

ZEBA BOOKS CLASSICS

**Songs of
Innocence and
of Experience
William Blake**

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William Blake



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letters@zebabooks.org

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Preface

Classics endure not because they are old, but because they are alive. They speak across centuries, cultures, and changing moral landscapes, carrying with them the anxieties, aspirations, and insights of humanity in its many forms. When a work survives the erosion of time, it earns the right to be read again -- not as a relic, but as a conversation partner.

Zeba Books undertakes this series with a simple conviction: public domain classics deserve to be accessible, affordable, and respectfully presented. These works no longer belong to a single nation, publisher, or generation. They belong to everyone. Yet too often, they are buried under careless reprints, poor formatting, or editions that treat the text as mere filler. Our aim is to reverse that neglect.

The books in this collection are reproduced with fidelity to the original text, while being prepared for the modern reader. Language has been preserved, not diluted; structure respected, not abridged. Where the prose challenges, it does so honestly -- because classics are meant to stretch the reader, not flatter them. At the same time, thoughtful typesetting and clean layouts ensure that engagement comes from ideas, not from wrestling with poor design.

Why read classics today, when new books appear by the thousands each week? Because the problems we face -- power, faith, love, injustice, ambition, fear -- are not new. Long before algorithms shaped attention and borders hardened identities, writers were grappling with the same tensions, often with sharper clarity. To read a classic is to realize that modernity did not invent complexity; it merely renamed it.

This series is not curated around prestige alone. Some titles are famous, others less celebrated but equally vital. What unites them is their influence: on thought, on literature, on political imagination, or on moral inquiry. These are works that shaped debates, inspired movements, and unsettled complacency. They are not always comfortable -- and that is precisely why they matter.

Zeba Books does not believe classics should be treated as museum pieces, to be admired from a distance. They should be argued with, questioned, underlined, even disagreed with. A living reader brings new meanings to an old text, just as the text sharpens the reader in return. This mutual friction is the essence of serious reading.

By reissuing these public domain works, we are not claiming to improve them -- only to make them available in a form worthy of their content. We see this series as an

invitation: to slow down in an age of skimming, to think deeply in an age of instant opinion, and to rediscover voices that still have something urgent to say.

If these books provoke thought, challenge assumptions, or simply remind readers that human inquiry has a long and dignified history, then this project has served its purpose. Classics do not ask to be preserved for nostalgia's sake. They ask to be read.

About the Author

William Blake was born in London on November 28, 1757. A poet, painter, engraver, and visionary, strived to reform the social order as well as men's minds. Though his work was mostly ignored or rejected during his lifetime, he is now regarded as one of the main lights of English poetry, and his fame has only grown with time. In his *Life of William Blake* (1863), Alexander Gilchrist informed his readers that Blake "neither wrote nor drew for the many, hardly for work'y-day men at all, rather for children and angels; himself 'a divine child,' whose playthings were the sun, moon, and stars, the heavens and the earth." However, Blake believed that his writings were of national importance and could be understood by the majority of his colleagues. Far from being an isolated mystic, Blake lived and worked in the bustling metropolis of London during a period of significant social and political

change, which had a profound influence on his poetry.

Blake's later years, spent in extreme poverty, were bolstered by the adoring companionship of a group of younger artists known as "*the Ancients*." In 1818, he met John Linnell, a young artist who assisted him financially while also generating new interest in his work. Linnell commissioned him to produce pictures for *Dante's Divine Comedy* in 1825, and Blake worked on the cycle of images until his death in 1827.

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**SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF
EXPERIENCE**

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

INTRODUCTION

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

‘Pipe a song about a Lamb!’
So I piped with merry cheer.
‘Piper, pipe that song again.’
So I piped: he wept to hear.

‘Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!’
So I sung the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

‘Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.’

So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

THE SHEPHERD

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

THE ECHOING GREEN

The sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring;
The skylark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around
To the bells' cheerful sound;
While our sports shall be seen
On the echoing green.

Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
'Such, such were the joys
When we all—girls and boys—
In our youth-time were seen
On the echoing green.'

Till the little ones, weary,
No more can be merry:
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.
Round the laps of their mothers
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest,
And sport no more seen
On the darkening green.

THE LAMB

Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
 Little lamb, who made thee?
 Does thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
 Little lamb, God bless thee!
 Little lamb, God bless thee!

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the East, began to say:

‘Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat
away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men
receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

‘And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of
love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt

face

Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

'For, when our souls have learned the heat
to bear,

The cloud will vanish, we shall hear His
voice,
Saying, "Come out from the grove, my love
and care,

And round my golden tent like lambs
rejoice."

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me,

And thus I say to little English boy.

When I from black, and he from white cloud
free,

And round the tent of God like lambs we
joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear

To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;

And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,

And be like him, and he will then love me.

THE BLOSSOM

Merry, merry sparrow!
Under leaves so green
 A happy blossom
Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow,
 Near my bosom.

Pretty, pretty robin!
Under leaves so green
 A happy blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty robin,
 Near my bosom.

