *Jerusalem* for this interpretation, adding that the fact that the sun is setting behind the church of the spirit indicates the onset of spiritual night. Even with the negative element emphasised, this explanation of the presence of the Gothic cathedral creates difficulties of its own, particularly for Wicksteed, whose whole thesis is that Job at the beginning is spiritually dead, obsessed by legalism, and seriously in the wrong. Lindberg is surely right in saying the cathedral is one pointer to

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<sup>31</sup> Wicksteed (1924), p. 90 and n. 2.

show that Job is universal, that Job lived as a Christian before the revelation of the Gospel. This is orthodox Christian doctrine: when Christ harrows Hell he takes out those for whom, in John Donne's words, 'merit of strict life may be imputed faith'. Certainly this seems to have been how the cathedral in Blake's *Illustrations* was interpreted by Blake's friends and admirers, for there is another such cathedral, equally anachronistic, in the middle distance in a tempera painting by George Richmond of 1828, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* (fig. 34). The presence of this little Gothic cathedral in Richmond's painting of the landscape of Samaria is apparently a gesture of homage to Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*; it certainly makes no sense as an 'emblem of True Art' in Richmond's painting, nor as a realistic building.

The opening words of the Lord's prayer are inscribed round the face of the setting sun. So from when Blake first conceived and drew the Job illustrations, he had decided to include overtly Christian material within them. Blake's Job uses the prayer taught by Christ, and Blake's Job must in some sense belong to the Christian era. Job was one of the body of Old Testament figures who believed in Christ before his Incarnation. One may take as an example King David. It is always recognised that historically he belongs to the Old Testament period, yet in Psalm 110:1 David says, 'The Lord said unto my Lord', and the second 'Lord' must refer to the second person of the Trinity. Job is conceived by Blake as Everyman, 'a human type who could occur in any age, and whose experiences, therefore, have something to tell the children of all times.'<sup>32</sup>

### c) Hidden symbols of the cross

In Chapter 2 I showed that Blake had placed hidden symbols of the cross in several of the drawings in the first part of his *Job*, and reviewed the evidence that Blake was working within a well-established artistic tradition. By this link with the language of

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<sup>32</sup> Lindberg, p. 68.

medieval art Blake is connecting his *Job* with a period when a religious painting was an icon, a revered object. But has he also some further purpose, in using this symbol?

The answer surely lies in Blake's understanding of the Christian ethic, his emphasis on the importance of forgiveness, and hatred of self-righteousness. Though J. G. Davies found Blake's theology wanting, regarded from a narrowly orthodox Protestant Anglican viewpoint, he commends highly Blake's understanding of the Christian ethic; for Blake grasped the essential nature of Christian ethics, in a way few Christian theologians have done.<sup>33</sup> Davies goes as far as to assert that all his prophetic works, most of his lyric poems, and the majority of his letters contain references to it. His message is the message of St. Paul, that Christ set us free from the Law, 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree' (Gal. 3:13). We should not therefore seek to be more righteous than Christ, but should seek, like him, to forgive. Self-righteousness is above all to be avoided, in Blake's view, who wrote in *Jerusalem*, 'He who does Forgive Sin is Crucified as an Abettor of Criminals, and He who performs Works of Mercy in any shape whatever is punish'd, &, if possible, destroy'd, not through Envy, or Hatred, or Malice, but thro' Self Righteousness, that thinks it does God service, which God is Satan' (E 565) Again, in *Jerusalem* Blake wrote 'Natural Morality, or Self Righteousness, was the Religion of the Pharisees who murder'd Jesus' (J 52, E 201).

Surely therefore this proves right Wicksteed's interpretation that the central theme of Blake's *Job* is Job's passage from a state of self-righteousness to a state of living faith? But no - for an important question needs first to be asked. Is Blake in the two passages just quoted condemning the secret self-righteousness of the individual who in the eyes of all appears full of virtue, or is he condemning the self-righteousness of the society that attacks one man for being different? In both the examples quoted above, Blake is

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<sup>33</sup> Davies, pp. 140 ff.

concerned with the way society groups together to attack an individual. This indeed happened to his Job, as is shown most dramatically not only in drawing no. 10, but in his earlier group of Job studies, showing the Comforters ranged close together against him, and pointing accusing fingers at him.<sup>34</sup>

Blake attacked the self-righteousness of the Pharisees as a group, and what it led to. The half hidden crosses in several of the drawings in the first half of the series are to show therefore the parallel between Job and Christ, and suggest that Job too was the victim of a self-righteous society.

#### iv) God and Satan

Blake is a *narrative* artist, and interpretation of his *Illustrations* lies in the relationships and contrasts between drawings, as well as in drawings taken individually. This is particularly true of Blake's depiction of the Deity. In the biblical Book of Job what happens in Heaven is confined to the prose sections at the beginning and end, apart from the fact that the central poetic section has its climax in the moment when God comes to earth and speaks to Job out of the whirlwind. In Blake's *Job*, by contrast, there are two plots. One is the story of what physically happens to Job, the other a story set in Heaven.

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<sup>34</sup> Figs. 4-7. See discussion of the problems of dating these variations on the same theme in Chapter One (page 16). Blake seems to have been obsessed with Job's isolation in his suffering. The tears running down his cheeks as he protests his innocence in the second state *Job* engraving, suggest that Blake thought Job's innocence was real. None of these depictions of Blake with his accusers seems to justify Lindberg's view that it was by obstinately persisting in his error of self-righteousness that Job at last learnt wisdom - rather they prove the opposite, that the accusers were the ones obstinate in their error.

### a) Blake's depiction of Heaven

The story set in Heaven in Blake's *Illustrations* can hardly be called the 'sub'-plot, in that Blake in drawing nos. 2, 5, 9, 14, 16, 18, and 20 seems to be showing us the greater reality, the reasons for what is happening in the main plot, concerning the physical life of Job. In nos. 11, 13, and 17 the 'sub-plot' takes over the whole plate: First Satan reveals himself, then God appears on earth, and Job and his wife are overwhelmed with love and awe.

Visually this heavenly plot is not subordinate, for in these seven designs where Heaven is shown, it occupies the whole upper two-thirds of the page, and Job and those with him are depicted as in some kind of a cramped dark cave, evocative of the Cave allegory in Plato's *Republic*. This is particularly noticeable in nos. 2 and 14. In no. 15, however, the balance between Creator and his created world is handled differently. Here Job and those with him are in Heaven, looking down upon the round world. Heaven occupies only the top third of the design, to leave a round space for the round world below. Dante Gabriel Rossetti describes the way they are 'grouped so as to recall a medieval medallion or woodcarving.'<sup>35</sup> The world is shown as a view through a telescope, a cameo, by one standing in Heaven; so here too Heaven is made visually more prominent, and Job, momentarily in Heaven with his Creator, is distant from the monsters he is viewing.

### b) Depictions of the Deity and Satan

How does Blake intend us to understand his representations of the Deity in the Butts set, where he has given us no margin-commentary to guide us? The biblical Book of Job

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<sup>35</sup> Gilchrist, p. 288.

begins with a brief description of Job's goodness, and then moves to the Court of Heaven, and Satan presenting himself before the throne of God. Blake likewise begins with showing Job, and then moves to showing a view of Heaven which takes two-thirds of the page, showing at the top the Deity, and between the Deity and Job the flaming youthful figure of Satan.

To depict this scene the artist has to deal with two separate problems: there is the theological problem of dualism, and the artistic problem springing from the inhibition about depicting God the Father. There are three alternative ways of interpreting Blake's rendering of the scene. The first is to say that the God whom Job worshipped at the outset was not the true and living God, but a figment of Job's imagination, that Job at the outset was obsessed with the material world, and with rewards in the Here and Now, and the God whom he worshipped was really Satan, as is revealed in drawing no. 11. Wicksteed expounded very persuasively his central thesis that the face of the God shown in the upper section of the plates is a mirror-image of Job's face, and that God is drawn thus because he is a creation of Job's imagination. But I will postpone discussion of Wicksteed's theory in detail to Chapter 5, because his commentary relates to the engraved set, not the Butts set.

Another alternative is to admit candidly the implied dualism, quoting the biblical precedents for the doctrine that Satan *was* present in Heaven till Christ himself saw him cast out. Although Milton in *Paradise Lost* depicted Satan as hurled out of Heaven before the creation of Adam and Eve, there is support in the New Testament, besides the Book of Job, for the continued presence of Satan in Heaven. If we translate literally the Greek words τα πνευματικά της πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἔπουρανιοῖς, Satan is called by Paul, 'the spirit of evil in things heavenly' (Ephes. 6:12). Blake, presumably because he felt that the King James rendering as 'spiritual wickedness in high places' did not accurately represent the meaning, used the original Greek version when he transcribed the whole of this verse from Ephesians onto the title-page of *The Four Zoas*.

This alternative has some scriptural authority, therefore, but it deepens rather than solves the dilemma.

The third alternative is to delve deeper into the nature of God and Satan, and this I believe is what Blake is doing in his *Job*. In his designs, the Satan perceived in heaven is very different from Satan perceived on earth: his role in heaven is not as a figure of moral evil, but as the bearer of pain and suffering: 'the servant of God and examiner of men', as Binyon perceptively described his double nature.<sup>36</sup> Blake depicts Satan in heaven as a handsome youth, physically indistinguishable from the angels round the throne who shrink away from him, yet on earth he appears either as a dark spectre with spiky wings, as in no. 3, or as a dark grinning figure, with scales instead of genitals. In this second drawing in the Butts set, what is the relationship between the figure seated on the throne, the little group of mortals down below, and the leaping figure round whom smoke and flames are billowing? Blake's description in the opening lyric of his preface to the first part of *Jerusalem*, 'To the Public' gives us a clue to his intention in the opening drawings of the Butts set:

Reader! [lover] of books! [lover] of heaven!  
 And of that God from whom [all books are given,]  
 Who in mysterious Sinais awful cave  
 To Man the wondrous art of writing gave,  
 Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!  
 Thunder of Thought, & flames of fierce desire:  
 Even from the depths of Hell his voice I hear,  
 Within the unfathomed caverns of my Ear.  
 Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be,  
 Heaven, Earth & Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony. (J 3: 1-10, E 145)

These lines speak of a Deity who is the source of all books, source of the Word itself, before all time, but who is a Deity terrifying to experience, for he speaks as thunder and as fire, and in Him are harmonised Heaven, Earth, and Hell. Satan, it appears, is a personification of the fiery aspect of God himself.

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<sup>36</sup> Binyon, 1906, p. 56.

We have another clue to Blake's presentation of the fiery leaping Satan in a note in his *Descriptive Catalogue*, claiming that he had finally liberated himself from the bad influences of Titian and Rubens, who had led him to destroy 'the original conception, which was all fire and animation' (E 547). Here Blake makes it clear that 'fire and animation' are vital to the artist. And thirdly, we have a more systematised explication of the harmonising of Heaven, Earth and Hell in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other, the Devouring: to the devourer it seems as if the producer were in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of his existence and fancies that the whole. But the Prolific would cease to be the Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights ... These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! and he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword (E 40).

The term "Marriage" in Blake's titlee does not mean "unite", but its opposite, the interplay of contraries. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* marks Blake's rejection of Swedenborg. However, in the same sentence as that ridiculing Swedenborg he couples together Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus, and even classes Boehme as approximating to Dante and Shakespeare.<sup>37</sup> And it seems to be Boehme's Doctrine of Contraries on which Blake is drawing here, in writing of the eternal opposition between the 'Prolific' and the 'Devourer'.

No commentator before Lindberg seems to have noticed that in no. 2 the hair of the seated figure is tossed in the same way as the hair of the bard in Blake's sketches for Gray's poem, which Butlin dates to 1809 (Butlin 886, 887, [text]656). His hair is

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<sup>37</sup> 'Swedenborg's writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further. Have now another plain fact: any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's, and from those of Dante or Shakespear an infinite number' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* plate 21, E 43).

disturbed, in an odd star-like outline, as if it is beginning to be tossed about by the first gusts of a tempest that will sweep through Heaven. Blake is using tossed hair to symbolise inspiration, however, rather than to symbolise the Deity being disturbed by the wind of Satan's coming.

In drawing no. 5 the Deity is still enthroned in a blaze of light (this is a good deal brighter in the Butts version than in the engraved version, twenty years later), but the scene on earth is overshadowed by the dark cloud that presages Satan's coming. Blake shows a Deity racked by pity and compassion for Job. The Deity is a young man in his prime, though his beard reaches to his lap. Satan looks back at him in salutation, as he plunges earthwards pouring suffering onto Job from the vial in his right hand. Again there is the suggestion of a partnership, a pair of contraries, the Devourer who 'takes a portion of his existence and thinks that he has all.'<sup>38</sup>

And then in the following designs the place of Satan is taken by Job's three friends, and so great is his grief, their arrival seems hardly a change for the better. Whereas Blake has shown Job and his wife as radiating a gentle light themselves, the three Comforters are solely lit up by the setting sun, and their upstretched arms in no. 7 are metamorphosed naturally enough into the upstretched arms of the fiends who try to tug him down to Hell in his nightmare, in drawing no. 11. Like the dark Comforters in no. 7, lit only by the light of the departing sun, the fiends are lit only by the fires of Hell.

Here in drawing no. 11, the nightmare in which Job clearly sees a 'God' with cloven foot, he shrinks away from him in terror, but turning, sees the fiends, binding chains held in readiness, about to drag him down into the abyss. The cloven footed one is not Job's God but the God of his three self-righteous comforters, who in the preceding drawing threatened him, their arms outstretched in angry accusations. Moskal in *Blake*,

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<sup>38</sup> *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 16-17 (E 40).

*Ethics, and Forgiveness* suggests that the three fiends clawing at Job are his Comforters, their demonic state revealed by Blake.<sup>39</sup> In Job's vision, Heaven is darkened, and has become as terrifying to Job as the Abyss beneath. The hideous phantom points to two round-topped 'tables of the Law' which loom menacingly in the area which was formerly heaven, completely replacing the light of the sun, while black forked lightning rends the sky.

Satan does not reappear again until no. 16, when he is seen plummeting downwards to destruction or the abyss. Why has Blake shown Satan being cast out of Heaven, a scene that has no apparent origin in the Book of Job? Satan in *The Four Zoas* and in *Jerusalem* is Error, and the casting out of Error is a way of personifying Job's μετανοια in chapter 42. Satan only seems to be, but while he seems to be, he holds man in a powerful grip. In the final stanzas of *Jerusalem* Los says to his sons:

Will you suffer this Satan this Body of Doubt that Seems but Is Not  
To occupy the very threshold of Eternal Life. (*Jerusalem* 93:20-1, E 253)

It is possible that there is a play on words here, and Satan's name is 'Is Not' as God's name is 'He Is'. Even though Satan is not, yet he is very powerful, for

What seems to Be: Is: To those to whom  
It seems to Be, & is productive of the most dreadful  
Consequences to those to whom it seems to Be: (*Jerusalem* 32:51-3, E 179)

and

Thou art in Error Albion, the Land of Ulro:  
One Error not remov'd will destroy a human Soul (*Jerusalem* 41:10-11, E 188)

The Land of Ulro is Voidness (*Jerusalem* 78:20, E 234), Dread Sleep (*The Four Zoas* viii: 113 line 16, E 376; *Jerusalem* 4:1-2, E 146), the place of 'unreal forms' (*The Four Zoas* ii:28 line 2, E 318). So to be in error is to be in a deathlike sleep, and though Error is a state of mind, a mere negation, it is very powerful.

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<sup>39</sup> Jeanne Moskal (Tuskaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), p. 144.

c) 'No man has seen God'

Although there are plenty of illustrations of the throne of Grace, and (especially in the fifteenth century) of the Creator as a hovering figure with outstretched arms, inhibitions about depicting God the Father are still strong, and in the medieval period of Christian art they were far stronger. In the illustration from a seventeenth-century German Rebus Bible, showing Job as 'armenvater' (figs. 22a-d), and again in the engraving showing Job with a cross in his hand, also from a Rebus Bible (fig. 32), God is represented not by a human figure at all, but by a flaming triangle, symbolising the Trinity. In other ways the design is similar to Blake's, with Satan a dark figure swathed in cloud, standing between Job and God. In *Satan burning the flocks of Job*, a miniature of c. 1140 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (fig. 21), God is depicted as a huge and blazing sun.

In considering Blake's intentions in his representations of the Deity we must be careful to interpret the meaning of the separate drawings in relation to the whole Butts series. No. 1 shows us a genuinely devout old man, surrounded by a family wrapt in prayer, not a group whose misguided worship is being satirised. This must affect our assessment of Blake's intentions in no. 2, the first representation of Heaven. We should not expect the Deity there to be some cruel Urizenic God. A further guide as to Blake's intentions is given in the close links between the family group on earth in no. 2 and the Warrington *Job*, painted 1788 or even earlier (sometimes titled *And Enoch walked with God*, because it shows a scene of easy intercourse between angels and men). On no. 2 alone one cannot be sure whether Blake is breaking with tradition here and attempting to depict the living God, first person of the Trinity, or whether his intention was to depict symbolically the interplay between the Prolific and the Devourer, the Prolific being God the Word, through whom all things were made. But no. 5 in the Butts set clearly shows a grieving, pitying Deity, which is not consistent with any interpretation of the Deity in no. 2 as a cruel Urizenic God, a God created in Job's mind by his error. It is necessary

to look still further ahead, and consider also the Deity as represented in the second half of the series.

The most original approach to an understanding of Blake's representation of the Deity in his *Job* is that of David Bindman in *Blake as an Artist*.<sup>40</sup> Bindman sees the presence of Christ as dominating nos. 12 onwards just as God and Satan dominated the first eleven plates. He sees the young Elihu of no. 12 as a type of John the Baptist, heralding both Job's redemption and the coming of Christ. In no. 13, Bindman sees the figure of Christ, his outstretched arms the same as those of Christ as he first appears to Albion, in Plate 35 of *Jerusalem* (fig. 15). Bindman writes that Christ is distinguished from Jehovah here by the whirlwind, and in subsequent plates by the brilliant radiance of his aura. Christ then acts as explicator of all that is, in no. 14 re-enacting the six days of creation, like Raphael in *Paradise Lost*. 'Job and his wife look up as Christ releases the sun and the moon, while above cherubim exult, their arms interweaving in a continuous pattern'. Bindman also remarks that this tripartite design reflects the tripartite design in nos. 2 and 5, but now Christ is in the centre, taking the place of Satan. In no. 15 it is Christ who explains the dominance of evil in the world by pointing to Leviathan and Behemoth, seen inside a globe divided into land and sea. Behemoth is 'a curious heraldic rhinoceros', and Leviathan a fearsome sea-monster, which in the Butts water-colour version belches out red flames from its mouth.

Bindman's approach leads naturally to the interpretation that in no. 17 it is Christ who appears to Job in an aura of light and blesses him and his wife. The figure has a beard almost to his feet, and yet is strong, in the prime of life. The fact that this and no. 20 are in a different, harder colouring, and on different paper, as discussed in Chapter 2, does not mean that they should be discounted as not properly a part of the series. Lindberg suggests that they were created at very much the same time as the rest of the Butts set,

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<sup>40</sup> *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), pp. 211-12.

but perhaps drawn partly by Blake's pupil young Tommy Butts, or even by his friend Mrs. Butts, and though certainly not coloured by him, the overall conception is clearly Blake's, and may well belong to the same period as the rest of the series.

Bindman's central insight is that one of Blake's preoccupations in his *Job* is with the ability of pre-Christian man (and any who have not had the opportunity to know Christ are included in this category) to come to a knowledge of Christ through vision. This insight would link Blake's work with the traditions behind the medieval Rebus Bibles, which in their *Job* illustrations depict the Deity as a blazing triangle to symbolise the Trinity: Job's knowledge of God is through his knowledge of Son and Spirit. This insight would also link Blake with a still older tradition, for the early Fathers saw Christ as present in the Old Testament and taught that when Moses had the vision of the burning bush, for example, it was Christ with whom he talked, not God the Father, for 'no man hath seen God.'<sup>41</sup>

In no. 18 in the Butts set, Job stands facing the viewer with widestretched arms, blessing his enemies who had so savagely attacked him, and whom God had judged. Here, writes Bindman, Christ is no longer separate from Job. This is much clearer in the Butts version, where Job faces outwards, blessing his people, whereas in Plate XVIII of the engraved set he stands facing away from the viewer, interceding for his people. Bindman goes on to suggest that in no. 19 Job and his wife are recipients of gifts, as Mary and Joseph received the gifts of the Magi; for in the last four plates there is a fusion of Job as Christian, and Job as Christ. This interpretation is attractive because it ties in with Lindberg's detailed evidence for a Christo-centric tradition in illustrating the Book of Job.

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<sup>41</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, Classics of Western Spirituality Series, tr. by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Pauline Press, 1978), pp. 59-60.

If Bindman's suggestion is right, and Blake's concern in the second part of the series is to depict Christ, not God the Father, as the one who reveals himself to Job, then we can use this insight to interpret the Deity in the first part also: in the first part we see not a cruel, Urizenic God, but God the Word, though he is invisible to Job. This hypothesis, based on a close examination of the Butts set nos 2, 5, 10, 11, 13 - 20, will need to be tested against the inscribed texts and marginal designs added by Blake when he created the engraved version, and this will be treated in Chapter 5.

#### v) The Meaning of the Outstretched Arms

**Historical background.** Lindberg describes how he set out to discover pictorial sources for Blake's images, and very often found not one, but fifteen or sixteen. Indeed, he found that Blake had a strong preference for repeating what had been copied many times before, and he began to realise that he had not found *the* sources for a particular work, but a common language of art (p. 114). Janet Warner, independently working along the same lines, published her findings first in 1970.<sup>42</sup> Warner uses Bulwer's *Chiroplogia*, which illustrates a formal language of hand-gestures. Lindberg found that attitudes and gestures that embodied a special meaning in one work of art could be used by another artist to convey the same meaning. But meaning could also be modified by context: 'artists can use *pathos formulae* as writers use words; and, like the meaning of a word, the meaning of a pathos-formula can be altered or modified by the context.' (p. 115). Christopher Heppner also has a detailed discussion of the use of *pathos formulae*, a term coined by Aby Warburg, who made a pioneering study of gestures from classical art that embodied Dionysiac and primeval passion. These *pathos formulae* form an

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<sup>42</sup> 'Blake's Use of Gesture', in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 188-94.

important part of the language of art, from the Renaissance to at least the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

Lindberg took as an example the outstretched arms motif, which in early Western Christian art was used to depict God the creator and sustainer of creation - a hovering figure, full face, with arms outstretched as if blessing or encompassing creation. The figure is first recorded on the column of Marcus Aurelius, in Scene XVI, illustrating the Miracle of the Rain, which saved the Roman soldiers when they were dying of thirst, and destroyed the enemy soldiers: 'The streams of rain take the shape of a gloomy face framed in long hair and spreading beard...With outspread wings and arms the figure sweeps forward over men and animals..' (fig. 36).<sup>44</sup> The figure on the Marcus Aurelius column is a bold and original conception, a part of a new movement towards expressionism that was in many ways at variance with the epic-documentary style of the column of Trajan, to which it is sometimes likened. The rain-god, Notos, was represented on the Tower of the Winds at Athens as a beautiful winged youth, his emblem an upturned waterpot. There is no earlier representation of the deity known, with the power and expressiveness of the deity with outspread wings on the Marcus column. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the figure became immensely popular, particularly in Italy. Blake used it scores of times in his work, modifying it with great subtlety to suit different contexts.

**Blake's use of this tradition.** Lindberg considers that in Blake's twenty-two *Illustrations* alone there are seventeen examples of the outstretched-arms *pathos formula*, three seen from behind. Blake uses the outstretched arms in no. 13 with the

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<sup>43</sup> Heppner, pp. 7-9, quoting from E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg, an intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 63-65.

<sup>44</sup> Lindberg, p. 120. The figure of the rain demon is reproduced in P. G. Hamberg, *Studies in Roman Imperial Art, with special reference to the state reliefs of the second century* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1945), pl. 31, with commentary, p. 153.

additional meaning of blessing, and in no. 14 with the additional meaning of expressing contraries: the outstretched arms of the Creator express the contraries of the universe, the freedom of the world of angels, the imprisonment of the world below. Blake uses the outstretched arms for Satan, in no. 3 to express his all-encompassing power, in no. 11 to point simultaneously to the Tables of the Law in Heaven above and the Fires in Hell below. The fact that they are both being pointed to by the same figure suggests the fact that they are interdependent, for 'Heaven & Hell are born together.'<sup>45</sup> Lindberg also shows how the figure of *Albion Rose* (1780) with its outstretched arms can be used, in no. 6, to show Satan tormenting Job, simply by changing the expression on the face to one of malice, and changing the message of the outstretched arms by slightly altering the tilt of the hands. In no. 2 this all-encompassing power is coupled with intense malice, as is shown by the twisted evil leer, and the downward and sideways movement of Satan's head. In no. 11 the malice is shown by the wildly tossed hair and the cloven hoof. But Blake also uses the outstretched arms for Job interceding for his friends (no. 18), and Job telling his daughters of his experiences, and of the contraries of God and Satan. In no. 20, 'The divine gesture, applied to a mortal, unites him with the spiritual powers.' (p. 121). In these plates we see Job wrapt in the prayer of unity, and his outstretched arms seem to be a gesture of devotion, a longing to be absorbed into the Creator.

Janet Warner in *Blake and the Language of Art* has made a less focused, more general study, showing how development in Blake's use of gesture reflects a development in theological understanding: from the down drooping hands and grim face of the Creator Spirit in Plate 8 of *America*, and Blake's engraving *The Lazar House* (where the figure seems to be Fate, measuring out the span of men's lives remorselessly), to the 'creative fingers' (as in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*) of God's right hand in the engraved version of *Job* Plate XIV, reflecting a development in theological

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<sup>45</sup> Annot. Swedenborg, *Divine Love*, section 432, E 609.

understanding. In Blake's use of the gesture there is important development between the Butts series of 1805 and the engraved version of 1826, for in the Butts set the hands droop more. Heppner writes of Blake's ongoing desire to expand and strengthen his ability to create powerful and expressive bodies, and how this took him more and more towards Michelangelo.<sup>46</sup> Blake saw Michelangelo as an extension of the work of classical artists, referring together to 'Rapha[e]l, Mich. Angelo and the Ancient Sculptors.' (E 562). With the help of Bo Lindberg's wide knowledge of the traditions of European Christian art, and of Janet Warner's and Christopher Heppner's detailed findings about the meaning of different gestures, we can look at Blake's iconography of prayer, man's response to this Creator God, and to Christ.

**Conclusion.** Blake was not aiming at naturalism, but at helping men to know God, at conveying an authentic reflection, however weak, of the glory of the age that is to come. Crabb Robinson in his 'Reminiscences' described a conversation about Wordsworth with Blake at the end of his life in which Blake's delight in Wordsworth's poetry was intense, in spite of 'the reproaches he continually cast on W...for his imputed worship of nature - which in the mind of Blake constituted Atheism'. On another occasion he records that Blake 'denied the reality of the natural world. Satan's empire is the empire of nothing' The impression given by Crabb Robinson is that Blake harped constantly on the difference between the natural and the spiritual.<sup>47</sup> Blake used naturalistic detail, but pure naturalism was not his aim, and in this he was following his master Michelangelo: there is a story told by Michelangelo's pupil and biographer Condivi that the *Pietà* in St. Peter's, made when Michelangelo was still in his early twenties, was criticised because there were no marks of suffering, and the Virgin was still young and beautiful, too young to be the mother of the dead Christ. Michelangelo replied that sin was what caused people to age, and therefore the Immaculate Virgin would not show

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<sup>46</sup> Heppner, p.21.

<sup>47</sup> BR, pp. 543-4.

her age as ordinary people would.<sup>48</sup> Few other Western artists thought out the implications of their subject so deeply as Michelangelo and Blake.

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<sup>48</sup> Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, Tr. Alice Sedgewick Wohl, ed. Hellmut Wohl (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976), p. 128.

## Ch. 4. Job's journey into night and his participation in God in vision

### i) The Butts set: Job as a man of prayer

Blake's Job is shown at prayer in almost half the drawings in the series. Sometimes he has a book, sometimes there are angels near him, sometimes he is wrapt in vision. Blake has shown us Job at prayer most obviously in no. 1 (where he is leading prayers with his family gathered round him), no. 4 (the messenger arrives), no. 8 (Job curses the day he was born - if cursing also can be classed as prayer), no. 10 (Job looks to Heaven as his comforters point at him in accusation), no. 13 (God answers Job from the whirlwind), no. 16 (Job, on his knees, sees Satan cast from heaven), no. 17 ('but now my eye seeth thee'), no. 18 (Job prays for his friends), and no. 21 (Job and his family praise God with songs and music). Clearly 'Job at prayer' is an important element of the iconography.

Useful light is thrown on Blake's intentions in the *Job* series by Gregory the Great, who commented on Job's attitude to the Law, 'he could not spiritually discern the proper use thereof.'<sup>1</sup> This early commentator seems to suggest that Job's enlightenment will only come to him from God: the spiritual dimension depends on God's gift. And in Blake's series it is not the letter as such that is condemned; for though in no. 5 God seems to be laying aside the book so prominent on his lap in no. 2, yet the book is back on his knees in the vision of Last Judgement shown in no. 16.

**No. 1.** Blake made it clear in the Butts set of water-colours that in the opening scene Job is at prayer, by inscribing 'Our Father who art in heaven' round the rim of the sun. Job is clearly raising his eyes to God, not letting them rest on his material possessions, nor on the book in his lap, and he is using the prayer taught by Christ himself, the prayer

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<sup>1</sup> *Morals on the Book of Job*, (tr. Bliss), 11:52, p. 103.

that invokes God affectionately and lovingly, using the singular personal pronoun, and calls on God not as Judge but as Father. Yet the musical instruments that should have been used for the praise of God hang unused above Job and his wife. Mention has already been made of the similarity between this design and the water-colour *By the Waters of Babylon* (Butlin 451, [text] 466), also made for Thomas Butts, and signed '1806 WB inv'. The design is similar enough for there to be perhaps a link in thought: if the children of Israel cannot sing the songs of Zion because they are in a strange land, surrounded by oppressors, then it might follow that Blake sees Job also as surrounded by a culture that did not know the living God, and that he too feels he is in captivity. The oppressive God of the age in which he lived is shown by Blake in no. 9, Eliphaz's dream: the figure is erect and threatening, arms hidden in his robe or folded, the mien forbidding and judgemental.

