

## WILLIAM BLAKE, *SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE* (1789)

### 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 a 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 vanish'd from my sight,  
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

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

### 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 & 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 on end.  
Round the laps of their mothers  
Many sisters and brothers,  
Like birds in their nest,  
Are ready for rest,  
And sports no more seen  
On the darkening Green.

### **The Lamb**

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

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb.  
He is meek, & he is mild;  
He became a little child.  
I a child, & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!  
Little Lamb, God bless thee!

### **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!"

### **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!

### **Nurse's Song**

When the 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 cover'd with sheep."

"Well, well, go & play till the light fades away  
And then go home to bed."  
The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd  
And all the hills echoed.

## Allen Ginsberg, Naropa class on Blake

AG: What I want to do today is to run through (William) Blake's "[Songs of Innocence and Experience](#)". Do most of you have the texts, or some of you have the texts? You might take them out. You've all read some Blake. Is there anybody here who never read any Blake at all? Raise your hands. Now, do most of you know some of the "Songs of Innocence and Experience"? I guess. Those of you who read Blake in grammar school, can you raise your hand? What schools did you go to?

Student: Public

AG: Where?

Student: In Detroit

AG: High-school, yeah, their regular high-school English. And then college? Yeah. Well Blake seems to be the one person who's penetrated through the educational system. [Allen begins, with harmonium, by singing the "[Introduction](#)" (from "[Songs of Innocence](#)") - "Piping down the valleys wild.." - followed by "[The Shepherd](#)" - "How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot..".(And) the next, "[The Echoing Green](#)", I have recorded [he attempts to play the recording but the record skips] - can't do it, I'll have to sing it.

Student: Do you want some help?

AG: I need some help then. If somebody could come up and turn pages for me,

Student: Is there a chair?

AG: Yeah, there's a chair. Would you bring that over? [Allen begins with the harmonium and sings, in its entirety, "The Echoing Green" ("The Sun does arise,/ And make happy the skies"), followed by "[The Lamb](#)" ("Little lamb, who made thee..?" "Little lamb, God bless thee" - he repeats the final refrain many times with the class) - (Next) "[The Little Black Boy](#)", which is the nearest to a statement of Gnostic nihilism, in a way, or anti-materialism, that Blake came to in this book, except maybe for the last poem, added on towards the end of his life, "[To Tirzah](#)".

[He sings "The Little Black Boy" ("My mother bore me in the southern wild..") and then follows it with "[The Blossom](#)" ("Merry Merry Sparrow..") ] - "The Blossom", which is Tantricyab-yum. Sparrow and blossom. Phallus and *yoni*. I think I have a recording of that I might take out [Allen plays a studio version of "[The Blossom](#)", with a chamber-orchestra accompaniment] - and "[The Chimney Sweeper](#)" [he plays a studio version of "[The Chimney Sweeper](#)", which begins with Peter Orlovsky commenting to Allen] - Peter said, "You know the words by heart" - I don't know if you can hear the words clearly without a text, actually, with that, because we were using echoes. I couldn't sing that because there were some high notes that only Orlovsky could get - "And by came an angel who had a bright key". "[The Little Boy Lost](#)" is done well on here [the record], and then I'll get back to singing myself. "[The Little Boy Lost](#)" and "[The Little Boy Found](#)".

Student: Allen, the last line of that, or the last couple of lines, what degree of irony.. what degree...is (there in) "The Chimney Sweeper"?

AG: I took it as very straight, naive, in that one. There are Marxist interpretations and others. And Gnostic interpretations that say it's totally sardonic. But actually, my ultimate feeling about it is that it's great sentimentality. I like it better that way than any other way at the moment. So that was the interpretation that was put on it. But I guess you should be forewarned that that actually might be Blake being really nasty also. [Allen then performs "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found" - "Father, father, where are you going?/ Oh, do not walk so fast!.."] - Then, ["The Laughing Song"](#) [Allen sings with harmonium - "When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy.."] - There's a weird version, kind of jazzed up, with laughter that we did. Are you interested in comparing the recordings? The trumpet on [this \(recorded version\)](#) is [Don Cherry](#), who's a really great jazz musician, so it all jazzed itself up. And also Cherry is on the maracas [Allen plays the [studio recording of "The Laughing Song"](#)] - I was doing that to actually punctuate the rhythm, score the rhythm, with "ha's".