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'Weep! weep! weep!
weep!'
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I
sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when
his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved;
so I said,
'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your
head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your
white hair.'

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a
sight!—
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned,
and Jack,

Were all of them locked up in coffins of
black.

And by came an angel, who had a bright
key,
And he opened the coffins, and set them all
free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing,
they run
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left
behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the
wind:
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good
boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want
joy.

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to
work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was

happy and warm:

So, if all do their duty, they need not fear
harm.

THE LITTLE BOY LOST

'Father, father, where are you going?
O do not walk so fast!
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost.'

The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

THE LITTLE BOY FOUND

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wandering light,
Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,
Appeared like his father, in white.

He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely
dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

LAUGHING SONG

When the green woods laugh with the voice
of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry
wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of
it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry
scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing ‘Ha ha
he!’

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is
spread:
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of ‘Ha ha he!’

A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet Sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown!
Sweet Sleep, angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight!
Sweet smiles, mother's smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes!
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep, sleep, happy child!
All creation slept and smiled.

Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace;
Sweet babe, once like thee
Thy Maker lay, and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,
Who became an infant small;
Infant smiles are His own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

THE DIVINE IMAGE

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God our Father dear;
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart;
Pity, a human face;
And Love, the human form divine:
And Peace the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine:
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.

Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

HOLY THURSDAY

'Twas on a holy Thursday, their innocent
faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red,
and blue, and green:
Grey-headed beades walked before, with
wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like
Thames waters flow.

O what a multitude they seemed, these
flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance
all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but
multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising
their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven
the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of
heaven among:

Beneath them sit the aged men, wise
guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel
from your door.

NIGHT

The sun descending in the West,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.

The moon, like a flower
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight,
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight,
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves
The feet of angels bright;
Unseen, they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest
Where birds are covered warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm:

If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep;
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep.
But, if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold:
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold:
Saying: 'Wrath by His meekness,
And, by His health, sickness,
Is driven away
From our immortal day.

‘And now beside thee, bleating lamb,
I can lie down and sleep,
Or think on Him who bore thy name,
Graze after thee, and weep.
For, washed in life’s river,
My bright mane for ever
Shall shine like the gold,
As I guard o’er the fold.’

SPRING

Sound the flute!

Now it's mute!

Birds delight,

Day and night,

Nightingale,

In the dale,

Lark in sky,—

Merrily,

Merrily, merrily to welcome in the year.

Little boy,

Full of joy;

Little girl,

Sweet and small;

Cock does crow,

So do you;

Merry voice,

Infant noise;

Merrily, merrily to welcome in the year.

Little lamb,

Here I am;

Come and lick
My white neck;
Let me pull
Your soft wool;
Let me kiss
Your soft face;
Merrily, merrily we welcome in the year.

NURSE'S SONG

When voices of children are heard on the
green,

 And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
 And everything else is still.

‘Then come home, my children, the sun is
gone down,
 And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away,
 Till the morning appears in the skies.’

‘No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
 And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
 And the hills are all covered with sheep.’

‘Well, well, go and play till the light fades
away,
 And then go home to bed.’
The little ones leaped, and shouted, and

laughed,
And all the hills echoèd.

INFANT JOY

'I have no name;
I am but two days old.'
What shall I call thee?
'I happy am,
Joy is my name.'
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old.
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while;
Sweet joy befall thee!

A DREAM

Once a dream did weave a shade
O'er my angel-guarded bed,
That an emmet lost its way
Where on grass methought I lay.

Troubled, wildered, and forlorn,
Dark, benighted, travel-worn,
Over many a tangled spray,
All heart-broke, I heard her say:

'O my children! do they cry,
Do they hear their father sigh?
Now they look abroad to see,
Now return and weep for me.'

Pitying, I dropped a tear:
But I saw a glow-worm near,
Who replied, 'What wailing wight
Calls the watchman of the night?'

'I am set to light the ground,
While the beetle goes his round:

Follow now the beetle's hum;
Little wanderer, hie thee home!

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

And can He who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear—

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast,

And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
O no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

He doth give His joy to all:
He becomes an infant small,
He becomes a man of woe,
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by:
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

O He gives to us His joy,
That our grief He may destroy:
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

Hear the voice of the Bard,
Who present, past, and future, sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walked among the ancient trees;

Calling the lapséd soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew!

'O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass!
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumbrous mass.

'Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,
The watery shore,
Is given thee till the break of day.'

EARTH'S ANSWER

Earth raised up her head
From the darkness dread and drear,
Her light fled,
Stony, dread,
And her locks covered with grey despair.

'Prisoned on watery shore,
Starry jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar;
Weeping o'er,
I hear the father of the ancient men.

'Selfish father of men!
Cruel, jealous, selfish fear!
Can delight,
Chained in night,
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

'Does spring hide its joy,
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower

Sow by night,
Or the ploughman in darkness plough?

‘Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around!
Selfish, vain,
Eternal bane,
That free love with bondage bound.’

THE CLOD AND THE PEBBLE

‘Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a heaven in hell’s despair.’