**No. 4.** The messengers are arriving from the direction of the cathedral, which is now hidden in shadow, as if it can no longer be a source of strength for Job. Job raises his face to God far more clearly and wholeheartedly than he did in no. 1. His hands pressed together in prayer suggest an attempt at acceptance of the losses God has inflicted on him.

**Nos. 8 and 10.** In no. 8 Job's hands are raised to curse, which is prayer too, but terrible prayer. And we see his great strength - Job the wrestler with God in the gathering darkness. Behind him are dark storm-clouds and night. In no. 10 Job does not look at his wife, who seems to be addressing him earnestly, nor at his three accusers, but instead spreads out his hands in protest that he is innocent, and turns his eyes heavenwards, as if here too he is praying. Job is alone, attacked by both friends and wife, and that isolation gives him a new dignity. Previously his strength lay in his great possessions, his family; from now on his strength will lie only in himself, and in what is given him by God. Blake has depicted him stripped to below the waist, and perhaps this is to symbolise his lack of worldly wealth. This scene of the Mocking of Job,

clearly linking Job with Christ in his Passion, is central to the series. Blake has composed it so that all six arms stretch out at Job in accusation, a motif which, as Moskal points out, recalls other scenes of betrayal, the Accusation of Socrates and of John Bunyan's Faithful.<sup>2</sup> Blake has created a new event, a torment which was not inflicted on Job, but was, of course, inflicted on Jesus. Robert Lowth writes: 'Another still more exquisite trial of patience yet awaits him, namely the unjust suspicions, the bitter reproaches, and the violent altercations of his friends', and concludes that this third and last trial was the principal part of the poem.<sup>3</sup> Moskal argues that Blake's central theme is Forgiveness, and interprets the three friends by showing them as fallen into the state of Satan. In no. 10 they are still recognisable as individuals, but demonic in their hatred, and Job looks away from them to Heaven, but in no. 11 they have become the fiends who try to drag Job to Hell. Moskal notes that it is towards these three fiends below that Job is looking, not towards Satan. We are building towards Job's great prayer for their forgiveness depicted in no. 18, which in the biblical version is only briefly mentioned towards the very end of the narrative (42:8,10)

**Nos. 13, 16 and 17.** In nos. 13 and 16 Job and his wife are both kneeling, looking up at God in awe and wonder. 'The Human Abstract' in *Songs of Experience* (E 27), and Blake's attacks on Jesus' so-called humility in *The Everlasting Gospel* (E 518-20) certainly give the impression that Blake hated humility, because it means the sacrifice of the God within man, the sin against the Holy Ghost. In almost all the instances when Blake uses 'humility' or 'humble' the words carry a strongly negative connotation; but there is one instance in *Milton* (31:38, E 131), and one in *Jerusalem* (12:36, E 155) where Blake uses the word 'humility' in an unequivocally good sense. And in Blake's *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, he writes 'On the right hand of these [the multitudes

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<sup>2</sup> Moskal, pp. 144-5; Lindberg, pp. 241-2, notes further contemporary sources.

<sup>3</sup> *De Sacra Poesia Hebrorum*, tr. C. Gregory (1787; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), vol. 2, p. 372.



ascending from the green fields of the blessed] rise the diffident & humble'. And one couplet from *The Everlasting Gospel* sums up Blake's attitude to the word:

I was standing by when Jesus died,  
What I call'd Humility they call'd Pride' (fragment n, E 518)

The humility of acts of self annihilation was never despised by Blake. This is enough to suggest that what he hated was false humility, not humility of all kinds. Damon writes, describing nos. 13 and 17 in Blake's *Illustrations*, 'Job and his wife face God sitting on their heels; they are not kneeling nor do they show any trace of humility.'<sup>4</sup> This is not believable; for how would they have reached that position, if not by kneeling? The awe and wonder so movingly shown on their faces is surely an aspect of humility. But Damon is right that Blake hated false humility. We have the paradox that this man who so often attacked humility was described by so many of his friends as humble. 'Secrecy was unknown to him. He would relate those things of himself that others make it their utmost endeavour to conceal,' writes Tatham,<sup>5</sup> and Crabb Robinson described him as having 'a very extraordinary degree of tolerance and satisfaction with what had taken place [ - ] a sort of humble & pious Optimism, not at all like the scornful Optimism of *Candide* - But at the same time that he was very ready to praise he seemed incapable of envy, as he was of discontent.'<sup>6</sup>

**No. 18.** Here, *Job's Sacrifice*, Job faces towards the viewer as he stands at the altar praying for his friends. His arms are outstretched in the same gesture as that of the *Jupiter Pluvialis* (fig. 36), and his face raised as one concentrating, rapt in divine vision. The position of Job at prayer here has an antique precedent in a fresco from the fourth century A.D, showing Daniel in the lion's den, with his arms stretched wide in a gesture

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<sup>4</sup> Damon, rev. Eaves (1988), p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> BR, p. 529.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 539.

of self-giving, rather than uplifted in supplication for help. Job's friends kneel beside him, and Job is in the process of being restored to the community from which his suffering isolated him. Finally, in no. 21, Job and his family praise God actively in songs and music, without books to guide them. Job is now at one with the community, and can worship joyfully.<sup>7</sup>

**The theme of despair.** Prayer and despair are at opposite poles, and Blake seems to use the very well-known conventions for depicting despair, showing a huddled figure with knees drawn up to the chin and head bent, in order to point the contrast, thus highlighting prayer. There are several plates in which Job is on the verge of utter despair. Janet Warner in *Blake and the Language of Art* has made an important study of the traditional rendering of Despair on which Blake drew, and on the poetic tradition in which, while despair is the ultimate sin against the Holy Ghost, grief can be creative, and in the end lead to regeneration. Warner has listed four thematic despair-figures: Job in no. 6, lying prostrate with arms close to his side, is one; another is the kneeling bent-over figure of his wife in the same plate; a third is the figure lying prone and inert; and fourth, most withdrawn of all, the hunched figure with drawn-up knees, viewed from the front - and Job is never shown in this posture, though Blake subtly hints at it in no. 12, in which Job sits and listens to Elihu as one who has just stirred from the huddled position, newly emerging from a deep pit of despair.<sup>8</sup> In the figure of Job's wife in no. 10 we see a mood close to despair, for she is sitting huddled, her knees drawn up, but her head is raised, to address either Job or the friends; in no. 12, however, she seems to be in total despair, huddled like a baby in the womb, her head bent, her body drawn in on itself. Her position is important in acting as a foil to Job, who refuses to lose courage. Prayer and despair go together, and Job discovers that prayer is deepened by

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<sup>7</sup> The origin of the persistent belief in Job's connection with music seems to lie in *The Testament of Job*, in which the writer tells us that Job at the end of his life bequeathed to his daughters magic girdles, with the help of which they could hear the music of the spheres.

<sup>8</sup> Warner (1984), pp. 109 ff.

near despair. One way of reading Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job* is as a man's inner journey of prayer.

**Despair and the Dark Night of the Soul.** In the biblical text Job is for much of the time on the edge of despair. The judging God of his comforters oppresses him, and he cannot hear his God (Job 6:25,27 and 9: 10-1, 16). To show this sense of separation from God visually, Blake has depicted a black cloud coming between Job and heaven as Satan descends, and in the following designs he shows Job as journeying into night.

What, if any, are Blake's sources for depicting Job's spiritual Dark Night? Blake's debt to Swedenborg, and, more importantly, to Boehme, has been intensively explored.<sup>9</sup> But Blake himself indicates, both in *Jerusalem* and in *Milton*, that there were other spiritual writers he also admired. Those named in *Jerusalem* are as follows: Fénelon, Mme. Guyon, St. Teresa, Whitefield, and Hervey (*Jerusalem* 72:49-52, E 227), and in *Milton* Whitefield is named again, coupled with Wesley (*Milton* 22:55-62). Blake seldom mentions real persons by name in his poetry, and it is worth investigating the context of each of these citations, because they were all people of prayer, and Blake seems to be presenting Job as a man of prayer, a man who lived close to God. They were also all people of practical ability, of active holiness. Here I have confined myself to how Blake could have known about them, and whether there is other evidence of their influence on him, apart from their mere names appearing in these two poems approximately contemporaneous to his *Job*. St. Teresa, whose influence can be traced on all the other four, is the only one treated in detail here.

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<sup>9</sup> The influence of Swedenborg has been very thoroughly discussed by Kathleen Raine in *The Human Face of God* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), and by D. Morton Paley in his discussion of the fluctuations in Blake's interest in Swedenborg ("A New Heaven is Begun": William Blake and Swedenborgianism, *BIQ*, vol. XIII, no. 32, fall 1979, pp. 64-90), and the influence of Boehme on Blake's work has been recently explored by Bryan Aubrey in *Blake, Watchman of Eternity* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986).

**(ii) Guides and witnesses: Fénelon, Mme. Guyon, St. Teresa, Hervey, Whitefield, and Wesley**

**a) Those named in *Jerusalem***

The Nations wait for Jerusalem, they look up for the Bride...  
 And the Fourfold Gate  
 Towards Beulah is to the south: Fénelon, Guion, Teresa,  
 Whitefield & Hervey guard that Gate; with all the gentle Souls  
 Who guide the great winepress of love.  
 (*Jerusalem* 72:37 and 49-52, E 227)

**The imagery of the Winepress.** Blake describes these five individuals as guardians of the Gate, 'with all the gentle Souls/ Who guide the great Wine-press of Love'. This is a startling phrase, for 'winepress' in the Bible is used always in conjunction with '*wrath*', when the word is used symbolically, as at Isaiah 63:3. This association of the winepress with God's wrath is echoed in the Book of Revelation, a book on which Blake drew for almost half his biblical imagery (Rev. 14:19-20 and 19:15).

Elsewhere in his writings 'wine-press' is used in the biblical sense outlined above, and Blake contrasts the rejoicing in Heaven as the grapes are trodden with the lamenting of the 'Human grapes':

The Wine-press on the Rhine groans loud, but all its central beams  
 Act more terrific in the central Cities of the Nations  
 Where Human Thought is crushed beneath the iron hand of Power.  
 (*Milton*: 25:3-5, E 121)

How red the sons and daughters of Luvah! Here they tread the grapes...  
 This winepress is called War on Earth: it is the printing-press  
 Of Los, and here he lays his words in order above the mortal brain,  
 As cogs are formed in a wheel, to turn the adverse wheel.  
 Timbrels and violins sport round the winepresses. (27:3,8-11, E 124)

But in the Wine-presses the Human grapes sing not nor dance,  
 They howl and writhe in shoals of torment; (27:30-31, E 124)

Blake goes on to compare the great Wars in eternity to the fury of Poetic Inspiration (*Milton* 30:19 E 129), and elsewhere, in *Jerusalem*, writes, 'Our wars are wars of life, and wounds of love...' (34:14, E 180). And so Blake implies here by his association of the winepress with *love* that the true love found in heaven is a distillation from suffering, and abandonment of the self.

**Those who guide the Winepress.** Five men and women were named by Blake as guardians of the gate of the Heavenly City, and guides of 'the great winepress of love.' Blake here is writing of a deliverance that will be universal, a Heavenly City whose gates are open to people of all nations. For here 'the Nations' wait, and Jerusalem's Gate is guarded by French and Spanish holy people, as well as English, though for most of the poem the emphasis has been on Albion, as Britain. The design for this plate shows a globe, which again suggests that Blake wanted to emphasise a universal deliverance, and the lack of national frontiers among these chosen ones.

All these five individuals named here are Christian and recent, but in terms of church allegiance and doctrine, Blake could hardly have gathered together a more diverse group. St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was a Spanish Catholic nun, François Fénelon (1651-1715) a French Catholic, Archbishop of Cambrai, Madame Guyon (1648-1717) a prolific French Quietist, George Whitefield (1714-1770) an eloquent Methodist preacher with strong Calvinist leanings, and James Hervey (1714-1758) also prominent in the Methodist movement. Jeanne Marie Guyon taught an extreme form of quietism, and was imprisoned in the Bastille for her teachings. Stevenson suggests that St. Teresa may have been selected because she had been someone very active in the reform of her Order, but more especially for her mystical writings on the soul's search for God. But Stevenson has not gone far enough. How could Blake have come across each of these five, and how much could he have known of Mme Guyon, Fénelon, and St. Teresa? Secondly, we have seen already in many instances the influence of the teaching of the Early Fathers on Blake, as handed down in the artistic tradition: can it be shown that

these five 'guardians of the southern gate' actually influenced Blake's thinking, or served as another link with the Early Fathers?

### **Mme. Guyon (1648-1717)**

Blake could have known of Mme. Guyon from an English translation of her autobiography and of *Moyen Court* published in 1775, *The Exemplary Life of the pious Lady Guion, translated from her own account in the original French. To which is added a new translation of her 'Short and Easie Method of Prayer' by Thomas Digby Brooke. Which treatise was the first rise of her severe persecutions.*<sup>10</sup> In the same year a translation of *Moyen court* was published in Bristol by T. Mills. Blake could also have known of Mme. Guyon through William Cowper. Cowper translated some of her hymns, and clearly admired her; Blake admired Cowper, and Hayley enlisted him to help with his Cowper biography, for which Blake engraved six plates. Cowper's translations were first published in 1801. He translated sixty-two of her poems, making the selection himself.<sup>11</sup>

She would certainly have confirmed Blake's dislike of priests and of the established Church, and his love of innocence and trust. And Blake would certainly have been interested in her, because she taught a love for God that was detached from sensible rewards and consolations - and this was the question that Satan posed to God, with regard to his servant Job. She would certainly have confirmed Blake's dislike of priests and of the established church, and his love of innocence and trust.

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<sup>10</sup> Dublin: William Kidd, 1775; Philadelphia: Joseph Krukshank, 1804.

<sup>11</sup> Cowper was invited to do these translations by a dissenting minister, William Bull, who gave him three volumes of her poetry. Cowper wrote to a friend: 'He is her passionate admirer, and rode 20 miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger.' (*The Correspondence of William Cowper*, 4 vols., ed. Thomas Wright (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), vol. 2, p. 5.

### b) François Fénelon (1651-1715)

The context of Fénelon's first rise to fame was the controversy surrounding the Huguenots, and it is possible that one of the reasons why Blake became interested in him was from his interest in the Huguenots. Even before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, many thousands of Huguenots had fled from France, and as a direct result of the revocation of 1685, 300,000 Huguenots fled to the Netherlands, England, and America. Their readiness to abandon status, security, and homeland for the sake of their faith made a strong impression in the countries that received them, and a century later they were still a noticeable presence in London. Blake's wife Catherine's maiden name was Boucher, a common Huguenot name. Whether or not she was a Huguenot by origin, Blake would surely have been impressed by the sincerity of the Huguenot cause, and by their sympathiser Fénelon.

Fénelon's revolutionary book on the education of girls, first published in France in 1687, had been translated into English by 1699.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by *Directions for a Holy Life and Attaining Christian Perfection*.<sup>13</sup> His political allegory, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, enormously popular in France throughout the eighteenth century, was also translated into English.<sup>14</sup>

Fénelon was also famous for his defence of Mme. Guyon. The quotations from the Early Fathers which he had submitted to the Commission at Issy investigating her, quotations also from acknowledged spiritual leaders such as St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, formed the nucleus of *Maximes des Saints*, published in the spring of 1697. The central issue was that of disinterested love. The *Maximes* were published in

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<sup>12</sup> François Fénelon, *The Education of Young Gentlewomen* (London: printed for N. R., 1699).

<sup>13</sup> London: J. Roberts, 1736.

<sup>14</sup> François Fénelon, *The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*, tr. Pierre Desmaizeaux (London: R. Ware etc., 1745).

English as *The Maxims of the Saints Explained*, together with the later pamphlets by Bossuet and Fénelon, attacking and defending it.<sup>15</sup> In 1723 Fénelon's convert, the chevalier Ramsay, published his *Vie de Fénelon*, presenting him as the victim of an odious Catholic absolutism, a position which would clearly have appealed to Blake.

*Maximes des Saints*, exploring the themes of mental prayer and contemplative union with God, leans heavily on Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Anselm, and Augustine, as well as more modern saints such as John of the Cross and Francis of Sales. Fénelon contrasts the disciplined, systematic meditation on scenes from the life of Christ with the freedom of contemplative prayer. He writes of the need for *pur foi*, a faith which puts no stress on ecstasies, visions, and the like, but is even content to walk in darkness: 'les saints nous apprennent qu'il faut alors ne s'arrêter point volontairement a ces lumières extraordinaires, mais les outrepasser, comme dit le bienheureux Jean de la Croix, et demeurer dans la foi la plus nue et la plus obscure.' He also writes of the need for faith that continues to trust God even when God seems to have abandoned us, as Francis of Sales also teaches.<sup>16</sup>

Fénelon's championship of Mme. Guyon ended in his being forbidden to preach outside his diocese. Within his diocese, however, he continued to be actively involved, his charitable generosity helping those suffering great hardship from the effects of the war over the Spanish-French succession. Blake would have admired his independence and active holiness: a man who worked for reconciliation with the Huguenots, in a hostile and increasingly polarised climate, a man who was not afraid to defend mysticism even when it had been officially condemned as heresy, and a man who was active in trying to relieve the sufferings of the poor. We shall see the same qualities of practical compassion in the other three, especially in St. Teresa.

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<sup>15</sup> François Fénelon, *Maxims of the Saints Explained* (London: Rhodes, 1698, reprinted London, E. and C. Dilly, 1775).

<sup>16</sup> F. Fénelon, *Oeuvres*, ed. Jacques le Brun (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), pp. 1028, and 1033.

### James Hervey (1714-58)

James Hervey and George Whitefield were both close friends of John Wesley at Oxford, though considerably younger, and they both followed him when he sailed for Georgia. Both were powerful preachers. James Hervey was a popular writer on religious themes, in the style of Young and Blair, and Blake painted a magnificent picture to illustrate Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* (c. 1820-27), which testifies to an ongoing interest in him.<sup>17</sup>

There are important parallels between Blake's illustration of Hervey's *Meditations* and his *Illustrations to the Book of Job*. Blake's inscribed on the illustration to *Meditations among the Tombs*, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire." Fire is an important element in Blake's *Job*. The God seated at the top of the picture in no. 2, with an open book on his lap, is suddenly invaded by the flames of Satan leaping into his presence. In no. 5, God closes his book and half rises, his whole stance embodying compassion and love, as the flaming figure of Satan comes between him and Job. Satan has even taken over his halo of light, while his flames threaten to scorch the angels that stand around the throne of God. In no. 11 dark flames from the Pit are threatening to engulf Job. There is a parallel also between no. 18 of the Butts set, in which Blake shows Job, facing forward with arms spread wide, like the hovering figure with widespread arms, facing forward, above Noah's ark in Blake's illustration to Hervey. This figure seems to be the spiritual form of Noah, which grows in strength as he contends with all the dangers of the Flood. There are also obvious parallels between Blake's illustration of Hervey's *Meditations*, showing the last day, when the dead shall rise again, and no. 16, showing Satan cast down.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Butlin 967, [text] 770.

Blake's struggle to come to terms with the threatening image of God the Father is reflected in his *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, and it is possible that his illustration to Hervey's *Meditations* is a kind of descant to the former Creation as Blake illustrates it is full of suffering: Adam is shown, not in Paradise, but with Eve dying in his arms, as he looks up appealingly to God; Noah is shown arising dripping from the ordeal of the flood; a widow sits desolate among the bodies of her husband and children. Yet Heaven is flooded with joyful reunions: here God *is* in Christ, for Jesus the man is shown transfigured into Godhead. This God is not a consuming fire, but a God who brings men to Resurrection. Blake uses the tradition of interpreting the Book of Job as a foreshadowing of Christ to make this God who brings men to Resurrection the theme of his *Illustrations*.

**b) The 'witnesses' named in *Milton*: Whitefield and Wesley**

But then I raised up Whitefield, Palamabron raised up Westley,  
 And these are the cries of the Churches before the two Witnesses{ }  
 Faith in God the dear Saviour who took on the likeness of men:  
 Becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross  
 The Witnesses lie dead in the Street of the Great City  
 No Faith is in all the Earth: the Book of God is trodden under Foot:  
 He sent his two servants, Whitefield and Westley; were they Prophets  
 Or were they Idiots or Madmen? shew us Miracles! (22:55-62, F. 118)

The poet, accompanied by Los, meets with Rintrah and Palamabron, who are both distressed by the falling away and corruption of the churches. They tell Blake that the 'Deism' of his age is due to 'Milton's Religion'. Harold Bloom suggests that Deism now means not only the beliefs of Voltaire and Rousseau, but the decline of the visionary Swedenborg into his own variety of dogmatic orthodoxy and predestinarianism (E 919). Against these the sons set the enthusiasm of the Methodist Revival, whose activities are a presage of the apocalyptic event, Whitefield and Wes[t]ley, forms of Rintrah and

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<sup>18</sup> Lindberg, pp. 219, 265, 314.

Palamabron respectively. In declaring that 'their bodies lie dead in the streets' the speaker is identifying them with the two faithful witnesses of Revelation 11:3-8, Moses and Elijah, who were resurrected after three days, and taken up into Heaven.

Blake is naming these 'witnesses' not for what they taught, but because they were prepared to be 'obedient to death', like their Saviour Christ, in a faithless generation. These allusions to faithfulness in a faithless generation also have a bearing on the interpretation of Blake's *Illustrations*. In the first chapter, I discussed how Linnell in his letters referred to 'the captivity of Job', and the link between this and no. 1, where Job is shown sitting under a tree on which the musical instruments which hang unused evoke (Psalm 137:1-4). Blake is presenting Whitefield and Wesley as witnesses in a faithless generation, and the visual evidence suggests that Blake saw Job's situation as parallel.

### **George Whitefield (1714-70)**

Whitefield, like Hervey, was intimately connected with the Wesleys. He remained officially an Anglican, though as a result of his attacks on the worldliness of the clergy he was soon banned from Anglican pulpits. So he 'took the world as his parish', and preached with formidable success. Benjamin Franklin calculated that his voice could be heard by thirty thousand. Franklin, though a Deist, admired him, as did William Cowper. But he was frequently attacked by mobs. Blake clearly admired Whitefield for he mentions him by name both in *Jerusalem* and in *Milton*, where he is coupled not with Hervey, but Wesley.

### **John Wesley (1703-91)**

Wesley was brilliant as an organiser, even though Whitefield and Hervey were more powerful as preachers than Wesley. But Wesley was more. The Methodist stereotype

of John Wesley in the past has been 'a plain man's plain man'. Because of his gift for putting theology simply, writes Outler, we tend to forget how deeply read he was in the Church Fathers, 'A major figure in a major religious movement - one who had glimpsed the underlying unity of Christian truth in both Catholic and Protestant traditions, and who had turned this recognition to the services of a great popular religious reform and renewal'.<sup>19</sup> Outler argues that the deep wellspring of Wesley's Christianity was the Bible and the Early Fathers. From Thomas à Kempis, William Law, and Henry Scougal he learnt that 'faith is either in dead earnest or just dead'; from the great scholars of the seventeenth-century revival of patristic studies, William Beveridge and Robert Nelson, that there is an intimate correlation between Christian doctrine and Christian spirituality; and from the "latitudinarians", Edward Stillingfleet and Gilbert Burnet, that a church's polity is measured more validly by its efficacy than by its rigid doctrinal purity.<sup>20</sup>

The hymns of John's brother Charles show many affinities with the Continental Catholic outlook. Donald Allchin, in *Participation in God: a forgotten strand in Anglican Tradition*, emphasises this, in analysing some of the hymns of Charles Wesley. His book is concerned with the presence in Anglican theology and spirituality of the patristic doctrine of  $\theta\epsilon\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  or 'deification', 'participation in God'. The Early Fathers taught: 'God became man so that man might become God': Blake echoes this teaching at the end of *There is no Natural Religion* (version [b]): 'Therefore God becomes as we are, That we may be as he is' (E 3). The Methodist movement's teaching centred on the

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<sup>19</sup> *John Wesley: a representative collection of his writings*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. viii-ix.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, *Christian Pattern, or 'A treatise of the Imitation of Christ'*, translated by John Wesley (1735) and *A Companion for the Altar*, extracted from Thomas à Kempis by J. Wesley (1755); *A serious Call to a Holy Life, extracted from a late author [W. Law] by John Wesley (1744)*; *The Life of God in the Soul of Man: or, The Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion*, [by H. Scougal], abridged by John Wesley (1744); *The Nature and Design of Christianity* [an abridgement by John Wesley of the first chapter of a book by W. Law entitled, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*]. Of this last, published in 1740, there were three reprints that year, and further reprints in 1742, 1748, 1756, 1771, 1775, 1806, and 1811.

believer's personal encounter with Christ in a moment of experiential faith and forgiveness, but it did not lose sight of the nature of the whole Christian tradition.<sup>21</sup> One can see evidence of this in Wesley's publication of *The Christian Library*, consisting of extracts from some fifty classics of Christian spirituality, among them the works of St. John of the Cross and St. Francis of Sales (though one may regret the way Wesley adapted and altered the texts so freely).

Allchin demonstrates the strength of the Christian tradition in the thought of both John and Charles Wesley. John Wesley represented what Outler would call *evangelical catholicism*. His practicality and compassion, as shown by his deep concern for the poor, and the successful founding of an orphanage in Georgia, would also have appealed to Blake.

### c) St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582): 'Contemplation' versus 'Meditation'

For this King does not allow himself to be taken, except by one who surrenders to Him wholly.<sup>22</sup>

**Background.** St. Teresa is the common denominator, the person whose influence can be seen in all the others named by Blake. He would probably have come to know of her first through art, but it is probably either through Fénelon's *Maxims of the Saints Explained*, or through the writing and preaching of John Wesley, that Blake first came to know of her teachings. He could have read her in English in the translation of her autobiography by Abraham Woodhead, published in London in 1675.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Donald Allchin, *Participation in God: a forgotten strand in Anglican Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), pp. 24-6.

<sup>22</sup> *The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, tr. and ed. E. Allison Peers, 2 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1944-6), vol. 2, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> *The Works of the Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus*, tr. Abraham Woodhead (London: Joseph Travers, 1675), 2 parts.

Samuel Palmer is our evidence for his enthusiasm for her writings. Describing Blake on the threshold of old age as he remembered him, Samuel Palmer told Alexander Gilchrist, 'He was fond of the works of St. Theresa, and often quoted them with other writers on the interior life.'<sup>24</sup>

After Alexander Gilchrist's death Palmer wrote, concerning Roman Catholicism and St. Teresa, in a letter to Anne Gilchrist of July 24th, 1862:

Everything connected with *Gothic* art and churches, and their builders, was a *passion* with him. St. Theresa was his delight.<sup>25</sup>

That Blake was interested in writers on the interior life is also shown by a letter from Frederick Tatham of June 8th, 1864, to Francis Harvey, 'I may say I have possessed books well thumbed and dirtied by his graving hands, books in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and Italian, besides a large collection of works of the mystical writers, Jacob Behmen, Swedenborg, and others.'<sup>26</sup>

**'Contemplation' versus 'Meditation'**. What follows is speculative, exploring the hypothesis that Blake may be depicting in images a contrast frequently dwelt on in the writings of St. Teresa: the contrast between the stage when prayer is 'mental', the brain actively studying God and striving to know him, and the stage called 'contemplation', when God takes over, and floods the soul with vision.

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<sup>24</sup> Gilchrist (1863), p. 303.

<sup>25</sup> BR, p. 321. There is only one reference to St. Teresa in Samuel Palmer's letters independent of Blake, and then it is only to quote the refrain at the end of each stanza in one of her poems (*Letters of Samuel Palmer*, ed. R. Lister, 2 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), vol. 2, p. 717). This suggests that Blake rather than Palmer was the enthusiast for the works of St. Teresa.

<sup>26</sup> BR, pp. 41-2.

**'Contemplation' in St. Teresa's writing.** 'Contemplation' is a key word in the writings of St. Teresa, being contrasted with 'mental prayer': mental prayer is like the study of the rules of chess, whereas contemplation is playing it. Contemplation cannot be attained without mental prayer, but mental prayer is only a means to an end. Chapter XVI of *The Way of Perfection* describes the difference between perfection in the lives of contemplatives and in the lives of those who are content with mental prayer. Chapter XVII concerns 'how some souls are not fitted for contemplation, and how some take long to attain it', and Chapter XVIII 'shows how much greater are the trials of contemplatives than those of actives'.<sup>27</sup> The difference in usage and meaning between 'meditation' and 'contemplation' was a central theme in Fénelon's *Maxims*, as I have described above.

St. Teresa's writings begin with practical advice on living, and throughout there is a strong practical strain. Her concern for the poor was the source of her reforms of the Carmelite Order. 'We aren't angels, we've got bodies,' Teresa reminds us, and warns of the dangers of forgetting this, teaching that the body is an integral part of the human make-up, by which God may be loved and served and glorified.<sup>28</sup> In *The Way of Perfection*, the first steps in prayer were intercession, love of our neighbour, and detachment from material things, coupled with detachment from ourselves. These are, as it were, the rules for setting out the pieces on the chess-board, before beginning a game of chess. She writes of the beginner, who is still wrapped up in himself and his own small concerns, 'In his early stages, he did not even know how to set out the chess-board, and thought that, in order to give checkmate, it would be enough to be able to recognise the pieces. But that is impossible. For this King does not allow himself to be taken, except by one who surrenders to him wholly.'<sup>29</sup> Detachment, self-surrender, can

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<sup>27</sup> *Works*, vol. 2, p. viii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 140-1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 64.

only be won through suffering. The paradox of the King who allows himself to be captured only by one who wholly *surrenders* to him demonstrates St. Teresa's ability to explain deep things in simple language, in this case, the language of a 'worldly' game (as she calls it), a game well understood even by children. This theme of self-surrender is central to Blake's thought also, occurring prominently both in *Jerusalem* and *Milton*. I will argue that it is also central to his *Job*.

