

PROVERB 1

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

LONDON

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
and mark in ev'ry face I meet
marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In ev'ry cry of ev'ry man,
in ev'ry infant's cry of fear,
in ev'ry voice, in ev'ry ban,
the mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
ev'ry black'ning church appalls,
and the hapless soldier's sigh
runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
how the youthful harlot's curse
blasts the new-born infant's tear
and blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

PROVERB 2

Prisons are built with stones of law, brothels with bricks of religion.

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 smil'd 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 make up a heaven of our misery.

PROVERB 3

The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.

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 water'd it in fears,
night and morning with my tears;
(My wrath did grow.)
And I sunned it with smiles,
and with soft deceitful wiles.

(My wrath did grow.)

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.
(My wrath did grow.)
And into my garden stole
when the night had veil'd the pole,
in the morning glad I see
my foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

PROVERB 4

Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening.
Sleep in the night.

THE TYGER

Tyger! Tyger! 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 water'd heaven with their tears,
did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
in the forests of the night:
what immortal hand or eye
dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

PROVERB 5

The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.
If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.
If others had not been foolish, we should be so.

THE FLY

Little fly,
thy summer's play
my thoughtless hand
has brush'd 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.

PROVERB 6

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom,
no clock can measure.
The busy bee has no time for sorrow.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

AH, SUN-FLOWER

Ah, sun-flower! 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 sun-flower wishes to go.

PROVERB 7

To see a world in a grain of sand,
and a heaven in a wild flower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
and eternity in an hour.

EVERY NIGHT AND EVERY MORN

Ev'ry night and ev'ry morn
some to misery are born.
Ev'ry morn and ev'ry night
some are born to sweet delight.
Some are born to sweet delight,
some are born to endless night.
We are led to believe a lie
when we see not through the eye,
which was born in a night, to perish in a night,
when the soul slept in beams of light.
God appears and God is light
to those poor souls who dwell in night,
but does a human form display
to those who dwell in realms of day.

From the SONGS OF EXPERIENCE,
the AUGURIES OF INNOCENCE,
and the PROVERBS OF HELL,
selected by Peter Pears