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R E V I E W

Andrew Wright, Blake's Job

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# Reviews

Andrew Wright. *Blake's Job: A Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972. Pp. xxi + 67, 22 plates. 2.75 U.K., \$9.50 U.S.A.

Reviewed by Suzanne R. Hoover

Because Blake concentrated so much of himself during the later years of his life into the *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, it remains an inexhaustible mine of his mature thought and style. (Sometime before 1825 he made three watercolor versions of the designs,<sup>1</sup> one pencil version, and the set of engravings that alone took him three years to complete, the fruit of a lifetime of interest in the Bible story.) And yet, curiously, the *Job* has been comparatively little studied in detail. Beyond Joseph H. Wicksteed's pathfinding work in 1910 (revised in 1924), the best discussions--actually, the only even moderately extended ones--of the series have been those of S. Foster Damon, presented first in his book on Blake in 1924 and revised in a separate edition of the *Illustrations* in 1966, and of Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes in 1935. This last is a critical catalogue, with fine reproductions, of all Blake's drawings and prints on the subject of *Job*; its brief interpretive passages follow Wicksteed. The Damon edition is still in print in hardcover and available in paperback as well.<sup>2</sup>

The latest edition of Blake's *Job*, with commentary by Andrew Wright, is a handsome book, in spite of its inferior reproductions. In format and editorial arrangement it resembles the Damon edition: an introduction of nearly seven pages precedes the plates, each accompanied by a short commentary. Wright includes, as Damon does not, selective footnote references to earlier interpretations which may agree with, or differ from, his own. The present edition, like Damon's, contains an appendix which gives the full context of the biblical passages used by Blake in the plates and his alterations of, and omissions from, those passages. (Wright supplies rather more of the context than Damon does.) A second appendix in Wright's edition comments briefly on some of the earlier studies of the illustrations.<sup>3</sup>

A word about the reproductions. A recent close comparison of the British Museum Reading Room "proof" set with the new book and with Damon and Binyon-Keynes demonstrated how difficult it is to reproduce the details and nuances--and hence the full force--of good impressions from the

original plates. The Clarendon Press reproductions are inferior to those in Damon's book (Brown University Press) in both linear detail and delicacy of gradation. This is especially apparent in the dark areas of the individual plates; the overall impression is that there is too much "contrast" in Wright. The photogravures (by Emery Walker) in the Binyon-Keynes limited edition are much closer to the originals than either of the two later books. The paperback was unavailable for comparison. It should be added that it has been customary to reproduce sets marked "proof." Damon used the Harvard College "proof" set, but Wright for unexplained reasons reproduces what we must assume to be an ordinary set (unless the word "Proof" has been removed from the plates) identified as that of Mr. P. G. Summers.

*Blake's Job* will be useful for the student who wants a serviceable set of the plates accompanied by some notion of what is going on. And as there was no such work in print in England, it has a *raison d'être*, of sorts, as an English alternative to Damon (the two volumes, perhaps unfortunately, even carry the same title). But it is difficult to ignore the simple fact that a more useful book at this point in Blake scholarship would have been a thorough study of the *Job* in all its aspects--art-historical, technical, biographical, bibliographical, aesthetic. We have come to the time when we would certainly benefit from a full and systematic account of earlier commentary, and we now require a discussion of the larger sense of the work itself: what Blake was doing and how he did it. Most important, an extended, richer reading of the individual plates is long overdue.

From the time of its publication one year before Blake's death and for nearly four decades thereafter, his *Illustrations of the Book of Job* had a rather dormant existence in some three

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1 The last of these versions, the so-called "New Zealand" set, is now thought to be at least partly by another hand than Blake's. For recent comments on this problem see Sir Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies*, 2nd ed., rev. (Oxford, 1971), p. 182, and David Bindman, ed., *William Blake: Catalogue of the Collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 46.

2 Joseph H. Wicksteed, *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (London, 1910; 2nd ed., rev., London, 1924); S. Foster Damon, *William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston, 1924), and *Blake's Job* (Providence, R. I., 1966); Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes, *The Illustrations of the Book of Job* (New York, 1935). The paperback version of *Blake's Job* by Damon is published by Dutton.

3 Northrop Frye's excellent essay, "Blake's Reading of the Book of Job" (in Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed., *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon* [Providence, R. I., 1969]), is mentioned here, but it appeared too late for Wright to make full use of it in his study.