**'Contemplation' in Blake's writings.** Blake only used the word 'meditation' in connection with Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*, but he uses 'contemplation' and cognate words in thirty-five instances, and an interesting development can be traced in the way he uses the word, progressing from the meaning 'general reflection' to a more mystical sense. Contrasting examples from his early work with uses from 1804 onwards suggest how the word bears on Job's inner journey in Blake's *Illustrations*.

In *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's first printed work, dawn is the time for contemplation (E 442), dusk is the time for contemplation (E 444), contemplation brings humility to man, and 'tis contemplation teacheth knowledge truly how to know' (E 447). All this is conventional. In the prose poem 'Contemplation', however, the goddess comes and offers him an idyllic pastoral escape, which, significantly, he rejects. Here Blake is already beginning to use the word in a pejorative sense. In *Ahania* (1795), Blake uses the noun 'contemplations' in the plural in a bad sense, almost in the sense of the Evil Thoughts of which the Desert Fathers wrote, the λογισμοι: he writes of 'dire contemplations' (*Ahania* 3:7 E 85), and of 'sullen contemplations' in *The Four Zoas, Night the Ninth* (page 138, l. 12 E 406). The verb is used in the same poem for remembering with bitterness past glories (*The Four Zoas, Night the Second*, l. 6, E 322). But in *Night the Eighth*, which is generally agreed to be later than the rest, we have 'Enormous works Los contemplated, inspired by the Holy Spirit' (l. 39, E 374).

In *Jerusalem*, which was written over a period of fifteen years or more, the word has two distinct meanings: the 'unfortunate contemplator' of Satan or the Spectre gets devoured by him (29[33]:23-4), and we read of sufferings 'among the winding places of deep contemplation intricate' (45[31]:22, E 194). On the other hand we have 'those in Great Eternity who contemplate on Death', who are beings with profound insight into spiritual truth (32[36]:50, E 179); and in the final glorious climax of the poem, we have contemplation linked with faith. Christ appears to Albion the likeness of Los, and they converse together as man to man, Christ speaking about the necessity of sacrifice and care for the other. Then Albion sees Christ engulfed by a dark cloud:

Albion stood in terror, not for himself but for his Friend  
 Divine, & Self was lost in the contemplation of faith  
 And wonder at the Divine Mercy & at Los's sublime honour  
(96:32, E 256)

Here 'contemplation' is linked with being taken out of oneself in faith, describes a state when the 'Self' is lost, and the reasoning faculty is no longer dominating, and yet the mind is wide awake and full of wonder.

Perhaps the three most interesting uses of 'contemplation' occur in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, written apparently as notes for a new exhibition of his work which he planned for 1810. Here, after a discussion of the difference between Allegory and Vision, he laments the fact that very little is known of the nature of Visionary Fancy or Imagination, and that people think the things of eternity less permanent than material things. He writes in terms that could suggest Neoplatonism, were it not that in the same paragraph he vigorously disassociates himself from Platonic objections to poetry as a form of knowledge (E 554).

In the first instance, Blake links the visionary images he describes in this work with 'contemplative thought', using the analogy of the eternal renewal of the oak through the acorn: 'just as the Imaginative Image returns by the seed of Contemplative Thought'. He

sees the prophetic writings in the Old Testament as illustrating these imaginative images, these 'conceptions of Visionary Fancy' (E 555). 'Contemplative Thought' in this context is the seed through which our knowledge of the eternal world is sustained: Blake is moving towards a more mystical sense of the word 'contemplative'.

In the second instance, later in the same work, Blake writes of a group of souls who have achieved a place in eternity and whom he has depicted lost in contemplation and hidden in a cloud, within the rainbow that surrounds God's throne. He says that he has depicted them as a cloud, not as individuals, because these are those souls who have humbled themselves, turning away from the Selfhood, and have sacrificed all to Inspiration:

I have represented those who are in Eternity by some in a Cloud within the Rainbow that surrounds the Throne they merely appear as in a Cloud when anything of Creation, Redemption or Judgement are the Subjects of Contemplation though their Whole Contemplation is Concerning these things the Reason they so appear is the humiliation of <the Reasoning & Doubting> Selfhood and the giving all up to Inspiration.' (E 563)

Like Albion, they are 'lost in contemplation'.

The third usage of the term in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* is well known. After several pages of description of the individual figures and what they represent Blake writes: 'If the Spectator could enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noah's Rainbow or into his bosom and could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the air & then he would be happy' (E 560). Blake here is vividly describing what the Eastern Christian believer hopes for as he stands before the icon in prayer.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See the interesting discussion in Leonid Uspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, 2 vols. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 148-9.

In these passages in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* where he speaks of 'contemplative thought' Blake has been using the terminology of St. Teresa, but has been coupling it with 'vision', which is not her usage. He actually comes nearer to her use of 'contemplation' in the final lines of a long poem about a vision of Los, which he sent in a letter of 1802 to Thomas Butts. He writes of four different degrees of *vision*:

Now I a fourfold vision see,  
And a fourfold vision is given to me  
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight  
And threefold in soft Beulahs night  
And twofold Always. May God us keep  
From Single vision & Newton's sleep (E 722)

For Blake, then, there were different levels of vision. The lowest level was the empirical rationalist's way of seeing; next came the level of twofold vision, which involved a personification, as in the poem for Thomas Butts, which describes seeing a thistle in his path transformed into a Urizenic grey old man who chides him; threefold is the calm of Paradise, but it is a refuge for the weak, not a place for those for whom true strength is to be found in weakness; and fourfold, his 'supreme delight', corresponds to St. Teresa's 'perfect contemplation':

God does not allow us to drink of this water of *perfect contemplation* whenever we like: the choice is not ours; this divine union is something quite supernatural, given that it may cleanse the soul and leave it pure and free from the mud and misery in which it has been plunged because of its sins. Other consolations, excellent as they may be, which come through the intermediacy of the understanding, are like water running all over the ground. This cannot be drunk directly from the source; and its course is never free from clogging impurities.<sup>31</sup>

We come now to Blake's *Illustrations*. Blake's Job in nos. 1 and 2 of the Butts set is using and studying the Scriptures, 'meditating', and this is quite different from the Job of the opening chapter of the Biblical version, who is concerned to purify his sons after

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<sup>31</sup> *Works*, vol. 2, p.80.

every occasion of feasting, and to make atonement for them by rising early and making burnt offerings (Job 1:5). Most commentators account for the discrepancy by saying that Blake has depicted Job searching the Law for the correct rituals he should perform. But, particularly in the Butts set, Blake seems to be pointing a contrast between the Job of the first two water-colours in the series, book in hand, and the Job of nos. 18 and 20, whose arms spread wide echo the gesture of God in nos. 14 and 17, as if Job in vision has become one with God. Blake could have shown him sacrificing, or purifying his sons through ritual, but instead he shows him studying and praying, as if prayer is the central idea, and he wants to contrast the way Job *prayed* at the beginning and the end of the series, rather than what Job did.

**True humility and self-surrender.** In *The Way of Perfection* St. Teresa is careful to warn the reader that without humility all is worthless, or very dangerous, for the visions and warm feelings may be sent by the devil. But she also writes about false humility: 'Avoid being bashful with God, as some people are, in belief that they are being humble. It would not be humility on your part if the King were to do you a favour and you were to refuse to accept it; but you would be showing humility by taking it, and being pleased with it, yet realising how far you are from deserving it.'<sup>32</sup> Blake makes this point in his *Illustrations* through the contrast between the friends who cringe away from the vision of God in fear, and Job and his wife who kneel and face Him, in wonder and acceptance. This theme of self-surrender is central to both *Jerusalem* and *Milton*, and also to the *Illustrations to the Book of Job*.

St. John teaches that the fervent soul moves easily into the 'active night of the senses', and readily gives up sensible rewards. But there follows a 'passive night of the senses' when God takes over, and the Christian begins to suffer unexpected, undeserved

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

mortifications.<sup>33</sup> We can find here parallels for Blake's Job. Like Hervey, Whitefield, and Wesley, Job was earnestly desirous to serve God, and so we see him, in both the first two plates. This voluntary self-offering was a necessary preliminary to the deeper relationship with God which he attains at the end, for without it he would only have been embittered by the unexpected, undeserved mortifications of the senses that he suffered. Instead he had the humility to sit and learn from a younger man, as we see him in no. 12.

All these 'guides of the winepress of love' were teachers of mystical doctrine in different ways, and with Blake's admiration for the vision of Jacob Boehme (which has been studied by many scholars), and his way of interpreting the Bible, his mind would have turned naturally in this direction. Blake respected those who gave evidence of their spiritual experience and their visionary insights, and he also respected the practical holiness of these figures, and their ability to evoke widespread response. Mme Guyon had travelled the length and breadth of France teaching, before her first arrest; Fénelon regarded it as a severe punishment to be forbidden to preach outside his diocese of Cambrai; Whitefield, Hervey, and Wesley were indefatigable field-preachers; Teresa of Avila showed ceaseless energy for journeying, as she set up Discalced Carmelite houses in new cities across Spain. All these, then, were people of prayer who lived out their faith creatively in the world, and with indefatigable energy, people who had first-hand experience of the depths of prayer, combined with a practical concern..

### iii) Job and the dark night of the soul

'Blake's Job is developed from materialism into spirituality. In this respect the composition of Blake's pictorial epic is linear. But in another respect it is cyclical: his

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<sup>33</sup> Juan de la Cruz, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991), pp. 361 ff.

Job is shown progressing from happiness through unhappiness to new happiness'.<sup>34</sup> Lindberg goes on to say that as regards the linear composition Blake has followed the Book of Job: Job has gained something from his captivity, for he becomes capable of seeing God with his own eyes, of talking with God face to face, and of abasing himself before his Maker. But the cyclical movement in Blake's *Illustrations* is a new departure, though the biblical book also has a cyclical as well as a linear structure. For in the Biblical version Job progresses from riches to sickness and rejection, then back again to riches; to Blake such a progress would be pointless, and in his *Illustrations* the new riches are different, for Job's material wealth is now unimportant compared with his spiritual riches. And whereas in the Book of Job his fall is sudden, as is God's visit in the whirlwind after a long period of despair, in Blake's work there is a gradual downward path into despair and darkness, and a gradual climb upwards again into hope, light, and new life.

Blake's use of darkness, and movement from daylight to dark night, and out into spiritual light, is highly original. But he also had possible sources in the Wesleys, and in St. Teresa and her populariser, Fénelon. Charles Wesley's hymn 'Wrestling Jacob', which enjoyed steady popularity, links the story of the patriarch with the New Testament, just as Blake linked his *Job*, and describes a dark night of struggle and near despair. And the teaching of St. Teresa, particularly as developed in the work of St. John of the Cross, is very much concerned with the 'Dark Night', not only of the senses but of the soul.

#### **a) Charles Wesley's 'Wrestling Jacob'**

Charles Wesley's remarkable hymn, 'Wrestling Jacob' was very well known by the time Blake was creating the designs for his *Illustrations* in the first decade of the nineteenth

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<sup>34</sup> Lindberg, p. 71.

century.<sup>35</sup> The Genesis story is very stark, it does not tell us who provoked the mysterious struggle in the night by the brook Jabbok: 'And Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled with him a man, until the breaking of the day' (32:25). But like Blake with his *Job*, Wesley alters the Biblical narrative in several ways. In his hymn it is Jacob who is the challenger, and the first word, 'come', his invitation to the trial of strength. Matthew Henry in his commentary here takes Job 23:6 as a parallel, arguing that Jacob like Job could only strive with God if God himself gave him strength.<sup>36</sup>

Wesley ignores v. 26, when Jacob demands a blessing before he will let go, and changes Jacob's parting request to know the name of his assailant into a persistent demand to know the *name*. The God of Genesis is a very enigmatic God, and Wesley seems to be drawing on the primitive idea that if you know someone's name then you have the secret of his power. Most importantly, Wesley alters the Genesis account by a vivid blending of New Testament imagery with Old.

In altering Jacob's demand for a blessing to a demand to know the *name* of the one he wrestles with, Wesley is exploring the idea that we get to know the other by fighting with him, and also the possibility that that Other may be God, and far stronger - as St. Paul realised, and was blinded by the realisation, on the road to Damascus. In physical struggle we expose our own strength of will to the strength of another: in the struggle with the Other we are exposing ourselves to a stronger power than ourselves. It is a recurrent pattern in English poetry, as in Donne's 'Batter my heart, three-person'd God', George Herbert's 'Prayer' which describes prayer as 'engine against the Almighty', and Gerard Manley Hopkins' *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, which begins 'Thou mastering

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<sup>35</sup> John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* (London: Methodist Conference Centre, 1779), hymn 140, p. 165. In the following analysis of Wesley's poem I am grateful to J. R. Watson for ideas from an unpublished paper, though I have to some extent developed them independently).

<sup>36</sup> *Commentary*, vol. 1, signature 2c, section 2.1.

me/God.' In the third stanza Wesley skilfully uses a heavy break after each pair of lines, to suggest the physical moves of a wrestling-bout, emphasising this by the unexpected use of the trochee 'wrestling' in the second last line, where we would expect an iambic foot. Strength arises from the ashes of defeat: after that night Jacob receives a new name, and becomes no longer Jacob, 'deceiver', but Israel, 'striven with God'.

**Jacob and Christ.** In Jacob's questions in the third stanza, Wesley is introducing the idea that Jacob is timeless, or that Christ by his Harrowing of Hell redeemed Jacob:

In vain thou strugglest to get free,  
 I never will unloose my hold;  
 Art thou the Man that died for me?  
 The secret of thy Love unfold:  
 Wrestling, I will not let thee go  
 Till I thy name, thy nature know.

Because the hymn throughout is in the first person it has a plurality of references, and Charles Wesley's own struggles with God and surrender, and the reader's own struggles with God, are all part of the meaning. We are all Jacob's 'spiritual seed'. Matthew Henry phrases it:

It was not only a corporal but a spiritual wrestling, by the vigorous actings of faith and holy desire; and thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob that pray, in praying still wrestle with God. <sup>37</sup>

In the sixth stanza Charles Wesley again brings in the theme of Christ:

What though my shrinking flesh complain,  
 And murmur to contend so long,  
 I rise superior to my pain,  
 When I am weak, then I am strong,  
 And when my all of strength shall fail,  
 I shall with the God-Man prevail.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., section 2.7.

Wesley is drawing us from the Old Testament into the New, using 2 Corinthians 12:10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong', thus making Paul too a wrestling Jacob. Matthew Henry brings out further links between Paul and Jacob by quoting from Galatians:

he [Jacob] halted on his thigh (v. 31), and some think he continued to do so till his dying day; and if he did, he had no reason to complain; for the honour and comfort he obtained by this struggle, were abundantly sufficient to countervail the damage, though he went limping to his grave. He had no reason to look upon it as a reproach, thus to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17).<sup>38</sup>

Wesley's hymn and Blake's *Illustrations* have in common a depth of theological understanding. In the following stanzas of Wesley's hymn Jacob grows weaker, and more insistent. It is as he weakens and the morning breaks that he suddenly cries:

'Tis Love! 'Tis Love! Thou diest for me,  
I hear thy whisper in my heart.

The greatness of Wesley's hymn lies in his giving a new context to 'God is love' (John 4:8), making it a truth that can only be reached by great perseverance and stubbornness, a whisper in the depth of the heart, not something proclaimed on the rooftops. He has vividly conveyed the physicality of the struggle, yet made it the universal struggle of the Christian in prayer.

**Blake's Job and Christ.** The final line of this stanza speaks of God as the 'God-Man'. In drawing no. 17, Blake has shown us the 'God-Man' of Wesley's poem, Christ with his arms outstretched in blessing. The figure is strong and erect, but his beard falls right to his feet. He stands on cloud facing the kneeling Job and his wife, and yet his feet are on a level with Job's knees, his toes almost touching him. Behind Job the Comforters cringe away in terror, and behind them extends a landscape, ending with mountains along the horizon. Behind the figure of Christ, however, all is dissolved in a blaze of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., section 2.7.

soul. Their teaching in turn derives from a tradition that can be traced back to St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*. He asks the question, 'What does it mean, that Moses entered the darkness, and then saw God in it?' To answer it, he writes of how Moses' first vision of God was a vision of blazing light, but later, on the mountain, it was a vision of darkness. 'This is the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness.' He quotes the Psalm of David, 'He who made darkness his hiding place' (Psalm 17:12).<sup>41</sup>

#### **b) The Dark Night of the Soul**

St. Teresa in her work *The Mansions of the Interior Castle* describes difficulties similar to St. John's 'Dark Night'. But she is not at all systematic about how one should pray, most of her writing being devoted to the Christian life in general rather than specifically to prayer, 'Pray as you can', she writes, 'for prayer does not consist of thinking a great deal, but of loving a great deal.'<sup>42</sup> I am not suggesting that because Blake's *Illustrations* seems to be the story of the Dark Night of Job's soul Blake must have read the writings of St. John of the Cross. I am suggesting that his own interior experience seems to match that of many others with whom St. Teresa and St. John came in contact, and this accounts for the fact attested, by Samuel Palmer, that he had a great enthusiasm for the works of St. Teresa.

St. John writes of the 'dark night' as deprivation, but he subdivides into 'the active night of the senses', which is detachment from material things, which can be born with equanimity, after the first shock - as indeed Job bears the loss of all his goods, and even

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<sup>41</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, Tr. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 94.

<sup>42</sup> *Complete Works* (1946), p. 233.

wasting away, there is something unexpected about the huge shins and powerful shoulders of Job in no. 8 as he raises his arms to Heaven to curse the day he was born. In no. 10, the comforters stretch out accusing arms, but Job in his loincloth, sick as he is, has something of the figure of a wrestler stripped for action, spreading his hands in an invitation to attack. There is a powerful physicality about no. 11, in which fiends try to drag Job down into hell, but this is not a wrestling with *God*. Job's wrestling with God is not a physical but a spiritual wrestling, which results in God visiting Job and speaking with him. Wesley's hymn sanctions linking the patriarchs with the New Testament, but also, more notably, sanctions the use of physical imagery for a spiritual wrestling with God.

Job refuses to let go, in the sense that he refuses to agree with his Comforters that he must have sinned, and keeps demanding that his God should face him. Job's 'fight' with God is because He seems to have withdrawn, to have abandoned him. The words of a twentieth century spiritual writer, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, are applicable to Job's struggle here:

'The day when God is absent, when he is silent - that is the beginning of prayer. Not when we have a lot to say, but when we say to God 'I can't live without you, why are you so cruel, so silent?' This knowledge that we must find or die - that makes us break through to the place where we are in the Presence. If we listen to what our hearts know of love and longing and are never afraid of despair, we find that victory is always there the other side of it.'<sup>40</sup>

Bloom writes of the sense of the absence of God being the beginning of real prayer, and that is exactly what Blake has shown us in Job's despair in drawing no. 10. Blake also indicates a journey into darkness, by showing the hills in dark silhouette against the sky. It is time to explore whether there may be a source for ideas behind Blake's Job in the teaching of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross on the dark night of the

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony Bloom, *School of Prayer* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1970), p. xvii

There are similarities between the stories of Jacob and Blake's Job. Jacob too was a patriarch, who had 'oxen and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants' (Gen. 32:5). Jacob too was anxious, and tried to use his wealth of flocks to buy the favour of his brother Esau (32:17-20), just as Job had used offerings from his flocks to try to buy the favour of God in his anxiety that his sons in their feasting might be cursing God in their hearts (Job 1:5). But Blake's version differs here from the biblical text. In drawing no. 2 Job is not sacrificing but studying the Scriptures, and his family are actively engaged too, watched by two angels holding scrolls, with whom Job and his whole family seem to be in converse. The family are gathered round, the young woman reclining behind him resting her arm lovingly on the shoulders of a young girl beside her, and their gaze is directed not towards Job but towards the two angels. It appears that Blake wanted to show Job and his family as devout searchers after God in a New Testament style, not in the style of primitive Jewish propitiation.

Jacob is separated from all his substance, and his wives and their children, having sent them on ahead of him with no certainty they will not be either slaughtered or carried off by the brother he wronged long ago. Here the parallels between Wesley's Jacob and Blake's Job are closer. For in drawings nos. 6-11 Blake shows us a Job equally isolated, a man rejected by his friends, even his wife, and cast out of the city, where he had formerly enjoyed honour, because of his loathsome skin-disease.

**Was Blake's Job a wrestler with God?** In the darkness Jacob wrestles all night with an unknown Other, refusing to let go until he receives a blessing (32:24-6). So too the Jacob of Wesley's hymn strives with the 'traveller unknown', and the third stanza in particular conveys the physical reality of the struggle. Blake shows his Job as powerfully built, even when wasted by sickness and sorrow. Doubtless this muscular figure is partly accounted for by Blake's respect for the muscular heroic style of Michelangelo. But in the context of the Book of Job, and all Job's complaints that he is

light. Lindberg with perception describes the way Blake has represented Job's vision of Christ:

The sky is dark, with the light of early dawn at the horizon; this light, however, is overpowered by the shining halo of God... The composition is asymmetrical. The principal figure stands on the left, where the sky reaches the lower margin; but on the right the horizon runs on two thirds of the design; the air on the left must, consequently, be earth immaterialised. The light issuing from God pushes the three friends away, down into the lower right-hand corner. Their repeated outlines give an almost futuristic definition of their crouching motion.<sup>39</sup>

With consummate skill Blake has represented pictorially the paradoxes of God becoming Man. And like Wesley he has given a new context to 'God is Love'. In Blake's illustration the message of Love is conveyed by the intimacy of the toes almost touching Job's knees, and the beard actually brushing them, while the head is gently inclined towards the kneeling couple. But most of all it is conveyed by the confident loving response on the faces of Job and his wife, as they kneel, bathed in light. Blake, like Charles Wesley, is boldly giving a Christian context to the Old Testament narrative, while simultaneously showing the abasement and the cringing terror of the Comforters, who dare not look on Christ. After this blessing Job's first act is to offer up loving intercession for these friends who have caused him such mental suffering, and in the following drawing they have recovered, and kneel beside Job without cringing away as he stands and prays for them at the altar.

**Jacob and Job.** The Genesis story of the angel wrestling all night and disappearing at first light has the power of primitive myth. The fact that the word for 'wrestled' appears only here is a pointer to its unusual nature. It seems to link with primitive beliefs that spirits or ghosts who haunt the night must disappear at daybreak. There is, however, a great deal in common between Blake's Job and the Genesis story of Jacob at the brook Jabbok.

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<sup>39</sup>Lindberg, pp. 320-21.

of his offspring. But still more important is detachment from spiritual vices such as excessive concern with the externals of worship, and the consolations of religion which feed the human ego. St. John writes, 'This dryness and distaste is not the outcome of newly committed sins and imperfections. If this were so, some inclination or propensity to look for satisfaction in something other than the things of God would be felt in the sensory part.'<sup>43</sup> In the *Testament*, Job's wife wants to have their children decently buried, and begs the kings to see to it, but Job forbids this, saying that their souls are already in heaven.

This stage is followed by the 'passive night of the senses', and the first stages of this are bewildering and distressing to experience. One is filled, says St. John, with a fervent love of God and longing for him, but one's prayers seem barren, and the world around loathsome, devoid of all attraction.<sup>44</sup> In the next book he describes this 'dark night of the spirit':

This dark night is an inflow of God into the soul ... Yet a doubt arises: why, if it is a divine light (for it illumines and purges a person of his ignorances) does the soul call it a dark night? In answer to this, there are two reasons why this divine wisdom is not only night and darkness for the soul, but also affliction and torment. First, because of the height of the divine wisdom, which exceeds the capacity of the soul. Second, because of the soul's baseness and impurity. To prove the first reason, we must presuppose a certain principle of the Philosopher: that the clearer and more obvious divine things are in themselves, the darker and more hidden they are to the soul naturally (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, lib. brevior, c. 1 ed. Didot). The brighter the light, the more the owl is blinded.<sup>45</sup>

The Christian may be not yet alive to the danger of trying to resist the prayer he has been given, in order to return to the prayer he has now lost, the prayer of familiar recitation (as in no. 1), of easy converse with the Father (as in no. 2).

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<sup>43</sup> *Collected Works*, p. 313.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 313-16.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335

The Christian who submits in humility to this new and bewildering experience, however, is on the threshold of greater depths of prayer and illumination. And this is exactly what we see in no. 12. The agonised wrestling Job of no. 11 is transformed into a man sitting peacefully in the starlight as he listens to the words of Elihu. This stage is then succeeded by a stage which is a time of immense delight and serenity. Blake in his very famous design shows us the morning stars singing together around the throne of God, and the fall of Satan from Heaven. He then shows us God, in Christ, directly blessing Job and his wife. The brilliance of the light emanating from his body is such that Job and his wife are screwing up their eyes, their foreheads are marked with long wrinkles, and the Comforters cannot even look. The sheer glory of God's communication is such that it fogs the mind, just as brilliant sunlight blinds the eyes. St. John borrows from pseudo-Dionysus the vivid phrase 'ray of darkness'.<sup>46</sup> The knowledge of God, which Job and his Comforters thought they had, has deserted them: in its place is a knowledge that cannot be verbalised.

**Conclusion.** Evelyn Underhill ends her study of mysticism with a section on Blake, whom she labels 'last of the great mystics'. The first part of Bo Lindberg's brilliant study of Blake's *Illustrations* ends with a long chapter discussing Blake's visions, concluding that both Blake and his wife took them seriously, and that Blake should be classed not as a madman but as a mystic, though what others describe as *unio mystica*, was for Blake all his life the *unio artistica*.<sup>47</sup> And so in the final two drawings of the series we see Job, full of new energy, swept up first with his three daughters, then with all his family, into *unio artistica*, as he tells of God's self-revelation, and joins in lively

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>47</sup> Lindberg, pp. 151-166, especially p. 166.

praise of God with the orchestra of instruments that in no. 1 hung unused in the branches of the tree.

## Chapter Five - The engraved set of *Illustrations*

The engraved set of *Job* illustrations is of unique value, because so few original artists have ever used the medium of engraving. In the early sixteenth century Dürer perfected the technique for original work, but his contemporary Marcantonio Raimondi was known mainly not for his original work but for his engravings based on paintings by Raphael. Blake in his prospectus of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* writes admiringly of 'those original copper plates of Albert Durer, Lucas, Hisben, Aldegrave, and the old original Engravers, who were great masters in painting and designing' (E 567).<sup>1</sup> The labour of engraving was so concentrated and slow, and required so many years of practice, that it soon came to be regarded as an occupation for petty craftsmen, not for original artists. Those that wanted to keep in their own hands the quality of the multiples that would be produced of their works, like Rembrandt, used the easier medium of etching.<sup>2</sup> In etching, the plate is coated with varnish and then lines are scratched in it, and a wash of acid applied. By the eighteenth century the techniques of etching were also used to make easier the first stage of the engraving process.

### (i) Blake as an engraver.

For his *Job* illustrations Blake took Dürer, Lucas van Leyden, Marc Antonio Raimondi, and Julio Bonasone for his masters. He reverted to the techniques of the Renaissance, incising everything with a graver. For this we have the testimony of John Linnell,<sup>3</sup> but Robert Essick has reinforced Linnell's statement by a careful

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<sup>1</sup> 'Hisben' is an old nickname for Hans Sebald Behan, made up from his monogram (Lindberg, p. 140, and n. 193).

<sup>2</sup> Binyon (1906), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> '...cut with the graver entirely on copper without the aid of Aqua fortis.' BR, p. 234, n. 1.

review of the literary evidence and by research into Blake's techniques.<sup>4</sup> Robert Essick has also made a detailed study of the proof pulls for Blake's engraved *Illustrations*, and has demonstrated that Blake did not work from a finished design, but thought and redesigned as he worked. Essick contrasts the slavish adherence to the letter necessary when copying the work of other artists, in contrast to the freedom of inspiration, afforded by original work, where 'the spirit giveth life.'<sup>5</sup> Essick sees Dürer as the strongest influence on Blake because of his originality, but Blake was also influenced by Dürer's disciple Marc Antonio, with his insistence on simplicity, using a minimum of cross-hatching, and large patches of light, even on the human figures.<sup>6</sup>

## (ii) The *Job* Engravings

Blake almost certainly drew the initial outlines direct onto the copper plate, as suggested and described by Lindberg, after transferring a simple sketch of the design.<sup>7</sup> After this initial outlining, which Blake incised onto the plate with a graver, Blake designed direct onto the plate. He experimented in order to create the illumination, using a burnisher to create highlights. We have Ruskin's judgement that 'in expressing conditions of glaring and flickering light, Blake is greater than Rembrandt.'<sup>8</sup> He was as gifted at creating radiant light in the engraved set as in the Butts set, though the medium was very different. For example, Plate XI (Job's evil dream), is the darkest in the series. But regarded naturalistically, it should be a blaze

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1980), pp. 242-4.

<sup>5</sup> Bindman (1987), text volume, p.47.

<sup>6</sup> Essick (1980), pp. 244-5.

<sup>7</sup> Lindberg, pp. 169-70.

