

Nelson Hilton --"William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*"
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"Read patiently take not up this Book in an idle hour the consideration of these things is the whole duty of man & the affairs of life & death trifles sports of time these considerations business of Eternity." Blake's annotations to a volume he studied in 1798 (see Blake, ed. [Erdman \[E\] 611](#)) can serve today to characterize the attention deserved and significance offered by the most familiar work of England's "last great religious poet" (Ackroyd 18) and "greatest revolutionary artist" (Eagleton, in Larrissy ix).

What we know as his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* begins in the publication, over the space of thirty-five years, of fifty copies of *Songs of Innocence* and twenty-eight of *Songs of Experience*, from which were constituted the two dozen actual sets of the combined *Songs*, variously ordered and with a joint title page. The work in its full form consists of fifty-four designs and poems which only in the last few copies follow the sequence adopted by almost every modern edition. These Blake etched in relief on relatively small (7 x 11 cm) copper plates, printed, often coloured, and bound: his title page gives equal weight to his labours as "Author & Printer," and expects no less of his readers. [\(1\)](#)

Composition also was protracted -- while the poems and designs of *Innocence* are dated 1789, three early drafts surface in a 1785 manuscript which also reveals the 28-year-old artist's predilection for "making a fool" of the reader ([E 453](#)); *Songs of Experience* and the joint title page are dated 1794, and one poem ("To Tirzah") appears a few years after that. The five epochal years between the title page dates of *Innocence* and *Experience* bracket the bulk of Blake's so-called "Bible of Hell," including remarkable works such as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (MHH), *VISIONS of the Daughters of Albion*, and, also dated 1794, *The Book of Urizen*.

As part of the "discovery" or "invention" of [childhood](#) in the eighteenth century associated with the interest in early education shown by Locke, Rousseau, and the Sunday School movement, the decades before the *Songs* saw the genre of short collections of devotional and moral poems for children emerge as a "most prolific and controversial literary form" (Shrimpton 22). The genre's mainstay was Isaac Watts's *Divine and Moral Songs Attempted in easy Language, for the Use of Children*, 1715, influential enough to be parodied not only by Blake (in "A Cradle Song"), but still later in *Alice in Wonderland*; other titles could be cited, however, including Charles Wesley's *Hymns for Children*, 1763; Christopher Smart's *Hymns for the Amusement of Children*, 1770; and Anna Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children*, 1781. These works make a small sub-set of eighteenth-century hymnody, itself arguably the most pervasively influential innovation of cultural discourse in Blake's time. While it has long been recognized that in terms of metrical and stanzaic variety, Blake's songs "make as clear a parallel with eighteenth-century hymns, as they make a contrast with eighteenth-century lyric" (Holloway 37), their contrast with the ideological burden of hymns has yet to be explored fully. If John Wesley could preface his brother's hymns with the hope that once children "understand them they will be children no longer, only in years and stature," then Blake

might counter that if adults could understand *his* songs, their "doors of perception" might be cleansed (*MHH* 14). Following his own interpretation of the Gospel, Blake thinks "every Thing to be Evident to the Child" (E 664), and writes that "the innocence of a child" can reproach the reader "with the errors of acquired folly" (E 600). His songs "about" or "from the perspective of" a guiltless point of view offer parables to test what such pure perception might be, and how our sense might be folly.

The girl and boy learning to read at the lap of their nurse or mother who appear on the *Innocence* [title page](#) announce recurrent concern with education in *Songs*. This group announces the "scene of instruction" to be found in or behind almost every song. The quintessential object of instruction is, in one form or another, language and the concomitant ability to play with the symbolic order, and *Songs* might be taken as evoking stations along a gradient beginning with total ignorance of that realm of symbol and culture and ending with original artistic contribution. These various stations can be shuffled in the various sequences of different copies of *Songs* -- there is no one developmental path, no single authorized reading. From a social perspective, the poems represent minute particulars from the spectrum of discourses across the social field. These different, often "contrary" stations or moments are rooted in the individual poems and designs themselves, making lack of single meaning a crucial point about each of the *Songs*. Given inescapable divisions in self and society, a Wordsworthian "common language of men" is impossible for Blake (Glen 106). There are no lyric effusions of emotion recollected, but rather dramatic stagings of language in action (see Gillham) -- as the few readings which follow hope to suggest.