Student: What year was this?

AG: This was 19...

Student: 68?

AG: '68 or '69. I forget. I don't know. This is still available actually. Even here, I think, but the album said "liner notes enclosed" - but they're not enclosed - So it's a sort of a mess. "Cradle Song", or "A Cradle Song" [Allen proceeds to sing, with harmonium accompaniment, ["A Cradle Song"](#) ("Sweet dreams, form a shade/O'er my lovely infant's head...", including "Heaven and earth to peace beguiles", the last line, which he repeats many times, with the class joining in) - and then ["The Divine Image"](#) ("To Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love") and ["Holy Thursday"](#) ("Twas on a Holy Thursday...) before tape ends here] [second side of the tape begins with] AG: ["Night"](#) - What I've done is set about 35 of the 45 songs, so I'll run through if we have time (left), is that alright? - Students: Yeah, wonderful - [Allen recites, with harmonium accompaniment, and in its entirety, "Night" ("The sun descending in the West.."), then ("I'll try that again) repeats the last two stanzas]. (Next), ["Spring"](#), which has a refrain at the end - I have a recording of some of these that I'll put out. This one I've done with (Bob) Dylan and Happy Traum doing the chorus work, which you can do ma'am..

Student: Me?

AG: Yep [Allen proceeds to give a rendition of "Spring", with numerous repetitions of the chorus line - "Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year"] - The next also has a chorus. ["The Nurse's Song"](#) (from ["Songs of Innocence"](#)) . I want to skip, for one second, to do ["The Nurse's Song"](#) (from ["Songs of Experience"](#)) first, on recording [Allen plays [recording of "The Nurse's Song"](#) ("When the voices of children, are heard on the green/And whisperings are in the dale..")] - When I was 20, I had an auditory hallucination of Blake's voice, which was just about like that. But it took me about 20 years to perfect it. So it was probably a hallucination of my own latent diaphragm vocalization. I was hearing my own voice, probably, as in a dream. (Next), "Nurse's Song" (from "Songs of Innocence") - "When the voices of children, are heard on the green/ And laughing is heard on the hill" [Allen performs this song and, as was his manner, repeats the final line several times, midway - "And all the hills echo-ed" - turning it into a "round" - this is followed by ["Infant Joy"](#) ("I have no name/ I am but two days old..") - and ["A Dream"](#) - "A Dream - this also has a chorus, a Buddhist chorus at the end of this, making use of "Om" and "Hum" -

"Once a dream did weave a shade".."Little wanderer hie thee home".."Hum hum hum hum..home home home home") - (and ["On Another's Sorrow"](#) - Can you hear me when I'm singing low? What time is it?...

[tape begins again] - Allen recites (with harmonium) "On Another's Sorrow" ("Can I see another's woe/ And not be in sorrow too?", repeating the last line, "He doth sit by us and moan" several times)] - "Songs of Experience" - I don't have all of them done [but Allen recites the first part, the Introduction - ("Hear the voice of the bard,/ Who present, past, and future sees..")] - I don't have ["Earth's Answer"](#) prepared. I have a ["Holy Thursday"](#) done country & western (style), but I don't know how to play the chords correctly, so I'll experiment with it actually. You'll get the general idea, if I can't get it straight, anyways [ Allen sings "Holy Thursday" ("Is this a holy thing to see..")] - Now let see how that goes..Okay..yeah..

["The Little Girl Lost"](#) (which is, more or less, an improvisation). I have the chords for it, but I don't have it worked out. I think it's actually one of the most powerful of the songs. The sentence and prophecy in it. He says himself, "Grave the sentence deep/ Shall arise and seek/ For her maker meek". So it's the same as the "voice of the bard", saying "Hear the voice of the bard".."O Earth return!.." "Why dost thou turn away?" "Why will thou turn away?" ("O Earth, O Earth, return../ Turn away no more/ Why wilt thou turn away?") - So its actually consciousness turning away from his ground that he's talking about. And "Lyca" [Allen pronounces it like "Lisa"] is the lost consciousness. So Lyca is the consciousness of mankind, which has become lost, and is wandering in the void. As I interpret it. Well how would you pronounce it? [to class] - L-Y-C-A - How would you pronounce it? I've puzzled over that for years. LIE-ka?