<sup>8</sup> John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1857), p.342.

of light, for there are the flames of hell at the foot of the design, and at the top, streaks of forked lightning flash from the two stone tablets of the Law. The black flames of hell are there from the earliest stages of the proofs, but it was not till the final version that Blake succeeded in producing, in the top left-hand corner, the effect of 'black lightning'.<sup>9</sup> Joseph Viscomi, in *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, an account of very detailed practical research over many years into Blake's working methods, discussing works by Blake such as his *Ezekiel*, and his *Job* illustrations, writes, 'Such prints had models, the outlines of which were transferred to the plates, but the final prints are neither imitations nor translations of the original design, but recreations. They were reconceived in terms of the visual effect unique to the graphic medium.'<sup>10</sup> In Blake's use of closely spaced lines of radiance there are clear links with Dürer's *Madonna crowned by an angel*, and his *Madonna with swaddled infant* (both 1520). But Blake did not so much copy Dürer's techniques as imitate his aesthetic achievement as a religious artist.<sup>11</sup>

**A style to suit the subject.** Gilchrist was the first to point out that Blake's style of expression 'was in keeping with the designs, which the work of no other hand could have been, in the case of conceptions so austere and primeval as these.'<sup>12</sup> Essick gives a detailed analysis of the way Blake created quite different textures in different parts of the engraving by his skilled use of the graver, for example, in Plate I he used quite different strokes for the wool of the sheep and the blades of grass. Quoting and commenting at length on Blake's letter to George Cumberland of April 12th 1827, he

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<sup>9</sup> Essick in Bindman (1987), p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Viscomi (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 371.

<sup>11</sup> 'To imitate I abhor. I obstinately adhere to the true Style of Art such as Michael Angelo Raphael Jul. Rom Alb Durer left it. the Art of Invention, not of Imitation.' (E 580).

<sup>12</sup> Gilchrist, i, p. 284.

concludes that Job is like Blake's art: 'for, as he learns so painfully, neither man nor God can be measured by a system of laws. Such too is the linear art of Blake's Job'.<sup>13</sup>

It is true that Blake creates an archaic, early-world atmosphere. But if Blake's main concern had been to depict a period historically remote, before Israel received the Law on Sinai, he would not have depicted so clearly the two stone tables inscribed with legible words from the Hebrew Decalogue. Lindberg is surely right in asserting that Blake wanted to show that Job was universal, and existed both in the Age of the Patriarchs, before the Law, in the Age of the Law, and in the world as redeemed by Christ.<sup>14</sup> Both Lindberg and Essick comment on Blake's skill in creating shimmering light, by introducing absolute whites, achieved through leaving smaller or larger areas of uncut copper. Blake is imitating the religious art of earlier ages, with its overriding concern to create radiant light emanating from the central figures in the icon, without regard to the natural sources of light in the design.

**The margins.** It was quite customary to leave a very broad margin round an engraving, and this may have been Blake's original intention when he re-drew the Butts designs half size. His marginal designs are incised directly onto the plate, not part of the original sketch which Blake counterproofed onto the copper. It was not unusual for engravings to have marginal designs, but usually they were purely decorative, whereas Blake's add to the meaning of the whole, and are worth careful study. The title-page is in the same linear style, and probably evolved in the same way, sketched directly onto the copper. An important feature of the marginal designs is the scriptural quotations, only half of which are from the Book of Job itself.

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<sup>13</sup> Essick (1980), pp. 248-9.

<sup>14</sup> Lindberg, pp. 65-74, and pp. 193-4; compare Essick (1980), p. 246.

### iii) Angels, scrolls and books added in the engraved version

#### a) The title page

The water-colour set was designed to be hung on the walls of Thomas Butts' house, and needed no title-plate, but it was natural that one should be added when Blake created the engraved plates, designed to be viewed in book form. Some scholars, notably S. Foster Damon, have regarded the title-page as the key to the whole series, but others are more cautious, in view of the fact that it was an afterthought, since it was not designed till almost twenty years after the Butts series was created.

On the title page, Blake's use of Gothic lettering, and of Hebrew, is indicative of his aims in creating the series. The English title is written in lettering reminiscent of the lettering used by the illuminators of medieval manuscripts. Andrew Wright suggests that by his 'anti-classical lettering' Blake is declaring his independence of the eighteenth century, and rejecting the Augustan tradition into which he was born.<sup>15</sup> It is more likely that his purpose is positive, a declaration of his close links with medieval tradition. In *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, Blake describes the 'Gothic Church' in his painting as 'representative of True Art calld Gothic in All Ages' (E 549), and just such a church is shown in the background to the first and fourth designs. To Blake, Gothic Art meant Christian Art, but also Universal Art. This is seen in his reworking, c. 1810, of his very early engraving *Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion*. For in this second state Blake inscribed below the figure:

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<sup>15</sup> Wright, p. 17.

'This is One of the Gothic Artists who built the Cathedrals, in what we call the Dark Ages', thus linking the New Testament disciple with Gothic art.<sup>16</sup>

Blake's use of Hebrew on the title-page seems to be equally symbolic. At the top in the centre, above the title in English, is the Hebrew for 'The Book of Job'. Few members of Blake's public would have known Hebrew, and Sheila Spector suggested that Blake used it for symbolic purposes, to indicate that here was a mystery.<sup>17</sup> Blake is saying that the Book of Job could not be read, as allegory is 'read'.

Lindberg's principle is that an explanation should first be sought within the *Illustrations* themselves, and I have treated this principle as central, in interpreting Blake's *Job*. This approach, which is characteristic of art-historians, respects the unity and integrity of a separate work of art. In *A Vision of the Last Judgement* Blake wrote about the difference between Fable or Allegory and Vision, and about the inferiority of Allegory (E 554-5). Lindberg, who is steeped in the traditions of European religious art, says that these angels on the title-page are simply angels, angels of the same kind as those shown in Plates II and V, where Blake depicts them observing the conduct of Job and his family (just as Satan also did), and bringing the contents of the books or scrolls to the throne of God. But according to Lindberg the angels have nothing to do with Job; they are watching the reader - at least those shown *en face* are watching the reader, while the others are spying out the inhabitants of the earth.<sup>18</sup>

#### **b) Angels in the marginal designs**

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<sup>16</sup> Essick (1980), p. 246, and fig. 184.

<sup>17</sup> Erdman ed. (1990), p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> Lindberg, p. 190.

It was common at the end of the eighteenth century to use angels to provide a decoration for the margins. But Blake's marginal angels are more than merely decorative. The partially-sketched angels in the side-margins of Plate III seem to be watching over some kind of a phoenix-like rebirth, as well as forming a foreground to the distant pillars of cloud and of fire, while in Plate IV in the upper margin the huge figure of Satan, stalking to and fro in the world, warns us that there is much more suffering to come. Satan has taken the place of Job's God. In Plate V, two weeping angels frame the top corners of the central design, put there to emphasise that there *was* sadness and suffering in heaven, as well as joy: For so Blake explained, at about the time he was working on these marginal designs, to Crabb Robinson, who admitted himself considerably startled. In the following plates, as Job travels further and further into the darkness, there are no angels to be seen; but in Plate XII, as the restored Job sits quietly in the starlight listening to the words of Elihu, a stream of angelic spirits rises heavenwards from his sleeping spiritual form. Job's sleeping spiritual form is watched over by two winged guardian angels similarly placed to those in the central design of Plate II. In Plate XIV two bearded angels are writing in books, and in Plates XV and XVI the top corners are again framed by a pair of angels. In Plate XVIII, Job praying for his friends, a whole group of angels surrounds the top corners of the central design; and in Plate XIX as Job and his wife sit and accept graciously gifts of money from their friends and neighbours, these same angels begin to stream down to earth. Thereafter we see no more of angels or of Heaven, as if Heaven and earth have become one.

It was argued in the parallel section in Chapter 3 that it was an over-simplification to contrast books (representing Inspiration), and books (representing the Law). For a heavy book reappears on the lap of the deity in the second part of the series, in no. 16, with no connotation of repressiveness towards Job, and in no. 20, two of Job's daughters seem to be writing in books. In Plate XVII of the engraved series the lower margin contains two large books and a scroll, all open to reveal passages from St

John's gospel, which a feminine winged angel watches over. I do not think Blake intended the books and scrolls in the margins to represent a barrier between God and man, any more than they do in the central designs derived from the Butts set; instead they are a source of revelation, and in so far as they contain words of prophecy, they make real the future in the present, they are the Book of Life.

**(iii) 'Prayer to God is the study of imaginative art' on a proof of Plate I (made c. 1824).**

Blake's method of designing the content of the margins directly onto the copper has led to a useful pointer to his intention, in the case of the variant proofs in the catalogue entry discovered by Robert Essick in New York, (figs. 18.i and 18.ii),<sup>19</sup> as described in chapter 1 (pp. 23-5). These variants have been reckoned of sufficient importance to feature in Erdman's revised *Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (E 687). In Essick's opinion this discovery could alter the whole perspective, suggesting an underlying similarity instead of contrast between the first and last plates. The antiphonal structure, first noticed by Charles Eliot Norton in 1875, has generally set the tone for interpreting the series. Surely so many critics cannot be wrong?

Essick's own solution is that only at a very late stage in the process of creating the engraved series did Blake fully realise his own meaning. Essick's view is that the proof inscription must modify the conventional interpretation of Plate I for the proof impression on which it appears, and perhaps also for all previous versions, including the Butts water-colours. Perhaps he exaggerates the importance of these variant proofs, for if we had only these variant proofs to guide us to the *true* interpretation, we would have to admit that Blake's *Job* is a failure, since its meaning would be

<sup>19</sup> Essick (1985/6), pp. 96-102.

shown to be opaque, ambiguous, and obscure. Essick suggests that when Blake eliminated this line from Plate I he was altering his conception of the *Job* series. 'The thematic shape of the entire series, particularly the errors which adumbrate Satan's entry into Job's life, and the opposition between letter and spirit visualised between first and last scenes, came into being at a late stage in Blake's long history as an interpreter of the Book of Job.'<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the Old Testament story God sided not with the Comforters who insisted that Job must have secretly done something wrong, but with Job (Job 42:7). Yet critics commenting on Blake's *Job* have been unanimous in decrying Job's 'errors' at the outset of his pictorial epic. Norton wrote, 'Job's prayers and burnt offerings, in the days of his prosperity were, after all, but the propitiatory and selfish sacrifices of the law.'<sup>21</sup> Wicksteed wrote, 'Here we see Job dwelling on the Letter that "killeth", while the Spirit that "giveth life" is not yet waked.'<sup>22</sup> and Damon, 'Job's errors are these: he fears God, instead of loving him as a friend; he "eschews evil" thus condemning half of life; and he relies on the Letter that Killeth, and thus has closed himself to Spiritual Discernment. Deepest of all is his secret Pride, which must be humbled.'<sup>23</sup> In each of these we can detect moral condemnation, even stronger in the passage quoted from Lindberg's commentary on the 1987 facsimile edition for the Blake Trust, quoted in the introduction,<sup>24</sup> and his commentary on Plate I, 'the words 'the letter killeth...the spirit giveth life' show he thought Job's religion at the outset to be the repetition of mere formulae.'<sup>25</sup> I have argued, however, that this is not the best

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Unnumbered page of comments on Plate I.

<sup>22</sup> Wicksteed (1924), p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> Damon (1966), p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> p. xii, note 5; cf. Lindberg, p. 1, 'In Plate I the sun is setting, as Job mumbles prayers composed by others.'

way of interpreting the undoubted contrast between the first and last drawing in the series, and that the Butts set suggests a terrifying inner journey of suffering, ending in mystical union and restoration. The Book of Job is about the arbitrariness of suffering, and the importance of forgiveness. If we thus condemn Job for his implied morals, we are in danger of behaving worse even than his Comforters, who at least sat in silence with him for seven days, before they began to condemn.

All these commentators assume that only the words, 'The letter killeth' apply to Plate I, and 'the spirit giveth life' should be understood as indicating to us the end of the story, the state of affairs Blake shows us in Plate XXI. But though it is tempting to take these words as the subtitle, as it were, for the whole series, there is no warrant for doing so. The words 'It is spiritually discerned' are already present in the proof version of Plate I, and these words in themselves are a warning against splitting the quotation from I Corinthians, or regarding it as the subtitle for the whole series. 'Prayer', 'spiritual discernment', 'the Spirit giveth Life' all suggest the same area of concern. Plate I should not be interpreted as illustrating the errors that make room for the entry of Satan into Job's life because this is not consistent with the most obvious meaning of the biblical text, and Blake was always someone who meditated on the text with great care. After all, God declared for Job, and against the friends who accused him of the sin of secret pride. The words on the proof version of Plate I are an indication that the 'self-righteous Job' assumption needs to be re-examined, and this I have tried to do.

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<sup>25</sup> Lindberg is usually very sensitive to Blake's depth of religious feeling, but in order to strengthen his argument he here implies that Blake thought that the Lord's Prayer was 'mere repetition of empty formulae'.

**(iv) The theme of fire/purification in the marginal quotations**

It is not Job's *moral* progress that concerns Blake, though moral progress is one of the offshoots of Job's experience. What then is Blake's primary concern? What is the principle behind the biblical quotations he has selected, and why are so many from parts of the Old Testament other than the book of Job, and from the New?

Blake's biblical texts fall into three clear categories: fire and purification (as against destruction), illumination or vision, and union with God. These reflect the three traditional stages in the soul's journey to God in prayer - not every soul's journey, but that of a few rare souls, generally misunderstood by their own age, and in after ages revered as saints. In the terminology of St. Teresa and St John of the Cross, they are the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive Way. Blake's *Job* narrates Job's dramatic progress through these phases, and his emergence as a leader of his family, and healer of his people.

In the margin below both Plate I and Plate XXI Blake has drawn an altar, with a sacrificial fire burning on it. On Plate II, which focuses on a youthful Satan wreathed in fire, the theme of fire is present in the background of almost all the quotations. There is an allusion to the process of pottery being hardened with fire in the verse from which Blake for Plate II took the words 'Thou art our Father': 'And now, O Lord, thou art our Father. We are the clay, and thou our potter' (Isaiah 64:8). And there are two other Old Testament references to God himself as fire: in Plate II 'I beheld the Ancient of Days' is taken from the well-known passage in Daniel, 'I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the head of his hair like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him' (Daniel 7: 9-10). Blake also quotes uses of the word 'fire', or allusions to it, on Plates III, 'The fire of God is fallen

from heaven' (1:16) whereas in the biblical text the house was destroyed by a great wind from the desert). Wicksteed makes much of the debauchery and carnal pleasure suggested by this scene, identifying some of the women as harlots, and castigating them because the musical instruments have been used to grace the feast not to praise God. However, I think Blake's intention was to draw the contrast between their prosperity, and sudden destruction. The inscription below Plate IV refers to 'the fire of God', on Plate X to fire used for purifying gold, and in Plate XI Job cries out: 'My skin is black upon me, & my bones are burned with heat.' (30:30). The theme also occurs in Plate V, where Blake quotes from Psalm 104:4, 'Who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire.'

All these examples are clustered in the first eleven plates of the series; and when the idea is first introduced, in Plate II, Blake is clearly coupling the idea of fire with the idea of illumination or vision: it is fire which purges and heals, rather than destroys. The pitying aspect of the Deity in Plate V was already noted, in reference to the Butts set. The words 'The Angel of his Presence', positioned centrally above Plate II, probably come from the prophetic verse in Isaiah, 'In all their afflictions, he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them' (Isaiah 63:9). The same theme occurs in Plate V, 'Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul (grieved) afflicted for the poor? '(Job 30:25).<sup>26</sup> These verses again suggest the purifying action of God, acting to heal not punish.

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<sup>26</sup> Here Wicksteed, who is convinced that the opening plates are to show the evil consequences of Job's self-righteousness, sees Job as condemning himself out of his own mouth, so that his words are to be taken as opposite to their face value. He writes however, 'I confess I don't see how anyone who didn't already know something of Blake's thought could detect in the marginal text above the design Job's condemnation out of his own mouth' (id., p. 115).

### v) The theme of Illumination or Vision

In the biblical book vision, and self-recognition in the light of vision, only occur right at the end; Blake has made them his central concern. At the foot of Plate I Blake inscribed: 'It is spiritually discerned', words which describe the gathered family worshipping God under the open sky. Just as Blake seems to have singled out references in the Book of Job to God's purifying fires, so he seems to have singled out the promise of vision and spiritual discernment: and verses containing 'I shall see' are quoted again and again. In the margins of Plate II he has 'I shall see God' (Job 19:26) and 'We shall awake up in thy likeness' (Psalm 17:15). Equally concerned with vision is Plate VI, 'We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He Is' (John 3:2). Eliphaz' vision in Plate IX is of a stern God of Judgement, and above is written, 'Behold he putteth no trust in his saints, and his Angels he chargeth with folly.' But this is not Job's God, it is the God of his comforters. Up to this point the quotations concerning vision have all been in the future tense, but in Plate X Job suddenly has a moment of vision: 'Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends,' he cries, 'for the hand of God hath touched me.' (Job 19:21) This is a prelude to the terrifying vision of the following plate, in which Blake will show Job's three friends in their aspect as servants of Satan, unrecognisable, trying to drag him down to Hell. In the right margin of Plate X are a few links of chain, which connect this design with the next, in which the fiends are holding chains in their hand with which to bind him.<sup>27</sup>

**Plate XI**, *Job's evil dreams*, has no precedent in the Book of Job, and therefore it is all the more important to explore why Blake should have decided to include it. As in Butts no. 11, on which it is very closely based, it depicts a devastating moment of vision for Job, when he sees clearly the cloven foot, and realises that Satan has been

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<sup>27</sup> Moskal (1994), p. 144.

masquerading as God. The incident seems to be closely based on the apocryphal *Testament of Job*, which opens with Job angering Satan by destroying the altar at which all the people are worshipping Satan as Lord of Creation (see above, pp. 33-44). The biblical quotations from the New Testament on Plate XI reinforce this picture. 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light & his ministers into ministers of righteousness' is a quotation from Paul's second letter to Corinth, warning his church there how hard it is to discern Satan when he is at work, 'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.' (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Again, at the foot of Plate XI Blake quotes from 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where Paul warns against the way Satan, 'the son of perdition', exalts himself and demands worship.

Yet Plate XI is also a moment of hope. At this moment Blake's Job is pierced through by a sense of an Other more real even than himself, a conviction that whether he lives or dies, there is a Redeemer who will ransom his soul:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, & that he shall stand in the latter days upon the Earth, & after my skin destroy thou This body yet in my flesh shall I see God whom I shall see for Myself and mine eyes shall behold & not Another/ tho consumed be my wrought Image (19:22-27).

It is an indication of Blake's religious depth that he couples this moment of conviction not with Job's heavenly visions but with his moment of blackest despair. Blake has subtly altered the wording. 'And though after my skin worms destroy this body' has been changed by Blake in the lower margin of Plate XI to 'Destroy *thou* this body'<sup>28</sup> Similarly, 'Though my reins be consumed within me' has been changed by Blake to

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<sup>28</sup> Wicksteed comments, 'the *thou*, refers no doubt to Nature as the Satanic power', quoting from a conversation in which Blake told Crabb Robinson 'Nature is the work of the Devil' (24th December 1825, BR, p.545), (Wicksteed (1924), p. 147).

'though consumed be my wrought Image'. Wicksteed comments, 'This suggests that Job is now learning the insignificance of his personal life, as being merely the 'wrought Image' of his own eternal being.' He seems to see this as purely a change inside Job's own head, a growth in understanding. Yet this is not consistent with the words that follow, made famous by their inclusion in the Burial Service, 'yet in my flesh shall I see God'. Blake is not concerned with what Job learns by using his God-given power of reasoning, his concern is with God's self-revelation. For Job is talking of a burning up not only of his herds and his herdsmen but of his own mortal nature, that God may come and dwell in him. His wealth and power and reputation for righteousness made up his 'wrought Image'. Jacob was maimed for life by his fight with the angel, and Job's 'image' similarly will be destroyed for ever. Blake has changed the text to make clear his own interpretation, that it is God who is purifying Job, burning him up, not the machinations of a scheming Satan waiting to prove his self-righteousness.

**Plate XII.** Elihu when he enters the group in Plate XII also uses the language of vision. Blake by the quotations which he selects makes it quite clear that Elihu is speaking about vision, about wisdom supernaturally given by God, rather than natural understanding. 'I am Young and ye are very Old wherefore I was afraid' puts Elihu among the ranks of simple vine dressers like Amos, and other prophets of humble origins, called to be the mouthpieces of God: 'For God speaketh once yea twice/ and Man percieveth it not' Elihu warns, 'In a Dream in a Vision of the Night/ in deep slumberings upon the bed/ then he openeth the ears of Men and seaeth their instruction.'

Elihu's attitude conforms with a pathos-formula for preaching before an earthly audience about heavenly things. It seems to have been invented by Raphael for the figure of St. Paul for his cartoon *The blinding of Elymas*.<sup>29</sup> Blake quotes more of

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Elihu's words than of the three comforters combined, so clearly Blake endorses him. He speaks of a Divine Intervention, 'If there be with him an Interpreter, One among a Thousand/ then he is gracious unto him/ and saith Deliver him from going down to the pit/ I have found a Ransom.' The purpose of being given new life is to receive illumination, and Blake quotes from Elihu's speech: 'Lo all these things worketh God oftentimes with Man to bring/ back his soul from the pit to be enlightened with the light of the living'.

**Plates XIII-XVI.** Elihu as he speaks is pointing upwards to the heavens: 'Look upon the heavens and behold the clouds/ which are higher than thou'. His point is that God is not concerned with punishing us for our weaknesses: 'If thou sinnest what doest thou against him, or thou be righteous what givest thou unto him?' His speech leads into a series of visions, in the first of which, Plate XIII, God as Christ appears to Job and his wife in a whirlwind.<sup>30</sup>

In Plate XIV Job and his wife see in vision the morning of Creation. The designs in the side-margins are more elaborate than any others in the series, comprising oval shaped emblems of the six days of Creation. In the lower margin are the coils of some sea-serpent so huge that neither its head nor its tail are visible to us. By the quotations from Genesis chapter 1 that accompany these emblems Blake makes it clear that the mortals in their cave of mortal existence are seeing a vision of the beginning of all things, liberated from the constriction of seeing only with their five senses. 'When the morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy' (Job 38:7) is a title that suggests the soundless music of the spheres.

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<sup>29</sup> Lindberg, p.271.

<sup>30</sup> David Bindman's view, with which I agree, is that Christ is present in all the designs for the second half of the series, wherever the Deity is shown; see also *Jerusalem* Plate 35 (fig. 15), which shows Christ as Creator.

In Plate XV the title is 'Behold now Behemoth which I made with you'. In this vision Job and his wife have been swept up into heaven, and God is showing them the huge sea-monsters below, and reminding them that they too are a part of God's creation. In the right-hand margin Blake has written, 'Of Behemoth he said, He is the chief of the ways of God/ of Leviathan he said, He is King over all the Children of Pride.' (Job 40:19). Opposite this in the left-hand margin, and also written above the design, are quotations concerning cloud.<sup>31</sup> To these can be added the quotation on Plate XIII, 'who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind' (Psalm 104:3). What Blake seems to be stressing is that these visions are from God, found in the darkness, not arrived at by the light of human reason, and that the darkness is as important as the light, just as Behemoth and Leviathan are important.

Plate XVI shows Judgement Day and the casting out of Satan: 'For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night' (Rev. 12:10). The first half of the verse from which Blake has taken this quotation runs, 'Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.'<sup>32</sup> In Plate XIII Job and his wife saw a vision of the Beginning of Time, and now they see a vision of the End. On either side of the twisted falling body of Satan are two other naked twisted forms, a man and a woman, and Blake gives us no clue as to who they are. With Satan goes the mortal coil of Job and his wife, the skins with which the Angel of the Divine Presence clothed their forefathers, Adam and Eve, when they fell (fig. 13).<sup>33</sup> They have been sloughed, as a snake sloughs its skin. 'Thus one portion of being is the Prolific. the other, the Devouring. To the

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<sup>31</sup> ' Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds/ the noise of his tabernacle' (36:29 ); 'also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud/ he scattereth the bright cloud also, it is turned about by his counsels' (37:11-12 )

<sup>32</sup> In this, Christ shares with them his vision of the fall of Satan.

<sup>33</sup> A letter to Butts of 6th July 1803 names a drawing which Blake says he has 'on the Stocks' as *The Angel of the Divine Presence clothing Adam & Eve with Coats of Skins*. Butlin 513, [text] 436. The giant angel has six toes.

devourer, it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of his existence and fancies that the whole.' (E 40).

**Plates XVII to XXI.** From now on, we see no more of Heaven, for God has come to earth, and Heaven and earth have become one.<sup>34</sup> Below Plate XVII Blake quotes, 'I have heard thee with the hearing of the Ear, but now my Eye seeth thee' (Job 42:5). The margins are full of quotations from the Last Discourse, in St John's Gospel. Because these are in the first person, most commentators understand that the figure standing and radiating shimmering light is the figure of Christ. Here too we have the language of vision, but joined with it is the language of oneness with God, through union with Christ. I have marked with italics all that refers to vision:

*He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also* (John 14:9, slightly altered from the AV, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father)

If you had known me, ye would have known my Father also: and *from henceforth Ye know him and have seen him* (John 14:7).

He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, *and will manifest myself to him.* And the Father shall give you Another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot Recieve (John 14:21,16-17).

At that day *ye shall know* that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you ... If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father (John 14:20, 38).

There is also a quotation from the first epistle of John:

We know that *when he shall appear* we shall be like him, for *we shall see him as He Is'* (I John 3:2).

And a quotation from Psalm 8 emphasises the generosity and humility of God in visiting his people:

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<sup>34</sup> Wicksteed (1924), p.196, makes this point with respect to the following plate, interpreting the central design here as showing Christ ascending from the dead, from Hell, and he entitles this plate 'Job's Ascent'. I do not feel there is enough evidence for this interpretation, but apart from this small disagreement, I am indebted to him for many insights in his commentary on these final plates.

When I consider the Heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him* (Psalm 8:3-4)?

This theme of illumination is therefore central in Blake's selection of texts.

#### vi) The theme of Divine Union

Already in Plate II, with the words in the upper margin, 'We shall awake up in thy likeness', Blake gave us the promise of this theme of Divine Union. The quotations from St John's Gospel and Epistle on Plate XVII contain the promise of Christ, 'I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.' The quotation from Samuel<sup>35</sup> is reminiscent of the words of the Magnificat, and show that Job and his wife receive new life. Job now understands that God was there with him in his suffering, even when he seemed to be in the depths of hell.<sup>36</sup>

The quotation from Hebrews 10.6 at the foot of the final plate is itself a quotation from Psalm 40. The whole verse runs:

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart (Psalm 40:6).

The heart is united with the law of God, and the soul in union with Him, as Job leads his family in the hymn of praise in the final plate.

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<sup>35</sup> '(The Lord killeth and maketh alive) he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up' (I Sam. 2: 6-7), c.f. Psalm 136:23, also quoted on this plate.

<sup>36</sup> How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God/ how great is the sum of them ( Psalm 139:17)... If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there/ If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there (Psalm 139:8).

For Blake, the Bible was not a handbook of ethics, but the story of God's self-revelation to Man, and it is God's self revelation to Job that is Blake's primary concern. In the caption above Plate XVIII, 'And the Lord accepted Job' Blake emphasises that the turning-point for Job was his great prayer for those who had so mistreated him. In the open book in the lower margin are Christ's exhortation to his disciples to forgive their enemies, for such is the nature of their Father in Heaven. Here is the categorical imperative, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:4). Job's friends, and we the readers, are to learn from Job's great prayer of intercession. 'I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust (Matth. 5:44-5). As Blake wrote in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* (1810), at about the time he created the Butts set, 'It is not because Angels are Holier than Men or Devils that makes them Angels, but because they do not Expect Holiness from another but from God only. The Player is a liar when he Says Angels are happier than Men because they are better Angels are happier than Men & Devils<sup>37</sup> because they are not always Prying after Good & Evil in one Another and eating the Tree of Knowledge for Satans gratification.' (E 565).

I have shown in this chapter that the additions made by Blake when he created the engraved series of Job illustrations do not represent a complete change of purpose, rather, there is consistency with the Butts set, and the engraved series also has as a central theme: Job as a man of prayer, one of the few really great men of prayer. It is special not just because it is almost unique in being a set of engravings by an independent artist, but also because it is unique in the corpus of Blake's work.

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<sup>37</sup> <& devils> conjectured.

In presenting the story of Job in this way Blake was following popular tradition, not drawing on recondite and little known sources that would baffle most of his readers. But on a deeper level it explores the nature of Satan, the nature of Prayer, and the relationship between Art and fulfilling the Gospel. It is important because it does not purge the text of the arbitrariness of suffering, does not rationalise Job's suffering as being caused by secret faults.

**vii) 'Prayer' and 'praise' in Blake's *Job*: religion as Art not Morality**

As we have seen, 'Prayer is the study of Imaginative Art', 'Praise is the Practice of Imaginative Art' were incised by Blake in a central position at the foot of the first and last plates of his *Job* engravings. So at some stage in their conception he must have thought of 'Imaginative Art', and its relationship to true religion, as the central theme of his illustrations. Admittedly, later he burnished out these two aphorisms, replacing them with quotations from the New Testament, but he contrived to use them elsewhere, at roughly the same time, in his *Laocoön*, where he had room to expand on what he meant by them. In his *Job* engravings he showed the same concept visually, by incorporating symbols of the painter's and engraver's callings in the marginal decorations of Plate XVIII, and of the poet-musician in the lower margin of Plate XX. If we recall Job's longing to preserve his words in rock, graven in lead with an iron pen (Job 19: 23-4), we see that the medium is the message: Job's art is his faith.

In the *Laocoön* print (fig. 17), usually dated c. 1820-22,<sup>38</sup> Blake has re-used the two aphorisms:

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<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that Bindman had already drawn a parallel with the inscription on the *Laocoön*, several years before Essick's discovery of the variant proofs (Bindman (1982), p. 21. He dates the final state of the engraving to c. 1820-22.

Jesus & his Apostles and Disciples were all Artists ...

