

William Blake

William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. In the final years of his life, Blake suffered from recurring bouts of an undiagnosed disease that he called "that sickness to which there is no name." He died on August 12, 1827, leaving unfinished watercolor illustrations to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and an illuminated manuscript of the Bible's Book of Genesis.

Most Famous Poems by William Blake

The Little Black Boy. Published: 1789. ...

Holy Thursday. Published: 1789 & 1794. ...

The Sick Rose. Published: 1794. ...

Auguries of Innocence. Published: 1863. ...

The Chimney Sweeper. Published: 1789 & 1794. ...

The Lamb. Published: 1789. ...

A Poison Tree. Published: 1794. ...

And did those feet in ancient time. Published: 1808.

‘The Echoing Green’, ‘The Shepherd’, ‘A Cradle Song’, ‘The Garden of Love’, ‘London’, ‘The Clod and The Pebble’, ‘The Tiger’.

The Poems of William Blake Themes

Opposition: In the “Marriage of Heaven and Hell,” Blake wrote: “Opposition is true friendship.” Even the title of that poem points to his theory of a “marriage” between opposites. So much of Blake’s work revolves around the theme that opposition represents balance in this world, and a focus on one side over its counter leads to oppression and ignorance. Many people who study Blake argue that he is an extreme radical who was out to abolish any form of order that existed during his lifetime. A close reading of his work dealing with this theme will prove this is not the case. William Blake was intelligent enough, and courageous enough, to recognize the Age of Reason’s over-governing intentions and set out to challenge the notion that sensibility and order are exclusive partners. But Blake did not seek complete anarchy in the world contrary to a lot of interpretation of his work. What the poet did was illustrate that governing does not have to equal a loss of liberty, and he did so by presenting the opposition to the demanding institutions—church, state, law, monarchy—of his time. By examining ideas and objects in terms of opposites and allowing access to both sides of the scale, man will reach a true state of enlightenment rather than a repressed state where few benefit and most are held in bondage.

The cycle: Cycle is very similar to the theme of opposition. Where Blake argues each object or abstract idea has an equal and valid opposite form, he also contends that nature of these objects and abstractions pass back and forth through one another. Most obvious in “The Season” poems studied here, but also in many other works of Blake, the reader learns of his static belief that nature operates in cyclical terms. William Blake would use this theory as evidential support for the changes of his time, especially the Revolutions that were happening in America and France. Frustrated with a long period of repression in Europe, Blake felt it was time for the people to rise and fight back, and that a political and philosophical cleansing was not only a positive part to the progression of mankind and evolution of societies, but that it was as natural as the rotation of the earth, the changing of the seasons, and the maturity of humans.

Oppression / Repression: Blake lived in a period of aggressive British colonialism, slavery, social casting, Revolutionary change in America and Europe, as well as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Being a member of the lower class, an uneducated artist (in the formal sense of the term, although Blake was clearly quite intelligent), and considered by many to be an inferior poet bordering madness, Blake experienced firsthand the struggles of oppression. Using words and illustrations, Blake fought back against his countrymen, political leaders, and religious principals(les). The theme of the repressed is the easiest to identify and extract from Blake’s poetry. Most all of his work will feature a wearisome protagonist who is attempting to revolt against some greater being, whether it be politically, religious, or even the shackles of love and marriage. Many times, this theme is represented in the form of mythology, literary allusion, and the personification of natural objects.

Innocence and Experience: Similar to Blake’s focus on man’s fall from grace, Blake was constantly exploring the moment of lost innocence. This repeated theme in Blake’s poetry is almost like a paragon for a combination of all the other themes so far discussed. The theme of the separation, transition, and difference between innocence and experience is highlights the theory of opposition, cycling, repression, and sexuality. Songs of Innocence and Experience aside (which can be found in a separate Grade Saver Note), Blake continues to explore and personify this transient moment and investigate its consequences. Recognizing that in a world of “reason” or “sensibility” we risk forgetting all of our primitive desires and suppressing all of our natural intuitions. Blake attempt to invoke recognition for the imaginative spirit that lies in all of us, but since our moment of experience, has been subjugated to the areas of our mind we are called upon to ignore.