Student: Yeah, LIE-ka, like "light-house".

AG: I think, "Lisa", "Lysa", "Allysa". What do you figure? - LIE-ka or LEE-suh? Take a vote. Who wants LIE-ka? What were the various ones? LEE-ka. Who wants LEE-ka? Raise your hands for LEE-ka. Raise your hands for LEE-suh? - Oh shit, who's got the book? There's a picture of her in the book. Who's got the Blake book? "The Little Girl Lost" - Is there [a picture of her](#) in "The Little Girl Lost"? Who wanted to know what she looked like? There's one there who wanted to know what she looked like. Pass it back.

Student: She's a big girl

AG: You want to pass it back?

Student: Someone else.. It's over there..

AG: It's alright. You just keep passing it on.

Student: If its LIE-ka he's playing with a simile

AG: True enough. You mean "like" ?

Student: LIE-ka

AG: Maybe. Lovely likeness lay ("Lovely Lyca lay")

Student: I looked up "Lyca" in the dictionary and I can't remember what it was

AG: The [Blake Dictionary](#)?

Student: An old *OED*

AG: By the way, if anybody's interested in figuring out Blake.. because, I'm not explaining very much here, because I figure the singing is sufficient - interpretation of the phrasing , and with the right phrasing it's pretty clear, more or less, isn't it? Has it been very much complicated about... a few (like this) are really obviously symbolic so I stop and take time, but..

Student: What do you think happened in between the times that these two sets of things were written? Do you think that his consciousness was actually, as that experience would.. indecipherable ? Do you think he knew all the stuff that he was singing about after he wrote...

AG: I think, latently, sure, but I guess he was still holding out for innocence, or still sentimentalizing a bit. But he thought he had made it so innocent that it would be a great stroke of genius to turn the other, dark, side on, maybe. I don't know. I don't know the times of composition. It may be that some of the "Songs of Experience" were composed during the time of "Songs of Innocence", but he didn't feel they fit, and then, all of a sudden, he had the idea to put them in. Yeah?

Student: Have you set "[How sweet I roam'd from field to field..](#)" ?

AG: No, actually [Ed Sanders and The Fugs set that](#). (Sanders will be teaching here, you know. I think the last week of the first session, I think). [Sanders](#) turned me on to this, actually. It was through Sanders' experiments with music with The Fugs that I decided, well, if he can do it, I can be a..

Student: Do you know...

AG: [begins singing] - "How sweet I roam'd from field to field,/ And tasted all the summer's pride,/ Till I, the prince of love beheld,/ Who in the sunny beams did glide!" - "He gave me lilies for my hair..." ("He shew'd me lilies for my hair..") - Do you know the rest?

Student: [takes up the singing] - "...And blushing roses for my brow;/ He led me through his gardens fair,/ Where all his golden pleasures grow.."

AG: Louder!

Student: Oh, I can't sing

AG: Oh..

Student: Do you want me to try...?

AG: Yeah, yeah..

Student [sings, in its entirety, the poem]

AG: [singing] "And mocks my loss of liberty". Actually, it was (Ed Sanders') idea, the country & western, originally. Yeah, I took it off from his.. does anybody know that Fugs record? It's actually a classic. It was recorded, I think, by Harry Smith...

Student: Allen, you started to say, if anybody's interested in figuring out Blake...