Many readers have found the ballad-like "[Introduction](#)" to *Innocence* a commentary on individual and cultural artistic development, which moves from ("pipes down") pre-verbal, pure sound inspiration to sung words to written text -- and, simultaneously, from a state of presence and mutual participation to one of absence and emphatic separateness (the penultimate four lines which begin "And I"). This process also foregrounds Blake's ongoing concern with identity (repetition, sameness) and difference, as elsewhere in the focus on "echoing": in what sense is a song "the same again" if it is rendered in words rather than sound? In Blake's time, especially with the popular "Glee Club" movement, "glee" was familiar as a song scored for three or more voices to make up a series of interwoven melodies -- a meaning applicable throughout to these "songs of pleasant glee." The poem's closing sets up the paradoxical realization that the only way "every child may joy to hear" the song is through its being sung by one who has learned to read. So we return to the issue of inspiration and transmission, of the "pipe," the conduit, the I (to represent it typographically). The engendering spring of the song-stream comes to readers via the "hollow reed" of the pipe and the pen, but for hearers requires that readers reinspire (literally, blow into again) the otherwise "hollow read" of the text.

The child asks the piper to pipe then to sing about "a Lamb," and while "The Lamb" follows in one copy, "[The Shepherd](#)" comes next in most. These pastoral references, as well as the term "innocence" itself, indicate the Christian imagery and themes which saturate *Songs*. The complex and idiosyncratic nature of Blake's Christianity has yet to receive full consideration, but any account must reckon with his apparent childhood in a private, radical Protestant sect, the Muggletonians (see Thompson), his later involvement with Swedenborg and the "New Church," his professional connections to the Dissenters, and his own various pronouncements -- those on the equivalence of Christ and imagination not least. In annotations written around the time of *Innocence*, Blake argues

that "our Lord is the word of God" (E 599), but also that "the Poetic Genius ... is the Lord" (E 603). The "acquired folly" which innocence challenges concerns especially religious ceremony, tedious hymns, and conventional theology, and their want of perception for that energetic, spiritual and intellectual vision which exists *in no sense*.

Orthodox Blake criticism takes "The Shepherd" as an evocation of familiar themes, with apparent parallels in traditional and contemporary devotional verse. But for Blake, always ready to read "white" where we read "black" (E 524), the poem may also invite us to reconsider what the sheep herd heard. To begin with, the cloying repetition (unique for Blake) in "How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot" seems, literally, too sweet; and with the odd image that not the sheep, but the shepherd "strays," brings up nagging associations of error, deviation, lack of guidance. "For he hears the lambs innocent call" offers a lame rationale for praise, and the curious logic culminates in the awkward grammar of the conclusion:

He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.

Songs is filled with such worrying verbal and graphic minute particulars (the stance and expression of the illustrated shepherd make for another) which, if we let them work, tease us into thought -- in this case all the more if we consider the dissonance with the biblical allusion, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Is. 40:11). It seems likely that one part of this glee reflects Blake's already longstanding meditation on the indictment penned by Milton at a similar age of earlier faithless "pastors" with their "lean and flashy songs" (*Lycidas* 123).

If one wishes to locate the poems on some ideal gradient of language-acquisition, "[Infant Joy](#)" offers an obvious place to begin -- and indeed it follows next in the same number of copies (11) as the common order. The poem appears to involve two voices, and many editors have felt compelled to "improve" the text with quotation marks. A moment's reflection may suggest that we are overhearing the play of a mother and baby in an initial enactment of how, especially for the infant, language comes to us already articulated in forms we must learn to comprehend. The text foregrounds the role of name and calling, yet seems to associate "joy" with a pre-verbal, unnamed state -- indeed, "infant," derives from the Latin *infans* or "not speaking." Unspeakable joy, perhaps. With an age of two days, the infant is on the eve of the traditional occasion for baptism and official recording of name (Shakespeare's birthday, for instance, is hypothesized by subtracting three from the known baptismal date). This fall into language, into the symbolic machinery of society is gain, in the eventual acquisition of skill with symbols, but also loss of the glory in undifferentiated potential. At the moment, for a moment, this latter joy assimilates the ineffable "I AM" of Exodus and Coleridge's later "primary imagination" -- but "The I am" cannot go unnamed for long.

