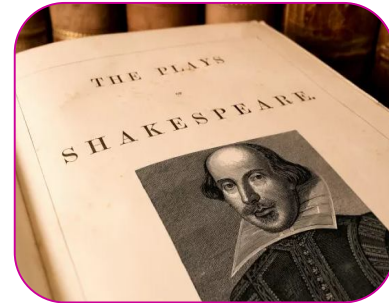




"BIBLICAL INFLUENCE IN SHAKESPEARES MACBETH; WITH REFERENCE TO THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES AND IMAGERY"

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ABSTRACT:

There is no need to introduce the most famous and well known book whose author is himself Lord Jehovah, and it is "The BIBLE". No book has made a greater impact on world literature than the Bible.

"It has colored the talk of the household and the street, as well as molded the language of the scholars. It has been something more than a "well of English undefiled, it has become part of the spiritual atmosphere. We hear the echoes of its familiar phrases haunts all the fields and groves of our fine literature"(Ackermann 9)

People almost three fourth of the population puts trust in the book whereas on the contrary note there are also people who opposed it. As it influenced me, it has influenced many writers of the different ages from the very beginning, that is from Anglo saxon period to the contemporary one.

In the present paper, I have analysed on the proliferation of the plot with the influenced of the great book, "Bible". This paper explore the Biblical influence seen in the famous tragedy "Macbeth" by Shakespeare. For my further research, I have applied a theoretical methodology, which includes theological books and documentations related to the topic.

KEYWORDS : *Biblical doctrines, Theological aspects, Imagery, Macbeth.*

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare debt to scripture is profound: biblical references and imagery is woven into every play. No writer has integrated the expression and themes found in the Bible into his own work more magnificently than Shakespeare.

Shakespeare himself would have been most familiar with an earlier version of the Bible, possibly the Geneva Bible, the Bishops Bible or the Great Bible, because the first edition of the King James Bible (Authorized Version) did not appear until 1611. Please note that the Biblical quotes used in this article are taken from "The New King James Version".

The Question arises that, is there any Biblical Influence? Is there any Theological doctrines present in Macbeth? Is there any Imagery and how these aspects helps for the further development of the story? Before that let us see what is Theological doctrine.

Steve Shirley has defined these both terms separately. According to him Theology comes from two Greek words "theos" meaning "God" and "logos" meaning "word". Therefore, it essentially, and primarily means "the words about God" or "the words of God" or the more common definition is "the study of God". Therefore, Christian Theology would be the "study of God" found in the Bible. This study would include such things as his: diety, nature, purpose, attributes, laws, commandments, spiritual precautions, relationship to the world and other beings and more.

Doctrine on the other hand, comes from the Latin word "doctrina", meaning "teaching" or "instructions". Therefore, this would mean the teaching and instructions of Gods word (the Bible).

(2 Timothy 3:16) says the Bible is "profitable for doctrine". In (Jhon 7:16-17) Jesus said of the doctrine he taught,

"..... My doctrines (teaching) is not mine, but his that sent me(17). If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine(teaching), whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself"

1. Theological doctrine of Fall of Man is seen in Macbeth:

Let us see exactly what is a fall of man. According to Graham Beynon, (pastor of the Avenue Community Church in Leicester) in his essay "An introduction to the Fall and sin", clearly explain the relation between the fall of man and sin.

The chapter 3 of Genesis says, that the cunning serpent approach to the woman Eve and tempt her by his fluttering words to eat the fruit from the forbidden tree, where we see in chapter 2 verse 16;

And the Lord commanded the man, saying "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die".

Eve gets tempted by watching the fruit of knowledge and found it attractive and tempting. She could not resist her temptation and pluck one of the fruit. After tasting it, she gave it to her beloved husband and he too eat it. When they had it, the very first thing they discover was that they both are naked and should not come in front of God. When God came to know about their disobeying act, he punished them and they were forbidden to stay in the Eden garden then after. The very first thing of their discovery or knowledge laid towards sin. Thus, by disobeying the command they fall from the presence of love of God. Compare to this theological doctrine, we see in Macbeth the similar fall of the hero. Like Eve, Lady Macbeth too became the cause of the downfall of his husband. She convince him to kill the King and causes a downfall for him. Macbeth follows his wife and act like wise. In the initial part of the play, we see Macbeth as a positive and good character like Adam. He serve the King honestly and won battles for him like Adam who serve God and loved his presence. But when Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to kill the king, he select his own downfall. His one sin follows the other one. His evil side sprout out which leads him to his own destruction. He falls so hardly for never to stand again.