Left Andrew Wright, *Blake's Job: A Commentary*, pages 48-49. Reproduced by permission of the Oxford University Press.



THE INSCRIPTION ON *EVENING AMUSEMENT* Martin Butlin

Geoffrey Keynes, in his book on *Engravings by William Blake: The Separate Plates* (Dublin, 1956), (p. 64), reconstructs the last line on Blake's engraving after Watteau's *Evening Amusement* on the basis of that on the companion print of *Morning Amusement*. However, the discovery of a third, untrimmed impression in red shows that in fact the wording is slightly different. As Keynes' transcription is not entirely accurate even in the first line, I give the full inscription:

Watteau pinx<sup>t</sup> W.. Blake fecit / EVENING AMUSEMENT /  
From an Original Picture in the Collection of M.<sup>r</sup>.  
A.. Maskin. / Pub.<sup>d</sup> as the Act directs August 21..  
1782 by T.. Macklin. N.<sup>o</sup>. 39 Fleet Street.

The punctuation after certain initials and in abbreviations such as "M.<sup>r</sup>", which is represented here by two full-stops, is in fact more in the form of two little dashes. It is also found in the inscription under *Morning Amusement* as can be seen from Keynes' reproduction though not from his transcription (*Separate Plates*, p. 63). In this connection it should be pointed out that the "s" of "sculpt<sup>t</sup>" is lower case, not a capital. In addition, at least on the copy of the print belonging to me, there is no full-stop at the end of the last line but there are two little dashes

above the stop following "Tho" suggesting a slightly fuller form of the abbreviation for Thomas, though they do not appear to take the form of an "s": "Tho::"

It should be noted that the inscription on *Evening Amusement* gives the name of the owner of the original painting as "Maskin" without a concluding "s". This is in fact correct. However, even allowing for the fact that the oval format of the engravings does not necessarily represent the shape of the original paintings, it appears that Maskin's paintings are not those now in the Wallace Collection. The provenances of *Les Champs Elysees* and *Le Rendezvous de Chasse* (as the paintings related to Blake's *Evening Amusement* and *Morning Amusement* are now known) seem to exclude Maskin's ownership, neither having left France till 1787 at the earliest (see *Wallace Collection Catalogues: Pictures and Drawings*, 1968 edition, pp. 360, 364-65).

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## XX Job and his Daughters

In another departure from the narrative of the Book of Job itself, Job tells his three daughters' the story of his life. The telling scenes seem to show the destruction of his children: directly behind is the voice from the whirlwind. The identity of figures, God's and Job's, is patent. These three panels represent the matter of Illustrations III and XIII: art, so to speak, within art; and the spectral elderly figures in the lower panels may represent two of the friends, the third being concealed from view by the bench on which Job and his daughters sit.<sup>1</sup> That the story of Job has been made into art is cardinally important in view of Blake's often iterated view of the primacy of art as a theological fact. "Art," he writes in *The Lances*,

"is the Tree of Life" And, in the same place, "Christianity is Art." Fig trees grow up both vertical borders and many leaves and much fruit entwine themselves within all the borders. A pair of angels embrace on the upper left margin, and another pair seems ready to embrace in the upper right margin.

The theme of this illustration is gracefully and accurately carried out in the circularity of the wall panels, the curve of the room, and the design of the floor.<sup>2</sup> The circle of Blake's Job narrative is now complete, and the regeneration has taken place. There remains only the necessity of depicting the renewal itself. This is to be the matter of the subsequent and ultimate illustration.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Danson says that the daughters represent Poetry, Painting, and Music because in the Blatts water-colour version of this scene they are holding "instruments of their art" (Danson, p. 30). But Blake's discussion of such person symbolism in the final version marks, in my view, an advance. Now am I disposed to accept Wicks' ingenious speculation that the daughters may represent sun, moon, and earth because Job's attitude is similar to that of the Creator of Illustration XIV. Cf. Wicks, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Hagstrum interprets the panel to Job's left differently. He thinks it depicts "a scene recalling Blake's famous representation of himself being inspired by Milton, a poet receiving the inspiration of Los." Like Los deferring evil by giving it form Job the artist has transcended his experiences by shaping them, and Urizen is now imprisoned in a well design near the floor" (Hagstrum, p. 123). This is ingenious but further away from the Job scene than necessary, and yet Hagstrum argues it again with much force in an important essay: called "Blake's Blake", in Heinz Bluhm, ed., *Essays in History and Literature Presented to Stanley Pargellis* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 174-5. Northrop Frye offers the following explanation, not of the individual panels of this illustration, but of their status: "These pictures are on the walls of Job's mind, for the room he is in is identical with his own body. That does not make them subjective, for Job is no longer

4 subject: he is one with God." (*Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton, N.J., 1947), p. 424.) I like this interpretation.

