

A STUDY ON THE REFLECTION OF BIBLICAL CHARACTERS AND CONCEPTS IN *LORD OF THE FLIES*

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ABSTRACT

There is no explicit or direct connection to Christian symbolism in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The extracted biblical parallels function as a kind of subtle motif in the novel. They add thematic resonance to the main idea of the story. The island itself reflects the Garden of Eden in its status as an originally pristine place that is corrupted by the introduction of evil. Similarly, one may see the *Lord of the Flies* as a representation of the devil, as it works to promote evil among humankind. The initial identification of the beastie as a snake reminds the story of the Fall of Man. Indeed, it is possible to read the fall of the parachutist as the event which leads to the ouster from Eden of the boys. Further, Jack's identification with hunting and Ralph's identification with shelter as well as their natural antagonism appear to be allegorization of the Cain and Abel story. Many critics have drawn strong parallels between Simon and Jesus in the novel. Simon's conversation with the *Lord of the Flies* also parallels the confrontation between Jesus and the devil during Jesus' forty days stay in the wilderness. The names given to the characters in the novel closely reflect to the biblical names. This article tries to investigate these biblical parallels and reflections in the novel.

KEYWORDS: Biblical Parallelism, Christian Symbolism, Character Reflection, Original Sin, Garden of Eden, Notion of Devil

INTRODUCTION

Many critics have characterized *Lord of the Flies* as a retelling of episodes from the Bible. While that description may be an oversimplification, the novel does echo certain Christian images and themes. The novel's biblical parallels enhance its moral themes but are not necessarily the primary key to interpreting the story. *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding is rife with references to biblical themes.

The major religious allegory surrounds Simon and his search for the truth. Once Simon has talked to the *Lord of the Flies*, he climbs the mountain in search of "the beast." What he discovers is that the beast is only a dead parachutist. When he runs down the mountain to tell the truth to the boys, they are in the middle of a ritualistic dance. They mistake Simon for the beast and kill him. This mirrors two Biblical stories. Moses went up to the mountain where God delivered the truth in the form of the 10 commandments. When Moses descended the mountain, he found his people had made an idol of gold shaped as a calf and were dancing and partying around the calf. Moses was furious and broke the stones which contained the 10 commandments. Unlike Simon, Moses was not killed. However, according to the New Testament, when Jesus came down from Heaven in order to deliver the truth to mankind, he was mistaken for a false prophet and executed. This mirrors Simon's ultimate fate. Thus, Simon is known in literature as a 'Christ-figure', a character who sacrifices his own life and that life generally affects the protagonist in some great way.

These kind of religious allegories are plenty in *Lord of the Flies*. They exhibit both at conceptual as well as character levels in the play.

The Concept of Original Sin

Many readers see the theme of the book being about the original sin and the fall of man. E.M. Forster detects that Golding in '*Lord of the Flies*' is a Christian in his acknowledgement of at least the possibility of original sin. Forster writes, Phrases like 'the end of innocence' and 'the darkness of man's heart' show us the author's attitude more clearly than has appeared hither-to. He believes in the Fall of Man and perhaps in Original sin. Thus his attitude approaches the Christian. We are all born in sin, or will all lapse into it. But he does not complete the Christian attitudes for the reason that he never introduces the idea of a Redeemer". (E.M. Forster, 1962: xi)

The purpose of writing *Lord of the Flies* is given in a detailed manner by William Golding in a lecture entitled 'Fable'. He declares that the basic message in the novel is a philosophical exposition of the notion that 'the man is a fallen being'. He explains that 'Man is a fallen being'. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his stale prelim. I accept the theology and admit the triteness; but what is a trite is true; and a truism can become round me more convenient form in which this thesis might be worked out, and found it in the play of children. I was well situated for this, since at this time I was teaching them (William Golding, 1965:88). I decided to take the literacy convention of boys on an island, and try to show how the shape of the society the evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature (William Golding, 1965:89).

The Garden of Eden

The tropical island stands for the Garden of Eden. The children are provided with whatever they needed for their sustenance. The children enjoyed their stay in the island as long as they didn't have the fear of the beastie. Even they forgot that they have stranded their and started building shelters for their living. They had great fun and games on the seashore. Whenever they felt hungry, they had plenty of fruits for their survival. The littluns, grown-ups all had a jolly hood time there. They didn't even think of their parents. As the Israelites had manna and birds for their meals on their journey to the Promised Land, the children of Golding's *Lord of the Flies* were fed with fruits and wild pigs in abundance.

The first allusion to the bible comes early in the novel, when Ralph comes upon the beach for the first time. He strips off his clothes and unashamedly revels naked in his isolation. The description of the scene, Skull-like coconuts are on the ground, Ralph unhooks the snake clasp of his belt, and everything is done with a film of violence permeating it. Within this Garden of Eden is a hidden evil, waiting to consume the children.

