

Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear  
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.  
Saying: come out from the grove, my love & 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:

Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,  
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee  
And then ill stand and stroke his silver hair,  
And be like him and he will then love me.

### The Chimney Sweeper<sup>1</sup>

When my mother died I was very young  
And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep.<sup>2</sup>  
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

Theres little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head  
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd, 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, & that very night,  
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,  
That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack  
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,  
And he open'd the coffins & 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 & 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 & never want joy

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark  
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.

1. Chimney-sweepers were mostly young boys, whose impoverished parents sold them into the business, or who were orphans, outcasts, or illegitimate children with no other means of living. It was filthy, health-ruining labor, aggravated by overwork and inadequate clothing, food, and shelter. Among the hazards were burns, permanently blackened skin, deformed legs, black lung disease, and cancer of the scrotum. Protective legislation passed in 1788 was never enforced. Blake's outrage at this exploita-

tion also sounds in "London." Admiring the poem, Charles Lamb sent it to James Montgomery (a topical poet and radical-press editor) for inclusion in *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing Boy's Album* (1824), which he was assembling for the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of Infant Chimney-Sweepers.

2. With a relevant pun, the child's lisping street cry advertising his trade, "sweep! sweep!"

Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm  
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.<sup>3</sup>

*touch of sarcasm*  
*unrealistic that it's written by a child's voice*

### The Divine Image

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love, *really a children's poem?*  
All pray in their distress:  
And to these virtues of delight  
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love *assumes middle position.*  
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. *love thrown to front of order.*

And all must love the human form,  
In heathen, turk or jew.  
Where Mercy, Love & Pity dwell,  
There God is dwelling too.

### HOLY THURSDAY<sup>1</sup>

Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean  
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green<sup>2</sup>  
Grey headed beards<sup>3</sup> walk'd before with wands as white as snow  
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow *preparing children*

O what a multitude they seem'd these flowers of London town  
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own *walk, of lambs, w*  
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs  
Thousands of little boys & 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<sup>4</sup>

3. A typical conduct homily.

1. One of the poems with a companion in *Experience* (see page 129). Holy Thursday in the calendar of England's official state religion celebrated the Ascension; it was customary to conduct the children in London's charity schools, many of them orphans, to services at St. Paul's, the chief Anglican cathedral.

2. The colors denote different school uniforms.

3. Minor officials charged with ushering and preserving order at services.

4. A conduct homily, perhaps Hebrews 13.1-2: "let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain angels strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."