

The influence of The Bible on Literature

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E 351 Literature of the Western World

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April 28, 2020

Without reservation, hands down, the Bible has been, is, and will be the most influential work of literature in the history of mankind. Not only has the Bible been an influence to writings of the past but also to many famous writings of the current and recent decades. In addition, the Bible is the most influential book written. The Bible has been translated into over 1,000 languages. With more than 1.5 billion copies sold, it is the best and biggest manuscript sold since the beginning of what we know as literature. Also, it is, after all, the most important book for the world's largest religion. Today we can find at least one Bible, if not two, in nearly every household.

So, what is the Bible? It is one of the oldest compilations of ancient literature. Too many Christians it is also known as a religious text or sacred manuscript. The word "Bible" is derived from the Latin word "biblia" (Harper, 2001) and the Greek word "biblos" (Harper, 2001) which simply means book, or books. Written by 40 authors, the Bible was written between a period of 1400 and 1600 years. There are many historians that account for its writing as early as 1450 B.C. Being canonized between 200 B.C and 200 A.D (Räsänen. 1992), it is divided into two halves, Old and New Testaments. The two halves contain an amazing collection of 66 books. In this remarkable assembly of 66 books there are several different writing styles such as history, poetry, parables, prophecy, as well as apocalyptic, to name a few.

In addition to the above, the bible is a sourcebook for daily living, a book of standards for our conduct, teachings that let us know what is right and what is wrong. It is a treasure cove of insights and principles to help us to live life to the fullest. But, what's most important about the Bible is that it is a piece of literature that contains the words and message God desires mankind to have so that it can be applied to all humanity. Again, what is the Bible? This essay will

attempt to answer this question. This essay will discuss the influence of the Bible in literature... influence of Bible in Greek Literature, and parallels in Greek/Western Literature and the Bible.

### **The Influence of the Bible on Literature**

In literary history there has been no other book that has had such a profound influence on literature than the Bible. Its influence is impossible to ignore. Not only has it been an influence on literature, it has been an influence on history and human cultures throughout the world. This evident is noted in the written works by notable authors such as Shakespeare who reference the bible more than a thousand times in his biblical works. There are other authors such as John Milton and Ernest Hemingway who all drew from the Bible. Even the writers of the Declaration of Independence make reference to the Bible

### **The Bible Influence on Art and Film**

The bible is far more implicated in all forms of literature in our world than just history. Being a part of the written and spoken literature, the arts have been affected by the Bible. There is artist such as Rembrandt and Da Vinci that have cascaded the Bible on their artistic works. In addition. Movies such as "The Matrix" that highlighted numerous Biblical references(Cline, 2019). Even the music world has been affected by the Bible. Artist such as Kanye West who have rapped about wanting to "see thee more clearly" in his hit, "Jesus Walks", Referenced the Bible.

### **The Influence of the Bible in Greek Literature**

Undebatable Greek literature is especially important. All western languages are integrally based on its writing and language. Greek literature is important because it laid the foundation of literature of the western society, culture, and its literature today. Greek literature refers to

writings composed in areas of Greek influence, throughout the whole period in which the Greek-speaking people have existed. The Greeks were the first foremost European society to establish multifaceted literature. This literary style and works influence western society today in many ways. Greek writers, authors, and poets, to name a few, are responsible for the establishment of such literary genre as poetry, tragedy, comedy, and philosophy to the world which all can be found at various points in the Bible.

### **The Bible and Greek Literature**

There are some difference and similarities between the Bible and Greek literature. There are some critics that say that the Bible plagiarized Greek literature. There is no proof to that claim except for similarities in the Bible and Greek literature. Both Biblical and Greek literature are similar because they have the same value for their believers or practitioners (Thomas, Philippe, 2017). Another similarity is that both were a source of life for their followers. For example, the Bible controls the actions and thoughts of Christians, like the Iliad was with the ancient Greeks. Another similarity between the two literary styles Both personalize the relationship with God or gods in the case of the Iliad. Both feed the soul of their believers. In addition, both promote love, respect, loyalty, and friendship for others. The difference between the literary style is that Greek literature was not consecrated to the ancient Greeks as the Bible is to Christians.

### **Parallels in Greek/Western Literature and the Bible.**

Parallelism is a leading factor in Biblical, Greek, and Western literature. Between the Old and New Testament of the Bible, there are many prominent instances of parallelism. The same can be said about Biblical literature and Greek /Western Literature. Parallelism in this paper can

be described as comparative literature (Beecroft, 2013). Comparative literature can be defined as the interrelationship of the literatures of two or more national cultures usually of differing languages and especially of the influences of one upon the other. In this World Literature course there has been different works of literature that fit this category. Such works as the Bible as it is compared to The Epic of Gilgamesh written by Sin-Lequ-Unninni, Medea written by Euripides, and the Inferno written by Dante, to name a few. Each of these pieces of works were written in a different time in history by different authors, but each had similarities with stories in the Bible.

