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## Traditional Lyric

Bruce Elliot Alford

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## Traditional Lyric

Bruce Elliot Alford

The house of God, a shield and shelter  
served us well and all appeared in place—  
vermillion seats, silver coins and collection  
plates payed out along the row

We were tedious, clapping  
worshipping beauty and spirit, and  
did not play with fears or ask if anyone  
was there

Out in the field, children pick okra  
that pricks and stings their prayers

Wearing hats of straw, almond and amber  
browned boys submit to hardness and heat,  
stop to notice nibbled leaves—the work  
of rabbits

The boys are deep in worship.

Discussion questions for the poem *Traditional Lyric*:

1. Explain the parallel between church and working in the fields.
2. Do you think that rural people make a religion out of working hard? Explain.
3. Do you think that the religion of many rural people includes an 11<sup>th</sup> commandment related to hard work? Explain.