The Divine Image and A Divine Image: William Blake's Religious Gnostic Perspectives

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Abstract

It is well known that most of poems in Song of Innocence (1789) are contrary images to some of the in Songs of Experiences (1794). Both collections share two states of human souls. However, in some of the poems, William Blake distinguishes them by giving identical titles, as in The Devine Image and A Divine image or by giving completely different titles. This technique in Blake's songs gives clues to his intention to provide his readers with the direct shift from innocence to experience, from the universal view of the world to that limited, self-centered one. Moreover, in these two poems, the poet's condemnation of the tyranny of religion and the Church appears directly. It appears through his depiction of the existence of God in humans through the coexistence and disappearance of particular virtues. This paper will, first, shed light on the parallel between the two poems and how they interact with/build on/contrast one another. Second, it will shed light on William Blake's religious outlook in revolt to initialized Christianity.

Keywords: William Blake, A Divine Image, The Divine Image, gnostic, Christian

I. Introduction

It is agreed that several poems in Songs of Innocence (1789) and Songs of Experience (1794) oppose each other. Either by giving identical titles as in the case of The Little Boy to A Little Boy, The Little Girl Lost to A Little girl Lost, and The Divine Image to A Divine Image or by giving new titles as The Lamb and The Tygre. The Blossom and The Sick Rose...etc. William Blake emphasizes the contraries between two different states of humans. It may be considered a shift on the poet's side from "a homogeneous, unified, individual less world to one over-run with egocentric. Individuals world" (Gleckner,1961, p. 373). Moreover, both The Divine Image and A Divine Image can be read as a critique of William Blake's religious outlook.

Makdisi observes that both poems "share a highly critical attitude towards the religious conventions" (p. 247). The Divine Image has a

didactic tone to it, as it celebrates Christian ideals and beliefs. Man is endowed with natural qualities, but he is unaware of them. The poem is written in very simple and straightforward language, but it has a lot of meanings and thinking. In human terms, The Divine Image personifies God. God is the pinnacle of human aspirations and desires. When we are in distress, we require assistance. We require sympathy and encouragement. God is a symbol of love and abundance. He is the pain reliever. Human humans have the same dreams and desires that God does. Mercy, pity, peace, and love cause "delight" and require "thankfulness" (Stanza 1, lines 1-4). Thus, when people are in hardship, they express gratitude for God's positive attributes. God bestows kindness, pity, love, and peace upon us, and when we are in need, we seek these virtues and express our gratitude. Gleckner writes in his essay "William Blake and the Human Abstract" that: "In The Divine Image in Innocence, Blake sets forth his four great virtues, mercy, pity, peace, and love, the last of which is the greatest, including as it does the other three. He identifies God and Man, the four virtues" (1961, p.373). In God's perspective, we are like children, praising God's attributes from our childlike innocence. Because we complement one another, there is inherent unity between man and God. Man is the personification of God, and God is the personification of man. Thus, God is the source of all mercy, pity, peace, and love. God and man are complementary to one another. Thus, Man is born with all of the excellent ethics and virtues he fails to practice after being influenced by negative and malicious forces...

In A Divine Image, brutality, on the other hand, originates from heart. External factors should not be held responsible for wrongdoing. Humans are the ones who get envious and corrupt. They cause harm to one another while also creating secrecy. The human heart is as strong as iron, and it can be destructive when used with demonic tools. When destructive abilities are activated in the human heart, man becomes nothing more than a beast's voracious tongue. The poem echoes the New Testament and Jesus' teachings (Jose, 2018, p.5). External influences should not be held responsible for evil. Evil thoughts do not originate from outside sources but rather from within the human heart. The human heart is responsible for the theft, murder, sexual immorality, adultery, greed, malice, deception, lewdness, jealousy, arrogance, and slander. These ills are not necessarily aided by external influences; rather, they originate from inside, as the heart is the abode of both good and evil. God must be discovered within humans. Outside forces are unable to locate him. Human beings were formed in God's likeness. Humans were also referred to as Divine, reinforcing the rejection of a transcendent God. God can be seen dressed as a human.