AG: Oh, if anybody's interested in figuring out Blake, look up "Lyca", LEE-suh, LIE-ka.. Likeness. Looking up the likeness of any of the images. There's [S. Foster Damon's "A Blake Dictionary"](#). (The book's) in the library now. Damon was a great Blake scholar, a friend of [Virgil Thomson](#), who, at an early age, began to study Blake in a sort of scientific way, by going back and getting a hold of the Gnostic and Hebrew cabalistic texts that Blake used and knew, and has written a number of books on Blake which are considered to be the most esoteric, ground-breaking, interesting, mystical books. S. Foster Damon - D-A-M-O-N. He used to set one song of Blake's to music every Christmas, because he was also a folklore archivist, and I once went to visit him a couple of times to sing to him what I had done, to see if it sounded right. He said what I was doing was more or less probably close, because what Blake was doing was working in the tradition of the Wesleyan hymn songs of the time: [John Wesley's](#) hymns and hymn tunes. Blake sung these songs, I forgot to say. "Songs of Innocence and Experience" are, literally, songs. They were intended as songs, and Blake sang them. It's not well-known in grammar school but in [the Gilchrist biography of Blake](#), which is the earliest biography by a family friend, it's recorded that Mr Blake used to go to his friends' parlors and sing the songs unaccompanied, or with instruments of the time, and scholar-professors who heard him sing unfortunately did not notate the tunes. So he was out there singing, which is why I try to restore some of the vocalization to them by singing them, because they're a lot easier to understand sung. And the music of them, that is the rhythm of them, gets a lot more subtle when you sing it. I goofed on the verse in "Night" which is actually the most interesting, rhythmically - "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/' - is like a really fast, sudden, syncopation of it. Here was where I began discovering that if you follow the punctuation you would begin to be able to figure out the breathing, and the swiftness of pronunciation, because, if you'll notice here - "Wrath", comma, "by his meekness", comma/ And by his health (comma) sickness/ Is driven away/ From our immortal day". Now, in the illustrated edition, you'd have to actually check it out (not from any copybooks, books copied) but you have to go back to Blake's own edition (which is illustrated with his own pictures) to find the original punctuation as he engraved them on the plates. Because he engraved plates and then colored them. He and his wife colored them. And, if you get a chance, one of the best ways to read Blake is to get to a library in a major city like New York or Los Angeles, the Huntington Library, the New York Public Library, the Morgan Library in New York, and I think some in Washington, I don't know, some in Washington..

Student: Probably the..

AG: Mellon?

Student: (Library of) Congress too has everything

AG: Maybe. Well, no. They don't have everything of Blake's, because there aren't that many. There are only 24 copies or so of "Songs of Innocence". There's only one copy engraved and colored of his major last work extant, "[Jerusalem](#)". Now, a lot of these are



reprinted by [Trianon Press](#), [Nonesuch?](#), I don't know.. what is it? ..what is the... There are a number of Blake books which are illustrated now. Colored illustrations meticulously done. \$100 and \$200 and \$500 and \$1000 each, to get copies, \$1000 to get a colored illustrated copy of Blake's "Jerusalem", but it's the best way to read them [this discussion, of course, taking place, long before the invention of the internet and [the Blake Archives](#)] - Read the texts and then go back and read those. Turn on, get high, and then look at the pictures and read the words, because a lot of his intention is given there in the illustrations, and if you can get a chance to go library to library, like (to the) Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, you can see one or more copies at the same time of "Songs of Innocence". For instance, in "Night", you can see how from copy to copy he changed the face of the tiger, the "tyger, tyger". Sometimes it's a little cuddly, friendly, human-faced, tiger, sometimes it's a really wrathful Tibetan tiger. Sometimes it's a smudgy-faced tiger. Because each illustration he touched up with pen and painted slightly differently, and his wife painted and colored in some of them and touched them up. So to really get Blake, if you get into Blake, it's a total delight if you can go get something done by his own hand and look at what he did physically. And if you don't understand what he did, Damon's researches are among the best that I've ever read. Damon has boiled down all of his intelligence into "A Blake Dictionary", where all the names, all the concepts, are spelled out and defined and compared from poem to poem. It's in the library here. You don't read it, you just .. If you run across a problem in Blake like, who is "Los"? or who is "Urizen"? [pronounced in succession by Allen as "Yur-reason" and "Yur-eye-zen"], you look them up. You can look it up in the book if the right words are important.

*The audio for some of this (beginning with Allen's performances of "Night", "Spring", "Nurse's Song", "A Dream", :Holy Thursday") is available courtesy the Internet Archive at: [http://www.archive.org/details/Allen\\_Ginsberg\\_class\\_The\\_history\\_of\\_poetry\\_part\\_14\\_June\\_1975\\_75P014](http://www.archive.org/details/Allen_Ginsberg_class_The_history_of_poetry_part_14_June_1975_75P014)*

*Thanks once again to Randy Roark for his pioneering transcription work*

addenda: (still from Allen's 1975 "History of Poetry" class, but the following week (July 4 - sic) -

[http://www.archive.org/details/Allen\\_Ginsberg\\_class\\_The\\_history\\_of\\_poetry\\_part\\_15\\_June\\_1975\\_75P016](http://www.archive.org/details/Allen_Ginsberg_class_The_history_of_poetry_part_15_June_1975_75P016)

AG: What I want to begin with is the last song of Blake that I'll sing (in this particular class) - called ["The Schoolboy"](#). This is a farewell to Blake and a salute to Independence Day and a tribute to those who came. So "The Schoolboy" (Allen sings Blake's "The Schoolboy" (from "Songs of Experience") in its entirety - "I love to rise on a summer morn...") Okay, (that's) a last Blake for this session.