<sup>3</sup> Conclusive identification of these figures may be impossible, but I cannot agree with Danson's assertion that they are Job and his wife in disguise (Danson, p. 30).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 42, 8, 177.

<sup>5</sup> Danson says that the circular shape of the floor represents "the commission of the heavens of art; the smaller circles represent individuals entering each other's houses" (Danson, p. 30).

<sup>6</sup> A recent sketch of Job and his Daughters is reproduced as Pl. 41 in *Prints Drawings by William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1925). And the tempera painting, now in the Rosenwald Collection of the National Gallery, in Washington, is reproduced as Pl. 74 of William Blake's *Illustrations to the Bible*. In the Blatts water-colour Job and his daughters are out of doors and his reward to them is depicted in a shoulder scene above his head. God in the whirlwind and the striking Satan are also depicted. The Lancelotti set represents a half-way house: the depictions—very faint—are on panels on a wall, but there is grass beneath the feet of Job and his daughters, and a number of sheep in nearby. The New Zealand scene puts this scene altogether indoors.



hundred copies owned by Blake's younger friend, John Linnell, whose continuing efforts to sell this work that he himself had commissioned met with so little success that we find ourselves surprised by a sudden glow of interest in the series when it was reproduced for the first time (considerably reduced in size), in 1863, by photo-lithography, in Gilchrist's celebrated biography of Blake.<sup>4</sup> Of course, it was known to an interested few prior to 1863. John Sartain, an American student in London during the 20s, later recalled a visit to John Varley's studio where he saw the *Job* prints, individually framed, "hanging side by side in one continuous line on the north wall of the room. They were suspended level with the eye . . ."<sup>5</sup> --in other words, they had the place of honor. In Mrs. Anna Brownell Jameson's popular survey, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, which appeared in 1848, some enthusiastic remarks on Blake's angels were illustrated with figures (reversed) selected from plates 5, 15, and 16 of the *Job*, but the work was not mentioned by name.<sup>6</sup> Ruskin did name it in his "Notes on Things to be Studied" in *The Elements of Drawing*, in 1857:

The *Book of Job*, engraved by [Blake], is of the highest rank in certain characters of imagination and expression; in the mode of obtaining certain effects of light it will also be a very useful example to you. In expressing conditions of glaring and flickering light, Blake is greater than Rembrandt.<sup>7</sup>

Two young admirers of Blake were deeply impressed by the *Illustrations to the Book of Job*: F. T. Palgrave, who was introduced to Blake via the *Job* by Jowett at Oxford in 1845, and Gilchrist, who was--probably--shown it by Carlyle at Cheyne Walk in 1855.<sup>8</sup>

For fifty years after the appearance of Gilchrist's *Life*, it was assumed that Blake had merely "illustrated" the Bible story of the mystery of human suffering and the indecipherability of God's ways. Allan Cunningham had set the tone in his biographical essay on Blake in 1830: Blake was "too devout to attempt [in the *Job* engravings] aught beyond a literal embodying of the majestic scene"; the plates are "very rare, very beautiful, and very peculiar" as engravings. Similar general remarks by William Howitt (presumably), in 1847, and William Allingham in 1849, foreshadowed the enthusiastic but brief and literal-minded plate-by-plate commentary written for Gilchrist's biography by D. G. Rossetti.<sup>9</sup> In 1875 Charles Eliot Norton brought out an American edition in which a photographic reproduction of the series was accompanied by a commentary that merely elaborated on Rossetti's excited, but unexciting, remarks. In 1880, the second edition of Gilchrist, which was widely reviewed and probably widely read, again included the *Job* series in its second volume. These reproductions, better than the first (although still reduced in size), were photogravures on India paper.