II. Concept vocabulary in The Divine Image and A Divine Image

The first impression the reader might have in The Divine Image is the title itself. Despite the title's simplicity, it arouses a lot of intellectual curiosity. A little thought in the title makes the reader guess what the reader stands for in The Divine Image. In general, the words of the whole poem are characterized by simplicity and brevity, but they carry an integrated meaning. The syntax of sentences and phrases shortly provides the required meaning. The poet uses some words within phrases repeatedly, and the repetition indicates the importance and gives emphasis to its religious message. Repetition of mercy and peace is intended to give divine attributes to God, attributes that cannot be coordinated and organized in this way except through the person of God only. Perhaps the meaning is confirmed by writing the words in the form of capital letters, which means that they are virtues specific to God.

Moreover, the existence of love and peace is paired with God inside Man. The use of the word "heart" (stanza 1, line4) gives man something of a privilege, and what distinguishes man from other creatures is emotions. The speaker is the third person who generalizes the poem's meaning. Even regarding the addressee, the speaker sometimes excludes himself, shares himself, and sometimes generalizes. The words are chosen intentionally. The presence of virtues in God, who bequeaths them to man, and this inheritance is justified by the existence of "for".(Stanza1, line1) R.B. Kennedy states, "Man share the same nature, or at least the same good qualities - mercy, pity, peace, and love - but they do not see that these virtues are corrupted in the world of senses" (1970, p.152).

Contrary to the previous poem, A Divine Image is indefinite, the title is not specified. However, this poem shares the previous one in the same simplicity with which the words are chosen. The words are put into phrases that make it easy to be understood. Also another note is that the poet uses some suffocating words in the first poem. The poet also used capital letters to give the same emphasis and to use them repeatedly in the poem to achieve a link between the two poems. But it seems that the poet added new opposite words in this poem. Another note in words is their presence in a metaphorical form to clarify the meaning more. "Forged iron, fiery forged, furnance seal'd' (Stanza2, lines 5-8). Alliteration is put to support briefness and simplicity.

Comparing the two poems in the concept of vocabulary, it seems that the poet puts a slight difference in the title, but it has crucial values. The use of the article 'the' in The Divine Image is vital to bring out an ideal state. The existence of the definition is linked to the existence of God, the only Creator. On the contrary, the use of 'a' in A Divine

Image refers to an indefinite state of Man. The article 'a' indicates any man. In the two poems, some words and phrases are repeated but written differently. Also, capitalization is used to give priority. In The Divine Image, the words that identify God are capitalized, such as Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love. On the other hand, words that identify Man are capitalized as "Cruelty, Jealousy, Terror, and Secrecy" (Stanza 2, lines 5-8). The same case in some phrases, "human heart, human face, human form divine, and human dress"; such phrases are capitalized in A Divine Image but not capitalized in The Divine Image to indicate the arrogance of an evil man.

III. Visual and Concrete Images

The Divine Image is full of images, and the images can be divided into two types: the first type, which is the integrated Image, such as the Image of the Father, the Son, and God, and the second type, which is partial images, that is, a part of the whole, such as the human heart, the human face, the human dress, and others that represent the part of the whole. The integrated Image of the father as a person will not be the figurative Image without the presence of the Son, and the presence of the father with the Son will not also present the figurative Image without the presence of protection and safety. Here, the father is the savior of the Son because the presence of tenderness, mercy, and all Christian values is linked to the existence of God, who is "our dear Father" (Stanza 2, line 6). This Son inherits the same divine attributes and virtues inherited from God.

The partial images of the poem are represented by four images that are found in the human being, including face, heart, and dress. The heart comes as one of the complex parts where emotions, instincts, feelings and other moral characteristics that distinguish a person from others dwell. The human eye and the human face are two means of expressing those feelings of sadness, happiness, joy and anger. Then, he uses "human form" (Stanza 3, line 12), which is love. Love, here, is all that humans need. Lastly, "human dress" (Stanza 3 line 14) is peace. The above-arranged images draw a different image of a human.