So sung a little clod of clay,
Trodden with the cattle’s feet,
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

‘Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another’s loss of ease,
And builds a hell in heaven’s despite.’

HOLY THURSDAY

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,—
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak and bare,
And their ways are filled with thorns,
It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,
And where'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appal.

THE LITTLE GIRL LOST

In futurity
I prophesy
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise, and seek
For her Maker meek;
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,
Where the summer's prime
Never fades away,
Lovely Lyca lay.

Seven summers old
Lovely Lyca told.
She had wandered long,
Hearing wild birds' song.

'Sweet sleep, come to me,
Underneath this tree;
Do father, mother, weep?
Where can Lyca sleep?

'Lost in desert wild
Is your little child.
How can Lyca sleep
If her mother weep?

'If her heart does ache,
Then let Lyca wake;
If my mother sleep,
Lyca shall not weep.

'Frowning, frowning night,
O'er this desert bright
Let thy moon arise,
While I close my eyes.'

Sleeping Lyca lay,
While the beasts of prey,
Come from caverns deep,
Viewed the maid asleep.

The kingly lion stood,
And the virgin viewed:
Then he gambolled round
O'er the hallowed ground.

Leopards, tigers, play
Round her as she lay;
While the lion old
Bowed his mane of gold,

And her bosom lick,
And upon her neck,
From his eyes of flame,
Ruby tears there came;

While the lioness
Loosed her slender dress,
And naked they conveyed
To caves the sleeping maid.

THE LITTLE GIRL FOUND

All the night in woe
Lyca's parents go
Over valleys deep,
While the deserts weep.

Tired and woe-begone,
Hoarse with making moan,
Arm in arm, seven days
They traced the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep
Among shadows deep,
And dream they see their child
Starved in desert wild.

Pale through pathless ways
The fancied image strays,
Famished, weeping, weak,
With hollow piteous shriek.

Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman pressed
With feet of weary woe;
She could no further go.

In his arms he bore
Her, armed with sorrow sore;
Till before their way
A couching lion lay.

Turning back was vain:
Soon his heavy mane
Bore them to the ground,
Then he stalked around,

Smelling to his prey;
But their fears allay
When he licks their hands,
And silent by them stands.

They look upon his eyes,
Filled with deep surprise;
And wondering behold
A spirit armed in gold.

On his head a crown,
On his shoulders down
Flowed his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.

'Follow me,' he said;
'Weep not for the maid;
In my palace deep,
Lyca lies asleep.'

Then they followèd
Where the vision led,
And saw their sleeping child
Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell,
Nor fear the wolvish howl
Nor the lion's growl.

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying! 'weep! weep!' in notes of woe!
'Where are thy father and mother? Say!'—
'They are both gone up to the church to
pray.

'Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smiled among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

'And because I am happy and dance and
sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and His priest
and king,
Who made up a heaven of our misery.'

NURSE'S SONG

When the voices of children are heard on
the green,
 And whisperings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
 My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is
gone down,
 And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in
play,
 And your winter and night in disguise.

THE SICK ROSE

O rose, thou art sick!
 The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
 In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
 Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
 Does thy life destroy.

THE FLY

Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength and breath,
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly.
If I live,
Or if I die.

THE ANGEL

I dreamt a dream! What can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen
Guarded by an Angel mild:
Witless woe was ne'er beguiled!

And I wept both night and day,
And he wiped my tears away;
And I wept both day and night,
And hid from him my heart's delight.

So he took his wings, and fled;
Then the morn blushed rosy red.
I dried my tears, and armed my fears
With ten thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again;
I was armed, he came in vain;
For the time of youth was fled,
And grey hairs were on my head.

THE TIGER

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

MY PRETTY ROSE TREE

A flower was offered to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said, 'I've a pretty rose tree,'
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my pretty rose tree,
To tend her by day and by night;
But my rose turned away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

AH, SUNFLOWER

Ah, sunflower, weary of time,
 Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
 Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
 And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
 Where my Sunflower wishes to go!

THE LILY

The modest Rose puts forth a thorn,
The humble sheep a threat'ning horn:
While the Lily white shall in love delight,
Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty
bright.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen;
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tombstones where flowers should be;
And priests in black gowns were walking
their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and
desires.

THE LITTLE VAGABOND

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is
cold;

But the Alehouse is healthy, and pleasant,
and warm.

Besides, I can tell where I am used well;
Such usage in heaven will never do well.

But, if at the Church they would give us
some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the Church to
stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink,
and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at
church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting,
nor birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil
or the barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and
apparel.

LONDON

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does
flow,
A mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.

But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage
hearse.

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor,
And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings Peace,
Till the selfish loves increase;
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head,
And the caterpillar and fly
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat,
And the raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The gods of the earth and sea
Sought through nature to find this tree,
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the human Brain.

INFANT SORROW

My mother groaned, my father wept:
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunnèd it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,—

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

A LITTLE BOY LOST

‘Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.

‘And, father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.’