Little new was said about Blake's *Job* for the next thirty years. Then, in 1910, Wicksteed wrote

*Blake's Vision of the Book of Job*, a monograph which interpreted the series according to a system, the clues to which were to be found in the designs themselves. Using such simple keys as left and right, above and below, Wicksteed was able to show that Blake had used the materials of the *Book of Job* to create his own story of spiritual pilgrimage and enlightenment. It is a story of unconscious betrayal of self, of fearful confrontation of self, forgiveness of self, and fulfillment of self in others. It is monumental in its deeply-considered rejection of a tragic view of human life--a rejection, here and elsewhere, which places Blake's late work in eternal dialogue with Keats's "late" work: the secure witness of faith versus a sure knowledge of fate. (As the son of Philip Henry Wicksteed, the late-Victorian translator of Dante, Joseph Wicksteed was perhaps peculiarly well fitted to understand Blake's symbolic method, and his dramatic presentation of spiritual pilgrimage.<sup>10</sup>)

Wright's reading of *Job* is based on the theory, set forth in his Introduction, that Blake here abandoned the system that he had developed in the late prophecies. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem* Blake "was working towards a statement that eventually he found himself unable to formulate within the framework of the 'system' that he invented." Wright implies that Blake's rest from poetry in his old age may indicate an acknowledgment of failure on his part: "In his last years Blake no longer attempted to tell his story in his own words. He turned to *Job* (and also to Dante), and it is my argument that the *Job* Illustrations say lucidly

4 The original edition of exactly 315 copies comprised 100 sets on drawing paper, 65 sets on French paper, and 150 "proof" sets on India paper. By 1863 the sets on drawing paper had been sold (or given away), but there remained an undetermined number of the other two kinds of sets. By 1874, probably as a consequence of new interest in Blake following the appearance of Gilchrist's book, all of the sets had been sold; 100 new sets were made at this time. See G. E. Bentley, Jr. and Martin K. Nurm, *A Blake Bibliography* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1964), p. 95.

5 John Sartain, *The Reminiscences of a Very Old Man* (New York, 1899), p. 108.

6 [Anna Brownell] Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, 2 vols. (London, 1848), I, 50.

7 *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1903), XV, 223.

8 See G. F. Palgrave, *Francis Turner Palgrave: His Journals and Memorials of his Life* (London, 1889), pp. 26-27, and Herbert Harlakenden Gilchrist, ed., *Anne Gilchrist, Her Life and Writings* (London, 1887), pp. 54, 59.

9 Cunningham's *Life* is reprinted in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford, 1969); the passages in question occur on pp. 499-500; [William Howitt?], "Death's Door," *Howitt's Journal* II (Nov., 1847), p. 322; William Allingham, "Some Chat About William Blake," *Hogg's Weekly Instructor*, n. s. II (1849), 17-20; D. G. Rossetti's commentary occurs on pp. 285-90 of Gilchrist's *Life* (1863), vol. I.

10 No account of the history of Blake's *Job* can omit mention of that most striking event--the creation of a ballet based on the series in 1931, by Ninette de Valois, to music by Vaughan-Williams. Sir Geoffrey Keynes, who conceived the idea and urged it to fruition, has told the fascinating story in his *Blake Studies*, 2nd ed., pp. 187-94. The ballet has been revived a number of times, most recently in the autumn of 1972.



what Blake had been trying to say all along." What had Blake been "trying" to say? Wright's statement of the message for which Blake changed his medium stops somewhat short of the heart of the matter. For example, Job is guilty because "he has allowed his mind to separate itself from the indispensable considerations of inwardness that are the conditions of grace." Further, Job labors under the misconception "that materiality can give accurate information about his spiritual condition." To make matters worse, Job has "allowed reason to triumph over imagination." Surely Blake is more interesting than this.