Hence, in The Divine Image, the visual images as "Human heart, 'Human dress, human eyes, and human form' (Stanza 1, lines 1-4) refer to mercy, pity, peace, and love. In A Divine Images, the same partial visual images are used in very different references. The "Human heart, Human dress, Human eyes, and Human form" (Stanza 2, lines 1-4), refers to "Cruelty, Jealousy, Terror, and Secrecy" (stanza 2, lines 4). The human heart, associated with tenderness and mercy in the first poem, turned into a source of brutal cruelty. We cannot see the shape of the human heart, but we can judge it through behavior, and, here, it is brutal and inhumane. And the "human face"

is the mirror of the heart, that is, through seeing what the heart hides, and, in the case of the poem, the "Human face" is nothing but a reflection of jealousy and hatred. Hatred, also, can move from a stage of benevolence to inhuman behavior; that is, it moves to an advanced stage of hatred and jealousy. A "human form" in the poem is processed to be "Terror," which means aggression. It seems that the poet does not see human behavior except violence and aggression. The last Image is the "human dress", which comes after the sequence of the human heart, the human eye, and the human shape, which is used to hide everything inside the heart. Human dress, again, refers to "Secrecy" (Stanza 2, line 4).

The second group of concrete images in the poem is used realistically. "Iron" (Stanza 2, line 5) is used naturally and can be shaped through heat and cooling. The poet uses iron to be the human dress, the external appearance that hides everything inside the person, and that he considered a picture of the hypocritical person. "Fiery forge" (Stanza 2, line 5) is the second Image that refers to where iron is heated and bent. The Image is used to refer to the human form. Just as "forge, furnace" (Stanza 2, line 5) is used to be a more specific place for heating iron.

Both poems share the same images. Also, the difference lies in the manner in which they are set. The same images as the human heart, human eyes, and human dress are written in The Divine Image not capitalized, but in A Divine Image are not. The images share the same references to refer to human behavior and appearance. They contrast each other in elements such as "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love"(line 1). In contrast, the elements of A Divine Image are "Cruelty" (Stanza 2, line1), "Jealousy" (Stanza 2, line2), "Terror" (Stanza 2, line3), and "Secrecy" (Stanza 2, line 4). Moreover, there are different images in the poems, such as father and child, which are used to describe the ideal father-son relationship. Other visual images are added to 'A Divine Image' as "forged Iron, a fiery Forge, a Furnace seal'd, its hungry Gorge" (lines 5-8), which are used to complete the Image of a human being whose main characteristics are "Cruelty, Jealousy, Terror, and Secrecy". (Stanza 2, lines1-4)

IV. Reality is A Symbol

The poet's use of symbolism in The Divine Image is aimed at generality and connection. The father, here, will not be a father without the presence of the Son, and he will not be able to exercise his integrated role of providing care and tenderness without the presence of the Son. God is also a god for the child's existence, and this child is Man. Here, the symbols of God, the Father, and the Son

are expressions of generality and integration. The father's relationship with the Son and any human relationship is under God's responsibility, who offers man safety. The poem has other symbols, such as Christianity, Turk, secularism, and Judaism. This group of symbols in the last stanza are used to express classification and discrimination to negate their existence syntactically. The words are adverbs, but syntactically, they refer to different religions. Using these symbols to build up a kind of divine equality because they are God's creations, and all creeds are responsible before God to provide them with care and security.

In A Divine Image, on the other hand, the symbolic meanings of "forged iron, fiery forge, furnance seal'd, and hungry Gorge" (Stanza 2, lines 5-8) must be given attention. "Iron" (Stanza 2, line 5) symbolizes power which is used negatively as means of cruelty and tyranny. But, again, it is like a man's garment, which he sews and cuts as he wants. Here, a person forms cruelty as he wants and hides it when he wants. Also, "fiery Forge" (Stanza 2, line 6) symbolizes one of the human characteristics. It is used to express nervousness and the speed of arousal, symbolizing one of the unwanted human behaviors. The symbol of "Furnance seal'd" .(Stanza2, line7) expresses the absence of feeling in the heart towards others. These feelings can be observed in facial expressions. Lastly, "hungry Gorge" (Stanza 2, line 8) is used to express hunger or particularly greediness; in The Divine Image, the religious tone of the poem is gratitude, complementarity, and governess. It is expressed clearly in stanzas 2 and 4. "our dear father" (line 2, Stanza 2) and "every man"(line 1, Stanza 4). On the contrary, the tone of A Divine Image is wicked and unsympathetic. It is expressed in the negative attributes of human beings in stanza 2.