Religion: It is unclear exactly where Blake stood in terms of his beliefs in God. Some contend that through his works it is clear he was an atheist; others argue he was more agnostic. While it is impossible to say for sure, it is not the opinion of this author that Blake had no belief in a super-being, God-like, creator. Blake makes many references to God and a supernatural, omniscient, and omnipresent being. That being said, it is very valid to assume Blake had a distinct disdain for religion as an institution. The theme of religion appears in a lot of Blake’s work, and in his “opposition is friendship” manner, he usually counterbalances this theme with references to nature, showing his belief in a natural superpower rather than mythological creator. Blake views religion as one of the paragons of tyranny. Inventing a

mythology full of angels, demons, and Gods that mirror a lot of Milton's writings, it becomes obvious that William Blake was fascinated with religion as literary allusion and infuriated with it as a means to suppress man's natural desires.

Poetry/Imagination: By the time William Blake began writing poetry at the very young age of twelve, he was already frustrated with the stale situation English poetry was in at that time. Blake felt poets needed to seek new ways to express their words and ideas and sought to step away from the Classic traditions of English poetry that had not really changed since Spenser (so Blake thought anyhow). As readers, we witness Blake play around with no forms and seek new methods to get across his message. In some of the poems, literary reference becomes the theme itself ("Memory, hither come" and "To the Muses" for example). William Blake was continuously finding new ways to express his philosophical beliefs and articulate his extraordinary imagination.

Songs of Innocence

"Songs of Innocence" redirects here. For other uses, see Songs of Innocence (disambiguation). Songs of Innocence was originally a complete work first printed in 1789. It is a conceptual collection of 19 poems, engraved with artwork. This collection mainly shows happy, innocent perception in pastoral harmony, but at times, such as in "The Chimney Sweeper" and "The Little Black Boy", subtly shows the dangers of this naïve and vulnerable state. The poems are each listed below:

The Shepherd
 The Echoing Green
 The Lamb
 The Little Black Boy
 The Blossom
 The Chimney Sweeper
 The Little Boy Lost
 The Little Boy Found
 Laughing Song
 A Cradle Song
 The Divine Image
 Holy Thursday
 Night
 Spring
 Nurse's Song
 Infant Joy
 A Dream
 On Another's Sorrow

Songs of Experience: "Songs of Experience" redirects here. For other uses, see Songs of Experience (disambiguation). Songs of Experience is a poetry collection of 26 poems

forming the second part of William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience. The poems were published in 1794 . Some of the poems, such as "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", were moved by Blake to Songs of Innocence and were frequently moved between the two books. The poems are listed below:

Earth's Answer
 The Clod and the Pebble
 Holy Thursday
 The Little Girl Lost
 The Little Girl Found
 A Dream
 Nurse's Song
 The Sick Rose
 The Fly
 The Angel
 The Tyger
 My Pretty Rose Tree
 Ah! Sun-flower
 The Lilly
 The Garden of Love
 The Little Vagabond
 London
 The Human Abstract
 Infant Sorrow
 A Poison Tree
 A Little Boy Lost
 A Little Girl Lost
 To Tirzah
 The School Boy
 The Voice of the Ancient Bard

1. 'The Little Black Boy'

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
 And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
 White as an angel is the English child:
 But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother gave birth to me in Africa. I am Black, but I feel passionately that I have a white soul. The English boy is white like an angel, but, being Black, I look like I lack divine light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
 And sitting down before the heat of day,
 She took me on her lap and kissed me,

And pointing to the east began to say.

I remember a lesson my mother taught me. One morning, before the day got too hot, she sat me down on her lap underneath a tree and kissed me. She pointed towards the sun and began to speak.

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
 And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
 And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
 Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

She told me to look at the sun as it rose, and said that's where God lives. God offers us light and warmth. All the living beings of the world receive comfort and joy from his energy.