On the important question of "system" in interpreting the *Job* designs, Wright in fact equivocates. He finds that "while it is both useful and necessary to consider Blake's Job in the light of his earlier achievements [something, incidentally, which this book does not do], it is a mistake to read into the Illustrations the symbols of the prophetic books, *at least in their earlier valuations*" (italics mine). This, claims Wright, represents a "different emphasis [in Blake studies] rather than a new departure." It does, certainly, differ from Damon's rather structured reading of the *Job* (Damon himself silently dropped his supplementary, Tarot-cards interpretation of 1924 in the 1966 edition); but, as to "different emphasis," compare Wright's approach with this clearer statement by Wicksteed: "If we are not actually concerned with the great Blake myth of the prophetic books we are clearly in the system which the myth embodies [Wicksteed's main point here is that Blake was not "illustrating" the Book of Job]. . . . it has become a better expression of his fundamental thought than any other work from his hand. . . . At a time when he had finally abandoned all effort to reach his public through literary expression he created almost accidentally a great Blakean dramatic poem built of pictures that can be made to speak." (Perhaps prodded by Damon's work, Wicksteed did, in 1924, put forward the presumably Blakean notion of a four-fold structure for the series. But he saw quite clearly that there were difficulties, and apparently in his heart remained agnostic on the question: "I confess that every fresh attempt that I have made against the Job fortress has yielded a new structural scheme.") Does Wright's thesis, with its curious loophole ("at least in their earlier valuations"), represent more than a slight shift in emphasis from that expressed by Wicksteed fifty years ago?

In the discussions of individual plates, there are many questions that might be raised about Wright's interpretations and the way in which he deals with past scholarship. For example, of Illustration XIV, "When the Morning Stars Sang Together," Wright says: "This design and its borders depict the creation. [One wonders] why Blake puts the beginning so late, exactly two-thirds of the way through his narrative. Two considerations are involved: first, by refusing to begin *ab ovo* Blake intends to indicate the cyclical aspect of his story; second, he will depict the creation within the creation: the world and man come into existence only as Job acknowledges the

divinity within." Here I think Wright may be missing the forest for the trees. The plate under discussion follows that of "The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind," and its meaning clearly follows from it. In Damon's words, it is a "vision of the universe," which includes the creation, as it includes regeneration. In any case, after stating that the plate depicts "the creation" Wright gives this skimpy footnote: "In the view of Wicksteed and also of Damon the composition of this design suggests the fourfold man and thus a vision of wholeness." As long as he was bringing in another reading, would it not have been more helpful of Wright to have given a fuller and more accurate account of earlier, divergent views on an issue as central as this one, the subject matter of one of Blake's greatest and best-known designs?

In general, the registering by Wright of earlier comments is quite unsystematic. Much useful specific comment by Wicksteed and Damon is omitted. The most unhappy of such omissions occurs in the discussion of Illustration XIX, "Job Accepting Charity" (Job and his wife sit humbly, yet serenely, as a younger couple and their children [?] approach with gifts). Even Damon, who elsewhere in his commentary avoids reference to earlier observations, here breaks his rule to tell the reader of Wicksteed's insight into this illustration as a "tender and passionate acknowledgment" of the Linnells' generosity to Blake. Unquestionably, this reading adds to the illustration much grace and radiance. Were the objection of the biographical fallacy to be put forward against Wicksteed's reading, two points might be made. First, Blake frequently introduced himself into his works--he believed in doing so. Second, Wright elsewhere does give interpretations he disagrees with, when he judges them to be of interest.

Considered collectively, the omissions from this book are difficult to understand. Wright notes, for instance, (as others have done before him) that "Blake's preoccupation with the subject-matter" of Illustration XI ("Job's Evil Dreams") is "reflected in the similarities" between that plate and the color print of *Elohim Creating Adam* (1795) in the Tate Gallery. Yet he does not note that the bearded, bent old man of Illustration V ("Satan Going Forth From the Presence of the Lord"), to whom Job is giving charity, is similar to the figure of the old man in plate 11, "Death's Door," from *The Grave*; and to the bent old man of no. 17, "Death's Door," from *The Gates of Paradise*; and to the bent old man of "London" in *Songs of Experience*; and the bent old man of plate 12 of *America*; and to the bent old man of plate 84 of *Jerusalem*. Nor does he note that the cruciform figure of Job in Illustration XVIII, "Job's Sacrifice," has similarities to the figure of Albion with hands outstretched, looking up at Christ, on plate 76 of *Jerusalem*, to the figure of Milton going to "self-annihilation and eternal death" on plate 13 of *Milton*, and even to the figure, poised in mid-dance, of "Albion rose," in which with outstretched arms he is "giving himself for the nations." There are many other similarities between the *Job* Illustrations and other works by Blake; surely, it would have been interesting to



*Bulletin* / Philadelphia Museum of Art. Vol. 67, no. 307 (July-September 1972). Pp. 34. \$1

*The Pickering Manuscript / William Blake.* Introduction by Charles Ryskamp. New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1972. Pp. 6 + 22. \$3