### **Gilgamesh and the Bible**

First, there are noted similarities between the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Bible. One similarity is that of the main characters Enkidu/Shamhat and Adam/Eve. In both of these stories, there was a man, created by a god, who lives amongst the animals. In each story this man is introduced to a woman who tempts him. Enkidu, like Adam, accepts food from the woman, eyes were opened to his wrong doings, covers his nakedness, and like Adam, Enkidu had to leave his former dominion, unable to return. Another similarity in both stories is there is a presence of a snake in the story of the fall of man in the Bible and the Epic of Gilgamesh, which steals a plant of everlasting from the hero.

### **Medea and the Bible**

Then we have the story of Medea. Medea is an ancient Greek tragedy written by Euripides' in 431 B.C. In this story we are introduced to Jason and Medes which are compared to Jacob and Rachael Of Genesis. Like Jacob, Jason travels to the east finding a beautiful maiden tasked with tending sheep. Also, Jason, like Jacob, had to endure various ordeals at the hand of a

deceitful soon to be father-in-law, to win his intended bride. Another similarity in the two stories is Jason's divorce Medea to marry Glauce. This is similar to how Jacob divorces Leah to marry her sister Rachel.

### **The Inferno**

Lastly, we have the Inferno. Written between 1308 and 1314 by Italian author Dante In Dante's poem, Dante is led by Virgil through the seven terraces of Purgatory which parallels to the seven deadly sins. Also, Dante describes the different levels of hell. In the Inferno hell is made up of nine similar in size circles. These circles represent an increase of wickedness, where sinners receive punishment appropriate for their crimes. This similar to the Bible's account of the different degrees of punishment in hell according Luke 12:47-48. In addition, in the Inferno Dante's vision of punishment in hell involved such punishments like tormenting of the soul, biting by insects, flailing in mire, submerged in boiling blood, and being lashed with whips, which is similar to Matthew 8:12, 22:13 where it speaks of hell as a place of "outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In my conclusion There is a strong awareness that the oldest book of literature, the Bible, is a very influential part of literature. In fact, it should be read as a literature because it is a masterpiece of literature. In spite of it being a literary masterpiece, people have easily overlooked the influence that this book has had on a huge amount of our culture's literature. In general, the Bible has had influence in shaping today's literature. It has also had some influence to Greek literature. In addition, there has been many comparisons of stories to the Bible. Stories such as "The Epic of Gilgamesh" written by Sin-Lequ-Unninni, "Medea" written by Euripides, and "The Inferno" written by Dante. With all these influences it can truly be said that the Bible is the most important and influential book to the literary world.

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Since the publication of the last etymological dictionary of Greek, both the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European, and our knowledge of the Greek substrate have led to numerous, often surprising new insights into the history and formation of the Greek vocabulary. This dictionary is a treasure trove covering 2000 years of Ancient Greek: from Mycenaean via Homer and the classical period to lexicographers, such as Hesychius (5th century A.D.).

Räisänen, H. (1992), *Scottish Journal of Theology, Volume 45, (Issue 3)*, pp. 303-324,

Finnish scholar in biblical studies, died in Helsinki, Finland, on December 30th following a battle with pancreatic cancer. Heikki was appointed Professor of New Testament Exegesis at his alma mater, the University of Helsinki, in 1975 and remained there until his retirement in 2006. Heikki Räisänen has raised significant challenges to the way New Testament theology handles the relation of history and theology. Räisänen continues this trajectory by splitting New Testament theology into its descriptive and reflective tasks, resulting in a programme which questions the unity of the canon, the appropriateness of prescription and the role of church authority in New Testament theology.

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Former writer for ThoughtCo, contributing articles about atheism, agnosticism, and secular humanism for 18 years. Cline was a regional director for the Council for Secular Humanism.

Thompson, T, Philippe, W. (2017), *Journal of Hebrew Scripture*, Vol 17, Pp 320.

biblical scholar and theologian. Professor of theology at the University of Copenhagen from 1993 to 2009. Part of the minimalist movement known as the Copenhagen School, a group of scholars who hold that the Bible cannot be used as a source to determine the history of ancient Israel.

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Alexander Beecroft studies and teaches in Greek and Latin language and literature, ancient civilizations, literary theory (ancient and modern) and the theory and practice of world literature. His major areas of research interest lie in current debates about world literature, from the role of premodern texts to debates about the global novel; in the literatures of Ancient Greece and Rome and of pre-Tang Chinese literature (i.e. before AD 600). His first book, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China*