And we are put on earth a little space,
 That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
 And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
 Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

My mother continued: God put us here on earth—in a small space—so that we could learn to accept and appreciate the rays of his love. Our Black bodies and faces are just a cloud, or the shade from trees.

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.

Once our souls have learned to take the heat, God will announce that there is no longer any need for our earthly bodies. He will beckon us out from the shade and invite us to frolic around his tent like joyful lambs.

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:

That's what my loving mother told me, and I'm passing on this lesson to the English boy. When he and I are freed from our earthly identities—me from blackness and him from whiteness—we'll gather around God's tent and play in joy and freedom (like lambs).

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

I'll offer him shade from the rays of God's love until he can tolerate the heat, and we'll lean upon God's knee. Then I'll stand up and stroke his white hair, and, being like the English boy, he'll love me.

Summary: A black child tells the story of how he came to know his own identity and to know God. The boy, who was born in “the southern wild” of Africa, first explains that though his skin is black his soul is as white as that of an English child. He relates how his loving mother taught him about God who lives in the East, who gives light and life to all creation and comfort and joy to men. “We are put on earth,” his mother says, to learn to accept God’s love. He is told that his black skin “is but a cloud” that will be dissipated when his soul meets God in heaven. The black boy passes on this lesson to an English child, explaining that his white skin is likewise a cloud. He vows that when they are both free of their bodies and delighting in the presence of God, he will shade his white friend until he, too, learns to bear the heat of God’s love. Then, the black boy says, he will be like the English boy, and the English boy will love him.

Critical Analysis:

"The Little Black Boy" is a poem by British poet William Blake, included in his 1789 publication Songs of Innocence. The poem “the little black boy” revolves around slavery and the ideal slavery mindset. Blake wrote about a black African-American child and his struggles with slavery which draws on Blake's own views about white supremacy and white suppression against the blacks through a black boy who is the speaker of the poem. It argues for racial equality, insisting that earthly identity is temporary and that all are worthy of God's divine love.

The speaker is an African child who has to come to terms with his own blackness. Blake builds the poem on clear imagery of light and dark. The contrast in the first stanza between the child's black skin and his belief in the whiteness of his soul lends poignancy to his particular problem of self-understanding.

The poem is in heroic quatrains, which are stanzas of iambic pentameter with the lines rhyming ABAB.

The poem has an underlying tone of sadness by the way in which the boy begins to understand his social constraints because he is black, and only in death will he be seen as equal to the English boy. The boy's skin tone is symbolic of the social constraints he will face in life and how he may overcome them.

This poem centers on a spiritual awakening to a divine love that transcends race. In a culture in which black and white connote bad and good, respectively, the child’s developing sense of self requires him to perform some fairly elaborate symbolic gymnastics with these images of color. His statement that he is “black as if bereav’d of light” underscores the gravity of the problem. The gesture of his song will be to counteract this “as if” in a way that shows him to be as capable and deserving of perfect love as a white person is.

The child’s mother symbolizes a natural and selfless love that becomes the poem’s ideal. She shows a tender concern for her child’s self-esteem, as well as a strong desire that he know the comfort of God. She persuades him, according to conventional Christian doctrine, that earthly life is but a preparation for the rewards of heaven. In this context, their dark skin is similarly but a temporary appearance, with no bearing on their eternal essence: skin, which is a factor only in this earthly life, becomes irrelevant from the perspective of heaven. Body and soul,

black and white, and earth and heaven are all aligned in a rhetorical gesture that basically confirms the stance of Christian resignation: the theology of the poem is one that counsels forbearance in the present and promises a recompense for suffering in the hereafter.

