

The Lamb by William Blake

Summary

The poem 'The Lamb' is taken from the collection of poems 'Songs of Innocence' by William Blake, published in 1789. The poem sees in the figure of the lamb an expression of God's will and the beauty of His creation.

The poem is told from the perspective of a child. In this poem, Blake uses a child as the speaker who directly addresses a lamb. He poses some questions and then answers them. The interconnected and repeated questions are both simple and deep – 'who made thee?' This answers the paramount question that people have about where we come from and who we are. In bringing this question through an innocent child's mouth, addressing the most innocent of animals, a lamb, Blake reveals that the children sometimes go to the crux of existence because they have not yet learned to complicate things.

In the following stanza, the speaker excitedly offers the answer to the question, "Who made thee?". He refers to Jesus Christ as the creator. The Lamb was created by Him who has the same name as the lamb. This creator is benevolent and loving, and he was once a little child. The speaker too is a child and their creator's name is shared by both the speaker and the lamb. The speaker then demands that God twice bless the lamb. There is a transition from the physical to the spiritual as the child speaks about Jesus as the creator and saviour of both lamb and child. If both the literal lamb addressed in the poem and the 'Lamb of God' that is Jesus Christ are associated with each other in the poem, then the poem's speaker – in being a child – is linked to both: a child is a young person just as a lamb is a young sheep. They are also connected by their innocence.

The poem blends the images of lamb, child, and Christ. The speaker is a child, filled with wonder and innocence. He speaks to a little lamb, asking the animal if it knows who made him. The Creator, the speaker says, "calls Himself a Lamb." He even "became a little child" like the speaker. They are both, child and lamb, called by His name. He is the ultimate lamb, the ultimate

child, from whom all others lambs and children receive their characteristics, especially their innocence.

All three, lamb, child, and Christ, are images of innocence. Christ is the perfect image, of course, for He is the sinless one, God incarnate, and lambs and children in their own innocence point to Him and projects this trait to the world.

Symbolism in William Blake's poem "The Lamb"

The Lamb composed by William Blake appears to be quite plain and easily convincing on the surface, but in actuality this carries a deeper note and has a depth of mystery and suggestiveness. It expresses an innocent child's simplicity and sense of wonder in course of his acquaintance with the world in the state of innocence. But underneath the simple song of the child, there lies concealed a deeper meaning. A kind of symbolic undertone, or what is popularly called symbolism, is discerned here.

Blake's poem refers to the innocent view of childhood about the little world around a little child. The child sees the world in its purity, beauty, and simplicity, and so finds in it something very close, akin to him. The lamb stands for innocence and simplicity, meekness and mildness.

The Lamb is a song about the little, timid lamb. The child addresses the lamb, interrogates it of its knowledge of its Creator, instructs it about Him, and invokes His blessings for it.

Blake's use of different references in the poem those are meaningfully symbolic. 'The stream' and 'the mead', meant for the lamb, signify singularly 'clearness' and 'smoothness' respectively. The reference to God, as calling Himself 'a lamb' and synthesizing Himself with it and the child, symbolizes His gentility, generosity and tenderness. The lamb and the child are, no doubt, the symbols of God in their purity and simplicity.

The poem *The Lamb* emphasizes the plain, innocent faith in the creation that is so grand and full of blessings. The child's question, apparently simple and spontaneous: **Dost thou know who made thee?**

The child gives no answer for that would be unbecoming of childhood. But this simple question bears out a significant truth about creation.

This is all clear, compact, deeply impressive and thoroughly coherent. Blake is plainly childlike, yet mystically suggestive and distinctly convincing and meaningful.