V. Blake's Religious Gnostic Attitude:

William Blake rejects the old orthodox attitude that forces its adherents to submit to oppressive and humiliating principles and customs. On the contrary, he presents a fundamentally changed and innovative frame of Christianity and its treatment of Satan, God, Heaven, and Hell. The poet attributes everything to spiritual, religious orientation, and conscience. Conscience is the creed recognized before God. Thus, the poet rejects the Church's institutional organization and repressive approach.

Nevertheless, the poet remains radically linked to the Bible, its commandments, and fundamental principles. Ryan once suggested that during the early nineteenth century, radical attitude became a necessity against the institutionalized religion, which State controlled. He thinks that it was the beginning of economic and political reforms. (Ryan, 2000). it is thought that the State controlled

Church. Religious rituals were imposed in people's lives, and worshippers were oppressed to go to Church on Sundays. However, Church did nothing against the hard regulations experienced by the authorities. It may be thought that William Blake calls for a spiritual religion that stems from inside.

It seems that the poet was influenced by the beliefs of Emmanuel Swedenborg, whom he read three or more of his books, as pointed out by Paley in his article "A New Heaven Is Begun: William Blake and Swedenborgian": "Blake owned and annotated at least three of Swedenborg's books: Heaven and Hell, Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, and Divine Providence; he mentions that also he read two others: Earths in Our Universe and Universal Theology [True Christian Religion]" (Paley, 1978). Moreover, Arthur Symons discusses the influence of Swedenborg on Blake in his words: "Blake's attitude towards Christianity might be roughly defined by calling him a heretic of the heresy of Swedenborg" (1971). Blake, himself declared that "all he knew is in the Bible. Nevertheless, he understands the Bible in its spiritual sense" (Britannica, William Blake). This statement may be a recognition of Swedenborg's impact on him, even if there is a slight difference in the rational direction (Symons, 1971). Both Paley and Symons state that Blake attended a conference in April 1789 about the general Church that Swedenborg founded. The poet William Blake benefited from Swedenborg's correspondence and adapted it for the benefit and purpose of his poems. Furthermore, the symbolic correspondences of Swedenborg appear in some songs of Innocence and Experience and his other long poems. The Swedenborgian picture of the body's relationship with the spirit and the human being's relationship with God is transferred (Blake, New Jerusalem Magazine, 1790, p.183); clearly, Blake's religious outlook is spiritual rather than institutional.

However, Blake is Christian in his deep reading of the Bible and benefiting as well as borrowing from it. Jose thinks that William Blake repeats what Jesus said that love is above everything and that Jesus had the commandment that his followers must love each other as Jesus loves them (Jose, 2018). And Jose affirms that this commandment is repeated again when Jesus commands people to love each other as he loves them. Jesus tells his followers that his love for him is as friends because he always advises them and informs them what "[he] heard from [his] Father." (John 15:12–16. As cited in Jose, 2018, p.5). In the commandment above, one may notice that the Image of the embodiment of God is in the souls of human beings in their actions, which is what Blake repeats in The Divine Image. In the last stanza of this short poem, there is a quote from the Bible about the belief that God exists in our souls, which is shown in actions and situations. Jose affirms that the poem benefits

from Bible concepts of the Father-Son relationship and God's existence in human souls (Jose. 2018).

Although Swedenborg's philosophy and Bible has an impact in Blake's poems Blake, his reliance on shaping his ideas about religion and belief is based on his own impartial style. Blake's religious philosophy focuses on seeing religion in the behavior and morals of human beings. For Blake, Langridge thinks religion was " a matter of intuition, and not a question of creed or dogma at all" (1904, p. 59). The practice of religion is a spiritual practice that appears from inside, and is not imposed through the practices of the rituals of the Church. Hence, in this case, Hester believes that "people get rid of the imposed restrictions that have become routine duties to an eternal relationship with religion that appears in all the internal and external actions of a man" (Hester, 1969, p. 18). The emergence of Blake's religious philosophy in both poems. The connection between man and religion spiritually, the presence of God within people, and the reflection of Christianity in the behavior of members of society are all ideas implicit in both poems. (Newell, 2018). As a Christian poet, who reads the Bible very well and is aware of the truth about creation and Creator, some critics think that even the title of the poem, The Divine Image, is an interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27: "Let us make man in our image..." (Jose, 2018, p.6).

