

# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

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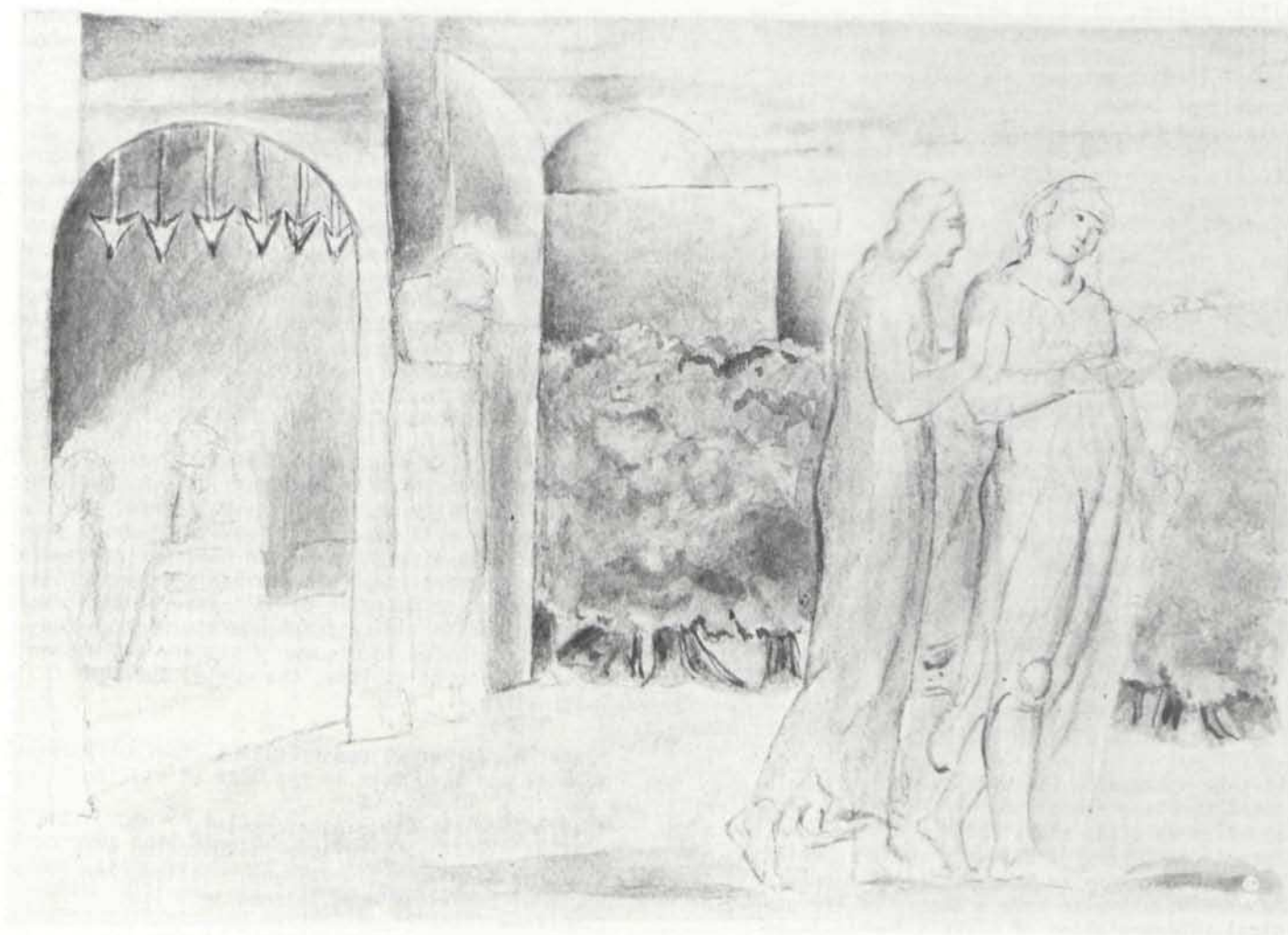
## An Additional Drawing for Blake's Bunyan Series

James T. Wills

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## **Notes**



1 "Christian Goes Forth Armed," from Blake's Bunyan series. Copyright the Frick Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