The Priest sat by and heard the child;
In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
And all admired his priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
‘Lo, what a fiend is here!’ said he:
‘One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery.’

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They stripped him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place
Where many had been burned before;
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore?

A LITTLE GIRL LOST

Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime.

In the age of gold,
Free from winter's cold,
Youth and maiden bright,
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair,
Filled with softest care,
Met in garden bright
Where the holy light
Had just removed the curtains of the night.

There, in rising day,
On the grass they play;
Parents were afar,
Strangers came not near,
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet,
They agree to meet
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heaven's deep,
And the weary tired wanderers weep.

To her father white
Came the maiden bright;
But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

Ona, pale and weak,
To thy father speak!
O the trembling fear!
O the dismal care
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair!

A DIVINE IMAGE

Cruelty has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
And Secrecy the human dress.

The human dress is forgèd iron,
The human form a fiery forge,
The human face a furnace sealed,
The human heart its hungry gorge.

A CRADLE SONG

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful light shall break.

TO TIRZAH

Whate'er is born of mortal birth
Must be consumèd with the earth,
To rise from generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The sexes sprung from shame and pride,
Blowed in the morn, in evening died;
But mercy changed death into sleep;
The sexes rose to work and weep.

Thou, mother of my mortal part,
With cruelty didst mould my heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst blind my nostrils, eyes, and ears,

Didst close my tongue in senseless clay,
And me to mortal life betray.
The death of Jesus set me free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

THE SCHOOLBOY

I love to rise in a summer morn,
 When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
 And the skylark sings with me:
 O what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,—
 O it drives all joy away!
Under a cruel eye outworn,
 The little ones spend the day
 In sighing and dismay.

Ah then at times I drooping sit,
 And spend many an anxious hour;
Nor in my book can I take delight,
 Nor sit in learning's bower,
 Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
 Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
 But droop his tender wing,
 And forget his youthful spring!

O father and mother if buds are nipped,
And blossoms blown away;
And if the tender plants are stripped
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,—

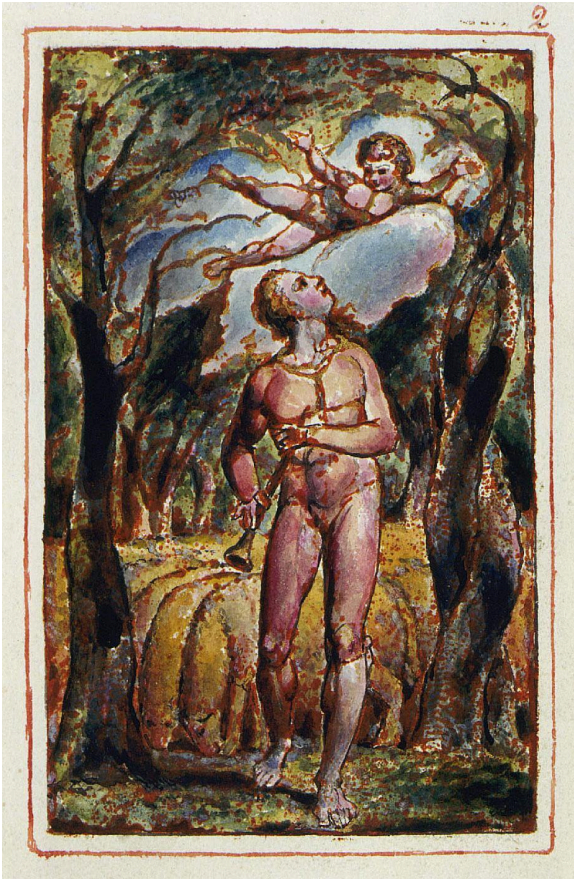
How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