Despite Blake's neutral religious philosophy, one cannot confirm that Blake had invented a new doctrine or religion. However, he objects to the nineteenth-century Church touching human values. He also objects to the representation of Christianity only in the Church. More clearly, the English Church became more dominant in governance in the 19th century and led society in the way of its interest (Ryan, 2003). So, Blake considers the nineteenth-century Church as dominant, and religion is "an institutionalized religion" (Mustana, 2007, p.26). The nineteenth century Church lacked all meanings of mercy and tolerance, and treated the guilty with a policy of stern preaching. Blake criticizes the Church for its limitation of expressing love between community members, and for considering lovers as sinners deserving of severe punishment. Finally, the poet hates church policy for its collusion with the government and legality and its imposition of compulsory worship.

Religious virtues come from man and not from the religious rituals imposed by the Church. "He could perceive no causal connection between churchgoing and good deeds worshippers seemed worse rather than better than other folks" "(Daives, 1966 p.16). Thus, going to churches on Sundays and practicing rituals will never indicate goodness or even be considered as a religious practice. Furthermore, The Divine Image is religious, spiritual, and behavioral in its interests. It celebrates the four Christian virtues that establish human behavior, and these four virtues, which are mercy, pity, peace, and love, are

recognized and practiced by every person who understands the truth of Christianity. It does not need to be taught or imposed by the Church, as they are divine virtues that, if found in a person, will rise to the level of Christ or a divine person. These four virtues determine the true relationship between divinity and humanity. Rather, it becomes supplications through which the man supplicates to God in times of adversity, and it must be cherished: "All pray in their distress" (Stanza 2, line 1), "Return their thankfulness" (stanza 1, line 4). All people of all religions, pagans, Muslims, and Jews, must celebrate this divine Image in humans.: "And all must love the human form,/ In heathen, Turk, or Jew;/ Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell/ There God is dwelling too." (Stanza 4, lines 11-14). Because all religions, for the poet, are linked to God. As A.M. Wilkinson (1977) affirmed: "God is within all men, irrespective of creed or religion, even with the Jews who crucified Christ, and with the Turks, who were Mohammedans, and who were traditionally thought of in England as typifying despotism, cruelty, and tyranny" (p.46).

For William Blake, the reality of the divine virtues and the reality of creation are two different things. He does not deny that God is the Creator, never Created of others. However, he focuses on the fact that what is essential in a formally worldly matter is the reality of man and his adherence to divine virtues to rise to a higher level and become a divine image. Northrop Frye (1947) insists on Blake's refusal to paint God except as a strong man, and if the poet is thinking of bringing back the old and epic ideas about God, he will portray him as a weak older man, and this is what the poet does not accept. "But there is no form of life superior to our own, and accepting Jesus as the fullness of both God and Man entails the rejection of all attributes of divinity which are not human ."(p.32)

Thus, William Blake is not an atheist and does not address the truth of the Creator, as it is a secret that man cannot realize. However, he sees God and realizes His truth through the presence of divine virtues in human beings. Therefore, Blake depicts God as a human being and rejects any attributes that are not divine. Nevertheless, Blake does not separate God from humans, but rather associates them with each other, R.B. Kennedy (1970) thinks that "In the case of The Divine Image sees God truly, and sees that God and Man share the same nature, or at least the same good qualities - mercy, pity, peace, and love - but they do not see that these virtues are corrupted in the world of senses" (p.152). This moral corruption, which the writer means, has been shown by the poet in A Divine Image as a moral corruption that comes from the human heart, which deviates from following the idealized divine virtues.