Reviewed by Morton D. Paley

The entire July-September issue of the Philadelphia Museum's *Bulletin* for 1972 is devoted to an illustrated essay by Martin Butlin: *The Blake Collection of Mrs. William T. Tonner*. This publication marks an event of the first importance to those interested in Blake, the gift of eleven works from Mrs. Tonner's estate, which as Mr. Butlin says "promotes the Museum at one bound into the ranks of leading American Blake collections." All the pictures are reproduced--one (the beautiful *Nativity* painted for Butts) in color, the rest in

halftone along with six other pictures and one inscription. Mr. Butlin's commentary is both cogent and informative, so that it is not so much necessary to review this publication as to call attention to its contents.

Four other Butts pictures are included in the Tonner gift: *Christ Baptizing*, *Mary Magdalene Washing Christ's Feet*, *Samson Subdued*, and *Jephthah Met by his Daughter*, all watercolors. The *Samson* is informatively reproduced with its companion picture, *Samson Breaking his Bonds* from the collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne. There is also the watercolor *Malevolence*, which gave rise to Blake's imbroglia with Dr. Trusler and hence to one of Blake's most spirited defenses of his art. Perhaps the most important single picture in the collection is the color print *God Judging Adam*, which Butlin considers "the most dramatic copy" of the three known examples.<sup>1</sup> The four remaining designs are the sketch for *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, the Flaxmanesque *Warring Angels*, the drawing of *The Death of Ezekiel's Wife*, and *A Destroying Deity*. The last named is perhaps the most interesting of

Hoover, continued

mention, not just one, but several of the most important ones, in order to suggest Blake's preoccupation with certain images throughout his career, and to try to throw some light on the ways in which the *Job* series manifests those concerns. To mention only one such correspondence, as Wright has done, might tend to suggest to the unwary student that that instance is unique. To be sure, such visual parallels have been largely neglected by all past commentators; close attention to them would seem to be called for in any future study of the work.

Perhaps the most unaccountable omission occurs in Wright's comments on Illustration XX, "Job and his Daughters" (illus. 1). There are a number of riddles in this, one of the most important plates of the series. What are the indistinct decorations on the wall behind Job, at seat-level? More important, what are the scenes depicted in the lozenges on the wall behind Job? Immediately behind him and slightly above we can see quite clearly a depiction of the event that took place in Illustration XIII, "The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind," but opinions differ as to the subjects of the two flanking scenes. Of these differences Wright gives an astonishingly incomplete account: he mentions only Jean Hagstrum's reading of the scene to Job's left. Wright's own somewhat uncertain interpretation ("the flanking scenes seem to show the destruction of Job's children") is closest to Damon's: "To his right and left are panels depicting the disasters that befell him."

A close study of the two side lozenges does not unfold their mystery entirely, but it does

make some interpretations, especially that of Wright, less tenable. The lozenge on Job's right clearly shows a group of young people pursued, and in at least two cases struck, by two old men with stakes or pikestaffs in their hands. Over this scene of horror and alarm broods a floating figure, male, somewhat indistinct, with long hair and outstretched arms. Needless to say, this assault by old men bears no resemblance to the destruction of Job's children as depicted by Blake in Illustration III. The subject of the second lozenge is less clear. In the foreground a man holds a plow, his head thrown back violently. In the background farm buildings go up in flames, while over it all floats a figure with outstretched arms, from which seem to have been generated the lightnings that started the fires.<sup>11</sup> This figure has a pleasant face and long hair. Although it is clearly masculine, like the other it does not resemble Satan. In Hagstrum's view the obvious echo in this lozenge of Blake's moment of inspiration in *Milton* (plates 14 and 29), in which Blake is pictured with his head thrown back and the falling star about to enter his left foot, suggests the regenerate Job who has become an

11 The outstretched arms occur, not twice, but four times, in this design: once in each of the lozenges just mentioned, once in the lozenge immediately behind Job in which God speaks from the whirlwind, and in the foreground figure of Job himself, who sits with his arms outstretched over his three daughters. There is a question as to whether Job is to be thought of as pointing to the two scenes on either hand; at least one hand gives that impression.



the four. Butlin dates it very late (c. 1825-26), comparing the figure's webbed wings with those in the tempera *Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils*. There is also something in the sculpture-like massiveness of the figure which recalls some of the illustrations to the *Inferno*.