## AN ADDITIONAL DRAWING FOR BLAKE'S BUNYAN SERIES James T. Wills

On 29 April 1862 Sotheby's offered for sale "a series of 28 designs [by William Blake] for the *Pilgrim's Progress*, nineteen of them highly finished in colours."<sup>1</sup> W. M. Rossetti described these twenty-eight drawings in the list of Blake's works he prepared for Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* in 1863. When Geoffrey Keynes discussed the illustrations in his 1941 introduction to the Spiral Press edition of *Pilgrim's Progress* and later in his *Blake Studies* (1949, 2nd ed. 1971), he observed that Rossetti "omitted to mention No. XVII, 'Christian in the Arbour'. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Sir Geoffrey's new total of twenty-nine included, as Rossetti's had done earlier, the troublesome No. XXII, but Sir Geoffrey remarked that this drawing had probably been misplaced from the *Paradise Regained* series.<sup>3</sup> If No. XXII is not, in fact, one of the original Bunyan drawings, then the number of actual illustrations should stand at twenty-eight as it did in the 1862 sale. I propose, however, that there are at least twenty-nine genuine designs in the series. This total may be achieved by the inclusion of an additional drawing not previously mentioned by Rossetti or Keynes. The following investigation will attempt to show that this additional drawing is a legitimate Bunyan design and at the same time try to settle some problems of sequence within the series.

The existence of an additional drawing was first brought to light in Martin Butlin's "An Extra Illustration to *Pilgrim's Progress*," *Blake Newsletter* 19 (Winter 1971-72), 213-14. At the time Mr. Butlin's note first appeared, my study of this drawing was already completed and ready for submission. The design in question [illus. 2] is currently housed in the Alverthorpe Gallery of the Rosenwald Collection and it is titled, with apparently no real authority, "A Warrior Attended by Angels." Further explorations into the physical appearance and subject of this pencil and watercolor drawing leave little doubt that "A Warrior Attended by Angels" is indeed one of Blake's original *Pilgrim's Progress* designs.

The physical appearance of the Rosenwald drawing is remarkably similar to that of the twenty-eight Bunyan drawings which are now in the Frick Collection. The design size of "A Warrior" measures 180 by 122 mm., while the sheet on which it is executed measures 244 by 189 mm. Although the sizes of the Frick drawings vary slightly, they are substantially the same as those of "A Warrior." The watermark of "A Warrior" runs

off the page from the center of the upper half of the sheet to the left; it reads J WHAT / 182. Exactly the same watermark appears on number six and twenty-eight of the Frick series,<sup>4</sup> and the entire watermark of J WHATMAN / 1824 may be constructed through evidence shown on the other drawings of the series.

The recto of the Rosenwald design [illus. 2] has no descriptive or explanatory inscriptions, and the verso is blank. The number 20 appears just above the border of the design in the right-hand corner, and at the base of the drawing, just below the border on the right-hand side, is what appears to be Blake's signature. One minor difficulty stems from the possibility that the zero of the number twenty was at first a one and was later rubbed out and altered to its present state.

The technique employed in the Frick Collection series is basically pencil sketching colored over with various water-color washes. In the same way, "A Warrior Attended by Angels" is a pencil sketch colored over with gray wash and heightened with other washes of blue, yellow, green and pink. Similarities of technique would in themselves be of comparatively little value in proving that the Rosenwald design belongs with the Frick series. Yet when details of technique and physical appearance are combined with the evidence provided by the subject matter of "A Warrior," inclusion in the original genuine series becomes clearly unavoidable.

As the title suggests, the Rosenwald drawing presents an armed figure surrounded by four others who seem to be ministering to him. The most sig-

*James T. Wills is writing a Ph.D. dissertation on Blake's designs for Pilgrim's Progress under the direction of G. E. Bentley, Jr., at the University of Toronto.*

1 Sotheby & Co., Sale Catalogue of Drawings and Paintings, Lot 187, 29 April 1862.

2 Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1949), p. 174.

3 Keynes, p. 184.

4 The numbers used here are those which appear in pencil on the drawings of the Frick series.

nificant aspect of the drawing, for present purposes at least, centers in the warrior's armament. The illustration clearly shows a shield buckled to his left arm and a broad sword hanging at his left side. He also appears to be wearing a helmet of some sort and possibly a type of armor on his lower legs. It is difficult to determine whether he wears any body armor, such as a breast plate, since he is partially covered by a flowing coat.

