

## Analysis on the Influence of Bible on British and American Literature

Yan Zhou

Foreign Language Department, Guangzhou College of Technology and Business, Guangzhou, Guangdong,  
510850

**Keywords:** Bible; British and American Literature; Study of Influence

**Abstract:** British and American literature is deeply influenced by Christian culture. Writers often quote the characters, language, and allusions in the Bible to enrich their content and deepen the theme. British and American literary works contain not only that, but also strong Christian ideas, such as: benevolence and forgiveness, sin and redemption. This paper introduces Christian culture, analyzes the relationship between Christianity and literature, and further demonstrates the far-reaching influence of Christian culture on English and American literature from the biblical quotations in British and American literature and Christian thoughts in English and American literature.

### 1. Introduction

The Hebrew Christian cultural tradition is one of the cultural foundations of English and American literature. The British and American writers who grew up on the soil of Christian civilization unknowingly drew the materials from Christian culture. The Bible is everywhere in English and American literature. This paper further analyzes the influence of Christian classic Bible and Christian thought on certain British and American literary works, and further uncovers the far-reaching influence of Christian culture on English and American literature.

### 2. Christian culture

Christian culture refers to the ideological value system with the Christian faith as the core as well as the social survival structure. Christianity originated from the Jewish religion of Israel, and then separated from Judaism and developed into Christianity, becoming one of the three major religions in the world. In the history of human civilization, Christianity plays a vital role. Christian culture is the source of Western civilization and affects the political, economic, and cultural fields of Western countries [1]. The characteristic of Christian culture is that it is a system of religious beliefs that believes in the existence of God and believes that Jesus Christ saves all human beings, that is, which believes that God is the true God of the Holy Trinity, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and has a set of meticulous theological system. The Bible is the core content of Christianity. It is the outline of Christian faith. It consists of the New Testament and the Old Testament, including: history books, legal books, poetry books, wisdom books, prophets, and prophecies[2]. It records the doctrine of Christian doctrine and the law, and its influence is not only limited to the religious field, but also penetrates into all aspects of social life around the world. With the spread of Christianity, more and more people are beginning to get in touch with the Bible, learning and gradually understanding Christian culture. For the British and American countries, Christianity is their main religious beliefs. The doctrines and thoughts in Christianity deeply influence people's world outlook, outlook on life and values. As for language, it is concise and rich in connotation, while it is vivid and unique in writing techniques and expressions. It greatly promotes the enrichment and development of English and American literature and forms a unique Christian culture. At the same time, the positive thoughts of benevolence and forgiveness, patience and kindness, as well as some contagious, thought-provoking and humorous stories embodied in the Bible, have been borrowed and cited continuously by British and American writers. British and American literature provides rich creative materials and eternal themes, which have a profound

impact on English and American literature.

Religion and literature belong to two different categories in essence. They are two different ideologies, which often have different meanings and values for people. If religion is to meet the needs of our faith, then literature is the need to satisfy our aesthetic level. Even so, there are many similarities between religion and literature. First of all, they have their own strong subjective colors in the process of reflecting the world and understanding the world. The subjectivity of religion is reflected in its "turning the essence of man into the reality of fantasy, and imagining the search for a superhuman being in the reality of the fantasy of heaven." In other words, people couldn't see God and heaven with their naked eyes, but they are convinced that there is such a god and believe that when they die, their souls can be saved and they go to heaven. The subjectivity of literature is reflected in the fact that even a particularly realistic and extremely accurate depiction of literature is inseparable from the subjective experience of writers. Secondly, religion and literature are the products of emotional experience. Emotion is the internal motivation of religious beliefs. Faith needs the support of emotion [3]. Religion mainly makes the believers psychologically and spiritually experience themselves as well as supernatural things through emotions. Literary creation is inseparable from the emotional experience. "Emotional expression theory" is an influential statement about the nature of art.

The similarities between religion and literature determine the inseparable relationship between the two. It is clear that Christian culture is a potential undercurrent in English and American literature. On the one hand, Christian culture needs to use English and American literature to make people better understand its "truth"; on the other hand, Christian culture in the process of its development also affects the lifestyle, behavioral habits, values and other aspects of British and American people. It has had a huge impact. The Bible phenomena in Christian culture can be seen almost everywhere in English and American literature. The spirit of Christianity has become the aesthetic ideal in English and American literature.

### **3. Christian Culture in British and American Literature**

T. S. Eliot mentioned in *Christianity and Culture*: "A European may not believe in the authenticity of Christian faith, but his words and demeanor can not escape from the traditions of Christian culture, which rely on that culture to have significance. Only Christian culture can make Voltaire and Nietzsche." The concepts of sin, redemption, forgiveness, repentance, good and evil, and fraternity in Christian thoughts have deeply infiltrated into the consciousness of Westerners. In many British and American literary works, the influence of Christian culture is realized.

