

Notes on Songs of Experience by William Blake

Songs of Experience allows Blake to be more direct in his criticism of society. He attacks church leaders, wealthy socialites, and cruel parents with equal vehemence. Blake also uses Songs of Experience to further develop his own personal theological system, which was portrayed as mostly very traditional in Songs of Innocence. In Songs of Experience, Blake questions how we know that God exists, whether a God who allows poor children to suffer and be exploited is in fact, good, and whether love can exist as an abstract concept apart from human interaction. Blake also hints at his belief in "free love" in this volume, suggesting that he would like to dismantle the institution of marriage along with all other artificial restrictions on human freedom.

Both Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience contain poems that are interdependent. A critical reading of "The Lamb," for example, is impossible without also reading the "Introduction," "The Shepherd," and "Night" from Songs of Innocence. Its meaning is further deepened when reading "The Tyger" from Songs of Experience, and vice versa.

Taken as a whole, Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience offer a romanticized yet carefully thought out view of nature, God, society, and religion from a variety of perspectives, ultimately demanding that the reader choose the view he or she finds most compelling from among the myriad voices of the poems.