

The Influence of the Bible on Literature

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The bible is one of the eldest and influential texts that many individuals look to for solace. The bible is the holy scripture of the Christian religion, purporting to tell the history of the Earth from its earliest creation to the spread of Christianity in the first century A.D. The bible consists of several different contributors and authors as it is said that Moses wrote the first five books of the bible, amongst the other writers were Joshua, Samuel, and a collection of prophets. The bible is especially influential in our society as most our households' own bibles, and we even incorporate Christianity in our everyday lives such as praying, hand on bible in court, and etc. Throughout literature there have been many instances in which the bible has an influence on it. This essay will discuss and analyze the influence of the bible in the literature, the influence of the bible in Greek literature, and the influence on the bible and Gilgamesh

American Literature

To begin, the influence of the bible in American literature continues to grow at a steadily pace. Since the beginning of times, Puritan writer were the starters of the Age of Reason, which eventually emerged into Romanticism and the Renaissance writers. In the middle of the 19th century Realism was developed. Throughout American Literature, religious ideologies and philosophies influenced the way that writers portrayed the time period, characters, feelings, and God. A lot of writers during this time put most of their focus into making their work centered around God. For example, William Blake who is a true renaissance man, wrote and produced works of art which were in many aspects ahead of his time. Blake' literature had the greatest impact which was the bible. His dynamic way of interpreting the bible could not be accepted by the church in those times or by a large majority of the readers because that was an era when the church had a lot of influence on the state. As stated in the article, "Previous work on the role of

desire in seventeenth-century English and American Puritanism has focused on the nature of marital love and sexuality,(n10) the respective duties of husbands and wives within a patriarchal society,(n11) and--to a lesser extent--the imagery of bridal passion in Puritan spirituality.(n12) The concern of this study is to explore the way Puritan devotional literature joined nature imagery with erotic language in describing the spiritual life, summoning human beings along with the rest of the natural world to a common longing for God.” (Lane 2000). Christianity even plays a huge part in our American film industry. Many shows have featured scenes that depicts stories from the bible. For example, *The Family Guy*, which is an American television show described Jesus before his death in the Last Supper.

Another famous example of literature that has references from the bible would be Dante’s *Inferno*. This piece of literature gives people an idea of what hell could look like. Although the bible has no specific punishment for each individual crime, Dante’s *Inferno* entails punishments for crimes. Dante was a devout Catholic and there was a big difference between Dante’s work and the bible. In the bible, everyone who goes to hell gets the same punishment. “And whosoever was not written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”. (Revelation 20:15). The book of life is where the sins of everyone is written down and from that lists of sins is how it is decided who will go to hell. Many believe that one universal sin is unfair, and people commit many different levels of crimes and why should someone who committed extreme acts of violence be placed in the same place as someone who committed a lesser sin such as lust. However, it is suggested that who are you to pick which crimes are the highest and which are the lowest.

Greek Literature

Secondly, there are many similarities and possible parallels between the bible and Greek literature. Homer who is a famous and legendary author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. During the times when Greek literature was popular, many readers sparked interests as the two readings had similarities. “Scholars focusing on either homer or the Bible, as they were received throughout tradition, regularly assume a given meaning of each text, which was then transmitted with varying degrees of accuracy. the notion of influence is crucial in such scenarios. Focusing on the readers, by contrast, we appreciate the active construction of the texts’ meanings. moreover, we inquire into the rich and deli-cate connections between interpretation, identity and topical concerns. homer and the Bible were appropriated over the centuries for very different purposes, playing a significant role in discussions and controversies, which they themselves could never have anticipated.” (Niehoff 2012). In this article, Niehoff interprets Homer’s text and even states arguments as to way his reasoning is correct.