Prayer is the study of Art.  
 Praise is the practice of Art.  
 Fasting etc. all relate to Art.  
 The outward Ceremony is Antichrist  
 Without unceasing Practise nothing can be done.

Practice is Art            If you leave off you are Lost

A Poet, a Painter, a Musician, and an Architect: the Man  
 Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian.  
 You must leave Fathers & Mothers & Houses & Lands  
                   if they stand in the way of ART (E 247, with *Laocoön* plate).

Blake had already explored this theme in *Jerusalem*, with Los labouring patiently, creating the prophets to defeat the kings of the material world, and helped in his labours by the 'Guardians of the Gate', the major spiritual writers to whom extensive reference was made earlier. If we include with these 'guardians' also the two named as 'witnesses' in *Milton*, we have a motley group, but all of them practised prayer, praise, and fasting - not because there was moral virtue in so doing, but because it was a response to the Beloved - put in Blake's words, it provided the 'Practise' without which they would be lost.<sup>39</sup> 'Practise' for them also meant living in the world and fighting the battles that had to be fought there, and not withdrawing. Blake disagreed with those who held that the essence of Christianity was morality, and keeping oneself unspotted by the world, and he spells out his disagreement in the long prose introduction to the fourth part of *Jerusalem*, addressed 'To the Christians':

Devils are  
 False Religions  
       "Saul Saul"  
 "Why persecutest thou me?"

I give you the end of a golden string,  
 Only wind it into a ball:  
 It will lead you in at Heavens gate  
 Built in Jerusalems wall.

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<sup>39</sup> cf. Lindberg's discussion of Blake's visions and his view of art, 'There is something in man which cannot be expressed except by art, poetry and music. If it were not so, we would not need the arts ... There is an inexplicable element in art, and this element is its very essence. We can talk around it but not about it. In this respect art is not very different from faith in God. Blake thought they were the same thing.' Lindberg (1973), p.165.

What are the Gifts of the Gospel, are they not all Mental Gifts? Is God a Spirit who must be worshipped in Spirit & in Truth, and are not the Gifts of the Spirit Every-thing to Man? O ye Religious, discountenance everyone among you who shall pretend to despise Art and Science! ... Let every Christian, as much as in him lies, engage himself openly & publicly, before all the world, in some Mental pursuit for the Building up of Jerusalem (E 231-2).

Clearly Blake had a great love and respect for the Mental Gifts gained by Job, for Job's Art, his 'mental gifts', grew out of his direct experience, and that direct experience is indubitably connected with the experience of pain. Blake wrote:

What is the price of Experience, do men buy it for a song,  
Or Wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price  
Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children.  
Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy,  
And in the wither'd field where the farmer plows for bread in vain.

(*The Four Zoas* II, page 35: 11-15, E 325)

Crabb Robinson wrote of Blake's own sufferings, 'Tho' he spoke of his happiness, he spoke of past sufferings, and of sufferings as necessary - there is suffering in Heaven, for where there is the capacity of enjoyment, there is the capacity of pain.' Blake's *Job* is the narrative of a life of prayer deepened by suffering.

Blake also saw the theme of forgiveness as central to the Job saga, and in his engraved set he links the end of Job's 'captivity' with the moment when he prayed for the friends who had so deserted him. For Blake, forgiveness was the essence of Christianity, the forgiveness that sets man free for the vigorous exercise of Art. Blake in his lifetime encountered ridicule in the intellectual press, prosecution in the County Court, the stealing of his ideas for designs, the attempt to dominate his inner mind; he saw that forgiveness was essential to his integrity as an artist, but he had a hard struggle to forgive, particularly those who attacked him in the intellectual press, such as Leigh Hunt (the 'Hand' of *Jerusalem*). It is a mark of something like sainthood that he continued to work with such energy and purpose, and yet with so little public

recognition, and that at the end of his life he achieved a following of younger artists, on whom he exercised a considerable influence.

In Blake's *Job* what we see is not the progress of one man's inner life, seen in isolation, but the progress of one man both in his inner life and in relation to his community. We do not see *Job's moral* progress from a state of self-righteousness to a healthier state of humility, but his spiritual progress through purgation, illumination, to union with God, and to return as a leader, able to take his community with him in his vision.

**Summarised**

**Plate by Plate Commentary**

**on the Butts water-colour set (c.1806-10)**

**and**

**the engraved set (1821-26)**

**of**

***Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job***

**The Title Page**  
**(engraved set only)**

The Hebrew above the title in English means 'the Book of Job', and its presence may be a declaration of the importance of Hebrew poetry . The Hebrew lettering is to show that these illustrations do not represent the literal story, but the spiritual meaning behind it. The lettering of the title is reminiscent of the lettering of medieval manuscripts, and Blake is declaring his close links with the medieval tradition and with Christian art.

The angels circling downwards and then upwards, from right to left, with wide-open eyes looking in all directions, are perhaps the Seven Eyes of God, but more likely are watching you, the reader, and bringing your deeds to the Heavenly throne, for inclusion in the Book of Life.

### No. 1. Job and his family (1:3-4)

Job, his wife, his seven sons, and his three daughters are gathered in the open air under an oak tree for evening worship, and musical instruments are hanging unused in the tree. Around them are sheep, some grazing, a few sleeping, and the sheep dog too is sleeping, with its muzzle resting on the back of one of the sheep. The composition is in Blake's 'Early Christian' style, typical of his religious illustrating work of this period, i.e. the grouping of the figures is formal and symmetrical, and they are lit not by the sun on the horizon but by a radiant light of their own (93), conveying an atmosphere of harmony and primeval innocence. By grouping the whole composition in the centre of the space, Blake creates an atmosphere of harmony and serenity. Bindman designates this Blake's 'Early Christian' style, and the composition has resonances with the Ravenna mosaics. The whole family are wrapped in sincere prayer, their eyes open, their expressions gentle and loving.

*Jerusalem* begins with a setting sun and ends with a rising one, and it is thought that Blake here also shows a setting sun; if so the sleeping sheep and sheepdog may represent the state of torpor into which the people among whom Job lives have fallen. More likely it is to convey a state of Innocence. A craggy mountain fills the right-hand horizon, and the sky on that side is dark apart from a waning moon and single star; there is a group of tents, to show Job's simple nomad life, in the middle distance. This is balanced on the left by a Gothic church or cathedral, behind which is a sun on the horizon, producing a flood of light. Possibly the mountain represents Mount Sinai, and the Old Dispensation, the cathedral the New. But if Blake had intended irony, had wanted to depict Job and his family weighed down by a burden of law and formal repetition, he would hardly have chosen as target the opening words of the Lord's Prayer, which approaches God lovingly as Father. Job has a heavy book in his lap, but he is clearly raising his eyes to God, not letting them rest on his material possessions

nor on the book. It is unlikely that the presence of the Gothic church or cathedral was meant to be ironic either.

Blake may have been inspired to create his *Job* series by the dramatic discovery in 1800 of six thirteenth century *al secco* paintings on the theme of Job, their subjects announced in rhyming Latin hexameters. The first one of the series shows Job addressing his seven sons and three daughters.

The musical instruments may have their origin in the tradition that still persisted in the age of Rubens that Job was the patron saint of musicians. In *The Testament of Job* we read that he used to play music and sing holy songs to entertain the widows who were his guests, in the days of his prosperity. Blake depicts Job as a man of prayer, not, as in the biblical version, a man obsessive about sacrificial ritual. Blake is declaring that his subject is Job's spiritual progress, a dramatic progress from indirect to direct knowledge of God.

By using Christian symbols such as the Lord's Prayer and the Gothic church/cathedral at the outset (there was a persistent medieval tradition that Job was the bishop of a cathedral), Blake is making it clear that he will interpret *Job* typologically, depicting Job as a prefiguring of Christ. This is in accordance with the tradition of Christian art which dates back to paintings of Job in the catacombs, as a type of Resurrection life, a tradition hallowed by the exegesis of several early Fathers, and popularised by St. Gregory the Great. But there was perhaps also an antiquarian source, for Blake was an admirer of the works of William Stukeley, who entitled the preface to his *Stonehenge* (1740), 'Patriarchal Christianity', and wrote that 'the first and patriarchal religion was Christianity, the Mosaic dispensation, as a veil, intervening.'. Job is here depicted as a good old man, he and his family a type of faithful remnant, radiating their small light, in a world growing dark.

**The engraved set, Plate I.** (Until Plate XVII, the compositions for the engraved set resemble closely the Butts set, but the marginal texts and decorations are important).

The quotation 'Thus did Job continually' refers to Job 1:3-4, but in this scene it seems to be evening not morning, and Job is studying with his family, not making sacrifices on their behalf. 'The Letter killeth, the Spirit giveth Life' in the lower margin must be taken in its entirety as describing this plate, for Plate XXI has its own balancing quotation. In an earlier version Blake inscribed instead: 'Prayer to God is the study of Imaginative Art' together with: 'It is spiritually discerned', which remained in the final version. 'Prayer to God', 'spiritual discernment' and 'the spirit giveth life' all suggest the same area of concern. The open books symbolise Job's study of God's self-revelation through Imaginative Art. In the upper margin are the words from the Lord's Prayer which were written within the disk of the sun in the Butts version, proclaiming by their presence that Job was a Christian. The altar in the lower margin, with an offering burning on it, seems to represent Job's spiritual sacrifice, his offering of himself (compare fig. 32, showing Job, and a burning heart).

In the lower margin are an ox (extreme left) and a young ram (extreme right), and it seems from their reappearance in the margin of Plate XXI that these symbolise Law and Gospel. The whole central design is within a tent, outlined in the margin with a plain clear line, suggesting that God has placed his tent on earth, protecting Job and his family.

## No. 2. Satan before the throne of God (1:6)

Here the design is divided into three, the upper part showing the Throne of God, the central area showing the irruption of Satan, and the lower area, a kind of cramped and cave-like space beneath the oak-tree, with Job and his family studying the scriptures, and conversing with angels. The grouping of the human figures resembles closely Blake's early painting, known as *Job and his family* (fig. 1). Satan occupies the central position, as also in nos. 5 and 6. Physically he is indistinguishable from the angels waiting on the throne (except that he is leaping, and is wreathed in flames), whereas when he appears on earth in later designs, he is shown as dark, huge, and sinister, with the wings of a bat. Blake held that Satan was Error, and only 'seemed to be', but while he seemed to be, his image was very powerful. Blake in his view of heaven is showing the two aspects of God, the Prolific and the Devourer, the Word and the Consuming Fire.

**Plate II.** The theme of fire as part of the attributes of God, and fire as a strengthener, is present in the background of almost all the quotations, and in the left-hand margin, the angels seem to be watching over some kind of Phoenix-like rebirth. 'God out of Christ is a consuming fire' Blake wrote on his painting to illustrate Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs*. But in 'I shall see God' there is also the promise of vision, and, in 'we shall awake up after thy likeness', of Divine Union. In the lower margin, which relates to the scene on earth, Job and his wife are active in the role of shepherds, but hatted as if for formal Sunday worship.

The words 'The Angel of the Divine Presence' appear to be a translation of the Hebrew words directly below them. But here Blake has left out *alef*, changing the meaning from 'angel' to 'king'; the Hebrew phrase has been translated as 'King Jehovah'. Blake here is deliberately presenting us with a mystery, as in his beautiful painting of the six-toed Angel of the Divine Presence clothing Adam and Eve after the Fall (fig. 13).

### No. 3. Job's sons and daughters destroyed (1:19)

In the biblical version, the house in which Job's family are feasting is destroyed by 'a great wind from the wilderness' (Job 1:19), but here Blake has depicted them as destroyed by Satan himself, as in an *al secco* in St. Stephen's, Westminster, based on *The Testament of Job*. The leaping flames light up with red the faces and naked bodies of Job's family, and of Satan also, and behind the central figure of Job's son is a glowing red column of smoke. The scattered serving dishes and pitchers, the musical instruments fallen to the ground, are to emphasise the contrast between prosperity and sudden destruction, not to pass moral judgement by showing destruction was a punishment for debauchery. The outstretched arms of Satan show his all-encompassing power, the strong tilt of the head, and the downward tilt of the wrists, suggesting his malice. His spiked, batlike wings are reminiscent of the wings of the weary Creator in *Elohim Creating Adam* (c. 1795, fig. 8).

**Plate III.** In the upper margin Blake quotes 'The Fire of God is fallen from Heaven', giving further emphasis to the Fire theme, which is not so obvious in the engraved version (136).

#### No. 4. The messengers tell Job of his misfortunes (1:15-19)

Messengers bring news of disaster to Job and his wife. In the composition, the diagonal lines of the running legs, and of Job's wife's raised arms, counterbalance the harmony of the design. Job accepts the news with the conventional gesture of prayer, hands pressed together as he hears of the loss of all his children, but his wife has her hands raised above her head in a gesture of acute distress. According to *The Testament of Job*, Job had been warned in a dream that, if he angered Satan, great trials would follow, but if he persevered in faith God would finally reward him (33).

**Plate IV.** Again the quotation in the margin speaks of 'the Fire of God'. The Job of the engraving looks up to heaven not in resignation but in puzzlement. The running figures make it clear that Blake believes the disasters really happened: this is not the story of an inward journey only, but of the interaction of outward event and inner character. The lower margin is filled with a motif of flames and lightning; in the upper the huge figure of Satan is 'going to & fro on the Earth & walking up and down on it.' (Job 2:2) He gleams with light, whereas of the throne of God there is no sign. Two spirits lie in an attitude of utter despair in the upper corners of the frame of the central design.

### No. 5. Satan going forth from the presence of the Lord (2:7)

In heaven, Satan salutes the throne as he dives earthward with fire to pour out on Job. Blake has shown us a pitying, grieving Deity, the book that lay on his lap now closed, half rising from his throne in distress. On earth is a scene which has no precedent in the Book of Job: in spite of his sufferings, Job is giving a large lump of bread to a beggar. But he is giving with his left hand, for this is the devil in disguise, and Job has recognised him and is giving him a stone, not bread: this medieval embellishment was popular in art (as were pictures of the devil scourging Job as he sat on the dunghill), and would have been known to Blake.

In the background Blake has depicted druid cromlechs, in a ruined state. Blake is following the conventions of Christian art in using ruins to signify the end of a worldly culture. In *Jerusalem* he depicted the druid culture as having deteriorated from its first vision into being cruel, vengeful, and worldly. In nos. 5-8, perhaps also in nos. 10 and 12, these cromlechs are visible in the middle-distance, replacing the Gothic cathedral (though in the subsequent designs it is not clear whether they are the ruins of druid or classical temples). Eighteenth century antiquarians had proved substantial links between the age of the patriarchs and the British druids, who were thought to be the descendants from a Phoenician colony.

**Plate V.** The whole of the lower margin is now filled with the coils of the serpent, and in the side-margins the serpents' tails are twisted around briars, behind which is the flame motif again. At the top are two weeping angels, grieving for Job's suffering: for there is suffering as well as joy in heaven. These are the last we see of angels - henceforth Satan rules, and there is no more intercourse with Heaven till God appears to Job in the whirlwind.

### No. 6. Satan smiting Job with boils

Here also Blake has embroidered the biblical narrative, which simply says that Satan 'smote Job with sore boils'. In *The Testament of Job* Satan 'attacked like a mighty hurricane and hurled Job to the ground' (34). Satan's position is very similar to that of Albion in the famous *Albion Rose*, but the strong tilt of his head and his leering expression, together with the downward tilt of his wrists, alter the message conveyed from one of innocent power and joy to one of superhuman malice.

Attitudes of despair were part of the traditional language of art, and these are shown both by Job's position, stretched out prone on his back averting his gaze, and that of his wife, who is huddled in a foetal position on her knees near his feet (95). In nos. 6 to 11 Blake is emphasising the isolation of Job, prefiguring the loneliness of Christ in his Passion (39-40).

**Plate VI.** In the lower margin is a broken shepherd's crook, the crook we saw in the hand of a respectably hatted Job in the margin of Plate II, when he was still in prosperity. In the margins are symbols of the shortness of life, the grasshopper and the frog (Exodus 8-10), the spider's web (Job 8:13-14). There is also the broken pot, from which Job took a potsherd to scrape himself. Gregory interprets the action with the potsherd as a prefiguring of the Passion, 'For what is the potsherd in the hand of our Lord, but the flesh which he took of the clay of our nature? For the potsherd receives firmness by fire. And the Flesh of our Lord was rendered stronger by His Passion.' Satan pours out fire onto Job, and as he burns within, the fire comes out as boils. In Dürer's *Jabach-altar* Job's wife is shown pouring water onto his boils to soothe them, and Job seems to be regarded as the patron saint of healing waters, from a woodcut by Hans Weiditz showing a bath-house, and outside it Job on his dung-hill (figs. 23 and 24).

### No. 7. Job's comforters (2:11)

Job's friends arrive, and with their arms uplifted in distress they approach Job, who is now lying half dead. The composition of the right half of the design is reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the *Deposition*, but there are also parallels in medieval illustrations of Job, who was clearly seen as a prefiguring of Christ. Job on his dunghill outside the city was understood as a prefiguring of Christ's passion, and in the fifteenth century this affected representations of Christ, and Christ's scourging is set on a little hill, instead of being inside the praetorium, as in the account in the Gospels. Job's half-closed eyes are averted both from his wife who supports him, and from the newcomers, and he looks towards the extreme top right of the design, at the cruciform architecture that has been taken as a symbol of Job's faith: Job is a Christian. There are similar hidden symbols of the cross in nos. 8, 10, and 12, possibly also in no. 4 (cf. fig. 32). In the middle distance are the ruins of cromlechs (see above, notes on no. 5).

**Plate VII.** In the engraved version, the figures of Job and his wife are lit by an inner radiance, which also lights up the ground at their feet, but the comforters are lit only by the sun, which is rapidly sinking below the horizon. In the lower margin, Job is shown in the attitude of a faithful shepherd, crook in hand, leaning against a tree to sleep briefly. His wife echoes his position. Job will wake again to his work: 'Ye have heard of the Patience of Job, and have seen the End of the Lord' (James 5:11).



**No. 9. The vision of Eliphaz (4:15)**

Eliphaz's warning dream. Here Blake has re-created the dream which in the text Eliphaz described. There is a halo of light emanating from the head of God, but Blake has skilfully shown the figure emanating also rays of darkness. Combined with the dark clouds which surround the vision, and the dark mountainous horizon, the effect is almost more sombre than the effect of no. 11. The figure of God here is erect and leaning forward in a threatening way, arms folded forbiddingly, eyes staring at Eliphaz in accusation - in every way a contrast to the pitying Deity of no. 5. Blake is showing us the forbidding judgmental God of the people among whom Job lived; even men whom he could count his close friends believed this to be the nature of God.

**Plate IX.** The trees in the lower margin are barren and dead. In the passages quoted Eliphaz reproaches Job for claiming to be more just than his Maker.

### No. 10. Job rebuked by his friends (9:21)

This powerful image of the isolation of Job, whose close friends have turned against him, is central to understanding Blake's re-interpretation of the Book of Job. These friends-turned-accusers prefigure the mocking of Christ, and Blake has created a new event, 'The Mocking of Job'. Robert Lowth also saw this mockery by his friends as Job's worst trial. Here too there is the hidden cross, and the indeterminate ruins, indicating a culture in decay. Blake is stressing the centrality of the ethics of forgiveness, and there are echoes of a passage that speaks of crucifying as 'abettors of criminals' those who try and forgive instead of exacting vengeance. That the theme is central to his understanding of the Book of Job is shown by the numerous studies that led up to his great *Job* engraving, showing Job with his three accusers ranged against him (figs. 3-7).

Job's despair at the absence of God is important in leading to the illumination of God's self-revelation to him, in Christ.

**Plate X** 'The Just Upright Man is laughed to Scorn' (Job 12:4). This is not part of the biblical Job's suffering, but of the words of his complaint. Blake is here drawing on a strong artistic tradition of the mocking of Job (figs. 25, 29-31). The quotations in the upper margin refer to Job in his relations with God: Job says God is trying him, as gold is tested with fire, and asserts that he will trust God, 'though he slay me'. 'Have pity on me, for the hand of God hath touched me' suggests that Job has a moment of vision, which seems to lead to the terrible vision of the next illustration, of Job masquerading as Satan. In the right hand margin are a few links of chain, and in the following design this chain will be in the hands of the fiends trying to drag Job down to Hell, who are Job's own friends, seen in their demonic state.

### No. 11. Job's Evil Dreams (7:14)

This scene also has no direct biblical source; in *The Testament of Job*, however, Job is warned in a dream that if he destroys the idol of Satan which all men are worshipping he will incur Satan's wrath. That this figure is not God is shown clearly by the wildly tossed hair and by the cloven hoof, which is depicted with great precision. The outstretched arms of Satan masquerading as God point to the two alternatives, the Law, or Damnation in Hell. In the *Testament* Satan is linked with 'the beauty of the serpent', and the glittering colours of the serpent entwined about Satan's cloven hoof, his head visible behind Satan's head, are in contrast to the sombreness of the rest of this design. Three fiends are trying to drag Job down into hell. The sombreness of the flames, and the lightning proceeding from the Tables of the Law, is masterly.

Typologically, this scene may also echo Christ's Harrowing of Hell. Parallels can be drawn here between Job's terrible descent into darkness, and the Dark Night of the Soul in the theology of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa.

**Plate XI.** The quotations bring out the link with *The Testament of Job*, in which Job angers Satan by destroying his idol, at which all are worshipping him as Creator. In the upper margin, written closest to the design, is 'Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light, & his Ministers into Ministers of Righteousness' (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The same theme is repeated in the line of words lowest in the lower margin: 'Who opposeth, & exalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped' (2 Thess. 2:4). But in the upper corners are quotations that link with earlier ones on the theme of purification by fire.

Yet Blake has chosen this also as the moment when Job proclaims his faith in Resurrection, and in One who will come to redeem him (129). Job longs to be able to

carve into rock or write with an iron pen his faith in Resurrection, that it may be there still, after he has gone. This wish Blake's illustrations hint at fulfilling, both in the artist's tools in the lower margin of Plate XVIII, in the pictures on the walls of Plate XX, and in Job leading his family in song, in Plate XXI. But Blake has made significant changes to the text which he quotes at length below the central design:

... For I know that my Redeemer liveth, & that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth & after my skin destroy thou this body (AV: 'though after my skin worms destroy my body) yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for Myself and mine eyes shall behold & not Another/ tho consumed be my wrought Image (AV: 'though my reins be consumed within me').

Job is talking of a material destruction here, a burning up of his whole mortal nature, a destruction of his 'image' comparable to the way Jacob was lamed for life by his encounter with God at Peniel. Blake has changed the text to make clear his own interpretation, that it is the fire of God that is purifying Job, not Satan's scheming punishment of his self-righteousness. .

## No. 12. The wrath of Elihu (32:6)

The young Elihu enters the debate, disagreeing with the three Comforters. Job sits quietly listening to him, but he is huddled as if he had only just emerged from utter despair, and his wife still sits with her head sunk in hopelessness: they have both reached a nadir where they cannot help *themselves* any longer (95). Elihu is a John the Baptist figure, foretelling both Job's restoration and the coming of Christ in vision (86); the Comforters, restored now to their position as friends, are listening with wrapt attention. He conveys the sense that something will come to restore them, God will come to them in self-revelation. One hand points to the stars, which are there to be a source of spiritual light since they represent no known constellation.

**Plate XII.** Blake quotes more words from Elihu's relatively short contribution than from all the Comforters' speeches put together, which suggests he agreed more with Elihu. 'I am young and ye are very old, wherefore I was afraid' are words which put Elihu in the ranks of prophets, singled out by God from humble occupations to be the channel of his revelations. Elihu warns that men may refuse to listen to God when he speaks, through vision or through dreams, to instruct him. Elihu speaks prophetically of Divine Intervention: 'If there be with him an Interpreter, One among a thousand ...'

The purpose of being given new life is Illumination: 'Lo all these things worketh oftentimes with Man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. Again Blake is emphasising the language of Vision. As Job sits quietly in the starlight, in the lower margin his spiritual form is sleeping, and a stream of angelic figures rise heavenwards from it.

### No. 13. The Lord answering Job out of the whirlwind (38:1)

Nos. 13 to 17 show a series of visions, and the figure of Christ dominates these, as the figure of Satan dominated nos. 2 to 6 in the first half of the series. In all these visions Job's wife is at his side as his loyal companion, whereas in the biblical version we hear no more of her after she exhorts Job to curse God and die. The process of softening her role can be seen already in the Septuagint, where she is given a long speech of her own, grieving for the loss of her children, and pitying Job. This is also reflected in the alternative tradition handed down in *The Testament of Job*, and in the artistic tradition which shows his wife bathing his sores (fig. 24), to try and cool their burning heat.

'No man hath seen God.' Therefore the early Fathers taught that in the epiphanies of God in the Old Testament He appeared as Christ, for example at the Burning Bush. Here God as Christ appears to Job and his wife and speaks to them out of the whirlwind, his wide-stretched arms spread in blessing. This design is echoed in the figure of Christ the Creator in the upper margin of Plate 35 of *Jerusalem* (fig. 15).

Both Job and his wife kneel, looking upwards in awe, whereas the Comforters seem to be flattened by the force of the wind. The scene is sombre, the main source of light the face of God, which lights up the figures of Job and his wife as they kneel in adoration. It lights up also the hands of the friends who bow to the ground in terror, their fingers stretched upwards.

**Plate XIII.** The lines of the whirlwind cut through all the figures, and continue in the margins, outside the design itself. The whirlwind has also flattened the trees in the lower margin.

### No. 14. When the morning stars sang together (38:7)

Job and his wife see in vision the Morning of Creation (139-40). The tripartite division of the page echoes the division in nos. 2 and 5, but whereas Satan dominated the central area of these earlier designs, the centre is now held by Christ. Here Christ acts as explicator of all that is, like Raphael in *Paradise Lost*. The Creator is just releasing the sun and moon, the pagan Selene and Helios in their chariots drawn by horses and by serpents, but the light that comes from them is nothing compared with the pure light radiating from the Creator, which is lighting up both the heavens and the earth. Blake probably believed that the classical deities derived from Hebrew originals. This design is justly famous.

The Heavens are divided from earth by a narrow belt of cloud, which encloses the mortals into a cramped area suggestive of Plato's analogy of the Cave in his *Republic*. Here the outstretched arms of God/Christ indicate contraries - not so much the opposition between day and night as the contrast between the freedom of the angels in the heavenly realms above, and the cramped existence of the mortals below.

**Plate XIV.** The marginal designs at the sides show in miniature the six days of Creation. At the foot of the design is a sea-monster so large we see neither head nor tail. By the quotations from Genesis 1 Blake is making it clear that Job and his wife are seeing in vision the act of creation, liberated from time and space. The verse 'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' (Job 38:7) was influential on *The Testament of Job*, which narrates that Job on his deathbed gave to his daughters magic girdles, girdles that would enable them to hear the music of the spheres.

### No. 15. Behemoth and Leviathan (40:15-41:1)

Christ has gathered Job, his wife, and his three friends into heaven, and in mystic vision they look down on the land and sea; contained in a medallion, such as was typical of medieval illuminated manuscripts, they see the great monsters Behemoth and Leviathan, desporting themselves, and greeting their Master joyfully (86). Leviathan is splashing and belching out red flames, Behemoth fawns like a bull-mastiff welcoming his Master home from work .

**Plate XV.** 'Behold now Behemoth which I made with you' (40:15). In the surrounding verses the biblical text is here corrupt (Job 40:13 ff.); in the Septuagint there is no specific mention of Behemoth and Leviathan, and they are called 'the chief of the playthings of the angels', and in the Vulgate it has been edited still further, and gives a clear message that God will bring these terrible monsters low, though this is not at all clear in the Hebrew (30). Blake is more uncompromising. In the right-hand margin is 'Of Behemoth he saith, He is the chief of the ways of God, of Leviathan he saith, He is King over all the Children of Pride' (Job 40:19). Pairing this on the other side are three different quotations concerning cloud. The frequency of this word 'cloud' is interesting: Blake may be alluding to the cloud on Mt. Sinai, or the cloud that hid Christ from the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, or both. Certainly he seems to be using darkness and cloud to stress that these things seen are visions come from God, found in darkness, in the cloud of unknowing, and that darkness is as important as light, just as Leviathan and Behemoth are important counterparts of Creation.

### No. 16. The fall of Satan

Blake has shown us Judgement Day, and the Casting Out of Satan. In no. 13 Job and his wife saw a vision of the beginning of time, and now they see a vision of the end of all things. On either side of the twisted falling body of Satan are two other twisted falling forms, a man and a woman, the mortal coil of Job and his wife, which Satan takes, thinking he has taken all. These are the skins with which Adam and Eve were clothed by the Angel of the Divine Presence, and they have sloughed their skins like snakes (fig. 13). The book on God's lap seems to be the Book of Life, opened at the Book of Revelation. God has become Christ, and it is as Christ that he defeats the Evil One. There are parallels here with Blake's illustration to Hervey's *Meditations*, which shows the Last Days.

**Plate XVI.** 'For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night' (Rev. 12:10). Blake has also quoted references in the New Testament which affirm the continued presence of Satan in Heaven; from Jacob Boehme he developed his own principle of Opposites, as in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

### No. 17. The vision of Christ

This scene is also not in the Book of Job. Christ, as the Ancient of Days, appears to Job and his wife and blesses them. It would not be at all obvious that the figure with arms outstretched in blessing, and a beard down to his feet, is Christ, were it not for the quotations from John's Gospel in the first person singular which fill the margins in the engraved version. These leave little doubt that Blake intends us to see this figure as Christ. Here God appears on earth, and where his feet touch the ground the solid earth is transformed into air by the brilliant light of his presence. God has come down to earth, and as he enters the world he becomes Christ.

There are strong technical reasons for considering this drawing either to have been coloured partly by another hand at the time Blake was working on the Butts set, or done by Blake as a gift for Butts to replace something he did not like, when he was copying the Butts set for his patron Linnell, some fifteen years later. But there is little doubt it was almost entirely drawn by Blake himself, and it is a moving and imposing design.