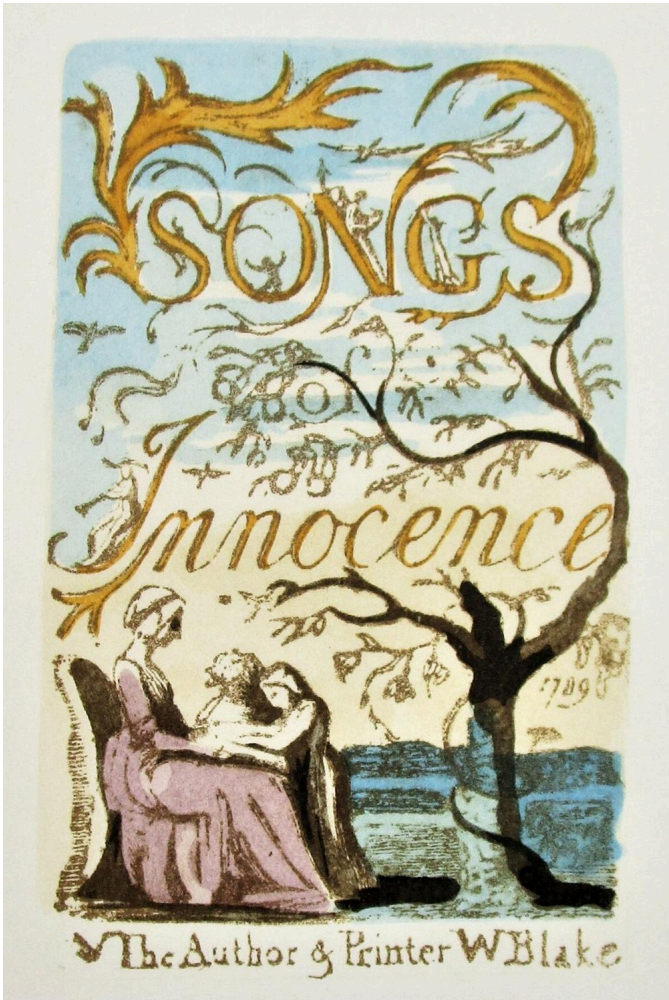
THE VOICE OF THE ANCIENT BARD

Youth of delight! come hither
And see the opening morn,
Image of Truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
Dark disputes and artful teasing.
Folly is an endless maze;
Tangled roots perplex her ways;
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the
dead;
And feel—they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others, when they should
be led.

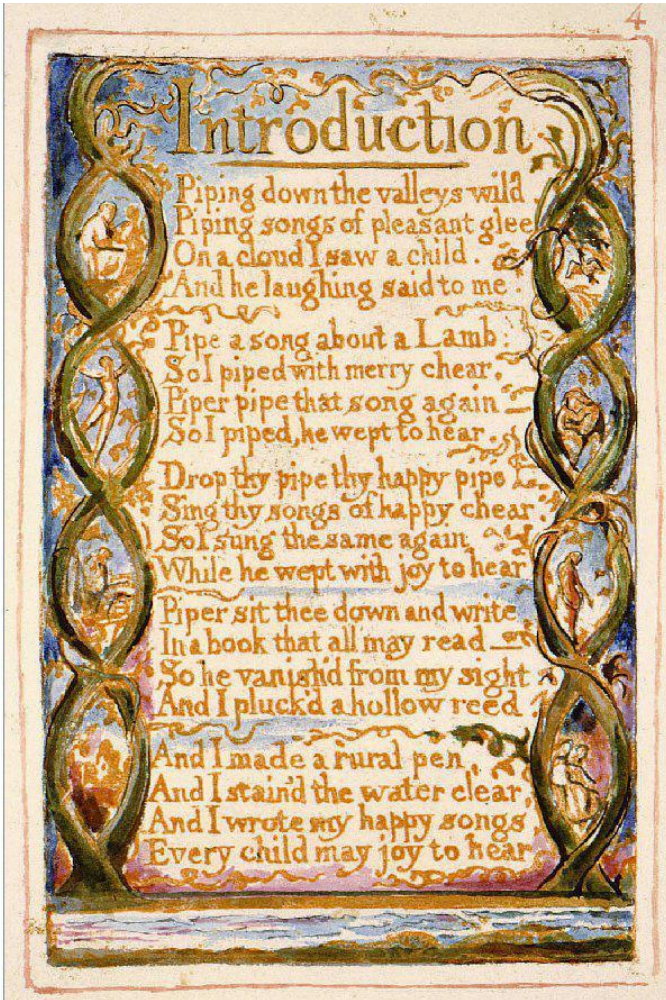
Appendix
Illustrations from Songs of Innocence
and of Experience

*(All plates reproduced here are illustrated by
William Blake (1789–1794))*





Songs of Innocence



Introduction



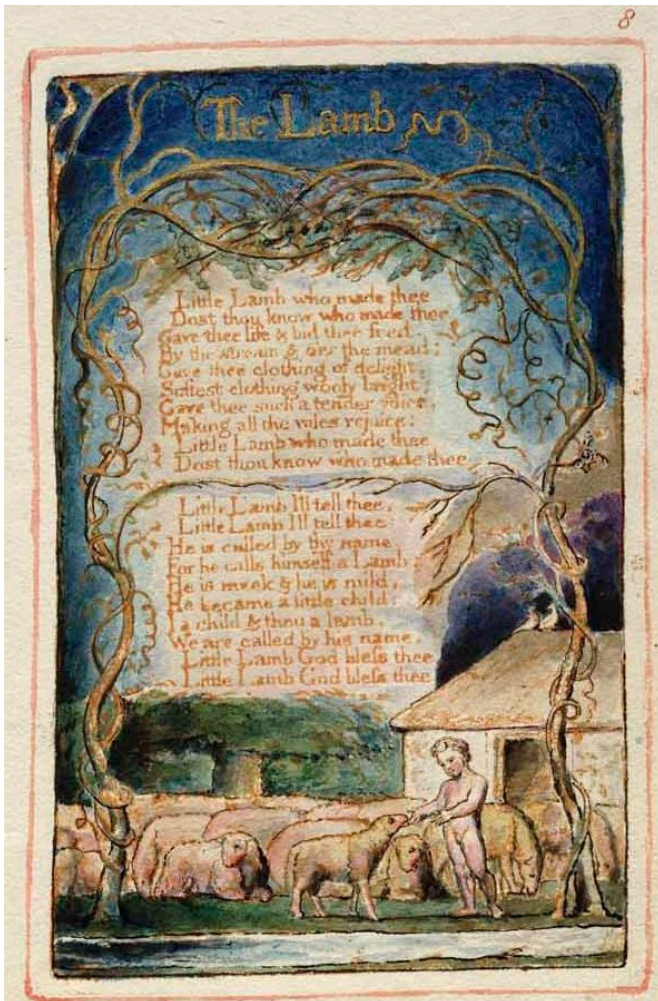
The Shepherd



The Echoing Green (1)



