

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

R E V I E W

Martin Butlin, *William Blake: A Complete
Catalogue of the Works in the Tate Gallery*;
Kathleen Raine, *William Blake*

Michael J. Tolley

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one color printed and the other water colored. Some of the differences between the two coloring methods are revealed by these comparisons, although monochrome reproductions, and even most color reproductions, never do justice to the richness of color printing. Unfortunately, these important illustrations were published too late to be included in my *Finding List* of Blake reproductions, *Blake Newsletter*, 5 (Summer and Fall, 1971).

Bentley has written an excellent catalogue, setting a high standard for future bibliographies of important collections. This book is a paperback, but the value of its contents and the quality of the sewn binding, paper, and illustrations justify the price. A good deal of space in this review has been devoted to pointing out probable errors, but to my mind these do not seriously hamper the great usefulness of Bentley's work. It has already become an essential part of any Blake library.

Martin Butlin. *William Blake: A Complete Catalogue of the Works in the Tate Gallery*, with an introduction by Anthony Blunt and a foreword by John Rothenstein. 2nd ed., rev. London: The Tate Gallery, 1971. Pp. 80, over 100 plates, 18 in color. £1.90. (Exclusively distributed in U. S. A. and Canada by Boston Book and Art Publisher, 655 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.)

Kathleen Raine. *William Blake*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970. The World of Art Library. Pp. 216, 156 pls., including 28 in color. £2.10 (paper £1.25). New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971. \$8.50 (paper \$4.95).

Reviewed by Michael J. Tolley

The first edition of Martin Butlin's Tate Gallery catalogue has proved very serviceable and the new one is most welcome, being superior to the old, excellent as that was, in nearly every respect. Fittingly, a brilliant color reproduction of "God Judging Adam" spreads across the dust cover: that this design should be presented afresh and with the correct title (not "Elijah in the Fiery Chariot," as we thought until 1965 when Martin Butlin published the new identification) was itself an outstanding cause of revision. However, in supplying us with some beautiful new reproductions and with at least a monochrome reproduction of every Blake work (excluding engravings) in the collection, the Gallery has gone beyond the needs of mere revision.

Michael J. Tolley, Senior Lecturer in English at The University of Adelaide, has published several articles on Blake in this and other journals. For over ten years he has been engaged on a comprehensive study of Blake's use of the Bible. He is a co-editor, with John E. Grant and Edward J. Rose, of the forthcoming Oxford edition of Blake's *Night Thoughts* illustrations.

More importantly, in the revision we get no perfunctory updating but a thorough rechecking, more rigorous and ample descriptions and new speculations by the leading scholar in this branch of the field, a foretaste of his promised *catalogue raisonné* of Blake's graphic work.

The new format, with its low, wide pages of varying color and texture, is very attractive, though there are disadvantages. It is highly convenient to have the designs reproduced on the same page as the commentary, but this is sometimes at the expense of quality of reproduction, notably of the pencil drawings and some vertical designs. The old edition is in this respect still valuable for reference use, in studying the details of designs such as the Hervey "Epitome" or the composition sketch "The Fall of the Rebel Angels." It is noteworthy that some of the old color reproductions have been strikingly improved, particularly the old lurid frontispiece design, "The Simoniac Pope."

That Anthony Blunt's prefatory essay on "The Art of William Blake" could be left unchanged from the 1957 edition, "save for minor revisions of detail," says much for its lasting quality. It is good to see that the old "serpent, symbol of materialism" found in "Elohim Creating Adam" has been quietly replaced by the "worm, symbol of mortality" that is actually present in the design. I am sorry to see that Anthony Blunt's myth that "static horizontal designs" are always used by Blake "to symbolize sorrow and man's imperfect state" is retained, with reference to the titlepage of *Songs of Experience* (p. 13), as this view is still influential. Stiffness may be vertical as well as horizontal, as we find in this particular design. What we should look for is the condition where mere stasis becomes petrific.