"[The Lamb](#)" moves further along the language acquisition gradient and into a paradigmatic scene of instruction. This evident response to the inspiring child's request for "a song about a lamb" offers at the least a three-part glee: one for the Lamb as child, the "bonnie lamb" of nursery rhymes and endearment; another for the young sheep also illustrated in the design; and another for the Agnus Dei. But by beginning with a question out of catechism ("Canst thou tell who made thee?" also begins a lesson in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Pt. 2) "The Lamb" tells any who have ears to hear that it has

been to Sunday school and encoded one of the most popular of Wesley's *Hymns for Children*, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild":

Lamb of God, I look to thee
Thou shalt my example be;
Thou are gentle, meek, and mild,
Thou wast once a little child.

This source suggests how the child's naming or calling, based on the symbolic identifications which ground perception, unselfconsciously reflects her or his indoctrination. Such scenes of instruction show how we cannot talk about naming without entering into the context of power and the imposition of form, whether under the aegis of Louis Althusser's "interpellation," Jacques Lacan's "Name-of-the-Father," or whatever other theory one uses to situate the never innocent discourse instruction which is "education." Blake knows as well as Lewis Carroll's Humpty-Dumpty that the question in naming is "who is to be master," and the fact of the matter here is that Jesus never calls himself a Lamb.

Too young to formulate distinctions of logic and Logos, the child, like a lamb led to language, gets lost in figural possibilities and in differences between calling oneself and being called. The alteration the "Author & Printer" makes between capitals and lowercase ("He"/"he", "Lamb"/"lamb") further evokes the fusion or confusion in the child's inability to comprehend metaphor, even as the text conveys the child's joy in the exercise of his or her developing semiotic mastery: "I'll tell thee, / ... I'll tell thee!" Fresh from instruction, the child tries to pipe on "the same again," but even as she or he delights gleefully in such empowerment, the insinuated discourses configure that energy for the maintenance of their own forms.

The repeated unpunctuated closing refrain, "Little Lamb God bless thee," again problematizes identity -- here of blessing and blessed, of subject and object -- and modulates into the poem which follows more often than any other, "[The Little Black Boy](#)." Among the most intimate of scenes of instruction, it challenges our sense of innocence as it shows the child take in "slave religion" for comfort against an oppressive system which has made everything black and white. One of Watts's songs for children has God shining "with beams of love" ("Praise for Creation and Providence"), but Blake deftly turns the tables to suggest these beams and their ideological freight as a cross the blacks "learn to bear" with the great white father's other "gifts." The boy's pathetic conclusion, "love me" reveals that however much his mother's pious lessons may, as he suggests, "bore" him, the suffering they seek to buffer and alleviate is real.

Trauma also occupies "[The Chimney Sweeper](#)," where children abandoned by their parents are to "do their duty" despite the daily harm in their unimaginable working conditions. Critics often cite its last line, "So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm," as an instance of irony in *Songs*, but if one thinks of irony as "saying one thing while meaning another," the term is too limited. The glees of *Songs* say several things while meaning them all -- and "innocence" entails the accepting of them all. On the one hand, little Tom Dacre has a dream which evidently recycles the consoling scene of instruction offered by the frame narrator, and believes it to such extent that "Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm." Ideology and the imaginary combine for this real power. On another hand, the poem's slightly older speaker's detachment and unselfconsciousness (as in his transitions "so," "And so"), heighten our sense of his pain and the force of the actuality he relates:

"So **your** chimneys I sweep" (emphasis added). The last line then tests your response-ability, which will decide its inflection and with that, your position vis-à-vis an "all" who have not, by some reckonings, given due to the sweeps and who should perhaps fear possible harm at the hands of mobilized "thousands of sweepers." Imagine, for instance, the tone of the Blake's contemporary Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, a popular educator and pioneer in the Sunday School movement, who wrote in 1792 concerning the establishment of "schools of industry" for the "inferior sorts" of children:

... it cannot be right to train them *all* in a way which will most probably raise their ideas above the very lowest occupations of life, and disqualify them for those servile offices which must be filled by some of the members of the community, and in which they may be equally happy with the highest, if they will do their duty. (See Gardiner 83)

"[The Little Girl Lost](#)" and "The Little Girl Found" are clearly to be taken together, as their shared middle plate insists. Like two other poems, "[The School Boy](#)" and "[The Voice of the Ancient Bard](#)," they appear first in *Songs of Innocence*, but often move to *Experience* in the joint collection, suggesting again the experience of changing perspective to be crucial to *Songs*. The two poems seem obviously allegorical, but of what? The absence of compelling interpretations -- invocations of the soul's journey, the myth of Persephone, and female adolescence notwithstanding -- suggests that the text may be a failure of obscurity. But if one sees *Songs* as concerned with the learning of language, which means, inevitably, wrestling with figurative language and the symbolic transferences which permit allegory, metaphor, and complex verbal meaning, then one might pause again over the protagonist's name, "Lyca." By way of context, consider Blake's treatment of another virginal figure in *The Book of Thel*, published the same year as *Songs of Innocence*:

Ah! Thel is **like a** watry bow. And **like a** parting cloud.
Like a reflection in a glass. Like shadows in the water.
Like dreams of infants. **like a** smile upon an infants face (1.8-10)

Here again, as with "Infant Joy," we circle around what has no name, and what in being named becomes defined and finite, subject to the limitations of our vocabulary. Lyca is like a figure for figuration -- a literalization of what happens when, in her poem, we try to grasp or impose our "fancied image" for all that might be meant by "sleep," "tree," "lion" "ruby tears." Imagine *the poem itself*, that emanation of the artist's mind, as "The Little Girl Lost" (just like Wordsworth's "[Lucy Gray](#)") and perhaps being found forever still the little girl is a distressing experience of innocence.

Point of view and desire for certainty are also at stake in the poem which often closes *Innocence*, "[On Anothers Sorrow](#)." Here every reader at least considers the possibility of another answer to the excessive rhetoric:

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

Even William Cowper, in a hymn Blake would have known, answers the analogous question "Can a woman's tender care / Cease towards the child she bare," with an honest "Yes, she may forgetful be" (437). In Blake's poem the reiterated "Think not" collides with the concluding reality of "our

grief" (not "another's" after all!) to end the poem, and *Innocence*, with "moan." So we confront at once our distance from such naive denial and the powerful (dare one say "innocent"?) longing such fantasy exerts for at least some part of us. It is the Chimney Sweeper's consolation for Tom Dacre writ large, and sometimes as effective.

"Language is the house of Being," according to Heidegger's famous figure (see Steiner 127) but for Blake, as for Wordsworth, that structure becomes for most a prison-house maintained by "pre-established codes," by cliché and convention. The warden of the prison-house, the fashioner of "mind-forg'd manacles," the force that has barred us from the play of Being in language, as from the stunning energy of true poetry, can be seen as "the bard." The fallacy in crediting such assumed authority looms in the [Introduction](#) to *Songs of Experience*, where, by the eighth line, three distinct subjects "might controll / The starry pole." With its echoes of Jeremiah ("O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord") and the God of *Paradise Lost* ("past, present, future he beholds"), the bard seems to command reverence -- but as in other cases, on inspection, the compelling language breaks into mumbo jumbo, etched on a plate whose vista of stars is graphically barred by the cloud of words. Students of the Bible, and of Wesley's great hymn, "Wrestling Jacob," will recognize that it is the opportunity to struggle for blessing or interpretation from a sacred messenger that is given "till the break of day." The religious references resonate with the particularly eighteenth-century, evangelical sense of "experience" as the inner history of one's religious emotion (see *OED*, s.v., 4b) -- indeed, "hymn of experience" appears throughout accounts of Methodism.