The original sin is a very important concept in Christian culture. It originated from the ancestors of mankind Adam and Eve who stole the forbidden fruit against the will of God. It is this inherent sin that is deeply rooted in human nature. Pride, jealousy, anger, laziness, greed, lust, murder, and other evils that violate ethical principles will inevitably occur. Therefore, Original sin became the root of all human sins, disasters, suffering and death. The sins described in British and American literature reflect the deep-rooted sins and crimes of mankind [4]. In *The Story of the Pastor*, the last chapter of *The Canterbury Tales*, the pastor testified the seven fatal sins of Christianity: pride, jealousy, anger, laziness, greed, overeating, and lust. Frankenstein, the protagonist in *Frankenstein*, believes that scientific experiments can create life beyond death, transcending God's ban to gain knowledge that he should not have, thus attempting to cross the boundaries of human beings. In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff, the avenger, was portrayed as a heinous demon. *The Love under the Banyan Tree* mocked and whipped the human greed and ruthlessness represented by the protagonist Efreem Cabot. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Alik is morally corrupt, tempting and insulting Tess. The sage in *The Sound and the Fury* is purely a representative of evil, who only loves money and has no humanity. Mrs. Compson is cold and selfish, a figure with great vanity. Manly Point in *The Good People in the Country* is a typical example of evil, a full-fledged liar, and the other protagonist, Hao Erjia, is guilty of pride and conceit. These literary works describe not only the crimes of moral corruption in the usual sense, but also the sins considered in Christian culture, such as pride and departure from God. Sin must inevitably lead to "redemption". Salvation means freeing human

beings or individuals from sin, bringing hope and rebirth. "Sin - punishment - regret - salvation" has become the clear main line running through many literary works. *Paradise Lost* and *Return to Paradise* describe the survival mode of the Bible tradition: Paradise - Lost - Finding - Return, people are constantly in the sorrow of losing paradise and the hope of regaining paradise. "I have previously sung of the happy garden, and the garden was lost only for one person to violate the fate; now I am going to sing this paradise for human beings. First, Adam could not withstand temptation and lost Eden. Sin is the barrier between human beings and the Garden of Eden. Only through the death of Jesus Christ can the paradise be rebuilt. Second, Adam can withstand the temptations from Satan and sacrificed himself to restore the lost for mankind. In his *The Road to Heaven*, John Bunyan described the protagonist "Christian" who escaped from the "City of Destruction" and bear the burden of sin. After various trials and temptations, he succeeded in finding the road to redemption, and finally getting the path to an eternal life. In Louis's fantasy novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Edmond betrayed his brothers and sisters and Aslan for the white witch's candy, and turned to the witch [5].

Love is the core concept in the Christian culture. The Story of Melibi in *The Canterbury Tales* tells that Melibi was prepared to retaliate against the enemy after being persecuted by the enemy. Later, he listened to the advice of his wife, Chongzi, gave up hatred, and forgiven the enemy. *The Canterbury Tales* is full of Christian thoughts about love, which is God's Essence, therefore, people must love each other. The forgiveness and tolerance of the enemy also reflects the love for God. *The Tempest* is a typical drama with the theme of forgiveness. The theme is about the fraternal thoughts of Christianity. God is kind and loves everything [6]. Therefore, people must love everything. Sin is inevitably punished [7]. The old sailor fell into a state of death because he killed an albatross. In the end, because of the restoration of his goodness and love for others, he was saved. Calden in *Tale of Two Cities* is a Christian who sacrifices himself to save others. He silently regards the happiness and the happy marriage as his own happiness, and finally sacrifices his life. As above showed, Christian culture is full of love, forgiveness, kindness, and so on. With love, all hatred and fault can be resolved. With love, everything can be perfectly and harmoniously linked.

#### 4. Conclusion

Christian culture is the prelude to the glory of English and American literature. The thoughts of "benevolence and forgiveness", "sin and redemption" proclaimed in Christianity, as well as the Bible as the foundation of Christian faiths and teachings play an important role in the enrichment and development of English and American literature. As the saying goes, "To know his son, to see his mother; to know his people, to regard his friends; to know his king, to see what he is doing," it's the same reason. After getting a certain amount of cultural and religious knowledge, we can better understand the author's writing intentions, the ideological connotation of English and American literary works, thus appreciating their essence.

#### References

- [1] Mo Yunping. Christian Culture and Western Literature [J]. Journal of Xiangtan Normal University, 2002.
- [2] Xie Li. The Influence of the Bible on English and American Literature [J]. Literature Education, 2012.
- [3] Sun Lei. Analysis of the Influence of the Bible on British and American Literary Works [J]. Journal of Inner Mongolia Agricultural University, 2012.
- [4] Yang Wei, "The Bible" - the golden key to open the treasure house of British and American literature [J]. Frontier Economy and Culture, 2009.
- [5] Dong Hongchuan. On the Influence of Christianity on Western Literature [J]. Journal of Chongqing Teachers College, 2001.
- [6] Johnson, S. The spirituality of Watchman Nee, its sources and its influences [J]. Evangelical

Theological Society papers, 2007, ETS-3917..

[7] Tree Software. Longacre, D. Developmental stage, scribal lapse, or physical defect? 1QIsaa's damaged exemplar for Isaiah chapters 34-66[J]. Dead Sea Discoveries: 2013. 201:17-50.