**Plate XVII.** 'I have heard thee with the hearing of the Ear, but now my Eye seeth thee' (Job 42:7). Blake follows the Vulgate, where the Authorised Version has: 'I have heard *of* thee'. This latter would not make sense, for Job has been hearing the words of God, not just hearing *about* Him, already. The lower margin contains scrolls and books open at the Last Discourse, God's self revelation through Christ. This is the moment of Vision to which Blake has been pointing, ever since 'I shall see God' was quoted in the upper margin of Plate II. In all the quotations from John's Gospel we have the language of illumination, of vision (143): 'I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.'

### No. 18. Job's sacrifice (42:10)

As Job intercedes for his friends, Job and Christ have become one, and Job prays the ancient 'Cross Prayer', like Daniel in the lions' den in early Christian frescoes in the catacombs. Job has the Risen Christ indwelling, giving him power to forgive sins, and his outstretched arms imitate the gesture of the Deity in nos. 13 and 14, as well as of Christ reigning on the cross. It is the same gesture as the hovering figure above the ark in the illustration of Hervey's *Meditations*, representing the spiritual form of Noah, strengthened by his ordeal, while his mortal body toils and struggles. This is the moment when Job, wounded healer, becomes the leader of his people. Whereas in the first half of the series we saw Job become more and more isolated, now we see him become at one with his close friends, then in no. 19 with a wider circle of neighbours, in no. 20 with new daughters, and finally with the whole of his family.

**Plate XVIII.** This is a dramatic and central moment, and quotations and altered design enhance its force. 'Also the Lord accepted Job' (Job 42:9). 'My servant Job shall pray for you' (42:8). 'And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends' (42:10). In the engraved version Job has his back on the world, and turns to God. Divine light streams down from Heaven, and Job is united with it, as the straight smokeless flame of his offering ascends to unite with the huge spiritual sun above. In the lower margin the quotations express what was for Blake the kernel of the Christian faith - mutual forgiveness. Perfection does not consist in avoiding sins, but in openness to all: (Matth. 5:44-5, 48). The burin and brushes, and artist's palette, seem to express the nature of Job's own *unio mystica*, which has always been the *unio artistica*. It was essential to his integrity to make a great effort to forgive those who ridiculed his work (such as 'Hand', who was Robert Hunt, the critic who had attacked him in *The Examiner*).

**No. 19. Every man also gave him a piece of money (42:11)**

The theme of Job as a prefiguring of Christ is continued, as Job and his wife sit and humbly receive gifts, the grouping of the seated figures reminiscent of the Holy Family receiving gifts from the Magi. But they received in the stable, whereas this scene is set out of doors, and behind them is a field of ripe corn, the heads already heavy with grain. They are sitting beneath what appears to be a fig tree, with figs ripening on the branches. The design used to be thought to be an indirect compliment to the Linnell family for their generosity to Blake and his wife, and though this theory is no longer tenable for the Linnell family, in view of the much earlier dating for the Butts set, yet it could have been a compliment to Thomas Butts, who was equally generous as a patron, and his wife, to whom Blake was very attached, and for whom he wrote some poems.

**Plate XIX.** The side margins are filled with a stream of angels descending earthwards, as Job and his wife sit humbly receiving gifts from neighbours. Hereafter we see no more of Heaven, for it is as if Heaven and earth have become one.

## No. 20. Job and his daughters (42:15)

Job is telling his daughters his experiences. Blake has used formalised central grouping, as in no. 1. Job arms are spread wide above his head, and above them a black and pink cloud, within which, centrally, God appears in a whirlwind, while to left and right of him hover bat-winged devils. The colouring is certainly not by Blake, and is too crude to be by Catherine Blake either. Lindberg conjectures it was the work of young Tommy Butts. Like no. 17, it is on different paper. Job and his daughters are seated on a red sofa, out of doors, and the daughters hold a scroll, a notebook, and a large tablet, and there is a second scroll on the ground. According to *The Testament of Job* Job's words were written down for posterity by his three daughters, and this scene was known to Blake through artistic sources.

**Plate XX.** The engraved version is set indoors, in an apse-shaped room, with paintings on the three walls, to which Job is pointing. Two daughters now sit very close to Job, their heads leaned against his chest, listening in absorption, while the third kneels at his feet, her left arm wonderingly touching his right foot. On the floor is a circular covering of plaited rushes, the pattern of intersecting circles perhaps symbolic of Job's constancy. The central panel shows God appearing in the whirlwind, and Job and his wife and three friends are all kneeling, with bowed heads. The friends are not cringing in fear, as in Plate XIII, for in Plate XVIII they were restored, when Job prayed for them. The side-wall on Job's right shows two warriors with lances attacking a group of young men; on the other side is a falling ploughman, with houses behind him in flames. Satan hovers above in both, scattering thunderbolts and fire. The repeated wide-stretched arms convey the contraries, God and Satan, and also that Job, in vision, has become one with God. In the lower margin: 'If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there/ If I make my bed in Hell, behold Thou/ art there' (Psalm 139:8). Alongside this are a lute and a lyre, symbols of Job's inspiration. In the side margins vines with bunches of ripe grapes, and angels in loving and affectionate converse.

### No. 21. Job and his family give praise to God

Job and his family sing and play instruments in praise to God. 'Great and Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty' is written in a fine hand on the disc of the rising sun. The uplifted arm of Job, and the verticals of the musical instruments, together with the vertical shading on the standing figures, and on the fleece of the resting sheep give a strong upward movement to the design, more pronounced than in its prototype *The Hymn of Christ and his Apostles* (fig. 14). There is the same symmetrical grouping as in no. 1, and clearly a contrast is intended. The words are from Rev. 15:3, which begins 'And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.' The progress is not from Law to Gospel, therefore, but a combination of both, just as Job has progressed from innocence through experience, to a balance that includes both, as shown especially in the engraved version of the previous plate. In the Book of Job there is a cyclical movement, from wealth, through suffering, to restored wealth and prosperity, but Blake reinterprets the story, and shows a progress from material wealth, through suffering, to the spiritual wealth of inspiration and closeness to God. He has for his source the artistic traditions deriving from *The Testament of Job*, from which the tradition grew up that Job was the patron saint of musicians, for he has shown here the scene evoked by the finale of *The Testament of Job*, when Job's daughters welcome with music the angels who come to take Job's soul to Heaven.

**Plate XXI.** 'So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning' (Job 42:12). In the lower margin is an altar with flames rising from it, but the smoke becomes the scene of Job and his family praising God. By the inscription on the side of it, 'In burnt offerings for sin thou hast no pleasure' (Hebrews 10.6, quoting Psalm 40:6) Blake invokes the whole verse, which is concerned with the offering of the whole being, in response to God's invitation. The shepherd's crook lying alongside the young ram symbolises the presence of Christ, and Job's role as shepherd of men.

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1. *Job and his family*, c. 1784-8, Cincinnati Art Museum.

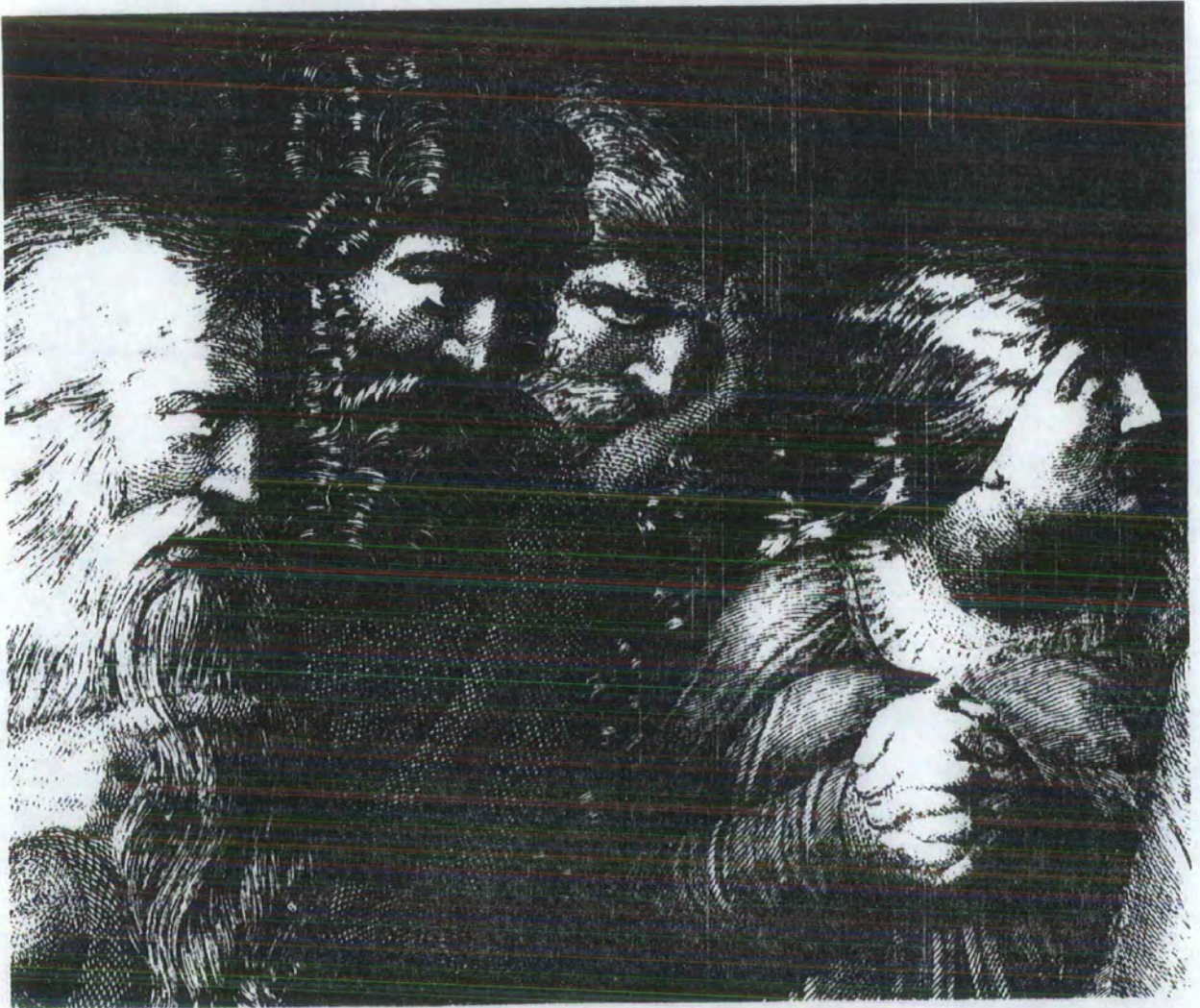


2. 'Urizen' Plate 1, Title-page, c. 1795, Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia.





6. *Job*, first state of engraving, probably August 1793, Geoffrey Keynes Collection.





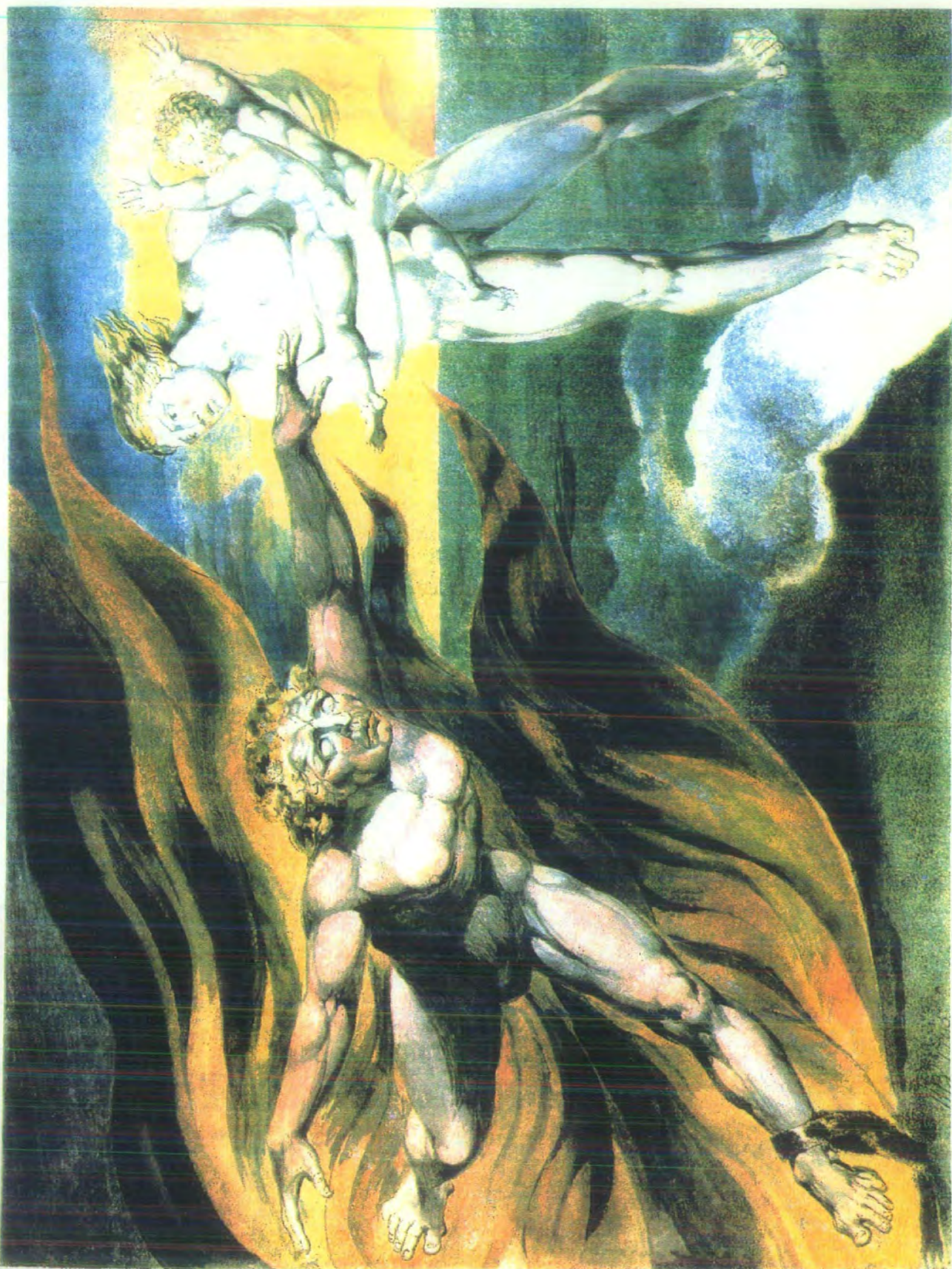
**7. *Job*, second state, some time after August 1793, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge..**



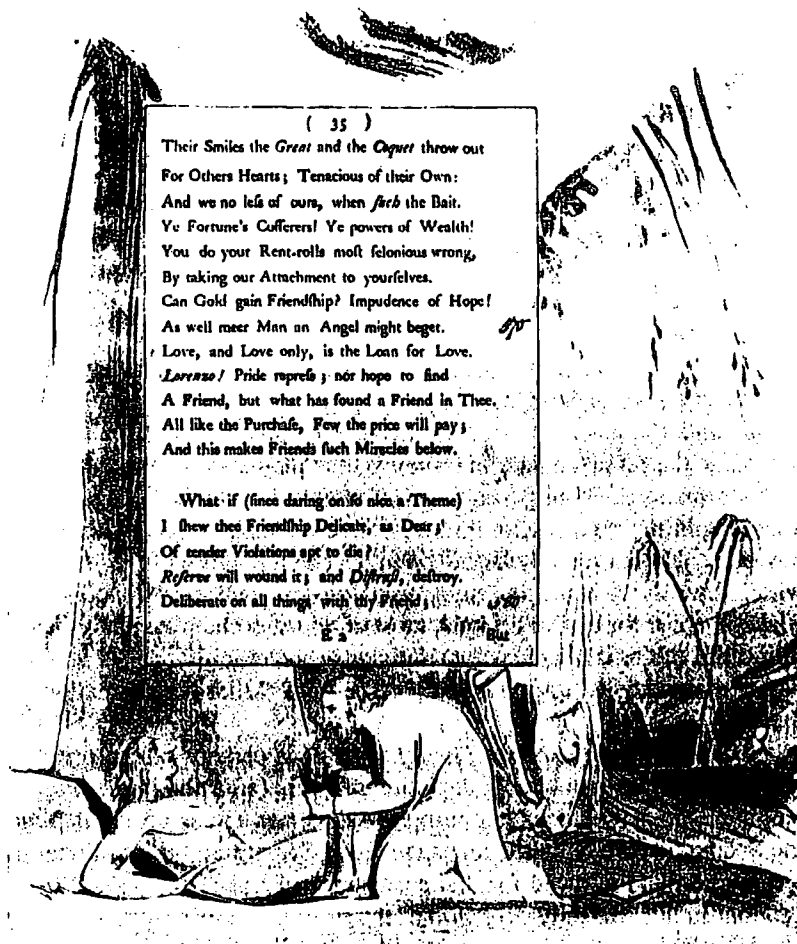


London

8. *Elohim Creating Adam*, 1795, Tate Gallery.



9. *The Good and Evil Angels struggling for possession of a Child, 1795*, Tate Gallery.



( 35 )

Their Smiles the *Great* and the *Coy* throw out  
 For Others Hearts; Tenacious of their Own:  
 And we no less of ours, when *such* the Bait.  
 Ye Fortune's Cufferers! Ye powers of Wealth!  
 You do your Rent-rolls most felonious wrong,  
 By taking our Attachment to yourselves.  
 Can Gold gain Friendship? Impudence of Hope!  
 As well meer Man an Angel might beget.  
 Love, and Love only, is the Loan for Love.  
*Lorenzo!* Pride reprefe; nor hope to find  
 A Friend, but what has found a Friend in Thee.  
 All like the Purchase, Few the price will pay;  
 And this makes Friends such Miracles below.

What if (since daring on this new a Theme)  
 I show thee Friendship Deicate, as Dear;  
 Of tender Violations apt to die?  
*Refere* will wound it; and *Disgrace*, destroy.  
 Deliberate on all things with thy Friend!

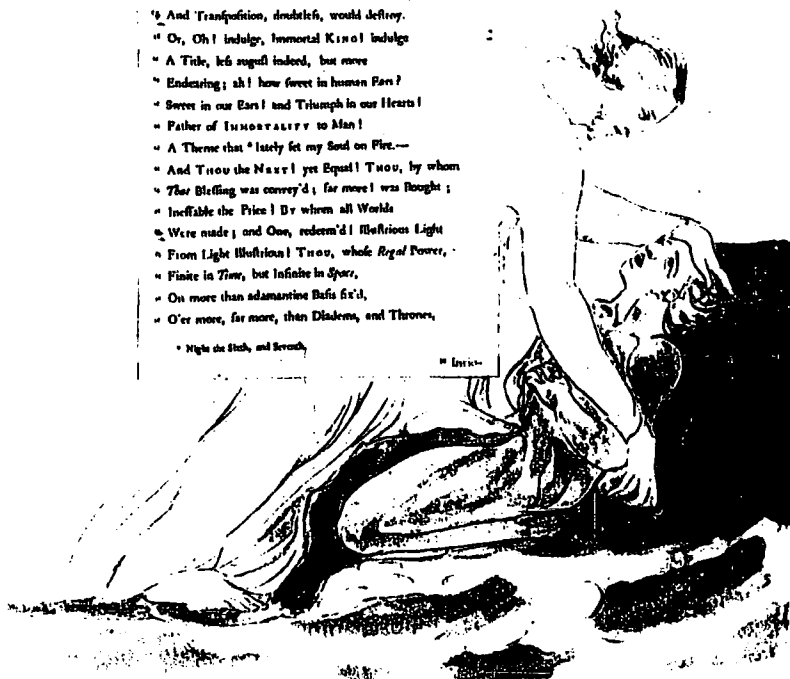
10.i. *The Good Samaritan, with a dubious potion.*  
*Night Thoughts* 68 (II.35) c.1795-7, Brit. Mus.

[ 11 ]

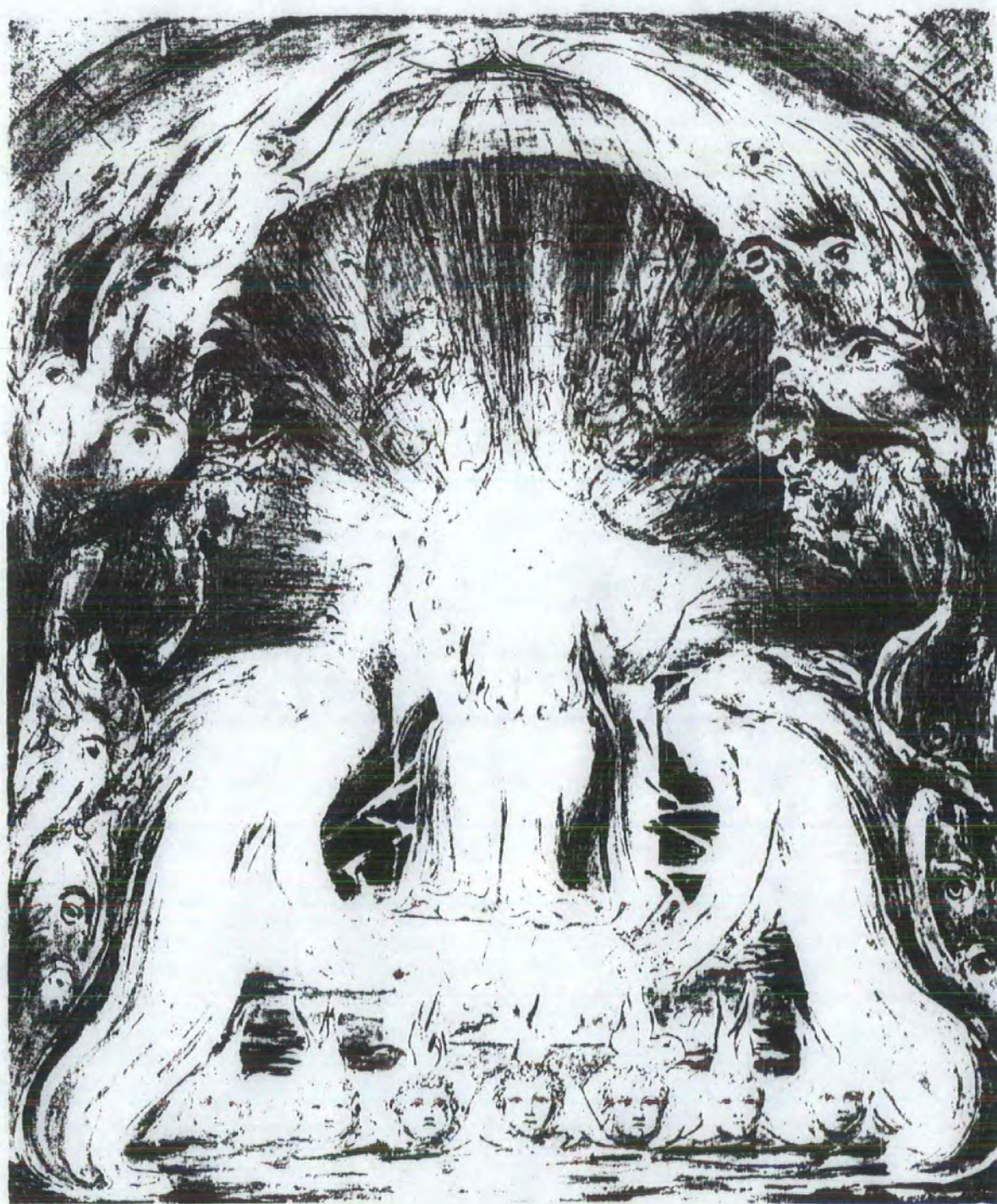
" To Laws they know not; Prings lodg'd in Seas  
 " Of well-adapted Joy; in different Domes  
 " Of this Imperial Palace for thy Son;  
 " Of this proud, populous, well-poll'd,  
 " Tho' boundless, Habitation, pleas'd by *THEE*!  
 " Whose several Clans their several Climates suit;  
 " And Transposition, doubtless, would destroy.  
 " Or, Oh! indulge, immortal King! indulge  
 " A Title, less sweet indeed, but more  
 " Endearing; ah! how sweet in human Part?  
 " Sweet in our Ears! and Triumph in our Hearts!  
 " Father of IMMORTALITY to Man!  
 " A Theme that 'lastly let my Soul on PINE—  
 " And *TITOU* the Name! yet Equal! *TUOU*, by whom  
 " The Blessing was convey'd; for me! was bought;  
 " Ineffable the Price! By whom all Worlds  
 " Were made; and One, redeem'd! illustrious Light  
 " From Light illustrious! *TUOU*, whose Royal Power,  
 " Finite in *TIME*, but Infinite in *SPACE*,  
 " On more than adamantine Basis fix'd,  
 " O'er more, far more, than Diadems, and Thrones,

\* Night the Sixth, and Seventh.

\* Invis-



10.ii. *Jesus, the Creator of Man,*  
*Night Thoughts* 529 (IX.111) c.1795-7, Brit. Mus.



11. *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting their Crowns before the Divine Throne*, c.1803-5, Tate Gallery.



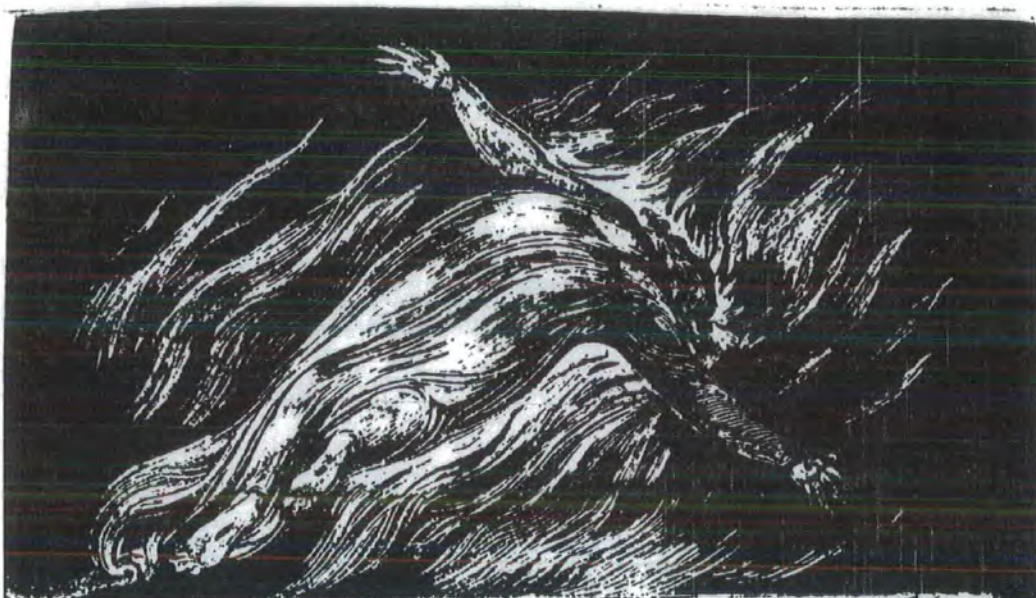
12. *Jacob's Dream*, c. 1805, British Museum.



13. *The Angel of the Divine Presence clothing Adam and Eve in Coats of Skin*, 1803, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



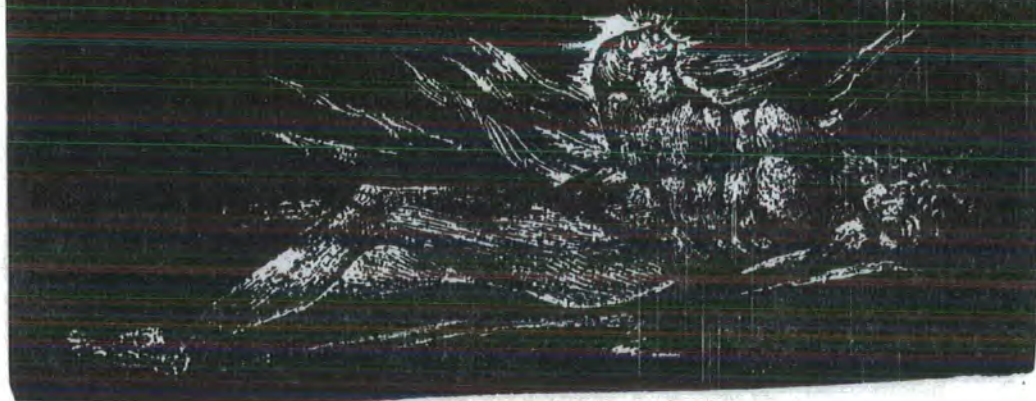
14. *The Hymn of Christ and his Apostles*, c. 1805, private collection, USA.



Then the Divine hand found the Two Limits, Satan and Adam,  
 Albius bosom: for in every Plume began those Limits stand,  
 and the Divine voice came from the Furnaces, as multitudes without  
 Number: the voices of the innumerable multitudes of Eternity.  
 And the appearance of a Man was seen in the Furnaces:  
 Saving those who have stepped from the punishment of the Law,  
 in pity of the punisher whose state is eternal death,  
 And keeping them from Sin by the mild counsels of his love.

Albius goes to Eternal Death: In Me all, Eternity,  
 Must pass thro' condemnation, and awake beyond the Grave:  
 No individual can keep these Laws, for they are death,  
 To every energy of ruin, and forbid the springs of life;  
 Albius hath entered the State Satan, be permanent, O State!  
 And be thou for ever accursed, that Albius may arise again:  
 And be thou exalted into a State: I go forth to Create  
 States: to deliver Individuals evermore: Amen.

