

Biblical Elements in the Poem, "Peace" by Gerard Manley Hopkins

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Abstract—The research paper aims to investigate the Biblical Elements in the poem "Peace", written by Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Great Victorian religious poet, on the eve of his departure for Bedford Leigh from Oxford- a curial sonnet, the abruptness of which reflects a fatigued and distracted mind. The title 'Peace' that Hopkins assigned to the poem is due to the impact of Herbert's Poem, 'Affliction'. To investigate Biblical references is one of the yielding delights of new interest in the aspect of Hopkinsian criticism. The thematic study of the poem indicates that there abound theological themes based on the Holy-Writ. The Bible is an embodiment of a notion of Divine Peace. The sonnet reflects the poet's prayer for Peace. The New Testament has the theme of Peace. Jesus came on this earth to grant Peace to the restless, which is the perfect Peace; on the other hand, Earthly peace springs from Patience does not dwell in a man without further condition. The Peace that God can grant; the practical aspects cannot give that Peace.

Keywords— Bible, criticism, Divine, Elements, Peace.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Victorian poet of Divinity, agony, and nature, was a Roman Catholic convert, born and bred in a Moderate High-Anglican middle-class family. It should be noted that he was a voracious reader of the Holy Bible. The major themes of Hopkins' religious poetry are theologically dealing with the Christian doctrines. Therefore, the theological themes embedded in his poetry deal with the Bible. He had the profound impact of "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and his theology" and the influence of "Imitation of Christ by Edward J. Klein", the impact of the National Theology of Duns Scotus. He had the profound impact of his New Testament regular reading.

The world is an embodiment of financial turmoil, violence, and political instability. No one can have a longing for some sort of Peace, more stable, and more long-standing. There is a poetic reflection in this short-sonnet that leads one to pray for Peace which might be substantive and divine. Such Peace is not found in temporary power reversals and violent victories of human actions, but the surrender of such power and the preceding of violence. The Gospel calls all human-kind to embrace Providence. The message of the New Testament is called the Gospel and this "Good-News" is "gospel of peace". In the Gospel, the

story of Jesus, coming to earth and being born as a baby is heralded by the angels with the words, "Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace those with whom he is pleased!" Luke 2:14(ESV) 2011. The Bible also speaks of Peace. God's kingdom is a kingdom of Peace in which there is wholeness including in relationships. The Gospel is a 'gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15) since it is the good news of Jesus, making Peace on the cross through his blood (Colossians 1:12), reconciling to God.

Moreover, God is the giver of Peace. Jesus says to His disciples that He gives them a peace that is unlike any peace that the world can give them (John 14:27). Paul in Ephesians 2:14 states the "Jesus is our peace." Jesus is the one who stands between God and us to act as the mediator to bring us peace (Hebrews 2: 24). A spirituality that connects the practitioner to God and a local community and salvation in Christ, the Trinity and church can contribute to peace-building. Several people in the world are unsettled lacking Peace in life. The poet proclaims the message of the real Peace that comes from Divine Mercy. The present research paper aims to investigate the Biblical Elements in the sonnet scattered hither and thither in threads and segments of the lines of the sonnet. It gives an essential message of Peace to the restless world, devoid of Divine Peace.

II. THE TITLE OF THE POEM

The title of the poem is peculiar, and it shows the restless and unsettled condition of the poet. Hopkins penned this poem when he felt unsettled as the following day he was to move yet again, from Oxford to a new post as a preacher in the industrial, northern town of Bedford Leigh. Peace probably is the title from Herbert's "Affliction" as its central image bears some resemblance to the poem. Besides, the poem, "Peace" which was composed of Jesuit-priest-poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins is dated "Oxford, 1879". A previous draft is dated 2 October of the same year. It is a curial sonnet like "Pied Beauty", but in alexandrines (with six stresses to the line). It may be regarded as a companion poem to "Patience". In this sonnet, the priest poet addresses his words to the spirit of Peace which the Christian Holy Spirit, one of three deities, different in forms, but one in attributes. It is the doctrine of the Trinity. The poet presents under the traditional form of a dove- the bird that returned to Noah's ark with an olive branch as a sign that flood was over. (Genesis 8:11).

III. THE THEME OF THE FIRST PART

"When will you ever, Peace, wild wood dove, shy wings shut,

your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?

When, when, Peace, will you, Peace? -I'll not play hypocrite' (Line, 1-3).