Hymn texts

**Isaac Watts, 'Joy to the World' (1719)**

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns;  
Let men their songs employ.  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders of His love.

**Reginald Heber, 'Holy, holy, holy' (c.1820)**

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

### **Henry F. Lyte, 'Abide with me' (1847)**

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,  
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,  
Familiar, condescending, patient, free.  
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,  
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea.  
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,  
And though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,  
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee.  
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;

Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

**John Newton, 'Amazing Grace' (1779)**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

**Anon, 'Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming' (c.1590s)**

Isaiah, verse 1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming,  
From tender stem hath sprung!  
From Jesse's lineage coming,<sup>1</sup>  
As men of old have sung.

It came, a floweret bright,  
Amid the cold of winter  
When half spent was the night

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,  
The Rose I have in mind  
With Mary we behold it,  
The Virgin mother kind

To show God's love aright,  
She bore to us a Savior  
When half spent was the night

The shepherds heard the story  
Proclaimed by angels bright,  
How Christ, the Lord of Glory  
Was born on earth this night.

To Bethlehem they sped  
And in the manger they found him,  
As angels heralds said.

This Flower, whose fragrance tender  
With sweetness fills the air,  
Dispels with glorious splendor  
The darkness everywhere;

True man, yet very God,  
From Sin and death he saves us,  
And lightens every load.

### **Anon, 'Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella (1553)**

Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabelle!  
Bring a torch, to the stable run  
Christ is born. Tell the folk of the village  
Jesus is born and Mary's calling.  
Ah!\* Ah! beautiful is the Mother!  
Ah! Ah! beautiful is her child

Who is that, knocking on the door?  
Who is it, knocking like that?  
Open up, we've arranged on a platter  
Lovely cakes that we have brought here  
Knock! Knock! Knock! Open the door for us!

Knock! Knock! Knock! Let's celebrate!

It is wrong when the child is sleeping,  
It is wrong to talk so loud.  
Silence, now as you gather around,  
Lest your noise should waken Jesus.  
Hush! Hush! see how he slumbers;  
Hush! Hush! see how fast he sleeps!

Softly now unto the stable,  
Softly for a moment come!  
Look and see how charming is Jesus,  
Look at him there, His cheeks are rosy!  
Hush! Hush! see how the Child is sleeping;  
Hush! Hush! see how he smiles in dreams!

*Alternative lyrics*

Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabelle!  
Bring a torch to the cradle run!  
It is Jesus, good folk of the village;  
Christ is born and Mary's calling:  
Ah! ah! beautiful is the mother!  
Ah! ah! beautiful is her Son!

It is wrong when the Child is sleeping  
It is wrong to talk so loud;  
Silence, all, as you gather around,  
Lest your noise should waken Jesus:  
Hush! hush! see how fast He slumbers:  
Hush! hush! see how fast He sleeps!

Softly to the little stable,  
Softly for the moment come;  
Look and see how charming is Jesus,  
See how He smiles, Oh see how rosy!  
Hush! hush! see how the Child is sleeping;  
Hush! hush! see how He smiles in dreams.

**Alan Richardson, 'Literature, Education and Romanticism' (2004)**

'The ongoing debate on the uses and dangers of literacy and popular (if not yet mass) education became during the later eighteenth century what Raymond Williams has called the most "central" issue "in the history of our culture." And as the concept of childhood became defined (if not in fact produced) by education, the new children's literature and literary representations of childhood, including Romantic idealizations of the child, reflected no less than did contemporary education theory the politics of literacy.' (853)

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**Nick Shrimpton, 'Hell's hymnbook' in *Literature of the Romantic Period* (1976)**

Blake's Songs 'spring from an exceptionally specialized branch of the lyric which happened to be very active in the latter part of the eighteenth century . . . (his) decision to write children's hymns. . . was a decision to participate in what was to be the most prolific and controversial literary form of the decade . . . Blake's Songs were certainly written for children, though not exclusively so, but like all children's literature they had to be bought by adults who wished to teach or improve. Yet Blake's poems encourage children to believe their own instincts to be superior to any adult instruction. The poems implicitly reject the very act of teaching' (20-26).