So spake the voice from the Furnaces, descending into Non-Entity



15. Christ as creator of man, Jerusalem, Plate 35, Copy A., 1804-1820, Brit. Mus.



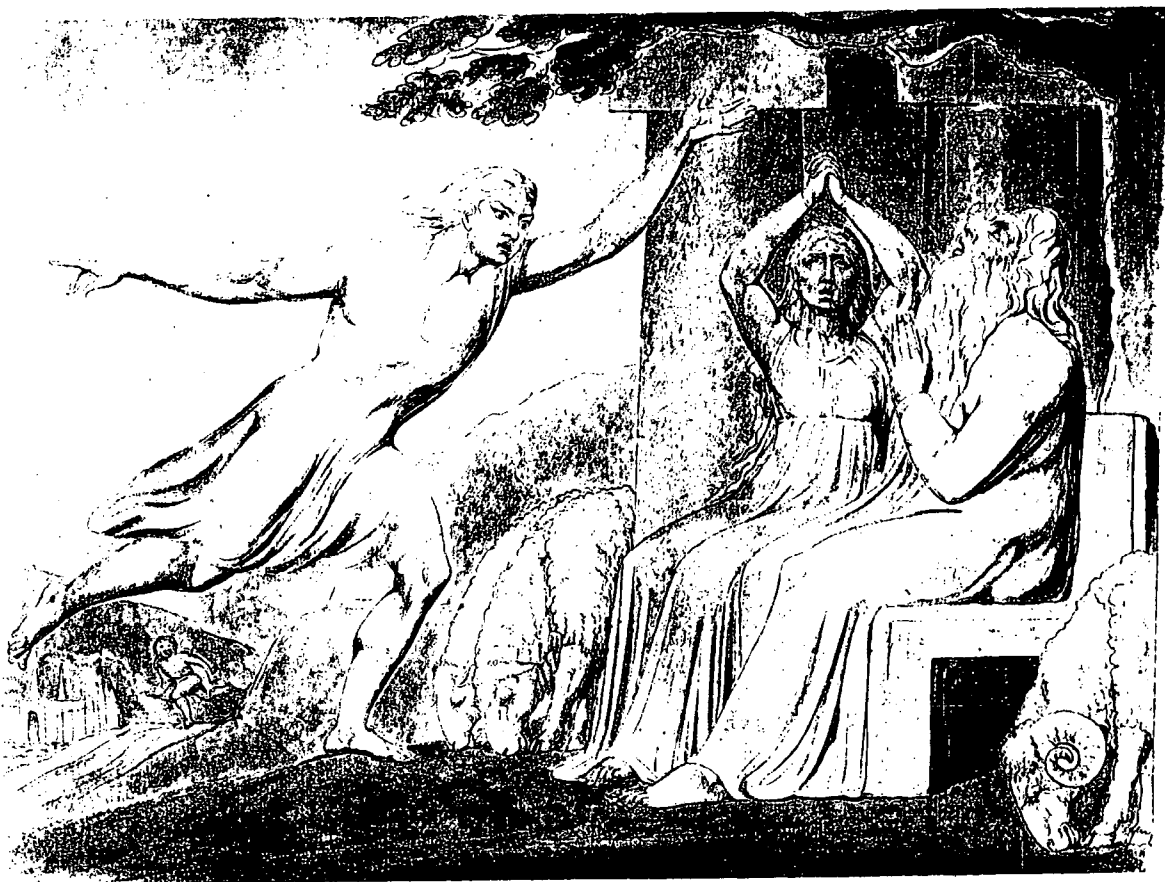
16. Butts set. No. 1. *Job and his Family*, 1805-6, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.



Butts set. No. 2. *Satan before the Throne of God*, 1805-6, New York.



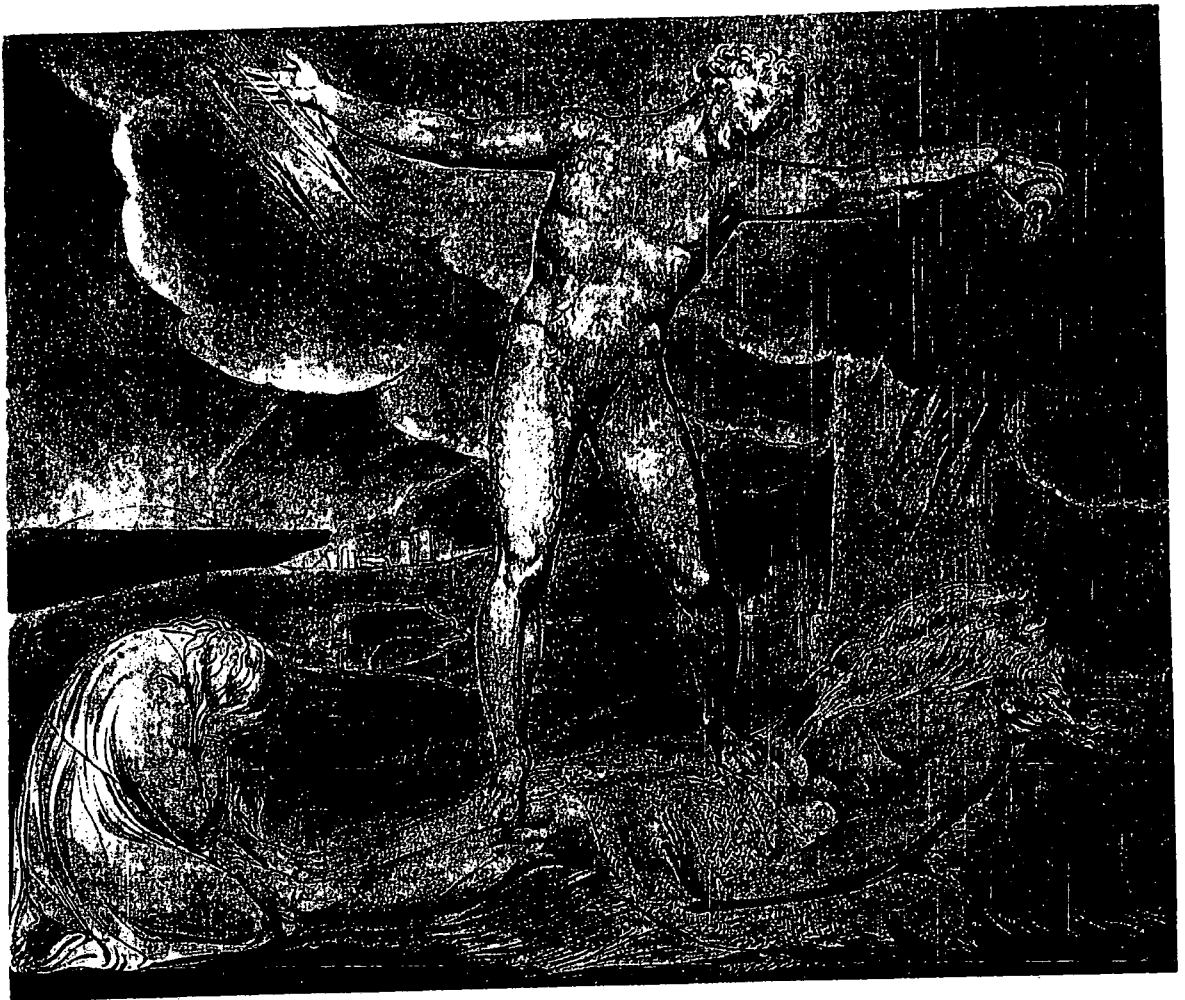
Butts set. No. 3. *Job's sons and daughters overwhelmed by Satan*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 4. *The messengers tell Job of his misfortunes*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 5. *Satan going forth from the presence of the Lord*, 1805-6, New York.



**Butts set. No. 6. *Satan smiting Job with boils*, 1805-6, New York.**



Butts set. No. 7. *Job's comforters*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 8. *Job's despair*, 1805-6, New York.



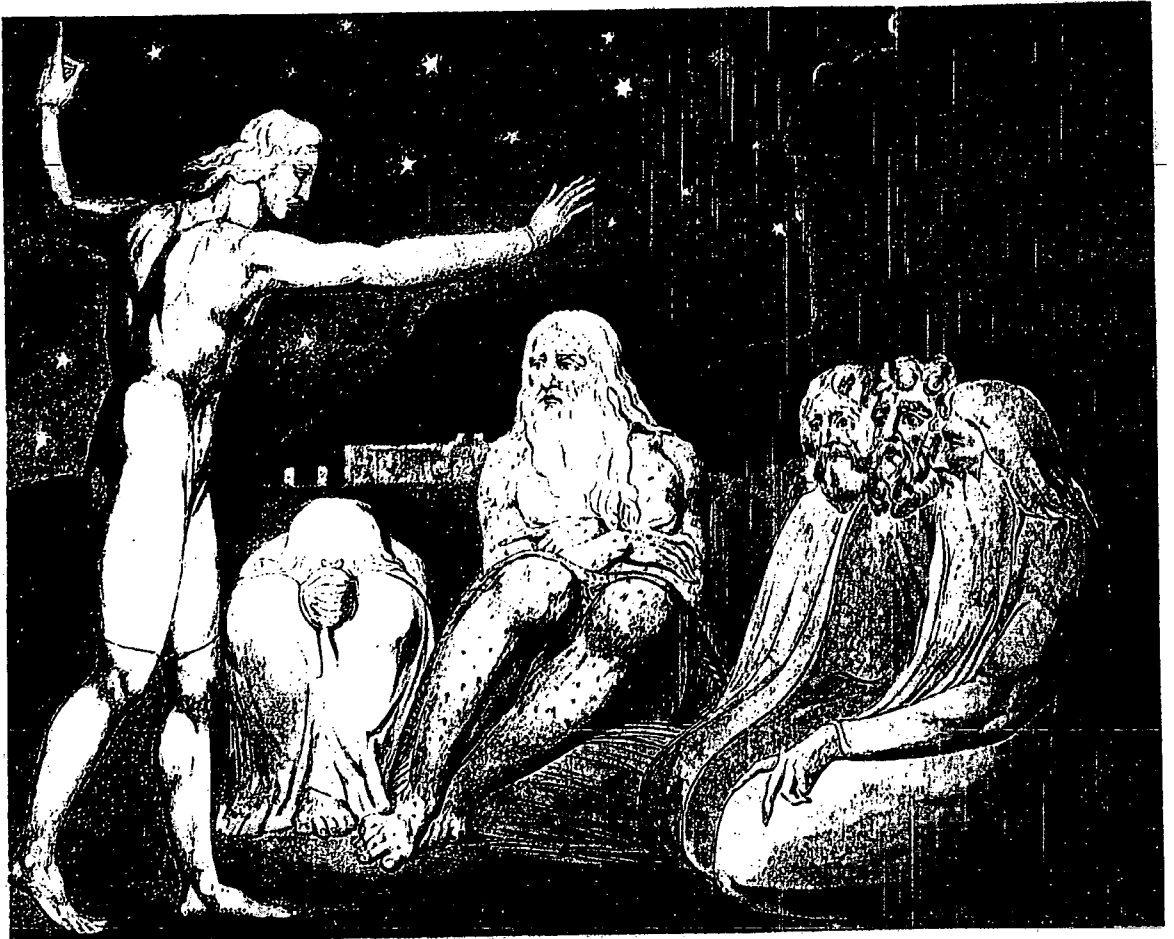
Butts set. No. 9. *The vision of Eliphaz*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 10. *Job rebuked by his friends*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 11. *Job's evil dreams*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 12. *The wrath of Ellhu*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 13. *The Lord answering Job out of the whirlwind*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 14. *When the morning stars sang together*, 1805-6, New York.



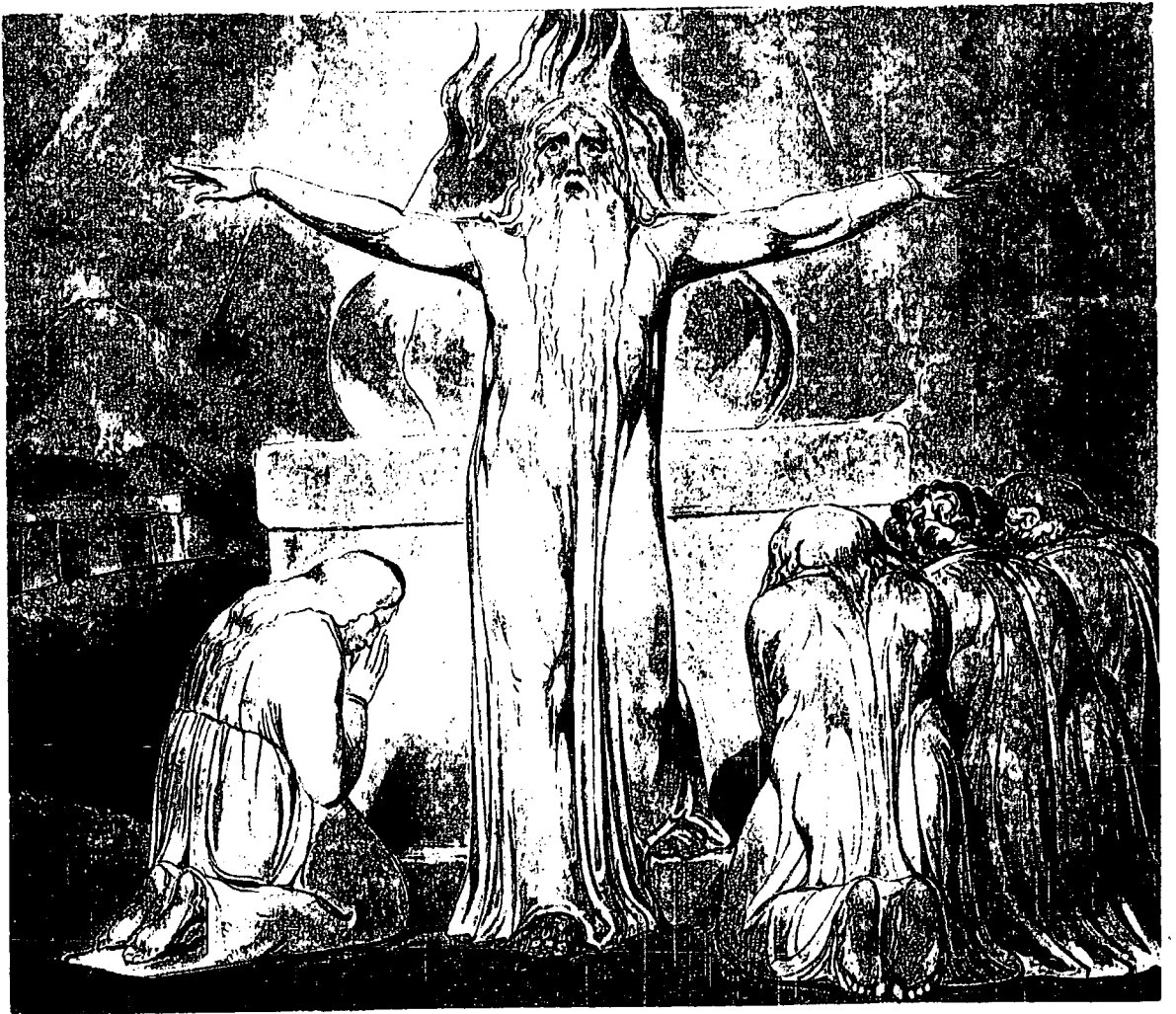
Butts set. No. 15. *Behemoth and Leviathan*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 16. *The fall of Satan*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 17. *The vision of Christ*, 1805-6, New York.



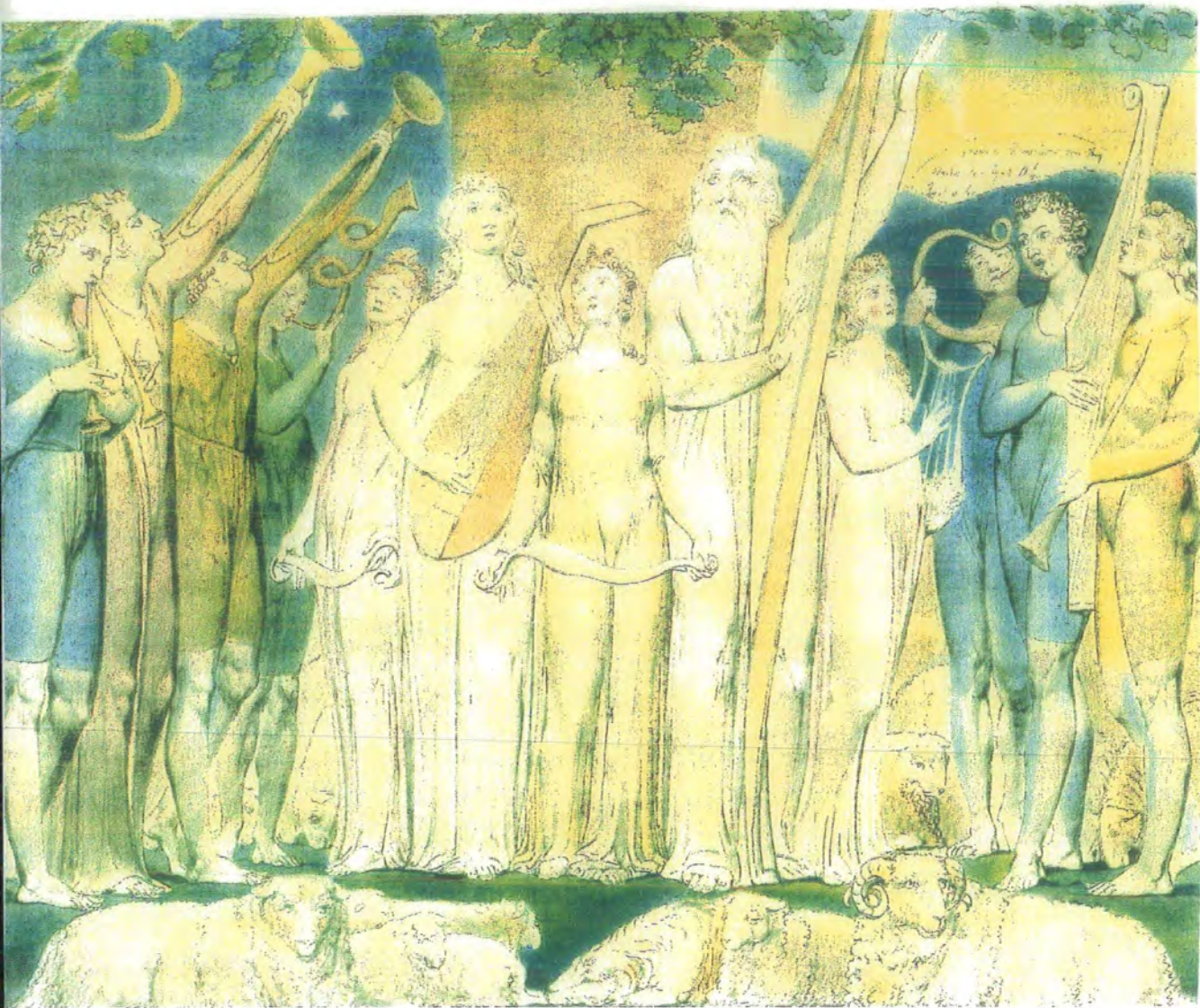
Butts set. No. 18. *Job's sacrifice*, 1805-6, New York.



**Butts set. No. 19. *Every man also gave him a piece of money, 1805-6, New York.***



Butts set. No. 20. *Job and his daughters*, 1805-6, New York.



Butts set. No. 21. *Job and his family give praise to God*, 1805-6, New York.

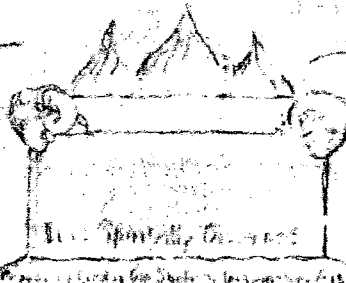




Thus did Job continually



There was a Man in the  
Land of Uz whose Name  
was Job. & that Man  
was perfect & upright



& one that feared the Lord  
& eschewed Evil & there  
was born unto him Seven  
Sons & Three Daughters

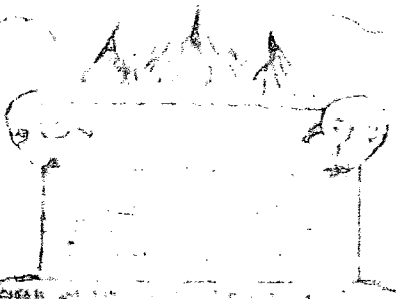
Arise ye that are weary of the world  
and heavy laden with sin  
and ye will find rest  
to your souls

Arise ye that are weary of the world  
and heavy laden with sin  
and ye will find rest  
to your souls



So the Lord blessed the tiny ear of wheat  
more than the log growing

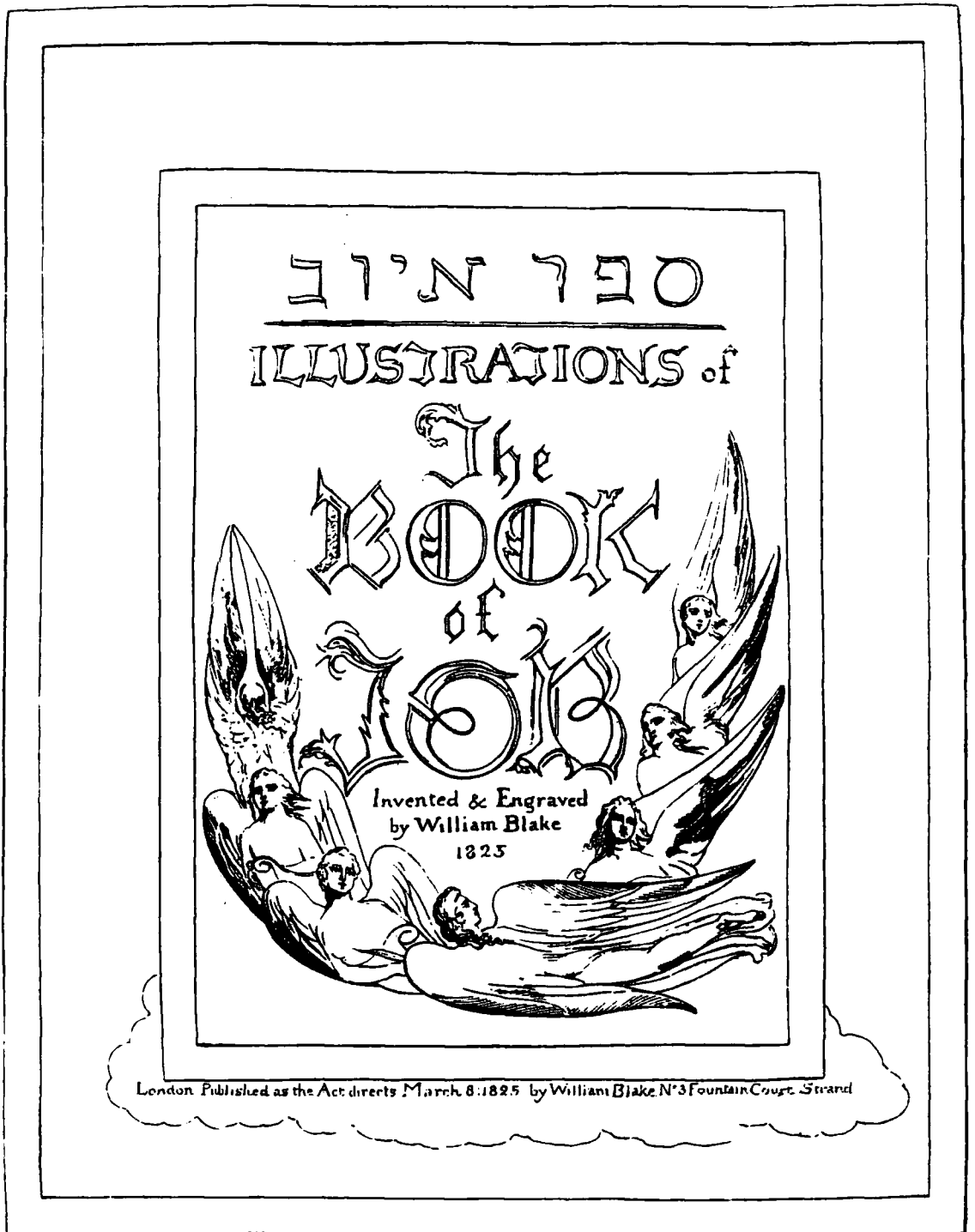
And the child  
in his first forty years  
saw his Son & his  
Sons Sons



Arise ye that are weary of the world  
and heavy laden with sin  
and ye will find rest  
& full of days

Project 2014

Arise ye that are weary of the world



19. Title page, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1826, British Museum.

Our Father which art in Heaven

hallowed be thy Name

1



Thus did Job continually



There was a Man in the  
Land of Uz whose Name  
was Job. & that Man  
was perfect & upright



The Letter Killeth  
The Spirit giveth Life

It is Spiritually Discerned

& one that feared God  
& eschewed Evil & there  
was born unto him Seven  
Sons & Three Daughters



WBlake inv & sculp

London. Published as the Act directs. March 8: 1828. by Will Blake N<sup>o</sup> 5 Fountain Court Strand.

Print

i. Thus did Job continually, 1826, British Museum.



I beheld the Ancient of Days  
 Hast thou considered my Servant Job  
 The Angel of the Divine Presence  
 יהוה 772  
 Thou art our Father  
 in thy Likeness  
 We shall awake up  
 I shall see God

When the Almighty was yet with me, When my Children were about me

There was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord & Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord

London, Published as the Act directs March 6. 1825 by WILL. Blake N<sup>o</sup>. 3 Fountain Court Strand.

Proof

ii. When the Almighty was Yet with me, When my Children were about me, 1826,



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iii. *Thy Sons & Thy Daughters were eating and drinking Wine in their eldest Brothers house ...* , 1826, British Museum.

And there came a Messenger unto Job & said The Oxen were plowing & the Sabeans came down & they have slain the Young Men with the Sword  
 Going to & fro in the Earth  
 & walking up & down in it



And I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

While he was yet speaking  
 there came also another & said

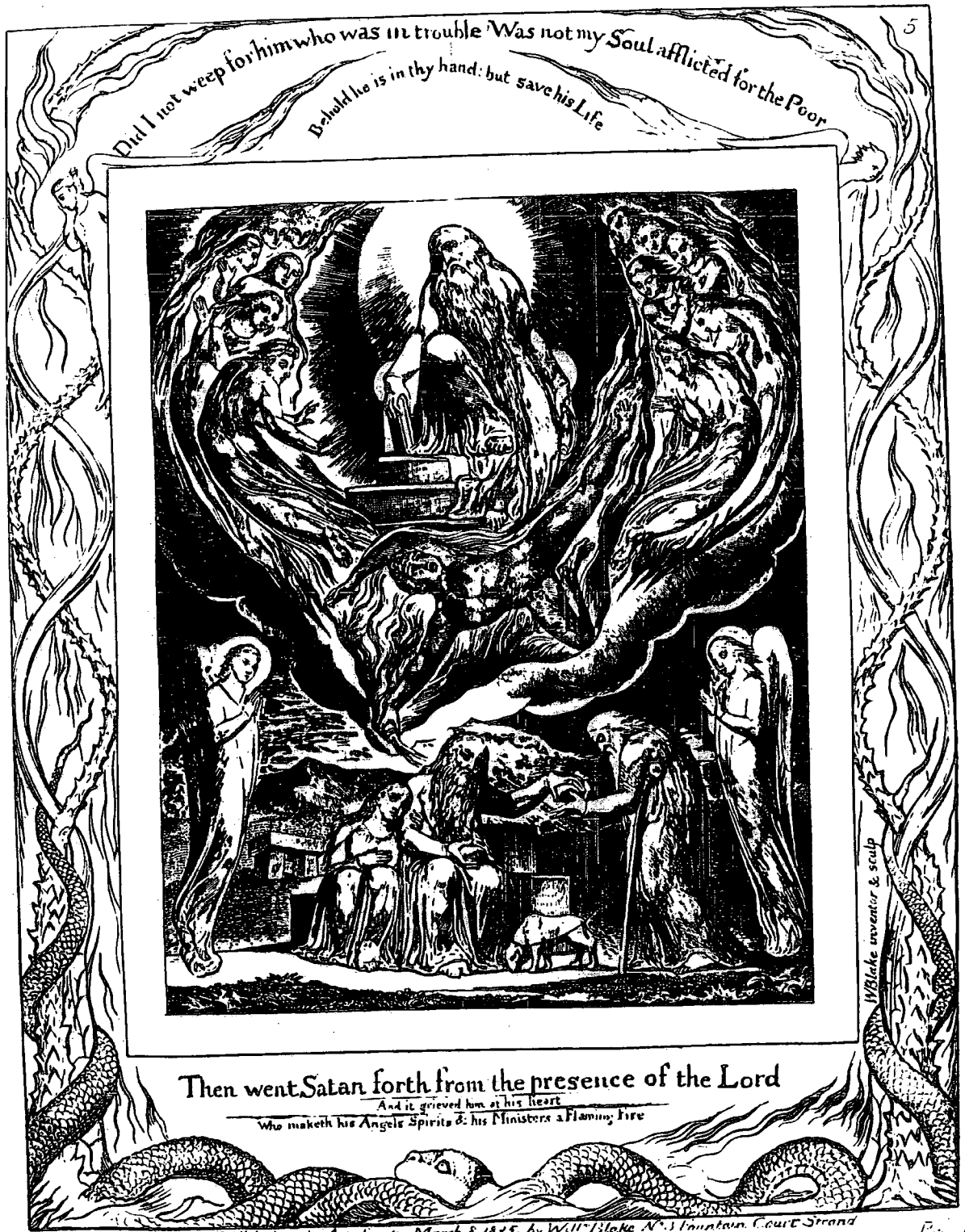
The fire of God is fallen from heaven & hath burned up the flocks & the  
 Young Men & consumed them. & I only am escaped alone to tell thee

W Blake invent & sculp

London. Published as the Act directs March 8. 1825. by Will Blake, N<sup>o</sup> 3 Fountain Court Strand

Proof

iv. *And I only am escaped alone to tell thee*, 1826, British Museum.



v. *Then went Satan forth from the Presence of the Lord*, 1826, British Museum.



vi. *And smote Job with sore Boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head,* 1826, British Museum.