The little children become afraid of something out there that they refer to as the beast. When they accidentally start a wildfire, committing an act of manslaughter, the exploding trees appear like snakes flying up into the air. Again, their innocence is overshadowed by their sinful natures, and that is reflected in overt allusions to the serpent.

The Notion of Devil

One of the most important symbolisms in the novel is Lord of the Flies. It is an English translation of Beelzebub, which often times is taken to mean Satan or a lesser devil. From its very title, one can see that this novel is a treatise about the origin of evil and its source. The title comes from the Babylonian phrase "Baal ze bubb" (Mathew 12:22-28). This is literally translated as *Lord of the Flies* but refers to what the bible would call Satan, Lucifer or The Devil.

The whole novel is intended to state in a way that man is a fallen creature. Every man is born in sinfulness and lives in the ways of sin.

The novel depicts that this sinful nature of man is the cause of all his disgrace in life. Evil is within oneself but rarely people realize it. Golding uses the character Simon to exhibit this truth to the island dwellers. Unfortunately, he becomes a victim of truth as Christ. The outer manifestation of evilness is the devil in Golding's words the Lord of the Flies. Though it is given the nature of Devil, it is this lord of the flies delivered the truth to Simon. But the inherent evilness of the boys killed Simon without letting the truth outside.

Comparison of Simon with Jesus

Golding intended Simon to be a Christ-like figure in *Lord of the Flies*. While not trying to say Simon is Christ, literally, he simply is giving the reader a figure to compare the story of Christ with. The name itself has a close connection to biblical personality namely Peter. Simon's place in the story seems a direct parallel to society's treatment of Jesus in the Bible. Jesus though doing everything good to the people, yet not recognized by them rather he was betrayed by the same people. The same way Simon was the one who knew the truth about the demon on the island but was not allowed by the boys to tell it out.

Jesus and Simon made prophesy in different ways. Simon in *Lord of the Flies* tells Ralph that he will survive: "You will get all right". Simon does include himself in prophesy; thus, one can infer he has prophesized his own death. Jesus on several occasions in the *Bible* predicts his own death.

The prophetic nature of Simon and his and his sensitivity to the beauty and terror of the island is examined by Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Greger. They state that Simon is the first child to know, to register fully, what the island and its jungle are like in themselves. The qualities that were present in Ralph's day dreaming at the finding of the conch, but have subsequently been overlaid by his need to think and lead, are fully realized in Simon. On the other hand, in solitary communion with nature, he taps Jack's sensitivity to the creepy as well as the beautiful. But he is outside the hunter mentality, the leader mentality outside even himself. He exists in terms of his sensitivity to what is outside him. This allows him to know comprehensively. He not only register the heat, the urgency, the sot, the dampness and decay; he also registers the cool and the mysterious submergence of the forest in darkness, the pure beauty and fragrance of star light and night flower, the peace. Finally he not only registers both, but accepts them equally, as two parts of the same reality. It is the qualities of acceptance and inclusion that give us the "Simon-ness of Simon" (Mark Kinkead Weekes & Ian Greger, 1967:30-31).

Jesus is so compassionate towards the poor and the needy. He feeds multitude which followed him with bread and fish. Simon also feeds the littluns who are unable to pluck the fruits from the high trees. In Matthew Chapter 36, one reads that "and he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37 And they did all eat, and were filled". Other passages: Mark 6: 34-44; 8: 1-9; John 6: 5-13.

"Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach, pulled off the choicest from up in the foliage, passed them back down to the endless, outstretched hands" (Golding 56).

Both **withdraw** themselves from society. According to the *Bible*, Jesus "withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed" (Luke 5:16). Simon also retreats into the wilderness: "Simon turned away from them and went where the just

perceptible path led him. Soon high jungle closed in. . . . He looked over his shoulder [. . .] and glanced swiftly round to confirm that he was utterly alone" (Golding 56).

Fasting is another character that resembles to that of Jesus in Simon's Character in the novel. Simon "shifted restlessly but there was no avoiding the sun. Presently he was thirsty, and then very thirsty. *He continued to sit*" (Golding 132-33). According to the *Bible*, Jesus went forty days and nights without food: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry afterward" (Matthew 4: 1-2).

CONCLUSIONS

From the above investigation, one can see that the novel, *Lord of the Flies* is full of symbols and metaphors that provide insight to the workings of society in general. Golding intended Simon to be a Christ-like figure. Simon's place in the story seems a direct parallel to society's treatment of Jesus in the Bible. There are a number of illustrations which are parallel to those in the Bible. The concepts and characters are closely connected to biblical representations. The Garden of Eden is rightly highlighted with the natural settings of the island. The notion of Devil is aptly compared with lord of the flies. *Lord of the Flies* as a whole echoes Christian ideas and themes without developing explicit, precise parallels with them. The novel's biblical parallels enhance its moral themes but are not necessarily the primary key to interpreting the story.

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