A case in point is "God Judging Adam," now described by Blunt in accordance with Butlin's reading (p. 15) as showing Blake's "stern oppressive God of the Old Testament . . . in the likeness of Urizen" imposing "his law on the aged Adam," while around "the figures blaze the sterile fires of 'Eternal fury,' and . . . a massive half-circle enforces the theme of the imposition of the material will." Both God and Adam are petrific forms or, more accurately, are in the process of becoming petrific, since there is still some color in their flesh (alternatively, both are becoming leprous or frozen). This is a companion design to "Elohim Creating Adam" because there stone is being turned to flesh, but here flesh is being turned to stone. One might go further and say that whereas one design shows God creating man, the other shows man creating God (as a punisher: the design shows man becoming what he beholds while God becomes what He does). However, it is difficult to locate the scene of "God Judging Adam" in Blake's mythology, whereas "Elohim Creating Adam" is clearly described in the last three stanzas of *The Book of Los*, where Los humanizes Urizen, ending,

Till his Brain in a rock, & his Heart
In a fleshy slough formed four rivers
Obscuring the immense Orb of fire
Flowing down into night: till a Form

Was completed, a Human Illusion
In darkness and deep clouds involvd.

Martin Butlin relates "God Judging Adam" to the description of Urizen in the second and third chapters of *The Book of Urizen*, which is partly but not wholly relevant, as it considers Urizen in isolation. Suggestive is a passage in *The Four Zoas* I, except that it is complicated by the presence of Los and Enitharmon:

Eternity groand & was troubled at the Image of
Eternal Death
The Wandering Man bow'd his faint head and
Urizen descended

Gloomy sounding, Now I am God from Eternity to
Eternity

Lo I am God the terrible destroyer & not the
Saviour

The Spectre is the Man the rest is only delu-
sion & fancy

So spoke the Prince of Light & sat beside the
Seat of Los
Upon the sandy shore rested his chariot of
fire

(page 12, lines 4-5, 8, 26, 29-31)

Urizen's chariot of fire is probably to be seen as a parody of Elijah's or the "Fiery Chariot of . . . Contemplative Thought" mentioned in "A Vision of the Last Judgment." Urizen's books include "The secrets of dark contemplation" (*Urizen* 4:26), while he himself is a "contemplative terror" (*FZ* IV, p. 52, l. 27). The fires of his chariot are imprisoned within a circular horizon, as is Urizen himself (cf. the *Europe* frontispiece). I make these remarks to carry Martin Butlin's reading further rather than to exhaust the design's significance. It must now seem to have deeper meaning than we formerly suspected.

One of the additions to the catalogue is "An Allegory of the Bible," formerly known as "The Pilgrimage of Christiana," William Rossetti's title. Martin Butlin rightly rejects the suggestion of a Bunyan reference and his more general title will have to stand until someone can discover the real subject, which seems to be an idealized vision of education. Another addition to the catalogue is "Los and Orc," showing Los raising his hands in horror as he contemplates Orc chained to the earth. The design's chief point of interest, compared with its analogues (which Butlin conveniently discusses) is the absence of Enitharmon, suggesting (like the text of the *America* Preludium, though not its accompanying design) that Blake originally motivated the chaining of Orc in different terms from those set out so fully in *The Four Zoas* V.

One of the new illustrations is the verso drawing on the page formerly listed as no. 70, now no. 7. In the first edition, Butlin considered that both the recto and the verso designs were "probably" connected with "Tiriel supporting the swooning

Myratana and addressing his Sons." He has now changed his "probably" to "almost certainly," but the parallels are unconvincing, and it may be more helpful to consider them as two different designs, perhaps part of a series distinct from *Tiriel*. The arm and profile of the main figure on the left in the recto design are similar to those of a flying figure in a drawing, probably contemporary, in the British Museum (recently reproduced as plate 2 in *Blake Studies*, 3 [Spring 1971]). However, the details of both Tate Gallery designs are obscure in the reproductions and we could do with careful descriptions from the originals.