Butlin's valuable pamphlet is a kind of *hors d'oeuvre* which makes us all the more anticipate the feast of his forthcoming complete catalogue of Blake's paintings, watercolors, and drawings. Conversely, *The Pickering Manuscript* is a welcome dessert, following what the *Newsletter*'s reviewer called "the definitive catalogue of one of the last three great Blake collections in private hands": *The Blake Collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne* by G. E. Bentley, Jr.<sup>2</sup> That catalogue was published by the Morgan Library in conjunction with its exhibition of the Thorne collection; now we are informed in Charles Ryskamp's brief Introduction to *The Pickering Manuscript*, that Mrs. Thorne gave the Manuscript itself to the Morgan Library at the end of 1971, thus adding even further to the Library's magnificent Blake collection. The fact

that the entire Manuscript is here reproduced in facsimile for the first time speaks for itself. We might, however, reiterate a point made by John E. Grant in *Newsletter* 21: with the ever-growing interest in Blake, facsimiles now perform two functions--they make material widely available, and they also reduce unnecessary wear on the originals. *The Pickering Manuscript* should serve both purposes admirably.

Morton D. Paley is Executive Editor of the Newsletter.

1 Butlin points out that for the Tate copy of this work Blake received one guinea from Thomas Butts, giving the U. S. equivalent as about \$2.50. It is only fair to Butts, however, to remember that both the guinea and the dollar are not, alas, what they once were. In 1793, for example, Blake advertised *America* at 10s 6d; and in 1806, the year of the receipt for *God Judging Adam*, Blake sold John Flaxman a "singularly grand drawing of the Last Judgment" for one guinea (Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 575).

2 Robert Essick, *Newsletter* 21, p. 26.

Hoover, continued

artist. The other scene, to Job's right, Hagstrum describes as "the day of [Job's] suffering."<sup>12</sup> One must agree with Hagstrum that the figure of the plowman echoes Milton and suggests the introduction of Blake himself into the story. But what of the burning buildings and the hovering figure? (Hagstrum doesn't say.) And one must agree that the other scene represents suffering of some kind, but whose suffering is it?

In my view the least implausible explanation that has yet been given is Wicksteed's, that "the panel on Job's right tells of the dire deeds of man against man [old men assaulting youths], that on his left of the disasters Nature inflicts [the buildings struck by lightning--perhaps the plowman, too], both inspired by Satan [the hovering figures in the two pictures]." The commentary in Binyon and Keynes follows this reading. But even this hypothesis leaves questions unanswered: why the echo from Milton in the figure of the plowman? If the hovering figures are Satanic, why don't they resemble Satan? Etc. Had Wright given closer attention to the details of the illustration, and included more of the earlier commentary, the reader would have a better notion of just what the difficulties are. As it is, we are presented with the patently implausible and left to shift for ourselves. (Although in several other places Wright refers to the earlier watercolor versions of the *Job* designs, he here omits mention of the interesting and suggestive fact that Blake left the lozenges indistinctly drawn in all sets of the watercolors. Only the last, "New Zealand" set has some adumbration of the scenes as we know them in the engraving, but without the engraving to guide

us we should find it difficult to tell much about them.)

In his interpretations of individual plates Wright has contributed several interesting observations to the literature on the designs. One of these is his identification of the objects lying on the ground between Elihu's feet in Illustration XII, "The Wrath of Elihu," as a purse and two pieces of money, rather than a potsherd, as Wicksteed had supposed. This seems a plausible conclusion, consistent with the larger meaning of the work.

Beyond specific criticisms, which will vary from reader to reader, this presentation of Blake's *Job* is flawed generally by its inadequate exposition of Blake's vision and method. If the account of Job's error is almost banal, the understanding of forgiveness and self-sacrifice as the energy of redemption is limited and understated. Much is lost, moreover, through an unwillingness to contemplate either symbolism or structure in the designs as a series. In sum, this book, seemingly designed for the beginning student, lacks the reflection, care, and learning that we might have hoped for in a new edition of this great work.

12 Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Prophet* (Chicago, 1964), p. 135. Hagstrum gives a more elaborate, more suggestive, but in some ways wilder, reading of the lozenges in "Blake's Blake," *Essays in History and Literature, Presented by Fellows of the Newberry Library to Stanley Pargellis*, ed. Heinz Bluhm (Chicago, 1965), p. 174.