The black boy internalizes his mother's lesson and applies it in his relations with the outer world; specifically, Blake shows us what happens when the boy applies it to his relationship with a white child. The results are ambivalent. The boy explains to his white friend that they are equals, but that neither will be truly free until they are released from the constraints of the physical world. He imagines himself shading his friend from the brightness of God's love until he can become accustomed to it. This statement implies that the black boy is better prepared for heaven than the white boy, perhaps because of the greater burden of his dark skin has posed during earthly life. This is part of the consoling vision with which his mother has prepared him, which allows his suffering to become a source of pride rather than shame. But the boy's outlook, and his deference to the white boy, may strike the reader (who has not his innocence) as containing a naive blindness to the realities of oppression and racism, and a too-passive acceptance of suffering and injustice. We do not witness the response of the white boy; Blake's focus in this poem is on the mental state of the black child. But the question remains of whether the child's outlook is servile and self-demeaning, or exemplifies Christian charity. The poem itself implies that these might amount to the same thing.

The Little Black Boy" is a Representative of God's Love because it presents the world's outlook toward the dark skin, which is associated with suffering and miseries. The poem begins with a stark comparison of an African boy with an English Boy. Although his skin is dark, his soul is as pure as the English child's soul. He remembers his mother told him that his dark skin is the result of constant and direct exposure to the sun. Using the metaphor of the sun, the mother explains that the sun brings heat and shadow to us. The natural objects and human beings receive comfort and happiness from it. As the poem continues, the mother tries to teach his son the power of love. To her, humans are provided with little space to understand the huge phenomenon of love. The tanned-color, she describes, is a temporary cloud that vanishes when we learn to adore God's love.

The speaker decides to tell these phenomena to the English boy and look forward to the time when they will throw their temporary clouds to love and respect each other truly. What, however, stays in the minds of the readers is the way he promotes equality using the phenomenon of God's love.

Themes :

Equality, racism, and God's love are the major themes of this poem. On a surface level, the poem reflects the mother's sentiments about how she makes her son hopeful about the future. She comforts him and makes him understand that they will soon meet their good fortune. The poem shows injustices against the African community in the UK and the US during those times. Many non-Caucasian people face discrimination due to the color of their skin. They can do nothing to change the ongoing practices. They can only hope for the good days when the boundaries between the two will be demolished, and they will embrace each other.

Literary Devices/ Figures of Speech in “The Little Black Boy”

Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line. For example, the sounds of /i/ and /a/ in “I’ll stand and stroke his silver hair,” the sound of /o/ in “And I am black, but O! my soul is white”.

Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line in quick succession. For example, the sound of /b/ in “And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face”.

Enjambment: It is defined as a thought in verse that does not come to an end at a line break; instead, it continues in the next line. For example,

“When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy.”

Imagery: Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. For example, “My mother taught me underneath a tree”, “When I from black and he from white cloud free” and “Thus did my mother say and kissed me.”

Symbolism: Symbolism is a use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal meanings. “Color” symbolizes the status or ethnicity of people in the world.

Simile: It is a figure of speech used to compare a person or an object with something else to make the meanings clear to the readers. For example, “White as an angel is the English child”, “But I am black as if bereav’d of light” and “And round the tent of God like lambs we joy.” Here a white boy is compared to an angel, black boy compares himself with a dark object, and children are compared to the lambs.

Metaphor and simile is in the line: “And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.” Africans are compared to the cloud; the white men presumed that their abilities were not equal; that the blacks cannot gain as much knowledge and experience as the whites.

10. The Clod and the Pebble

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

"Love doesn't try to make itself happy. It doesn't care about itself at all. Instead, it sacrifices its own comfort for others, and creates its own kind of Heaven even within the misery of Hell."

So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

At least, that's according to a little lump of clay, who is often squashed by cow's walking overhead. But a pebble in a nearby stream sang out this tidy response:

"Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."

"Love only wants to make itself happy, and to make others dependent on it. Love takes pleasure in other people's discomfort, and creates Hell even in the middle of Heaven."

Summary

This poem takes up the refrain of love from the last line of "Earth's Answer" and explicates two views on the nature of love. The "Clod of Clay" sees love as selfless and giving, building "a Heaven in Hells despair." The hard "Pebble of the brook," however, sees love as seeking "only Self to please" in order to eventually build "a Hell in Heavens despite."