A small point on page 46 may be cleared up here. Discussing "David Delivered out of Many Waters," a design based on Psalm 18, the editor notes that "The ropes by which David is bound are not in the King James translation of the Bible but, as shown by Taylor, suggest that Blake had access to a version or translation of the original Hebrew which reads 'The cords of death' instead of the Authorized Version's 'sorrows' in verse 4." This shows a common misapprehension. Many editions of the King James or Authorized Version do not include the translators' original marginal references, which are nevertheless a standard feature of this translation (not to be confused with the marginal cross-references, which vary with different editors). Blake shows knowledge of what may conveniently be called the A. V. margin on several occasions, including (presumably) this one, where "cords" is listed by the translators as an alternative reading to "sorrows" in Psalm 18.4. Martin Butlin's description of this design is too compressed. He tries to acknowledge John E. Grant's reading in *Blake Studies*, 1 (Spring 1969), 200-201 (a counterblast to Taylor's reading in 1 [Fall 1968], 78-83) but actually misrepresents him. According to Butlin, "Blake shows cherubim of four distinct ages, that in the middle showing, as Grant has pointed out, David as a young man." According to Grant, the picture could be analyzed into "three overlapping triangles each [of] which join the three figures of comparable age and depict groups of beautiful men, ugly men, and strong men. If we know Blake's 'Goliath Cursing David' in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, we recognize that the youthful cherub in the middle, and two at the top of the columns right and left, have the same face as that of David when young." However, Grant's analysis seems unsatisfactory. While it is quite likely that six of the cherubim form pairs of strong, ugly and beautiful types, the central cherub is slightly different from the two upper ones, while the figure of Christ is a distinct type, not to be assimilated to the "strong" type by triangulation, and the aged David is not very similar to the aged "ugly" cherubim. It seems likely that the cherubim are the Seven Eyes or Spirits of God, who represent the ideal force of redemption when acting in concert with Christ, who controls them. (This symbolism is, however, not easily reconcilable with that in *The Four Zoas* VIII, p. 115, while the seven spirits are all given young faces in "The Four and Twenty Elders," no. 40 of the Catalogue.) The ideal "7 + 1" symbolism in this design forms a nice contrast with the "six plus smoke" symbolism of punishment in

"The Blasphemer" (no. 29), which Taylor has seen as a humanization, in pictorial terms, of the Jewish candelabra, a brilliant insight that Martin Butlin surprisingly omits to notice.

It is good to have a color reproduction of "The River of Life" (no. 41), although it shows to us how much brilliancy has been lost through fading over the years, by a strip of blue along the bottom formerly covered by a mount. Martin Butlin repeats without comment Wicksteed's weird interpretation of one of the figures as the Bride (the New Jerusalem) swooping down "to sever the thread of remembrance." It is time another view were put forward, as Raine also follows Wicksteed uncritically. The problem concerns an object held in the hand of this female figure, who stoops down to the river. The more natural interpretation is that she is collecting water in a shallow bowl; Wicksteed, however, in a separately published study (*Blake's River of Life: Its Poetic Undertones*, n. d. [1949]), uses pictorial analogues to interpret the object as the upper part of a pair of shears, hence his reading of her action as that of severing the thread of remembrance. These pictorial analogues are admittedly close, but are not to me convincing when weighed against other evidence in the design. It may be questioned, if Blake wished to draw shears, why did he not complete them? The water, a little beyond the stooping figure, is wonderfully transparent, "clear as crystal" in the words of Revelation 22.1. The gesture of severing the thread of life seems inappropriate to the Bride, if she is the woman represented, whereas it would be entirely appropriate for the Bride to be gathering water, in line with Revelation 22.17. Further, she seems to be gathering water in the natural manner, that is, scooping against the flow of the river, which we must presume to have its source near the large globe (perhaps we shouldn't call it a sun, in view of Revelation 22.5) in the background. I don't at present understand all the details of this design, but I plead for a natural reading against one that would turn Blake into an arbitrary emblemist.

It is interesting that no. 44, "The Wise and Foolish Virgins," should now be classed as a copy after Blake, while nos. 50-52, "The Man Who Built the Pyramids" and two versions of "The Man who Taught Blake Painting in His Dreams," should now be considered replicas, perhaps by John Linnell. Martin Butlin does not give the full grounds for his rejection of no. 44; I hope that some time they will appear.