The Echoing Green (2)



The Lamb



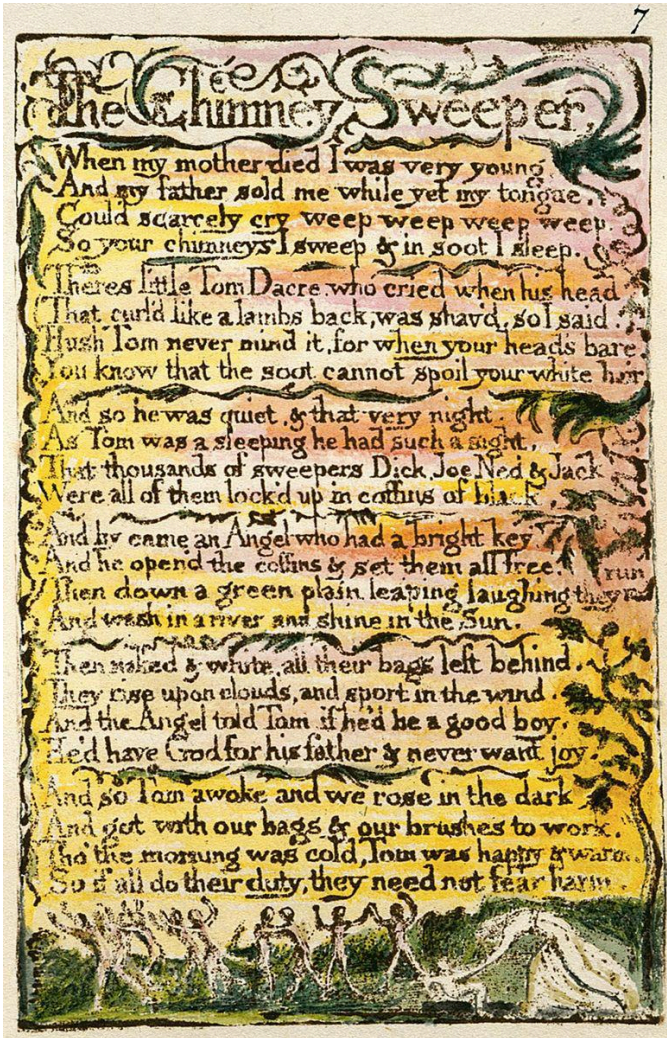
The Little Black Boy (1)



The Little Black Boy (2)



The Blossom



The Chimney Sweeper



The Little Boy Lost



The Little Boy Found



The Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
 And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
 When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
 And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
 And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
 When Mary and Susan and Emily,
 With their sweet round mouths sing Ha Ha He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
 Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
 Come live & be merry and join with me,
 To sing the sweet chorus of Ha Ha He.



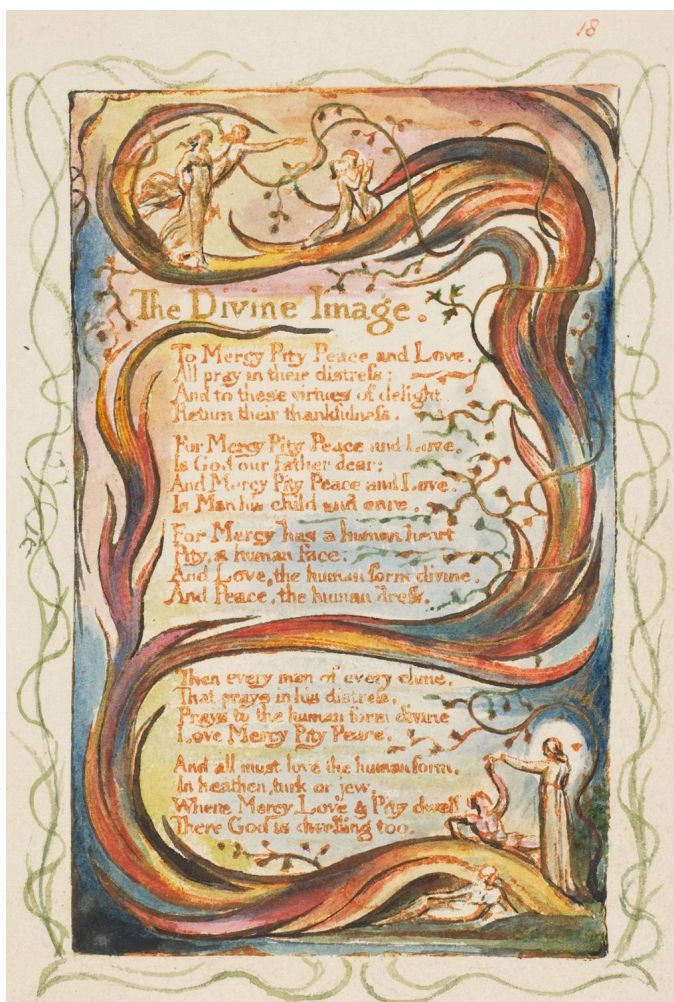
The Laughing Song



A Cradle Song (1)