This warrior is Christian, the pilgrim of Bunyan's narrative. Such a statement is readily defensible by comparing him with the figure presented in two drawings from the Frick series, while the scene represented is readily identifiable as an illustration to *Pilgrim's Progress*. Indeed, "A Warrior Attended by Angels" should be placed between the Frick design called "Christian Goes

Forth Armed" [illus. 1] and the one entitled "Apollyon and Christian" [illus. 3]. The pencil numbers which appear on the Frick drawings are at best of questionable value, but it may be worth noting that "Apollyon and Christian," like "A Warrior," shows the number 20.<sup>5</sup>

Blake's "Christian Goes Forth Armed" illustrates a very specific scene in Bunyan's work. According to Bunyan, once Christian has been armed by the four maidens who inhabit the Lord of the Hill's house, Discretion, Piety, Prudence and Charity, he walks from the gate of the house ac-

5 The numbering has been dealt with more completely by G. E. Bentley, Jr., in his article, "The Inscriptions on Blake's Designs to *Pilgrim's Progress*."



2 "Christian Takes Leave of His Companions" ("A Warrior Attended by Angels"), from Blake's Bunyan series. National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection. Reproduced by permission.

accompanied by the porter. As they proceed, Christian questions his guide about pilgrims who may have preceded him, and the porter replies that one named Faithful has gone before but, "he is got by this time at least below the Hill."<sup>6</sup>

In "Christian Goes Forth Armed," Blake depicts Christian and the porter at the moment they leave the gate and move towards the steep descent of the Hill of Difficulty [see illus. 1]. The drawing is sketchy in part, but the figure of Christian definitely includes a shield buckled to his left arm, what appears to be a sword hilt in his left hand, and what probably represents a type of armor on his right leg. There may be a slight suggestion of a helmet, but this detail is not nearly so clear as the others noted. As in the Rosenwald design, Christian is shown wearing a flowing coat; this is

probably the "Broidred Coat" he says was given him by the three shining ones.<sup>7</sup>

Christian takes leave of the porter in Bunyan's narrative, and

he began to go forward; but 'Discretion', 'Piety', 'Charity', and 'Prudence' would accompany him down to the foot of the Hill. So they went on together, reiterating their former discourses, till they came to go down

6 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress From This World to That Which Is to Come*, ed. James Blanton Wharey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 55.

7 Bunyan, p. 49.



3 "Apollyon and Christian," from Blake's Bunyan series. Copyright the Frick Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

4 K. Schutz, undated pencil drawing of three angels singing, Number 17 in the Aders album. By permission of the Harvard College Library.

5 Jacob Götzenberger, undated pen drawing of angels assisting a poor family, Number 21 in the Aders album. By permission of the Harvard College Library.

the Hill. Then said 'Christian', As it was 'difficult' coming up, so (so far as I can see) it is 'dangerous' going down. . . . therefore, said they, are we come out to accompany thee down the Hill.

Then I saw in my dream that these good companions, when 'Christian' was gone down to the bottom of the Hill, gave him a loaf of Bread, a bottle of Wine, and a cluster of Raisins; and then he went on his way.<sup>8</sup>

The drawing in the Rosenwald Collection [illus. 2] undoubtedly shows Christian at the bottom of the Hill surrounded by his four "good companions." Behind and above them the house of the Lord of the Hill is sketchily outlined. Although the presents mentioned by Bunyan are not obviously identifiable, the maiden to Christian's immediate right may be holding a bottle in her left hand. The design portrays Christian at the moment he departs from his four friends and enters the Valley of Humiliation; a more appropriate title might therefore be "Christian Takes Leave of His Companions."

The ultimate purpose of Christian's armament becomes apparent in the next sequence of events in *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Blake's illustration for it provides yet more evidence for including "Christian Takes Leave of His Companions" in the series. As soon as he enters the Valley of Humiliation, Christian is confronted by the horrible Apollyon:

Now the Monster was hidious to behold: he was cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride); he had Wings like a Dragon, feet like a Bear, and out of his belly came Fire and Smoak; and his mouth was the mouth of a Lion.

The battle which ensues at first goes badly for Christian:

Then 'Apollyon' espying his opportunity began to gather up close to 'Christian' and, wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that 'Christian's' sword flew out of his hand. . . . But as God would have it, while 'Apollyon' was fetching of his last blow, . . . 'Christian' nimbly reached out his hand for his sword and caught it, saying, 'Rejoyce not against me, O mine Enemy! When I fall I shall arise'. . . .<sup>10</sup>

"Apollyon and Christian" [illus. 3] illustrates the moment just before Christian regains his sword and vanquishes the monster. Blake pictures Apollyon with great attention to detail, while at the same time spending a large amount of time on the figure of Christian. The design is in a more finished state than either of the two drawings just discussed, and it shows much more clearly that Christian is indeed wearing armor on his legs and body. Most important for present purposes, however, the drawing also shows exactly the same sword, shield and helmet seen in the Rosenwald design. These facts, as well as the striking facial resemblance between the two detailed representations of Christian, complete the overwhelming pictorial evidence for including "Christian Takes Leave of His Companions" in the original Bunyan series. In addition, the sections of *Pilgrim's Progress* quoted establish a firm textual basis for accepting the design and for placing it between the two Frick drawings.

