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Comparison & Contrast of 'Songs of Innocence' and 'Songs of Experience' by William Blake :-

William Blake was the son of a London tradesman and he felt the presence of the souls of great literary figures of the bygone days. He published his own books whose margins done by himself through a self-devised art. He composed 'The Songs of Innocence' and 'Songs of Experience' which are two poles on which the edifice of life is based. There are two contrary states of man's being or existence or the life cycle. The one stands for joy, bliss, happiness, peace and unity. The other stands for turmoil, disturbance, dissension, disunity, sorrow and wisdom.

When Blake's life was blissful, happy and calm, he wrote "The Songs of Innocence" & when his life was disturbed days & reflect the rebel & the revolutionary in him he wrote "The Songs of Experience". The former are the creations of an adolescent & the latter of a matured philosopher. In the Introduction to the "Songs of Innocence", it is the Piper who wants to sing the songs of innocence to make everyone happy -

"Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child
And he laughing said to me:
Pipe a song about a Lamb!"

In the Introduction to "The Songs of Experience" the speaker is the Bard who appeals to the Earth to shake herself free from the fetters of convention & moral laws & religious taboos -

P.T.O

"Hear the voice of the Bard;
who present, past & future sees;
whose ears have heard
the holy word."

The past, present & future have different meaning for the Pipes and the Bard. According to ^{the} Pipes the past can only be the primal unity, the present is innocence & the immediate future is experience. But according to the Bard the past is innocence & the immediate ~~future~~ ^(present) is experience & the future a higher innocence. One singer uses mild & gentle numbers & other terrific tones both see the imaginative & symbolic significance of all the activity in the songs.

Both have some companion poems which reflect the change in attitude from 'Innocence' to 'Experience'. But the feeling at both the places are different & so are images & atmosphere, tone & purpose. Unlike the blossom of Innocence, the rose in Experience is sick. One of the characteristics of Innocence is its free life of imagination; Experience breaks this free life, and in its place substitutes a dark, cold imprisoning fear.

Thus Blake wants to show us ~~that~~ who noble things like love, joy & mercy can be distorted and used as a cover for base and cowardly motives. He shows how hypocrisy pretends to practice the cardinal virtues of pity and mercy —

"Pity would be no more;
If we did not make somebody poor;
And mercy no more would be,
If all were as happy as we."

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