A Cradle Song (2)



The Divine Image



Holy Thursday



Night (1)

When wolves and tygers howl for prey
 They pitying stand and weep;
 Seeking to drive their thirst away
 And keep them from the sheep
 But if they rush dreadful
 The angels most headful
 Recieve each mild spirit
 New worlds to inherit.

And there the lions ruddy eyes
 Shall flow with tears of gold:
 And pitying the tender cries
 And walking round the fold;
 Saying: wrath by his meekness
 And by his health, sicknes
 Is driven away.
 From our immortal day.

And now beside thee bleating lamb
 I can lie down and sleep;
 Or think on him who bore thy name
 Graze after thee and weep
 For wash'd in Jhes river
 My bright mane for ever
 Shall shine like the gold.
 As I guard oer the fold.



Night (2)



Spring (1)



Spring (2)



Nurse's Story



Infant Joy



A Dream



On Another's Sorrow





Songs of Experience

Introduction.

Hear the voice of the Bard!
 Who Present, Past, & Future sees
 Whose ears have heard,
 The Holy Ward,
 That walk'd among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul,
 And weeping in the evening dew;
 That might controll
 The starry pole;
 And fallen fallen light renew!

O Earth O Earth return!
 Arise from out the dewy grubs;
 Night is worn,
 And the morn
 Rises from the slumberous muds.

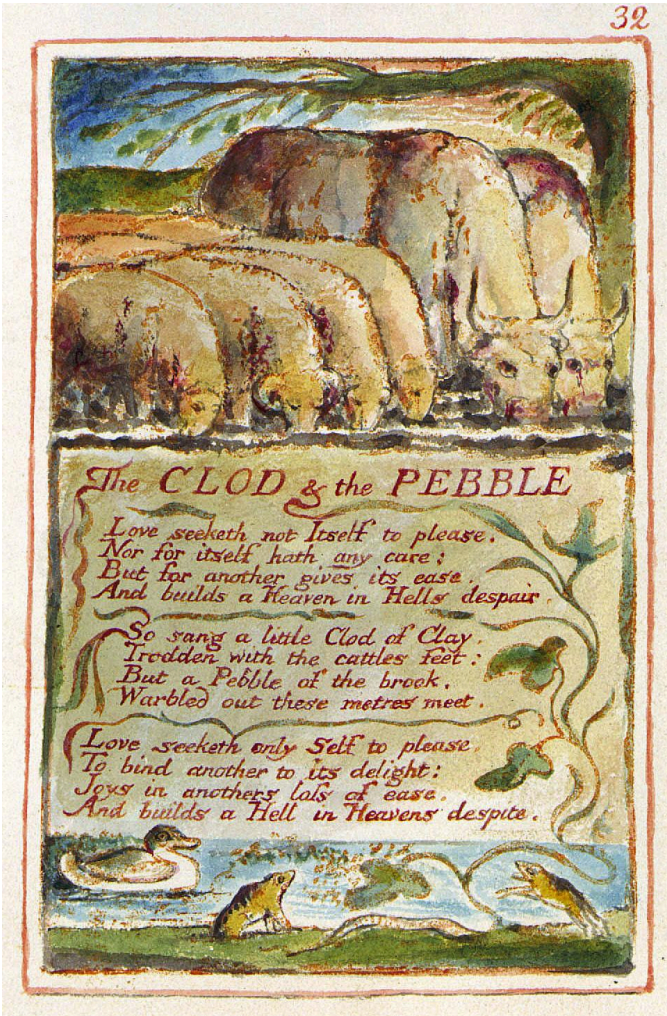
Turn away no more:
 Why wilt thou turn away
 The starry floor
 The watry shore
 Is givn thee till the break of day.