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**Mike Sanders, 'The National Chartist Hymnbook and Victorian Hymnody' (2012)**

'From the smug conservatism of Mrs. Alexander's "All Things Bright and Beautiful" to the cultural-imperialist sentiments of "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," Victorian hymns are often seen as exemplifying the ills of nineteenth-century culture. Politically, aesthetically, and even theologically offensive to many scholars, the Victorian hymn currently languishes in an obscurity that many consider well deserved. Studies of Victorian hymns have generally concentrated on their theology (as in the work of Lionel Adey and Ian Bradley), their role in fostering primarily "conservative" social attitudes (Susan Tamke and Stephen Wilson), or their literary and aesthetic value (J. R. Watson). More recently, there has been a burgeoning interest in women's hymn writing (Nancy Cho and F. E. Gray). These lonely champions of Victorian hymnody are all agreed on the cultural vitality and influence of the hymn form in Victorian society. In *Abide with Me: The World of Victorian Hymns*, Bradley comments on "the ubiquity and pervasiveness of hymns in Victorian culture," noting that hymn texts "appeared on postcards and tombstones, on framed posters to be hung up at home and in school reading books" and that hymn tunes "were played by brass bands and barrel organs and formed the largest single category of subject matter for pianola rolls" (xiii-xiv). In similar fashion, J. R. Watson argues that "hymnbooks, of every style, and catering for every taste (and even every locality, or school), were produced in vast numbers" throughout the nineteenth century (341). The raw data clearly supports this assessment, as the British Library catalogue lists 1,200 hymnbooks published between 1837 and 1901. W. T. Stead estimated that by the 1890s more than two million hymnbooks were being sold in Britain annually (Bradley 54-55). Even the Anglican Church, which tended to regard hymn singing as a "badge of dissent," and which took its last legal

action against hymn singing in 1820, was ultimately unable to resist this cultural phenomenon, tolerating (if not officially sanctioning) the publication of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861.'

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**Emma Mason, 'Devotional Poetry', *Oxford Handbook of British Poetry 1660-1800* (2013)**

"The question of how believers hear the word of God shapes the history of devotional poetry. The complexity of parallelism and poetic sound patterns that mark the Hebrew Bible are matched by the text's insistence that the believer listen. God's appearance to the disciples in the Gospels, for example, is signified through a booming voice that reverberates from a cloud: 'This is my beloved Son: hear him' (Luke 9.35). There are countless commands to pay attention to the possibility of hearing God, climaxing in Revelation's 'He that hath an ear, let him hear with the Spirit saith' (3.6). The sound of God's voice was seen as well as heard in the Bible. One of the earliest references to synesthetic listening in the Old Testament appears in Exodus, wherein the Hebrew version describes God's encounter with Moses witnessed by a crowd who see sound: 'And all the people saw the sounds of the thundering' (Exodus 20). Commenting on this passage, John Wesley reminded his reader that 'God has many ways of speaking to the children of men by his spirit, conscience, providences', implying that listening was an act, not just of the senses, but of faith. Literary critics and historians alike have traced a specific relationship between listening and religion in the eighteenth century, one that predates modernity's obsession with the ocular. Leigh Eric Schmidt, for example, maps a history of hearing in the American enlightenment to show how Christians of various denominations preserved an authentic discipline of hearing to counter acoustic illusions like ventriloquism or the auditory tricks of spiritualism. The reliance on a printed as well as an oral tradition of poetry to teach and train the believing ear suggests that aurality was not simply linked with religion against an emergent modern visual culture. Eighteenth-century poetry in particular called attention to the sound of verse through regular metre, precise rhyme schemes, linguistic artifice and a dependence on the couplet to encourage memorization. This in turn allowed for ready recitation, in the pulpit, field or chapel, as well as a return to the page in order to correctly learn a poem's diction and intonation. As Wendy Roberts argues: 'The sound of poetry became so important that performing it correctly could entail artificial elocution – observing elisions and contractions in one's pronunciation or fully rhyming a slant rhyme depending upon one's elocutionary theory.'"