Turning to no. 45, the "Epitome of James Hervey's 'Meditations Among the Tombs,'" I notice that the figure of God at the top of the design is enclosed in a disk of fire much in the way that God or Urizen is enclosed in "God Judging Adam." Blake's text, "God out of Christ is a Consuming Fire," is appropriate. Martin Butlin remarks that the text is "quoted by Calvinists to prove the existence of Hell but not from the Bible." There does seem, however, to be a biblical basis for the text in Hebrews 12.29: "For our God is a consuming fire." Blake's qualification (if it *is* Blake's), "out of Christ," is characteristic of

his theology: "Christ the Mediator" may be recalled as another illustration of the text.

In that part of the Catalogue dealing with the Dante illustrations it is good to see that the inscriptions on the backs of many of the watercolors are now published. Eventually, these will all be collated and may appear to have a logical order. Interpretation of these designs is still heavily dependent on the work of Albert S. Roe and needs thorough reconsideration.

There are a few misprints, which I need not list here. Overall this is a first-rate product and tool of scholarship and I wish there were more space in my review for commendations instead of the minor criticisms I make, which are intended to extend the value of this work, not to devalue it. Martin Butlin's purpose has not been to say all, but to act as unobtrusive intermediary between the works in his charge and the students of Blake, giving essential information and stimulus to appreciation. His is one of the most valuable works in my Blake collection.

Students will buy Kathleen Raine's new book for the illustrations, some of which in color are very beautiful. A book of this kind has long been needed. In this case, unfortunately, the publishers made an inappropriate choice of author for their text. Kathleen Raine has vast learning, but it is not in the field of art history and she has simply taken what she wanted to say about Blake's learning as a graphic artist from such scholars as Sir Anthony Blunt and Professor Giorgio Melchiori. She does, however, seize the opportunity of trotting out her well known prejudices about Blake's literary influences; these are better set out in *Blake and Tradition*. Her value judgments are frequently perverse, she is not attentive to pictorial detail and she contradicts herself. At times even her style is bad and I found her text painful reading, being inclined to apply to her book her injudicious remark about *Europe* where, she says, the "lines of verse" are "much inferior to the accompanying designs." (Her summary of *Europe's* theme is that it "describes the fiery activities of 'Red Orc' trampling the grapes of wrath in the 'vineyards' of France," i. e., she seems to have read, badly, only the last page of the poem.)

Her most perverse judgment is probably that on the *Night Thoughts* illustrations: "In fact, the book is one of Blake's least pleasing works" (p. 95). Consequently, she shows only one of these illustrations, the engraved title-page for *Night the First*. One must wonder whether she has seen the original water-colors. Here she shows herself as Philistine as Blake's colleagues who, she says, "now began to speak of his 'extravagances,' and his 'eccentric designs.'" She ends her brief remarks on the Young designs with the absurd statement that Blake "was the last artist to capture the *frisson*

and the melancholy of the 'gothic' taste for mortality" (which reduces Blake at the same time that it shows her ignorance of many nineteenth and twentieth-century illustrators), and the patronizing question: "And what, one wonders, would the author of *Night Thoughts* have made of Blake's 'Dream of Nine Nights'?"

Her inattention to pictorial detail is revealed, for instance, in her description of the title-page for *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. According to her (p. 69), this shows "Urizen advancing with outspread arms and vast beard," though actually we see a short-bearded man with arms folded who is probably Bromion not Urizen. But Miss Raine wishes to relate the design to "a Roman sculpture of Jupiter Pluvius"; ironically, she is probably quite right to do so, but the connection is more distant than she assumes. Similar carelessness is shown in the reference to "man-headed horses" in *Jerusalem* 29 (Wicksteed said correctly in his commentary that they are "clearly lions"). Further, after referring to Urizen's "venerable features of 'aged ignorance'" on p. 78, the writer refers us to *Jerusalem* 99 (which is not, as we are told, "the last plate of *Jerusalem*") for Urizen's opposite type, "the true world-ruler" Jesus and his "mystical marriage with the soul." However, "Jesus" there has "venerable," i. e. aged, features, which must baffle the reader for whom this study is an introduction to Blake. Miss Raine should know that the goodness or badness of "venerable" men in Blake depends on the context.