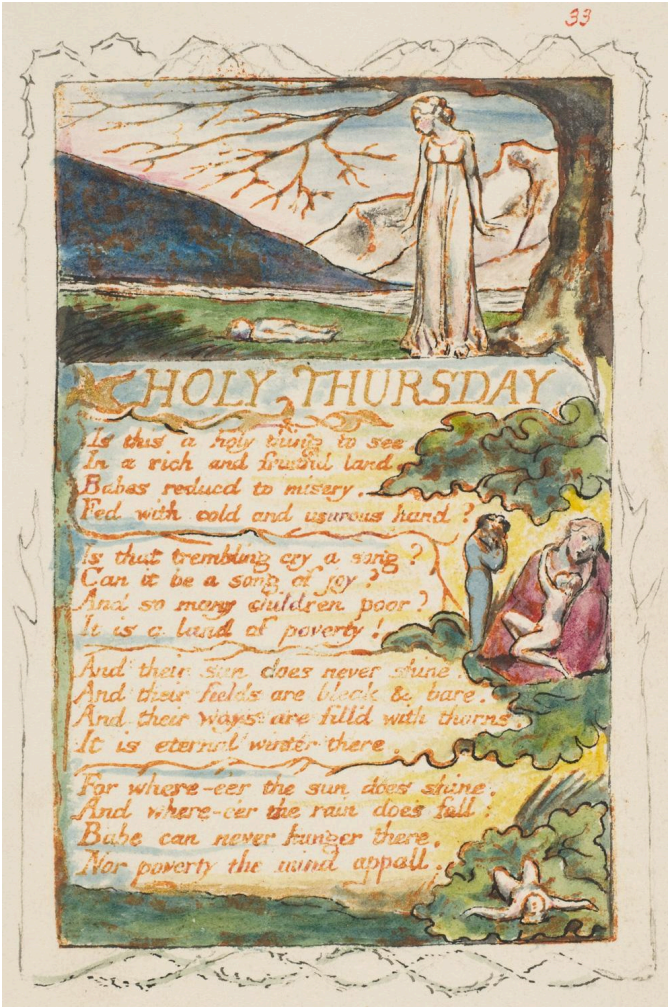
Introduction



Earth's Answer



The Clod and the Pebble



Holy Thursday



The Little Girl Lost



The Little Girl Found (1)



The Little Girl Found (2)



The Chimney Sweeper



Nurse's Song



The Sick Rose



The Fly



The Angel



The Tyger



My Pretty Rose Tree, Ah! Sun Flower, The Lilly



THE GARDEN OF LOVE

I went to the Garden of Love,
 And saw what I never had seen:
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 Where I used to play on the green.
 And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
 And Thou shalt not, writ over the door;
 So I turned to the Garden of Love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore.
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 And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
 And Priests in black gowns, were walking their
 rounds,
 And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

The Garden of Love



The Little Vagabond



London

The Human Abstract.

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 If all were as happy as we;
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 All the selfish loves increase.
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 Soon spreads the dismal shade
 Of Mystery over his head,
 And the Caterpillar and Fly
 Feed on the Mystery.
 And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
 Ruddy and sweet to eat,
 And the Raven his nest has made
 In its thickest shade.
 The Gods of the earth and sea,
 Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree,
 But their search was all in vain,
 There grows one in the Human Brain.



The Human Abstract



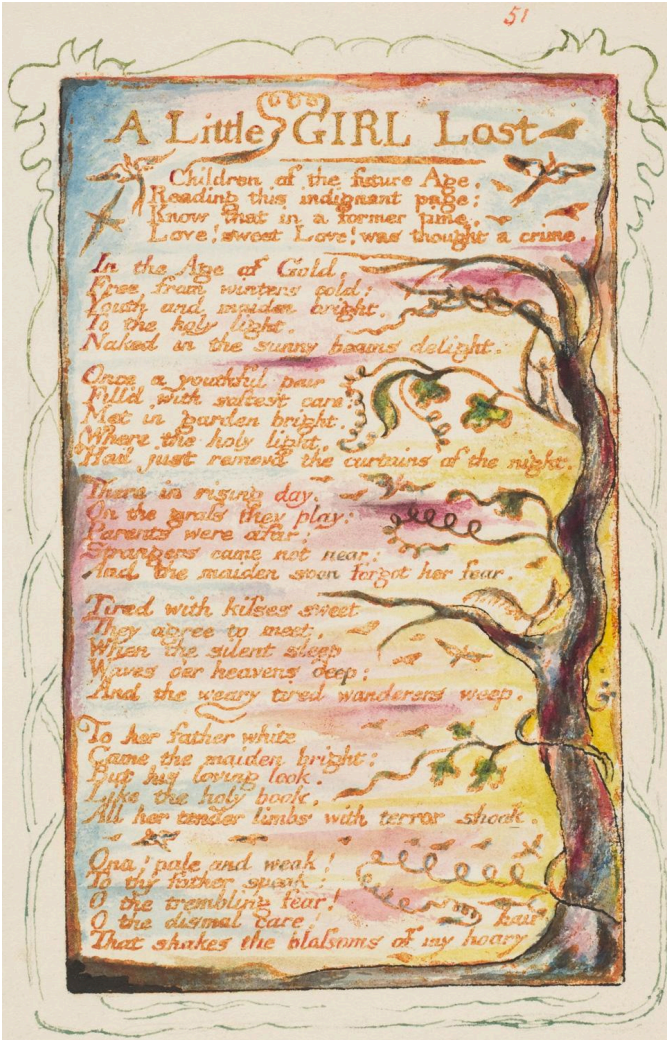
Infant Sorrow



A Poison Tree



A Little Boy Lost



A Little Girl Lost



A Divine Image



To Tirzah



The Schoolboy



The Voice of the Ancient Bard



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