A Divine Image is also considered a poem that sets Blake's religious outlook and his criticism of the Church. as pointed out by Makdisi (2003), who considers this poem concerning "Holy Thursday" and "Chimney Sweeper" as: "a highly critical attitude toward the religious conventions of the established church, which Blake identified elsewhere in unambiguous terms as the 'state religion'" (p. 247). The poet implicitly clarifies some worldly attributes acquired by man that does not reflect the spiritual relationship between God and human beings. For the poet, if a person fails to acquire the divine virtues in The Divine Image, he will turn into an image of a denied person. For him, earthly attributes are cruelty, hatred, and violence that stem from the behavior of the person himself; They are the outputs of nothing than the heart. According to Blake, these earthly attributes are shreds of evidence of the weakness of the spiritual relationship between Man and God if Man fails to inherit the divine qualities inherited from God and Jesus. These qualities are part of the human being, from the heart, and they can be seen in human form as clothes; they are what he wears and can be seen in his face and features.

The poet also believes that if the basis of religion comes from love, and love has its place in heart, then cruelty also comes from the heart and is part of the biological formation of man. It is part of humanity and not part of divinity. Moreover, the person who embraces Christianity is nothing but an embrace of God's light, and any deviation from this embrace is an embrace of Satan (Wills et al., 2020). The poet considers the attributes of cruelty, violence, hatred, and others to be purely physical, not spiritual, human attributes. The soul is linked to God, and the body is linked to humans only. So: "Cruelty has a human heart," and "Jealousy a human face." "Terror" is "the human form divine" (Stanza 2, line 3), and "Secrecy is the Human Dress."(Stanza 2, line 4). Being away from the light of God is living in the darkness of humanity and the ambiguity and lack of clarity surrounding human lives.

Appropriately, in Blake's religious outlook, "people do not believe in God for fear of punishment or to get a reward from God. Instead, they unify with God only because they love Him and know His blessings" (Maniquis, 2009, p. 27). God, who is always with man, gives the power to overcome problems and does not cause problems to test man. Therefore, God exists in people's hearts, where God interacts with humankind. Moreover, to become the inner voice of the man. (Vacca, 1993). People will find God in their hearts if they find divine virtues in their attitudes; their attitudes will become the inner voice of God. William Blake himself finds God in his heart. His sentiments and emotions are devoted to orthodox Christianity. He never shows any reflection of heterodoxy, but he is frustrated by the formality of the Church. Moreover, Blake contrasts the Church's belief in the separation between God and Man and that Jesus is the

unique Son of God as he considers every human being supposed to be the Son of God, a very Swedenborgian belief. In this case, Blake contradicts the essential doctrine of Christianity. However, many Christian doctrines are believed by the poet. I, e the basics of Christianity can not be converted, but he developed an idiosyncratic version of self-identified Christianity, which the corrupted Church will never accept.

VI. Conclusion

The theme of religion is the main goal and motive of most Blake's poetic and pictorial works. However, comparing his works with other artists shows that he differs from other artists and painters in his reformist goal that falls within the poet's spiritual program. Through the previous readings of two examples from Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experiences, one can say that spirituality is a necessity for an early nineteenth century poet, a period known for the authority of the State over the Church. The poet creates a kind of religious art to depict a spiritual image that differs from that of the nineteenth century. The poet tries to convey that religion has a positive effect on human behavior if it is expressed spiritually. Although he is a Christian, one may rarely find many sermons in his poems. Religiousspiritual orientation in his poems is totally linked to the rest of life's social, political, economic, and psychological aspects. For him, if religion is reformed, all other aspects of life will be automatically reformed. The poet's connection of divine virtues with human beings is the relationship of the Father to the Son and the heir to the inheritance. Furthermore, the impact on true Christianity can be noticed in divine behaviors. If these behaviors are reflected in humans, the spiritual Image of God must be reflected in the earth as appointed in The Divine Image. However, the poet's focus in A Divine Image on the formal characteristics of people, such as face and dress, is nothing but evidence that if the divine virtues weaken, they turn into a purely weak humane image. This weakness is the source of the soul and the heart, as they are feelings of cruelty, jealousy, and hatred that appear in the face and outward appearance in general. On the contrary, if religion harms some people, it is due to the flawed human thinking of religion. Misunderstanding religion properly is the cause of all social unrests. Finally, I believe that the world's lack of spirituality made there a strong attraction towards it through reading its inspirations. William Blake has been portrayed as the most inspiring spiritualist since the nineteenth century until present day. In his art, he does not separate between the spirituality and the religion, so his poetic pictorial legacy are still read till today.

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