Analysis

The love that has been bound by Reason, and which must be renewed in order to free Earth from her chains, is thus examined to ask if men love selflessly or selfishly. The difference in perspective aligns with the "experiences" of the two inanimate speakers. The clod has been "Trodden with the cattle's feet," so that it is malleable, but also easily shaped to the will of others. The pebble has been hardened by its time in the brook and therefore offers resistance to any who would seek to use it for their own ends. By contrast, the clod is somewhat mobile, whereas the pebble must remain at rest in its place on the bottom of the brook. Blake uses his ironic voice of experience to point out that love, if done according to the edicts of Reason, creates a Hell on earth, whereas selfless love—love from the heart and the ever-adapting Imagination—can make a Heaven out of the Hell surrounding mankind.

Nonetheless, the poem does not allow the reader to side completely with the Clod and its view of love. Both clod and pebble experience loss; the Pebble rejoices in the loss of others, while the Clod rejoices in its own loss of ease. Even the Clod's Heaven is built on the despair of Hell, thus "taking" from another in order to increase. In the "Experienced" mind, exploitation of others is a requirement for progress of any sort.

Structurally, the poem appears at first to be two balanced syllogisms of the respective viewpoints. The word "but" in line 6 is the turning point from the Clod's argument to that of the Pebble. The former argument is one of Innocence, while the second shifts to Experience. That Blake chooses to end the debate with the Pebble's argument lends to this poem an interpretation that favors the Pebble's hardened point of view regarding love. However, the balancing lines "And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair" (line 4) and "And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite" (line 12) force the reader to see the two views as balanced and to reach his own conclusions based on personal experienc

Critical Analysis

"The Clod and the Pebble" is a poem by William Blake, first published in *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794). In the poem, a personified clod (a small clump of earth or clay) and pebble put forward two very different definitions of love. The clod, representing the more optimistic—and perhaps naive—perspective, views love as a kind of radical selflessness, in which giving and self-sacrifice are all-important. The pebble disagrees, declaring instead that love is in fact pure selfishness, something that only seeks to please itself. In the end, the poem leaves it up to the reader to make up their own mind about the true nature of love.

It is crucial to understand that the clod represents innocence and the pebble symbolizes experience. In this poem the Clod of Clay is being compared to a child. When a child is born, it does not know what to do until it is taught. It can change sides easily as it “moulds” to try and find its definite place in the world. Children are taught to be nice and therefore, follow all orders and try to be a good kid to their parents. Also, a child learns from the elders, which is why they say that the first child and/or last child or the only child in the family is usually the most selfish because they are cared for the most and are always watching their parents. The middle child is usually left out and learns by itself trying to do the right thing. A Pebble is the elder because it knows that caring too much for others will lead to problems for you. If you give money to many people you will end up poor. If you care too much for someone they become spoiled.

The love that has been bound by Reason, and which must be renewed in order to free Earth from her chains, is thus examined to ask if men love selflessly or selfishly. The difference in perspective aligns with the “experiences” of the two inanimate speakers. The clod has been “Trodden with the cattle’s feet,” so that it is malleable, but also easily shaped to the will of others. The pebble has been hardened by its time in the brook and therefore offers resistance to any who would seek to use it for their own ends. By contrast, the clod is somewhat mobile, whereas the pebble must remain at rest in its place on the bottom of the brook. Blake uses his ironic voice of experience to point out that love, if done according to the edicts of Reason, creates a Hell on earth, whereas selfless love—love from the heart and the ever-adapting Imagination—can make a Heaven out of the Hell surrounding mankind.

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The theme of the poem is the two contrasting sides of love represented by a clod and a pebble. William Blake says loving others “builds heaven in hell's despair.” That is the kind of love Blake thinks we should strive for in this poem. The clod in Blake's poem is a metaphor for a selfless pure kind of love.

A clod of clay is, of course, softer than a pebble, and what's more, it's malleable, capable of being bent into a different shape (much as it sees love as a willingness to be bent to another's will), but since it has literally been trodden underfoot, its view of love shouldn't be taken as authoritative.