2. Bible is against Witchcraft and Spirits:

In the beginning of the first act we see the trio of witches visiting Macbeth to prophecies his destiny. Banquo asks whether they are mortal, nothing that they seems to be inhabitants of the earth. The second time Macbeth meets the witches is in a cave(although, if you consider Hecate to be a legitimate aspects of the play, she mentions the "pit of Acheron" as intended meeting place at the end of Act3, scene 5, which might indicate either that Macbeth has actually descended into hell, or that the cave is a sort of meeting point between earth and hell.) He believes in supernatural. Satan uses witchcraft to prevent people from finding holy spiritually in God alone. The Bible speaks often of the consequences of following false idols and falsehood.

Leviticus 19:31,

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them, I am the LORD your God".

Similarly, Leviticus 20:27,

"A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death..... their blood will be on their own heads."

As far the above verse is concerned, we see the similar action was taken in the play. The very beginning of the evil start from the prophecy of the witches. Though, the transformation is seen in Macbeth, when he tempted by the prophecy of becoming a King. The transformation was from good to bad which lead him towards his own destruction. He kills the King Duncan. He didnt stop there. When the murder is revealed, Macbeth swiftly kills the prime witnesses, the sleepy guards of the king bedchamber. Macbeth is duly proclaimed the new king of Scotland, but recalling the Witches second prophecy, he arranges the

murder of his fellow soldier Banquo and his son Fleance both of whom represent a threat to his kingship according to the witches prophecy. Thus, his evil deeds went on and on to fulfill his ambition and desire.

When he is told that Macduff has deserted him, Macbeth begins the final stage of his tragic descent. His first move is the destruction of Macduff's wife and children. Malcolm, son of Duncan persuades Macduff the murder of his family should act as the spur to revenge. In the final scene we see that Macbeth is stunned when Macduff reveals that he was not "of woman born" but was "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb. Macbeth is stunned but refuses to yield to Macduff. Macduff kills him and decapitates him. At the end of the play, Malcolm is proclaimed the new king of Scotland. It was his punishment of visiting the witches and believing on their prophecies.

3. Biblical Imagery in Macbeth:

Macbeth is full of imagery. Here are just a few examples. In Act 1, scene 2, the captain is telling King Duncan of Macbeth's bravery in battle and describes the scene saying,

Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorize another Golgotha,"

The Golgotha mentioned here is a Biblical allusion to the place where Christ was crucified. Matthew 27:33 mentions Golgotha, otherwise known as, "The place of the Skull".

In Act 1, Scene 3 Banquo talks with Macbeth about the witches saying,

"But tis strange.
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths."

In Corinthians 11:13-14, Paul, the apostle, talks about how Satan uses false apostles or prophets as his "instruments of darkness" and their truths are not to be trusted.

There are many more of these references throughout the play. It consists of the use of symbols to convey an idea or to create a specific atmosphere. Shakespeare uses imagery in Macbeth often; pathetic fallacy, blood, tailoring and sleep are examples of this.

Pathetic fallacy is a tool of imagery which is used in Macbeth to convey nature's response to the unnatural events that occur. Most of the scenes in which some kind of ill-doing is taking place is set at night or in darkness of some kind. Macbeth's murder of Duncan happens at night, and it triggers a response of outrage and grief in the land. Nature's troubled actions show us this; as Lennox tells Macbeth just before Duncan is found dead,

"The night has been unruly; where we lay, or chimneys were blown down..... lamentings heard in the air some say the ear was feverous and did shake." (II(iii) L59).

Another good example of imagery used is blood. It is used to convey guilt, murder, betrayal, treachery and evil. Macbeth, directly after his murder of Duncan, is concerned about the blood on his hands, and states that no amount of water will wash the blood away, signifying the guilt in his heart.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, Shakespeare has a tremendous influence of the Bible on his soul and thoughts. We find the doctrines, imagery, symbolism etc based on the Bible throughout the play. Macbeth is full of Biblical influences. It is countless.

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