The question of how the Rosenwald drawing became separated from the other twenty-eight designs remains to be solved, but after the initial separation the subsequent history of "Christian Takes Leave of His Companions" may be easily traced. The Alverthorpe Gallery accession records

8 Bunyan, pp. 55-56.

9 Bunyan, p. 56.

10 Bunyan, pp. 59-60.



reveal that Mr. Rosenwald acquired the drawing from Sotheby's on 10 December 1958, and according to the auction catalogue it was "formerly contained in an album of letters from Blake, Coleridge and Lamb formed by Mrs. Charles Aders. . . ."<sup>11</sup> The remainder of the album was eventually sold by Sotheby's on 15 December of the same year and is now in the Houghton Library, Harvard University. The exact original position of the Blake drawing within the album cannot now be easily ascertained, especially since nearly fifty leaves have been cut out. Still, there is a strong possibility that the design originally appeared between entry Nos. 17 and 26.<sup>12</sup>

Containing materials which range in date from 1811 to 1874, the Aders album is arranged in a roughly chronological manner. The ten entries in question are significantly grouped, at least so far as their dates can be ascertained, around 1827, the year of Blake's death. Support for placing the Rosenwald design between Nos. 17 and 26 arises primarily from the angel motif of a large proportion of these entries. Number 17 is an undated pencil drawing, heightened with white and gold, of three angels singing, by K. Schutz [illus. 4]; number 20 is a manuscript of Charles Lamb's "Angel Help," dated 1827; and number 21 is an undated pen drawing, heightened with gold, of angels assisting a poor family, by Jacob Götzenberger [illus. 5]. Götzenberger may be remembered as the German artist who commented favorably on Blake's Dante designs.<sup>13</sup> Entries 22 and 23 deal with "Angel Help"; the former is an 1827 version of the poem by Mary Lamb, the latter an 1827 letter from Charles Lamb concerning the same poem. Between Nos. 17 and 26 there are eight leaves cut from the album and one blank leaf, No. 25, from which something has been removed.

It may well be that in 1827 Mrs. Blake, knowing that the Bunyan series had twenty-nine drawings, sold that number to Tatham, simply confusing the *Paradise Regained* design with "Christian Takes Leave." Consequently, Mrs. Aders could have ac-

quired the latter drawing, placed it in her album in one of the spaces mentioned above, and given it what she considered an appropriate title.

Regardless of whether these conjectures about placement in the album and separation from the series prove correct, there is no doubt that "Christian Takes Leaves of His Companions" is a Bunyan design. Taken together, the three drawings discussed are a fine example of Blake's method of illustrating *Pilgrim's Progress*; and barring any further additions to the new total of genuine designs--there is a possibility that there may be several more<sup>14</sup>--the way now seems open for the completion of a full scale study of Blake's designs for Bunyan.

11 Sotheby & Co., Sale Catalogue of Drawings and Paintings, Lot 72, 10 December 1958.

12 I am using here the notation of the Houghton Library. The discussion of the album which follows is taken in part from a description provided by Mr. Rodney G. Dennis, Curator of Manuscripts at the Houghton Library.

13 Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary Reminiscences and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1871), II, 74.

14 There are two Blake drawings in the British Museum each of which represents a figure seated before a burning city. According to a description I received from Miss Dinah Mitchell of the Department of Prints and Drawings, the designs are accompanied by a note by Samuel Palmer. The note says, in part, that they are two states of "a design perhaps from the *Pilgrim's Progress*." There seems to be no substantial evidence at this time to support Palmer's conjecture. For further information on these drawings, see Raymond Lister, "Two Blake Drawings and a Letter by Samuel Palmer," in *Blake Newsletter* 23, forthcoming.

There are also three designs, formerly in the possession of W. G. Robertson but now untraced, which are related to the Bunyan series. *The Blake Collection of W. Graham Robertson*, ed. Kerrison Preston in 1952 for the Blake Trust, lists these three designs as Nos. 104, 105, and 106. The respective titles are "Christian and Worldly Wiseman," "The Interpreter's House," and "Vanity Fair." Frederick Tatham vouched for all three as genuine Blakes, but he was firmly convinced only that No. 106 was definitely a Bunyan design.