Love is a common theme in the literary world, but none talk of it with such fluency as William Blake. In William Blake's poem, "The Clod and the Pebble," his use of heaven and its connotations with selflessness reveal that only by giving away oneself, and allowing others to use us, can we be truly rewarded by our love.

In the first stanza of the poem, Blake describes the clod's perspective of love. In the clod's view, love is seen as a selfless, caring, and even amenable force. His perspective of love seems almost religious, with how pure and innocent his ideas are, and is further cemented as a religious perspective due to the fact that this love, "builds a Heaven...", and also since it comes from a clod made of clay, which represents the medium god supposedly used to create man. The connection between the clod, and the fact that it believes love to be a wonderful amazing power, indicates that only a clod or something that is lowly and, "trodden with the cattle's feet," would feel this way, since the pebble, as something which represents a more sophisticated or a higher beings view point, says that love is selfish and sadistic. The conflict of the two earthly objects views on love leads to the unveiling of the concept that love is only beneficial to one if he or she is willing to sacrifice and humble oneself, such as the clod did, and that love can be disastrous when used in a self centered manner.

The connection between the objects and their views on love also form another layer of truth to the nature of love. The pebble, which is something that is arguable more valued than a clod, is represented as the wiser or more educated being in poem, which could represent a person of higher intellects views on love, while a clod or fool, believes in an idealistic fantastical view of love. On this basis it becomes clear that Blake is saying that only the dimwitted individual believes love is a holy thing, and that a person with any intelligence will know that love can be a cruel and destructive force.

Literary Devices:

- Alliteration. Alliteration is an important part of "The Clod and the Pebble" and occurs through the poem. ...
- Paradox ...
- Assonance. ...
- Consonance. ...
- Personification. ...
- Repetition
- Metaphor

The poem follows a regular structure of 3 stanzas each with 4 lines. There is a regular abab rhyme scheme which is only broken in the middle stanza, emphasising the switch between the clod and the pebble. The regular form in general reflects the considered standpoint of the speaker.

William Blake's "The Clod and the Pebble" we see the two metaphors used to describe the contrasting sides of love. Blake uses a Clod and a Pebble as his metaphors for love. The clod exemplifies a selfless kind of heavenly love, while the pebble represents a stubborn and

selfish kind of love. The theme of the poem is the two contrasting sides of love represented by a clod and a pebble. William Blake says loving others “builds heaven in hell’s despair.” That is the kind of love Blake thinks we should strive for in this poem.

The clod in Blake’s poem is a metaphor for a selfless pure kind of love. The Clod represents a heavenly biblical love, which puts others in front of him. Blake stated at the beginning of his poem, “Love seeketh not itself to please,/ Nor for itself hat any care,/ But for another gives it ease(1,2,3).” The clod gets joy out of helping others. A clod is soft, and it will not hurt someone. It can be molded, changed stepped on, and squished without pain for anyone. The clod also represents a person full of innocence. It represents a person that has not been drove to the point of being a pebble by the hard times of life. That is why a clod is a perfect metaphor for this kind of love.

The pebble in Blake’s poem is a metaphor for a selfish person that desires everything only for himself. Blake states, “Love seeketh only Self to please,/ To bind another to its delight (9,10).” The pebble has no feelings for anyone except himself. The pebble is the perfect metaphor for selfishness. A pebble is hard, and it will not change. Just like the selfish love that the pebble represents. The pebble is also experienced and has lost its innocence, unlike the clod. The pebble has been jaded by life and expects the worst out of people. This is why the pebble is so self-centered.

Blake also uses heaven and hell as metaphors for the clod and the pebble. Talking about the clod, Blake states, “And builds a heaven in hell’s despair (4).” Heaven is a strong metaphor to use, and that is a very strong compliment to give the clod. However, Blake says the exact opposite about the pebble. Blake states, “And builds a hell in heaven’s despite (12).” These metaphors show that the clod is trying to make the best out of life. The clod wants to turn a hell into a heaven. However, the pebble builds a hell on earth for everyone around him. The metaphors of heaven and hell prove just how contrary the clod and the pebble are.