It is the first stanza of the poem. The poet begins this poem with a complaint that the bird as a "Wild Woodrose", which is 'shy' of approaching him with its "flake-doves" sent floating scare in the starlit night and is easily alarmed. He confesses through his mouth that Peace does not come to him from time to time, as God promises it in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, Not as the world gives do I give you, let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid". There is embedded within the line some threads of Peace-Theology. Peter Milward rightly remarks, "Thinking himself as a tree in the wood, he asks the dove of Peace when he will ever cease flying around and settle quietly beneath his boughs."¹ The reputation of his question with 'When' and invoking Peace twice show his plaintive insistence. His innovation is to the Holy Spirit as Peter Milward says, "His manner is the reminiscence of his invocation to the Holy Spirit on a similar occasion in No worst¹. The poet does not want to boast that he has a pure-peace. He dramatizes as if he had not ever any gifts of Peace.

The second stanza of the poem is a part of the first section . "To own my heart: I yield you do come sometimes; but

That piecemeal Peace is poor Peace. What pure Peace allows

Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it. (Lines 4-6)

Here, "Own my heart" is explained by the poet himself in a letter to Robert Bridges, his crony dated 21st August 1884," and he says, "Merely, 'my own heart' is transplanted for rhythm's sake, and then Tamaqua exquisite, "as Hermann would say." (L.B196)³. He admits that Peace does not come to him from time to time. He has imperfect Peace and pure Peace. He prays to God to grant him complete Peace. His plight is like the last times of the last days as prophesied by Christ, in Matthew 24: 6,7," And you will hear of wars and rumors wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet." For nation will rise against nations, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famine and earthquakes in various places." (ESV). The actual effects of wars and natural calamities are the death of Peace.

IV. THE THEME OF THE SECOND PART

The second part of the poem is the sestet which denotes that the poet has some consolation and hope in Jesus Christ. White comments that 'the consolation ending is less potent than the complaining start'.⁴ In the Volta of the sonnet, there is a turn of thought. The poet turns from plaint to consideration of comfort. If God has taken away his Peace, he should give him some other useful things. He confesses that God has left Patience instead of Peace. Heaven is the place where he can get perfect Peace. Earthly Peace which springs from Patience, does not dwell in a man without further condition. He does not come here to console the broken-hearts with the hope of paradise. The state of unrest can be used as a means of spiritual progress. Brooding is not morose in word-act. It is a generative, warmly creative, emphatically wise and tragic stance of ethical love by the wild, uncontrollable dove of Peace- a figure with resonances of the Christian Holy Spirit, the notion of the Global Peace, and a sort of personal Peace that all of us dPeace and justice alike. Sure. The brooding individual is often presented as an introvert, but this poem has the idea that it is to brood to go beyond talk, to do work, and to render birth to

' O surely, revving Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu

Some good! And so, he does leave Patience exquisite,

That plumes to Peace after that. And when Peace

here does house,

He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo

. He comes to brood and sit.

God's Holy Spirit has a generative power. When a believer is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he can get Peace. The Bible says in Rom 5:1, "Therefore, since we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Like a mother bird over the eggs in her nest until they are hatched and then fully-fledged. Thus, true Peace is necessarily productive. Here "to coo" is used as concomitant with 'brood and sit'. God is the giver of Peace because it is part of His character. Numbers 25.12, Isaiah 54:10 speak about his Peace to His people.

V. CONCLUSION

Eventually, the poem is replete with some Biblical references. The poet prays to God to grant him his Peace or some charitable entities in place of Peace. Patience is a virtue that brings about hope. The hope of every believer is the citizenship of a heavenly kingdom. Jesus is Peace himself. The Bible says in Psalm 34: 14, "Depart from evil, and do good; seek Peace and pursue it." (KJV). There the priest poet prays to God to grant him Peace to the core so that he may pursue it and share this Peace with others. Psalm 37:37 says, "Mark, the perfect man, and behold the upright: the end of that man is Peace." The poet is upright and perfect, but he has anguish of not having perfect Peace. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is Peace and love. (Gal.5:22).

The Bible remarks in Romans 8:6, "To be carnally minded is death, but to spiritually minded is life and Peace." Consolation is for spiritual progress in the poem. Jesus came to the earth from heaven, "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of Peace." (Luke 1:79, Opcit.). The Angelic message about the birth of Jesus in Luke 2: 14 is, "Glory to God in the Highest; and on earth peace, goodwill towards men" The poet also asks God to give him some other good things for the service to human-being. Thus, it is crystal clear that the poem has theological as well as Biblical elements in it.

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