7  
What! shall we receive Good  
at the hand of God & shall we not also  
receive Evil



And when they lifted up their eyes afar off & knew him not  
they lifted up their voice & wept. & they rent every Man his  
mantle & sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven

Ye have heard of the Patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord.

W. Blake inven. & sculpt.

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17ccc

vii. *And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voices and wept, 1826, British Museum.*

Lo let that night be solitary  
& let no joyful voice come therein



Let the Day perish wherein I was Born  
And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days & seven  
nights & none spake a word unto him for they saw that his grief  
was very great

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viii. *Let the Day perish wherein I was Born*, 1826, British Museum.



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ix. *Then a Spirit passed before my face / the hair of my flesh stood up*, 1826, British Museum.

But he knoweth the way that I take  
 when he hath tried me I shall come forth like gold  
 Have pity upon me! Have pity upon me . O ye my friends  
 for the hand of God hath touched me  
 Though he slay me yet will I trust in him



The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn

Man that is born of a Woman is of few days & full of trouble  
 he cometh up like a flower & is cut down he fleeth also as a shadow  
 & continueth not And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one  
 & bringest me into judgment with thee



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W. Blake inv. & sculp.

Proof

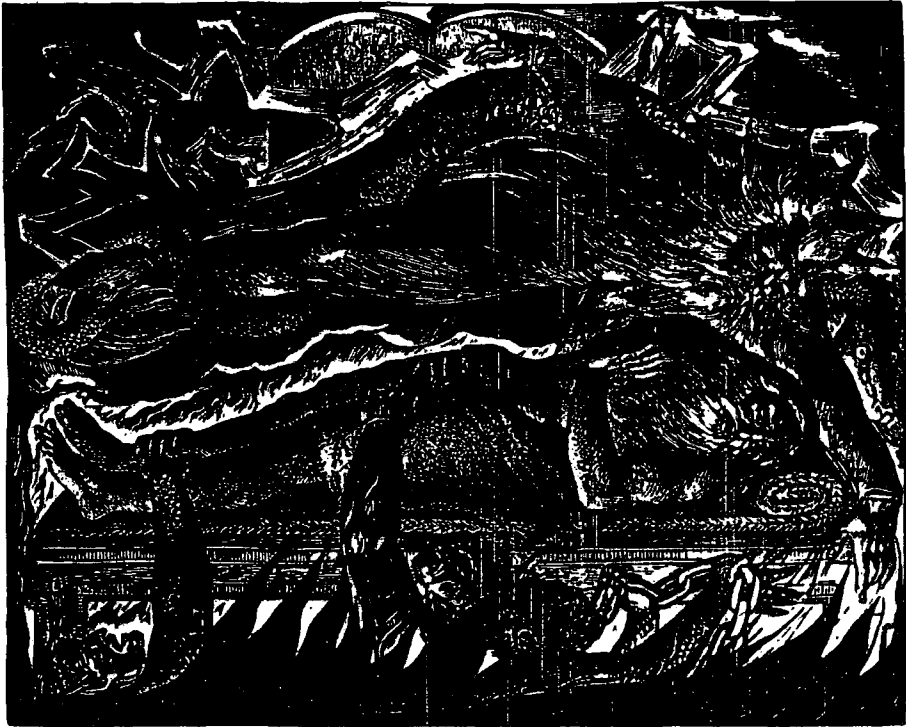
x. The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn, 1826, British Museum.

My bones are pierced in me in the  
night season & my sinews  
take no rest

My skin is black upon me  
& my bones are burned  
with heat

The triumphing of the wicked  
is short, the joy of the hypocrite is  
but for a moment

Satan himself is transformed into an Angel of Light & his Ministers into Ministers of Righteousness



With Dreams upon my bed thou scarest me & affrightest me  
with Visions

Why do you persecute me as God & are not satisfied with my flesh. Oh that my words  
were printed in a Book that they were graven with an iron pen & lead in the rock for ever  
For I know that my Redeemer liveth & that he shall stand in the latter days upon  
the Earth & after my skin destroy thou This body yet in my flesh shall I see God  
whom I shall see for Myself and mine eyes shall behold & not Another tho consumed be

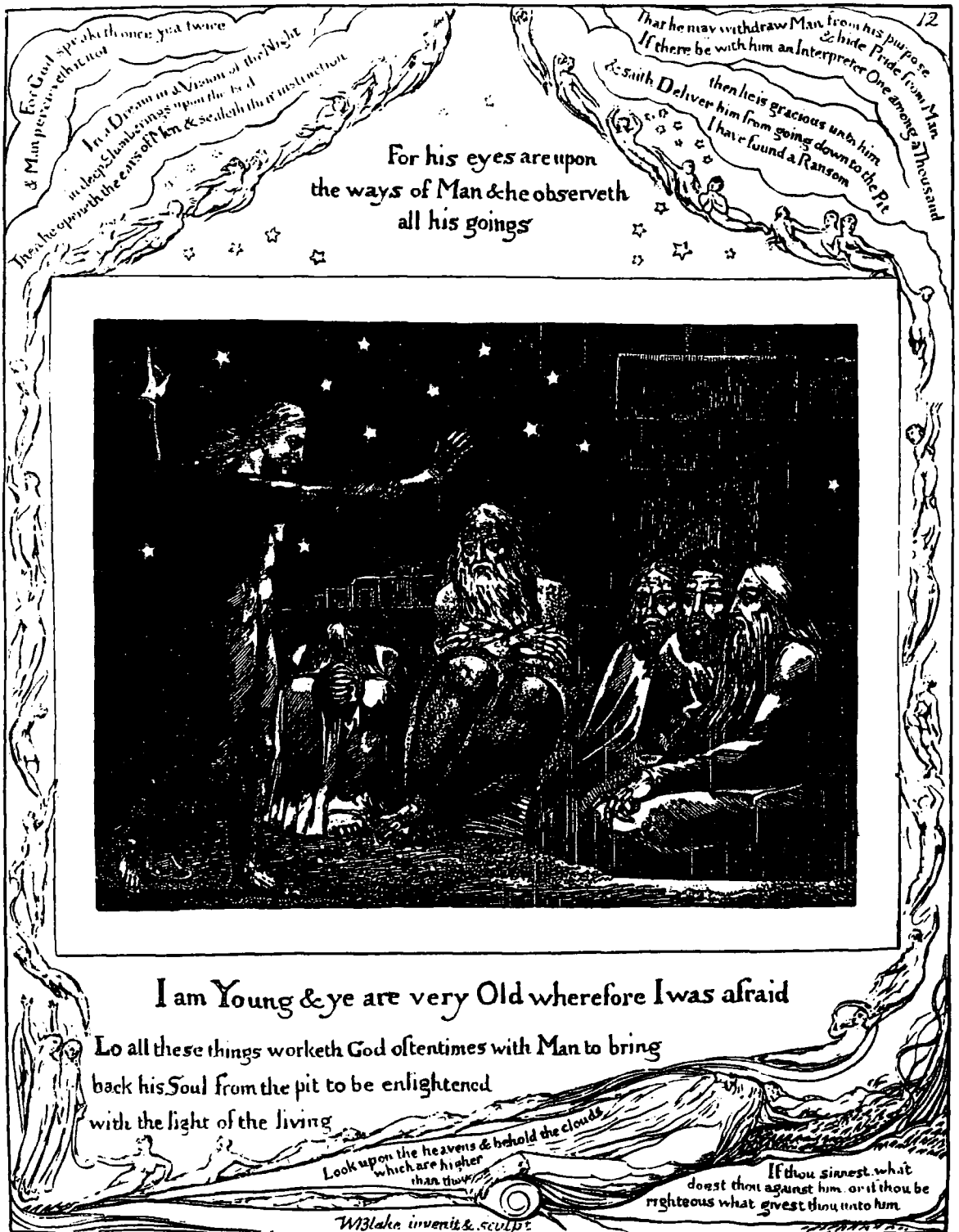
Who opposeth & exalteth himself above all that is called God or is Worshipped

W. Blake invent & sculp

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Proof

xI. *With Dreams upon my bed thou scarest me & affrightest me with Visions*, 1826,  
British Museum.



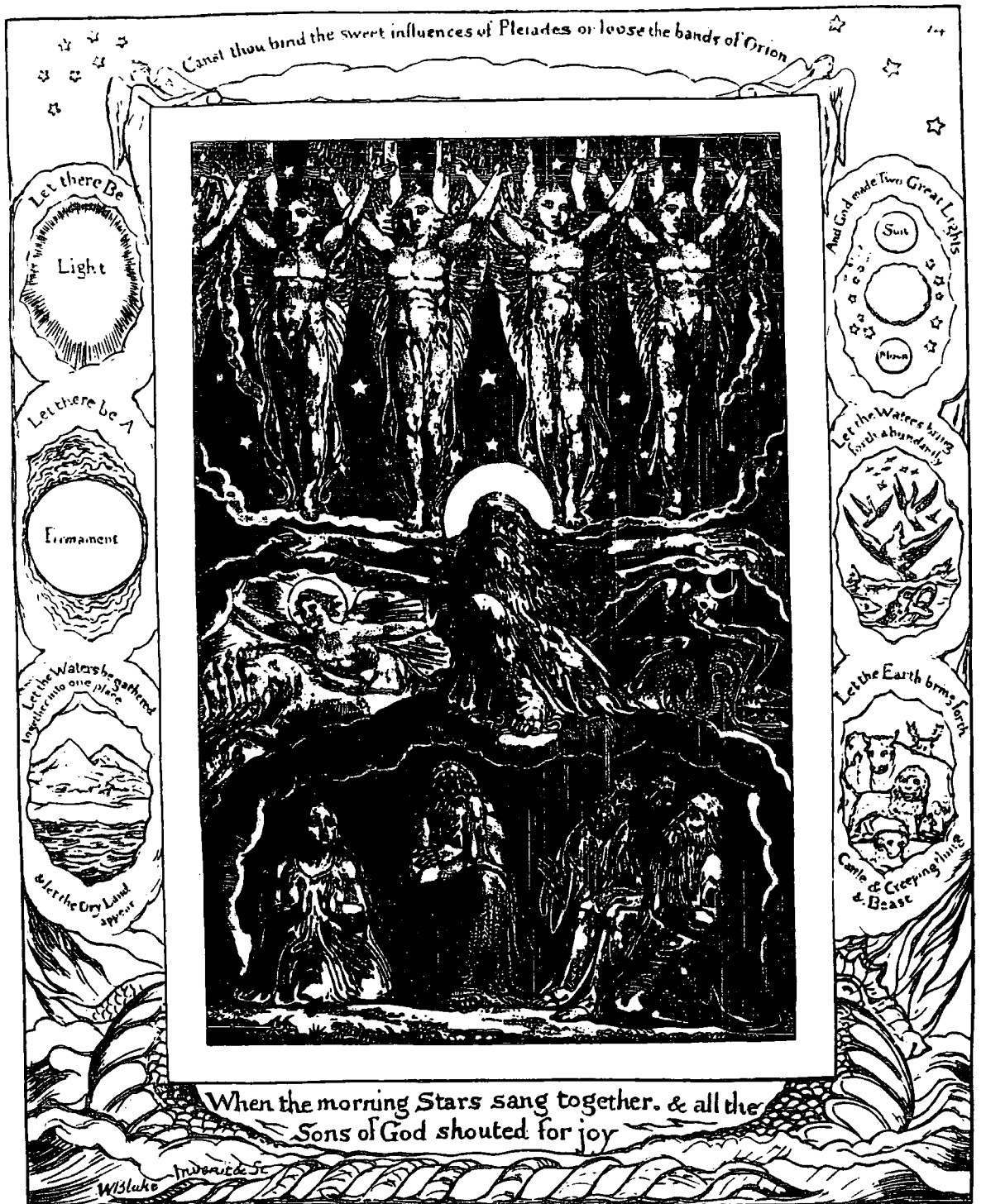
London Published as the Act directs March 8: 1825 by Will. Blake N<sup>o</sup> 3 Fountain Court Strand

Front

xii. *I am Young and ye are very Old wherefore I was afraid*, 1826, British Museum.



xiii. *Then the Lord answered Job out of the Whirlwind*, 1826, British Museum.



xiv. *When the morning Stars sang together, & all the Sons of God shouted for joy*, 1826, British Museum.

Can any understand the spreadings of the Clouds  
the noise of his Tabernacle

15

Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud.  
He scattereth the bright cloud also it is finished.  
His counsels



Of Behemoth he saith, He is the chief of the ways of God  
Of Leviathan he saith, He is King over all the Children of Pride

Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee

W Blake invenit & sculpt

London. Published as the Act directs March 8. 1825 by Will Blake, 43 Fountain Court Strand

Printed

xv. Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee, 1826, British Museum.

Hell is naked before him & Destruction has no covering



Cast them out for the Almighty to perfection  
The Accuser of our Brethren is Cast down  
which accursed born before the God day is night  
Cast down by seeing find out Good

It is deeper than Hell what cannot be known  
The Prince of this World shall be cast out

Even the Devils are

Thou hast fulfilled the Judgment of the Wicked

Subject to Us thro thy Name Jesus said unto them I saw Satan as lightning fall from Heaven  
God hath chosen the foolish things of the World to confound the wise  
And God hath chosen the weak things of the World to confound the things that are mighty

W Blake inv & sculp

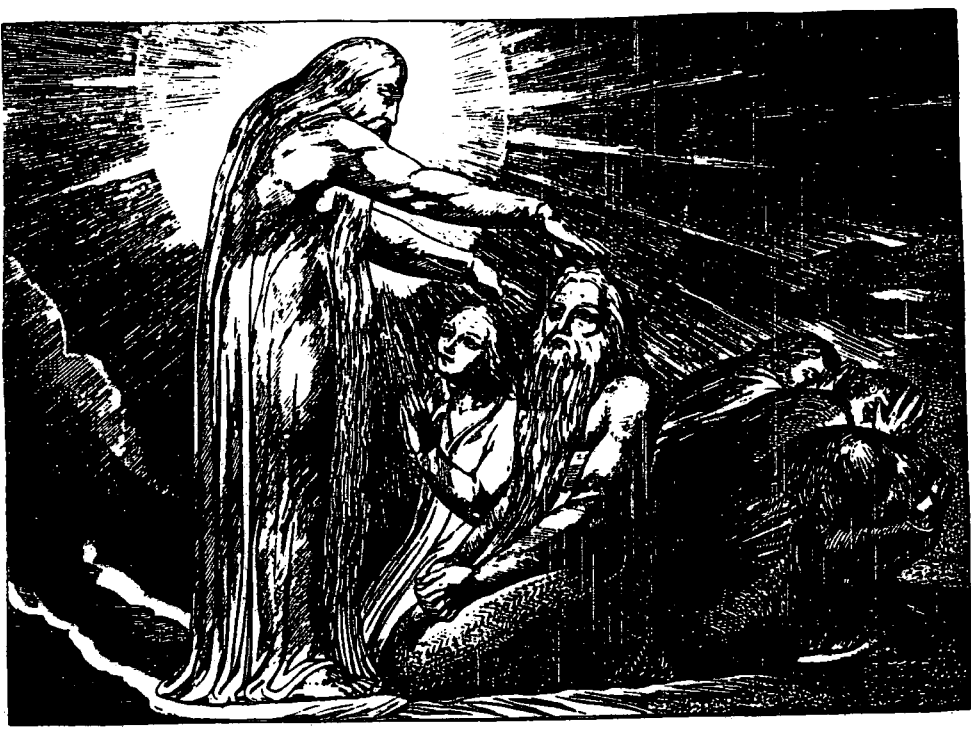
London, Published as the Act directs March 6: 1825 by William Blake, N<sup>o</sup> 3 Fountain Court, Strand.

Printed

xvi. *Thou hast fulfilled the Judgement of the Wicked*, 1826, British Museum.

He bringeth down to the Grave & bringeth up  
He shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is

We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is  
When I beheld the Heavens the work of the hands of the Deity then I saw what is My Father  
& the Son of Man that thou art mindful of him  
that thou visitest him



I have heard thee with the hearing of the Ear but now my Eye seeth thee

He that hath seen me

If ye could know me ye would have known my Father also and from henceforth ye know him I have seen him

Behold me for I am with the Father and the Father loveth me and shall be loved of my Father for the Father loveth the Son and he will manifest himself to the world

And the Father shall give you another Comforter who shall abide with you forever even the Spirit of Truth who shall be with you and shall be in you and shall be in the world

And the Father shall give you another Comforter who shall abide with you forever even the Spirit of Truth who shall be with you and shall be in you and shall be in the world

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father & you in me & I in you because I said I go unto the Father

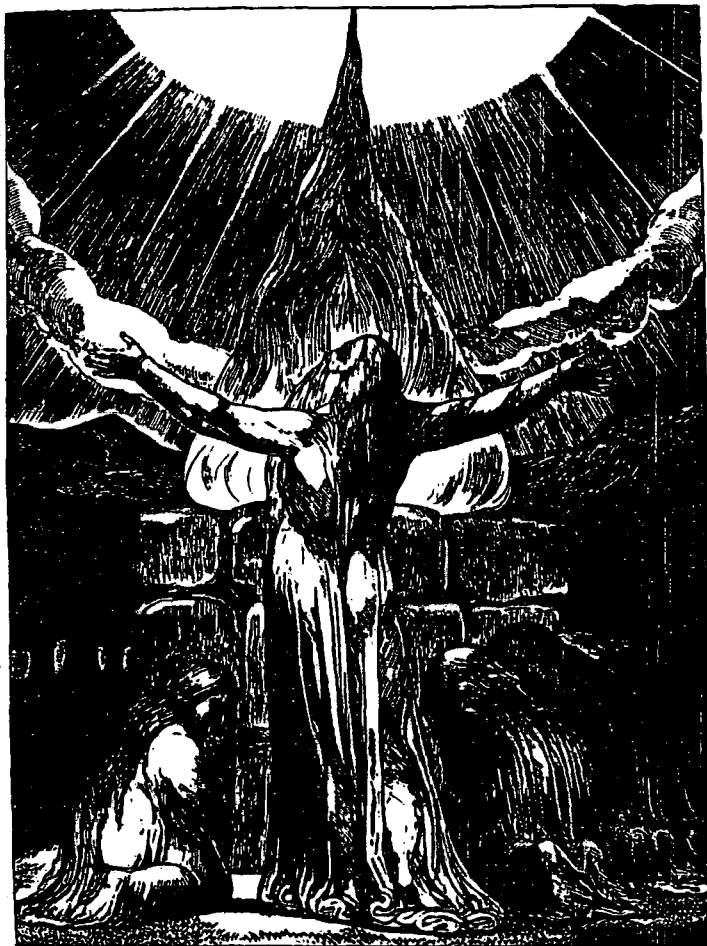
W. Blake inv & sculp

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xvii. I have heard thee with the hearing of the Ear but now my Eye seeth thee, 1826, British Museum.

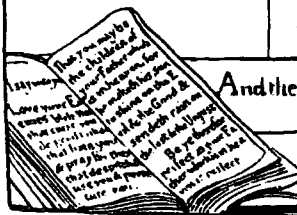
Also the Lord accepted Job

18



And my Servant Job shall pray for you

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his Friends



W Blake invt  
sculpt

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Proof

xviii. *And my Servant Job shall pray for you*, 1826, British Museum.



xix. *Everyone also gave him a piece of Money*, 1826, British Museum.

How precious are thy thoughts  
unto me O God  
how great is the sum of them



There were not found Women fair as the Daughters of Job  
in all the Land & their Father gave them Inheritance  
among their Brethren

If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there  
If I make my bed in Hell behold Thou  
art there

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Proof

xx. *There were not found Women fair as the Daughters of Job in all the Land & their Father gave them Inheritance among their Brethren, 1826, British Museum.*

Great & Marvellous are thy Works  
Lord God Almighty

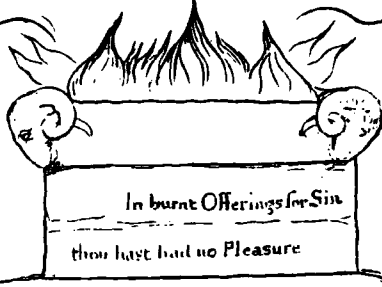
Just & True are thy Ways  
O thou King of Saints



So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job  
more than the beginning

After this Job lived  
an hundred & forty years  
& saw his Sons & his  
Sons Sons

even four Generations  
So Job died  
being old  
& full of days



In burnt Offerings for Sin  
thou hast had no Pleasure



W Blake inv & sculp

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xxi. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning, 1826, British Museum.



10. And his sons went and feasted in that day...



11. And a wind from the desert blew upon the flocks...



20. F. H. van Hove, 1621.

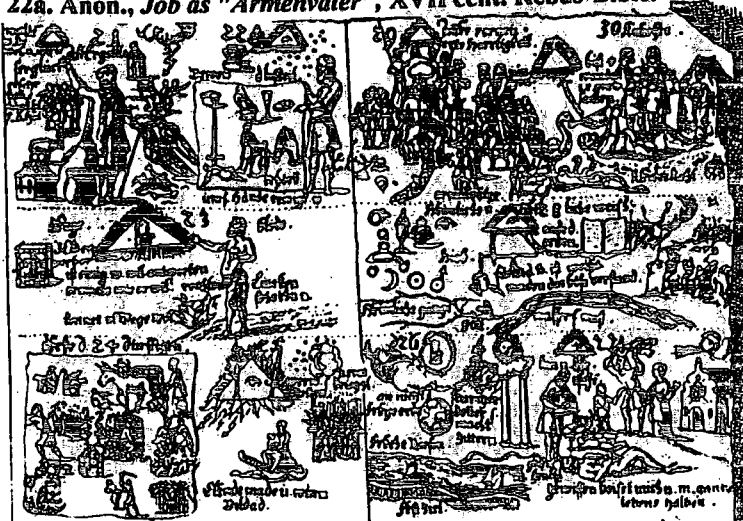
21. Anon., Satan Burning the Flocks of Job, c. 1140.



22a. Anon., Job as "Armenwater", XVII cent. Rebus-Bible.



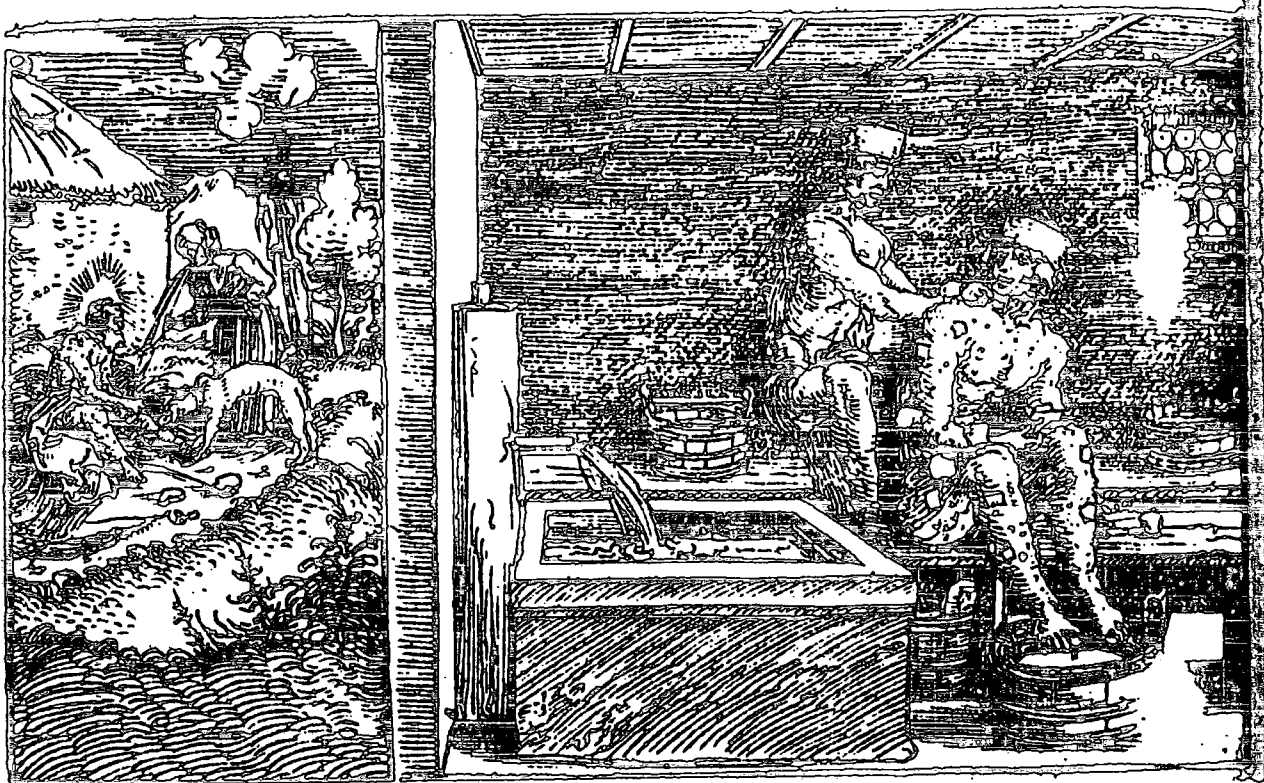
22 b. Detail top right.



22 c. Detail lower left.



22 d. Explanatory sketch



23. Hans Weiditz, *Von der kretze* ('with Job on the dunghill'), 1532, British Mus.



24. Albrecht Dürer, *Job and his Wife* (the *Jabach* altar), Frankfurt a/M.



25. Tobias Stimmer, *Job*, 1621, British Museum.



26. Anon., woodcut, 1540, Strassburg.

*Job. I.*

Job/ein frommer Gotteselger Mann  
 Wustt grosse Not vnd Angst bestahn/  
 Vom Satan vnserm argen Feind/  
 Der in bracht vff Gut/Ehr vnd Kind/



Doch bschützt in Gott der herre sein  
 Vnd gab im wider Kinderlein/  
 Darzu gross Gut/Ehr vnd Gewalt  
 Also hilfft Gott den Frommen bald.

27. Jost Amman, *Job*, 1571, British Museum.



28. Le Petit Bernard, *Job*, 1555, British Museum.



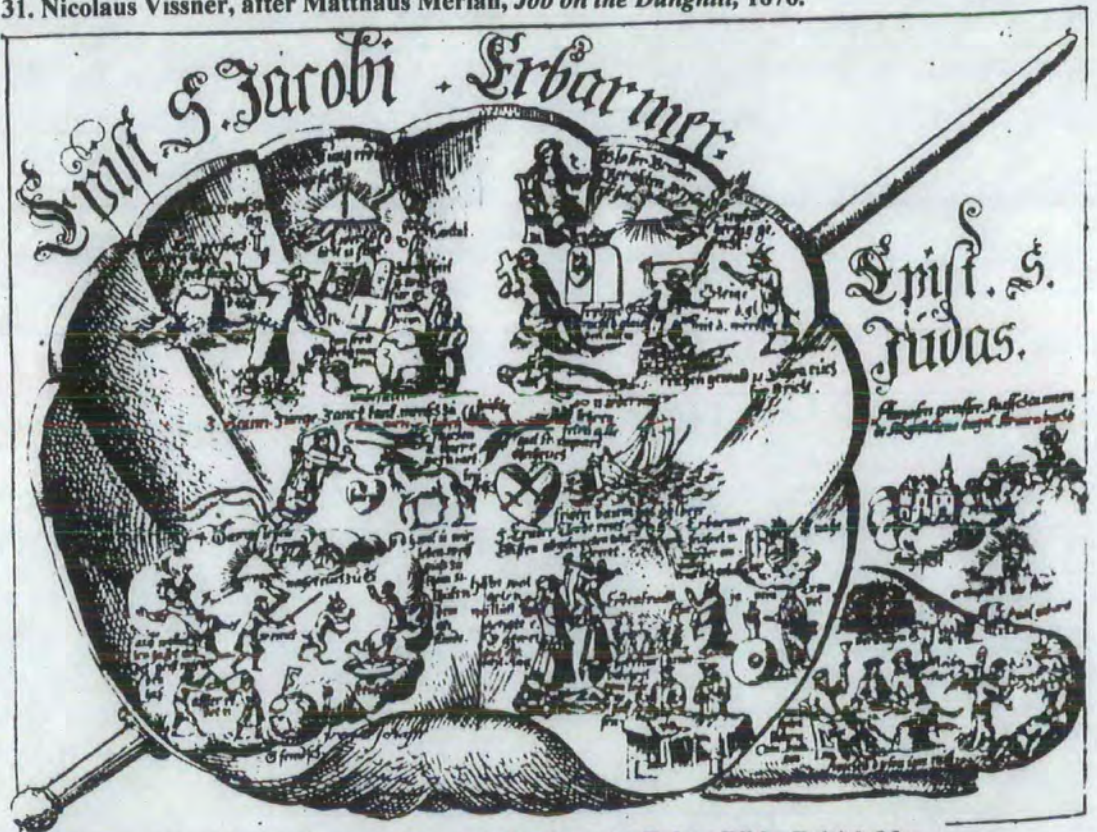
29. Edward Ryland, *Job*, 1765, British Museum.



30. Augustin Hirschfoegel, *Job on the Dunghill and Christ Carrying the Cross*, 1549.



31. Nicolaus Vissner, after Matthaeus Merian, *Job on the Dunghill*, 1670.



32. Anon., *Job with the Cross and James 5:11*, German Rebus-Bible, British Mus.



33. James Barry, *Job*, etching, 1777, British Museum.



34. George Richmond, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria*, 1828, Tate Gallery.



35. Anon. after J. U. Kraus, 1728. British Museum.



36. Marcus Aurelius column, *Jupiter Pluvialis*, Scene XVI, Rome, 176-193 A.D.