The clod and the pebble are perfect metaphors for the two kinds of love. They are the exact and complete opposites. Everyone has traits of the clod and the pebble, but they usually have overwhelming traits that determine whether they are a clod or a pebble. Kindness, selflessness, and understanding are good traits of the clod. The pebble possesses selfishness, pride, and stubborn.

“Love seeketh not itself to please,

Personification – Love, makes it realistic

Nor for itself hath any care,

But for another gives its ease,

Imparts maternal and sacrificial qualities to love

And builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair.”

Biblical Allusion – Refers to not only ideals of heaven and hell but also perfect love as portrayed in the Bible, very relevant to the Romantic Age. An interesting point to note is how the “H” is capital in both the words.

So sung a little clod of clay,

Symbolism – joy;Plosive sounds

Trodden with the cattle’s feet;

Qualities Imparted – Malleable and Pliable

But a pebble of the brook

The Clod and The Pebble is a part of Blake's poem collection "Songs of Innocence and Experience." The clod here symbolises innocence whereas the pebble symbolises experience. It has weathered down, has faced harsh circumstances and thus is the symbol of experience. Warbled out these meters meet:

Symbolism – sorrow ; Warbling is very similar to yodelling and the pebbles warble is a stark contrast from the clod's innocent singing.

"Love seeketh only Self to please,
Qualities Imparted – Selfish
To bind another to its delight,
Qualities Imparted – Forceful, Imposing
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a hell in heaven's despite."
Symbolism – sorrow; Biblical allusion

Themes: "The Clod and the Pebble" offers two competing visions of love. The first kind of love is based on selflessness, as represented by the personified Clod, while the second is based on selfishness, as represented by the Pebble.

11. "The Divine Image"

To Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
All pray in their distress:
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

The first stanza of The Divine Image presents four virtues: Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love. These virtues are capitalized as they are personified ("To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love/All pray in their distress"). This personification reflects the relationship between divinity and humanity. Moreover, these virtues become objects of prayer in case of distress and should be cherished and praised ("All pray in their distress", "Return their thankfulness"). Notice how the style of this stanza and the following ones in The Divine Image have a clear and simple language that focuses on the images portrayed rather than on the language itself.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear:
And Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is Man his child and care.

The second stanza links the virtues to God and to man. The lyrical voice references the virtues again and they are directly related to God: "For Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love/Is God, our father dear". After that, these same virtues are related to man: "And Mercy, Pity, Peace

and Love/Is Man, his child, and care”. Notice the repetition of the virtues and how they form a unity between divinity and humanity. This relation between God and man is emphasized by the father/child relationship established after the mention of the two words. The bond between divinity and humanity is, thus, presented strongly.

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

The third stanza of *The Divine Image* focuses on describing each of the virtues and how they relate to mankind. Notice that this is the first stanza where the virtues appear separated. The lyrical voice will list the virtues and assign them to a human form: “Mercy has a human heart”, “Pity a human face”, “Love, the human form divine” and “Peace, the human dress”. This change in the message of the poem emphasizes the characteristics of each virtue and their relation to man. Moreover, there are many repetitions of the words “human” that focus on their link to the virtues and to their personification.

Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine
Love Mercy Pity Peace.

The fourth stanza furthers on the link between the virtues and humanity. According to the lyrical voice, these virtues are always in “every man, of every clime” in their prayers. Again, this furthers the human aspect of these virtues and continues building a strong relationship between humanity and divinity. This can be seen, especially, when the lyrical voice says that all prayers are “to the human form divine”. Notice how the quatrain ends by repenting the virtues together as mentioned in the previous stanzas of *The Divine Image*.

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

The final stanza of *The Divine Image* explains how all forms of humanity should be cherished. The lyrical voice mentions that “all must love the human form/In heathen, Turk or Jew”. This is because all forms of humanity are linked to divinity and, consequently, they are all important. Finally, the lyrical voice finished the poem by saying that three of these virtues (Mercy, Love, and Pity) coexist with God together: “Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell/There God is dwelling too”. This highlights this idea of inseparability between God and man, presented in the previous quatrains.