She contradicts herself in making the sweeping statement on p. 113 that "Blake by no means shared the British love of landscape-painting" and then quoting his approving remarks on Claude and Constable, landscape painters both, on p. 140. Throughout the study, Miss Raine's propensity to generalize on inadequate premisses is very irritating. A similar fault appears in her exaggeration of Blake's interest in the Roman Catholic church, which she repeats (pp. 26, 198).

A sample of bad style is in the retelling, on p. 142, of Blake's expulsion of Schofield, the soldier, from his garden at Felpham. We are told that Blake "threw him out by main force," which presents a ludicrous image at odds with Blake's own account. What comes next is very confused:

Ill-advised words followed, reported as "Damn the King, and damn all his soldiers, they are all slaves"; and some remarks about Napoleon more fitted to the mouth of a French than of an English poet. On this occasion Hayley came to Blake's defence in fine style, and he was acquitted. No doubt he was innocent. Yet the words imputed to him were such as he might well have spoken in anger

Miss Raine doubts and does not doubt.

Sometimes, indeed, what Miss Raine is saying is obviously invalid, as when she remarks that Blake's "learning was none the less exact and extensive for being that of a draughtsman rather than

a man of books" (p. 22) or when she writes: "His trees--or Tree, for it is always the one Tree that he depicts, stylized according to its good or its evil aspect--are depicted with minutely observed natural detail, like the bole of the elm in 'The Little Girl Found'" (p. 139). Blake's trees are various and not all naturalistic (like the *two* elms intertwining in "The Little Girl Found"): reducing them to One will get us nowhere.

Misprints or similar errors are glaring, as when we are told (p. 18) about Blake making a drawing in "1733" when he "was not yet eighteen" or when we are startled (p. 26) by a reference to Samuel Butler's recollections of Blake (for Samuel Palmer's) or when Wicksteed's name is misspelt on p. 209 and Rossetti's on p. 137 (and why is Cromek always spelt Cromeck?--even if this is correct, it is a pedantry). Captions to the illustrations are not always accurate, as when it is suggested that the "Joseph of Arimathea" of plate 3 is from the 1773 state (for which see Keynes, *Blake Studies*, 1971, pl. 14) not that of "twenty years later, or more" (Keynes, p. 28), or when "Elohim creating Adam" (pl. 60) is called "God creating Adam." Sometimes the design chosen is not the best available to illustrate the text: thus, the plate chosen from Bryant (pl. 6) to illustrate Blake's reflection of the frieze-figures there in his Job design no. 16 is much less persuasive than that Keynes reproduces in *Blake Studies* (pl. 12). Sometimes the designs are not properly cued in to the text, as when (p. 146) a reference to "The plates of *Milton*" is cued to plates 104-10 (except 105), which are from Blake's illustrations to Milton. Sometimes one might reasonably complain at the absence of an illustration mentioned in the text, such as the "Riposo" which, we are told on p. 142, "Blake considered his best picture 'in many respects.'" Sometimes there seems to be no relation between text and illustration at all, as when on p. 196 we are not cued in to pl. 123 and the description of the design concerned is wide astray: "His depiction of Hell Gate makes it clear that Blake understood Dante's Hell to be this world, where Satan-Urizen is censured by a worshipping iron-crowned ecclesiastic who kneels before him." In context this has to be a reference to plate 123, a good color reproduction of the Dante design, "The Inscription over the Gate of Hell," but Miss Raine's account is baffling.

I have not come to the end of the strictures I could make. Perhaps the surprising thing is that I have not been completely blinded by them into missing the times when Kathleen Raine says things well. I like her warm response to *Jerusalem* 76, which shows Albion standing before Christ crucified and of which she says it "is the most moving depiction of the relationship between the moral and the divine humanity known to me" (p. 163). I like her insistence on Blake's hatred of war; I like her admiration of some of the Butts biblical designs; I like her appreciation of Blake's living form, though I think she concedes too much to Roger Fry in admitting (pp. 109 ff.) that Blake's line "does not evoke volume at all"--the massive chest of Albion on p. 108 (pl. 80) contradicts that slight in itself.