The scene of instruction accosts the reader directly in "[London](#)," whose speaker's repeated self-reference makes him or her emphatically "here" and demanding dialogue. For "I hear" asks implicitly, "do you hear?" -- which is to say, "are you here?" "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," is one inspired teacher's reiterated elliptical comment, but the general lack of comprehension for the parables, says Jesus, fulfills the prophecy of Esaias that: "...hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive" (Matt. 13:14). So, what do we hear, here in this poem? "Mine" or "mind"? "Forg'd" or "fraudulent"? "Man" in manacles? Whatever it is, however it works, it is everywhere mined and forged in the hearth of the heard and seen in the here and now of everyday Babelondon. Amidst the din of official "chartered" ideologies and unexamined lives, the speaker strives to unlock the reader by the multiplication of significance, breaking chains of thought and speech at their weakest link, the idea of a single meaning, univocal sign. This deconstruction involves asserting a new synaesthetic logic for eye and ear. Thus we are urged to hear *how* a sigh runs in blood, *how* the sweepers' cry makes pale a blackening St. Paul's -- in short, we must learn to see, hear in a new way:

The mind-forg'd manacles I **hear**

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I **hear**

The small shock of perceptual expansion occasioned by the acrostic can stand for the larger reconfiguring necessary if we are to attend truly to the voice of the barred.

In the final stanza, what is heard is not the "curse" ending the second line, but, again, *how* it blasts the "tear" which ends the third and rhymes back to "hear." These rhymes, "... hear/ ...curse/ ... tear/," bring to bear the contrary dictions of sight and sound as we hear, see them coalesce in the final sight and sound rhyme, "hearse." The oxymoronic image of the "marriage hearse" points to the impossibility of imagining that sight and sound, sign and meaning can be eternally linked or chartered, and in its unexpected juxtaposition of "hearse" for "bed" asserts an intelligence and point of view which calls our own to account. That everyone who has stopped us with a claim to hear voices and see invisible marks can be dismissed as crazy does not mean that we are never to imagine the evidence of things unseen

According to a recent collection of "the top 500 poems" as determined by computer analysis of hundreds of anthologies, the now most published poem in the language is "[The Tyger](#)." Or should we write, to follow the renaming of [that anthology](#) (Harmon 1077) and some other editors, "The Tiger"? Would it make any difference to an artist who writes "tiger" when he wishes, and who asserts elsewhere that "Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place"? (E 146) What of the asymmetrical rhyme, in the beat of the poem's dread feet, of the word "symmetry"? Shall we pronounce it to match with "eye"? And what of the notoriously toy-like, even bemused feline whose illustration seems so incongruous with the celebrated words?

The poem's insistent rhetorical and figural emphasis -- beginning with the opening hurdle of metaphor, "Tyger Tyger, burning bright" -- announces a text which will test the language sensitivity *Songs* explores. Either we are not concerned with a conventional "tiger," or with usual "burning," or *both*. Before the poem beguiles us to the self-congratulation of some imaginary theodicy by the answering of its questions, consider, with Jean-Jacques Lecercle, the implications:

... a question's purpose is not, as is commonly thought, to solicit information, but to elicit an answer, to establish a relation of power between questioner and questioned. It is a striking feature of questions that he who asks them establishes, by the very act of asking them, his right to question, his expectation of an answer, and his power to elicit one. (46)

In "The Tyger," if we answer, we become like God -- a temptation which as proved alluring enough, it would appear, to make the language's top poem. Well might the illustrated Tyger smile over this ultimate fooling of readers.

The decades of answers which make up "Tyger studies" must be passed over for a few observations. Given the expense of copper, Blake etched both sides of the plates for *Songs* (using small dikes of wax around each side) and exact measurements indicate that the question "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" can refer to the poem of that name only millimeters away on the flip side and a few years older. On the one hand, it is the "Author & Printer" himself who dares seize the "brightness of fancy; power of genius ... poetic inspiration" which his contemporaries characterized as "fire" (*OED*, s.v.). Part of that genius seems to concern with the author's appropriation of Milton, who writes in *Paradise Lost* that the Creator "of Celestial Bodies first the sun / A mighty Sphear he fram'd" (7.354-5). In a work dated the year after *Experience*, Blake's creator figure Los similarly makes a celestial body: he beats "Roaring ... bright sparks" with a "vast Hammer" on "the Anvil" until "An immense Orb of fire he fram'd," at which he "smiled with joy" (E 98) -- momentarily regaining the flow, the peak experience of the artist's unspeakable "infant joy."