Summary

The personified figures of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love are listed as the four “virtues of delight.” The speaker states that all people pray to these in times of distress and thank them for blessings because they represent “God, our father dear.” They are also, however, the characteristics of Man: Mercy is found in the human heart, Pity in the human face; Peace is a garment that envelops humans, and Love exists in the human “form” or body. Therefore, all prayers to Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love are directed not just to God but to “the human form divine,” which all people must love and respect regardless of their religion or culture.

Form

The poem is comprised of five ballad stanzas—quatrains in which the lines have four and three beats, alternately, and rhyme ABCB. This stanza form, in English poetry, conveys a sense of candor and naturalness, and it is common in songs, hymns, and nursery rhymes. The lilting rhythm and the frequent repetition of words and phrases combine with a spiritual subject matter to create the poem’s simple, hymn-like quality.

Critical Analysis

This is one of Blake’s more rhetorical Songs. The speaker praises both God and man while asserting an identity between the two. “The Divine Image” thus differs from most of the other Songs of Innocence, which deal with the emotional power of conventional Christian faith, and the innocent belief in a supreme, benevolent, and protective God, rather than with the parallels between these transcendent realms and the realm of man.

The poem uses personification to dramatize Christ’s mediation between God and Man. Beginning with abstract qualities (the four virtues of Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love), the poem makes these abstractions the object of human prayer and piety. The second stanza explains this somewhat strange notion by equating the virtues with God himself. But the idea is still slightly unorthodox, suggesting as it does that we pray to these abstract virtues because they are God, rather than praying to God because he has these sympathetic qualities. The poem seems to emphasize that Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love are not God’s characteristics but his substance—they are precisely what we mean when we speak of God.

Themes:

The Divinity and Unity of Humankind

One of the main themes of *The Divine Image* is humankind’s relationship with God. The lyrical voice praises both divinity and humanity and links them together. Thus, the virtues that are presented by the lyrical voice carry within them a divine side, but also a human aspect. God and Man become inseparable and, because of that, mankind also turns into something worthy of praise: “And all must love the human form,/In heathen, Turk, or Jew;/Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell/There God is dwelling too”.

The poem's speaker says that humanity was made in God’s own image, but that doesn’t mean that the human shape physically resembles God. Rather, it means that people embody God’s powerful goodness: his “Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love” are expressed on earth through people. And this connection between humanity and God, the speaker insists, also connects human beings to each other: every person expresses the goodness of God, and every living

person is thus holy. All people, whatever their background, are thus united by their shared divinity.

To this speaker, “Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love” aren’t just attributes of God—they are God, “our father dear” himself. And, at the exact same time, they’re “Man, [God’s] child”—that is, all of these qualities are embodied by human beings. Mercy, for instance, “has a human heart”: it’s through real, live human hearts that the divine quality of mercy appears on earth. In other words, humanity expresses God.

Since God’s virtues appear on earth in human form, it follows that everyone carries God with them, just by virtue of being a person. God’s “divine image” lives on earth, the speaker argues, through “the human form divine.” When people “pray in their distress” to God, they’re thus also praying to the goodness and kindness of humanity (because, again that goodness and kindness is God).

If God lives in the “human form,” the speaker proclaims, then people don’t just need to remember that they can seek and express God’s goodness in themselves. They need to remember that God’s goodness lives in every person. That truth cuts across false distinctions between religions and cultures: addressing a predominantly Christian audience, this speaker reminds readers that God lives in “heathen, Turk, or Jew,” not just in Christians. All people must love every single “human form” for this very reason. Through “Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,” then, God lives in every “human form”—and unites all people.

Literary Devices:

Many literary devices are used throughout this poem, but the ones that stick out more than others are simile, metaphor and imagery. These devices provide a thorough and very descriptive explanation to the poem.

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