In addition to this, there is evidence of Christianity in the famous Epic Beowulf. Beowulf contains several biblical references. References to Cain and the flood are the most direct examples in Beowulf. Throughout the epic of Beowulf, the main character frequently referred to praying to God and having a savior. In Beowulf, we explore both Christian and pagan beliefs and how they are able to coexist at the same time. When Beowulf compares his battle with Grendel’s mother, he states that “the fight would have ended straightaway if God had guarded me” (1.4). There are multiple instances in which Beowulf references God, and it continues as until the end.

Bible and Gilgamesh

Lastly, I would like to explore the “Epic of Gilgamesh” and “The Biblical Flood Story” have a similar story but major differences as well. In both texts, a flood occurs, which were

caused by the higher power and or Gods. In both texts these floods were meant to destroy the people on earth. In the bible, Noah was called upon to build an arc due to his righteous character and was able to bring two of everything along with him. As far as Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim built an arc to save himself. Both stories had a designated person was picked to survive the flood by building an arc, but each God went about it in different ways. After the forty days of flooding had finally passed, Noah opened the window and released a raven and then a dove. Utnapishtim set free a dove, a swallow, and then a raven. Although there was a difference in how many birds were released and what kind of birds, the meaning of why remained the same which is to find out when the water had receded.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is a proven fact that the bible plays a part of a lot of things that we see and read. For centuries, authors have based their literature off of stories in the bible and it changes within the genre of literature. Puritans want to glorify God in all ways possible. When it came to their writings and literature. Dante's *Inferno* gave depictions on what hell may be like according to the different levels of punishments. Homer whom is the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* also had evidence of bible references throughout his famous literatures and readers began to cause controversy between the two texts finding similarities between them. *Beowulf* is an epic poem that is filled with references from the bible. As *Beowulf* acknowledged praying to God on several occasions throughout the story. The last famous piece of literature that has evidence of bible references would be *Gilgamesh*. Along with *Beowulf* that had a lot of controversy with bible references as did *Gilgamesh*. As you can see there has been evidence of biblical references for years to come. It is even common to see biblical reference in our films.

References

Bremer, F. J. (2009). *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=292778&site=eds-live&scope=site>

- Written by a leading expert on the Puritans, this brief, informative volume offers a wealth of background on this key religious movement. This book traces the shaping, triumph, and decline of the Puritan world, while also examining the role of religion in the shaping of American society and the role of the Puritan legacy in American history.

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Dyatlik, T. N. 1,2. tdyatlik@gmail. co. (2018). *The Value of Biblical Greek in Theology and Exegesis of Martin Luther*. Gileya, (133), 174–178. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hus&AN=130699728&site=eds-live&scope=site>

- This study of the value of Greek in Luther's theology and exegesis will take the following three steps. First, I will try to define the possible Greek tools which Luther might have used. Second, I will look at Luther's use of Greek in his exegesis. 174 Finally, I will examine the influence of Greek on Luther's theology. In his early career Luther was quite comfortable with the Vulgate. Studying his theory of the Bible translation, Krause concludes that Luther «was suspicious of returning to the original languages of Scripture, preferring the traditional interpretations based on the Vulgate».

Lane, B. C. (2000). Two Schools of Desire: Nature and Marriage in Seventeenth-Century Puritanism. *Church History*, 69(2), 372. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3169585>

- In Milton's description of the marriage of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*, the entire Garden of Eden is seen to participate in the celebration of their union. Spousal and nature imagery are woven together, beauty and desire joined in the mystery of Adam's amazement at this gift of his "other self" newly received from God's hand. Says Adam of his wife,

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Hamori, E. J. (2011). Echoes of Gilgamesh in the Jacob Story. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 130(4), 625–642. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hus&AN=527648828&site=eds-live&scope=site>

- The article presents an examination into the Biblical Old Testament story of the patriarch Jacob, highlighting the thematic parallels seen between the struggles of the patriarch and the ancient Near Eastern narrative of the Epic of **Gilgamesh**. The author asserts that the writer of the Genesis passage was both familiar with the **Gilgamesh** epic and likely referenced its elements to further its thematic goals.

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