The very latest of the *Songs*, appearing only after the collection had been published initially, and linked through its curious name to Blake's later work, "[To Tirzah](#)" deserves special attention as a kind of coda. Using a dictionary to the Bible one can identify Tirzah as the one-time capital of the Northern Kingdom, memorable for a comparison to Jerusalem in the erotic lushness of Song of Songs (6:4, AV), and Tirzah as the fifth of five daughters, whose collective petition for inheritance decided women's rights in property for their culture. Given Blake's other emphases on "five," one could associate the daughters with the senses, so that seeing only the sense of smell, sight, audition, and taste named in the poem, Tirzah might be associated with the remaining sense of touch. In fact, the AV's mistaking of "Tirzah" for a form of the Hebrew verb *tirseh*, allows one to imagine the title translated "To Sensual Enjoyment."

The obsession of the speaker in "To Tirzah" "To rise from Generation free," must in part be referenced to the word's sexual sense as exemplified by Hume's argument that "[t]here is in all men, both male and female, a desire and power of generation more active than is ever universally exerted" (*OED*, s.v. "generation"). The speaker's preoccupation strengthens through the second stanza's concern with "The Sexes" and the story of how they generated or "sprung from Shame & Pride," then "blow'd" or blossomed (literally, exposed organs of generation), and died -- at which point one might want to invoke Original Sin, but if "Shame & Pride" preceded and engendered "The Sexes," then that familiar story has been made strange. The mortality established with that Sin weighs heavy on a speaker obsessed -- in hymnal long measure -- with "Mortal Birth," "my Mortal part", "Mortal Life", and while such concern is ostensibly obviated by the poem's penultimate line, the very existence of the text undercuts dramatically assurance that "The Death of Jesus set me free." Many hymns voice this idea, though none to my knowledge so bluntly; and *sin*, the hymns agree, is that from which the death of Jesus frees us, so that a disjunction opens between "Generation," from which the speaker still wishes to rise free, and the implied condition of sin, from which he or she claims to be set free. Similarly, the sincerity of the speaker's attribution of "false self-deceiving tears" is compromised dramatically by our understanding that such accusation comes from personal experience -- that in calling Tirzah false, the speaker indicates his or her own weepy-eyed self-deception.

The question the speaker twice addresses to the mother, "Then what have I to do with thee?" might evoke Jesus's apparently rude words to his mother at Cana: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4). Here again, as elsewhere in the poem and throughout the *Songs*, desire for simple meaning, a direct lock of words and meaning, begins to slide under the surfacing contradictions of a speaker who doesn't know what he or she is saying, another subject who hasn't learned to read aright. In fact the repeated question appears a number of times in the Bible, and for an author learned with the best in that "great code of art" (E 274), the cumulative effect of these contexts subverts what might seem at first an obvious significant allusion. A review of its instances shows that to ask "What have I to do with thee?" places one in the company of those who address some form of Power while already deeply involved in events which will show that they have very much to do with what they question. Perhaps, indeed, only one possessed, like Legion, and not "in his right mind" (Mark 5:15, Luke 8:35-36) would treat with such dismissive rhetoric the crucial question of existence. In one contemporary hymn, Legion recalls how, "Fill'd with madness, sin and woe," he was found by Jesus,

Yet in this forlorn condition, When he came to set me free,
I reply'd to my Physician,
"What have I to do with thee?" (Cowper and Newton, 407)

There is not space to enter the still greater scandal of the poem's illustration, which would further the sense that "To Tirzah" enacts the strained psychology of a hymn-singing "Moral Christian" (E 877) and sexist upholder of the "patriarchial religion" (E 171) who cannot imagine "the improvement of sensual enjoyment" (*MHH* 15) or celebrate "holy Generation! [*Image*] of regeneration!" (*Jerusalem* 7.65). But given the argument of "[The Everlasting Gospel](#)" that "The Vision of Christ that thou dost see / Is my Visions Greatest Enemy" (E 524), and the context of hymns, "To Tirzah" serves to confirm that *Songs* are the Psalms of the [Bible of Hell](#).

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1. The best generally available facsimile is that edited by Lincoln. A hypertext version, which facilitates experience of the various sequences and includes annotated bibliographies, can be accessed [at this site](#); color reproductions will be found at the web site for [The Blake Archive](#).