

IN DEFENSE OF BIBLICAL LITERACY  
IN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES

---

A Thesis  
presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Timothy Love  
Dr. William Kerwin, Thesis Supervisor

JULY 2017

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

IN DEFENSE OF BIBLICAL LITERACY  
IN ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES

presented by Timothy Love,

a candidate for the degree of master of Arts

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Professor William Kerwin

---

Professor David Read

---

Professor John Frymire

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the instrumental guidance of William Kerwin. His assistance in directing my research was unquestionably beneficial, and integral to my findings.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....   | ii |
| INTRODUCTION.....  | iv |
| CHAPTER ONE  |    |
| Biblical literacy should not be exclusive to religious studies.....  | 1  |
| The establishment and decline of biblical theory and biblical literacy in English<br>literary studies..... | 8  |
| The “religious turn” is not necessarily a biblical turn.....   | 16 |
| CHAPTER TWO  |    |
| Identifying and examining biblical allusions.....  | 21 |
| Biblical analysis of Shakespeare’s <i>King Lear</i> .....  | 26 |
| Biblical analysis of Milton’s <i>Lycidas</i> .....   | 35 |
| CONCLUSION.....  | 55 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....  | 56 |

## In Defense of Biblical Literacy in English and American Literary Studies

\*\*\*

“...the Bible is probably the most important single source of all our literature. That is certainly the case, and an increasing neglect of the Bible in our secularized times has opened a gulf between it and our general literature, a gap of ignorance which must in some measure falsify the latter.”

—Robert Alter and Frank Kermode

\*\*\*

### Introduction

—

I once witnessed a guest speaker give a psychological interpretation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* at my university. He, an early modern scholar, used Freudian terms to explain specific Miltonian intentions, avoiding scriptural contexts for the most part of the hour. Needless to say, I was pretty impressed by his unique perspective. The examination was highly scientific and strategically safe—free from religious opinion or theological controversy. I was very much captivated by such a, rare, highly psychosomatic analysis...until the question and answer period started, that is.

My sense of awe began to wane after someone in the audience, a fellow early modern scholar, asked the guest speaker a biblical question. Using terms such as “antediluvian,” the fellow scholar attempted to bring *Paradise Lost* into biblical relevance (how dare he!). Disappointedly, the guest speaker gave a haphazard response, seeming unprepared for such a biblically literate inquiry. Moments later, another scriptural question emerged from the audience, this time from a young, up-and-coming scholar. The guest speaker looked bewildered, as if the

young scholar's biblical terminology was a foreign language. Upon finishing the question, he waited for an answer...The guest speaker paused, then responded nervously: "Well, I know as much about the Bible as most people do."

This was the bulk of his answer.

In other words, his biblical knowledge was, in his view, commonly inept. He felt he shouldn't feel bad for failing to answer such an advanced biblical question concerning *Paradise Lost*, because most people, including fellow scholars in the academy, also couldn't.

However, the interpretive limitations incurred by such biblical illiteracy are seriously disappointing, despite the commonality of such scriptural incompetence in academic circles.

The issue of contemporary biblical illiteracy poses major problems for English and American literary studies. As sharp declines in basic biblical awareness over the past century persist throughout American society as a whole, deficiencies in academic biblical emphasis swells at the core of incomprehensive English scholarship. Irresponsibly, many scholars let notions of comprehensive textual interpretation via biblical consideration slip in favor of narrow, singular lenses (such as the psychoanalytic lens used by the guest speaker) or focalized critical trends that ignore biblical theory.

Academic realizations of biblical illiteracy and consequential declining comprehensive analysis are marked by calls to fuse scriptural study with literary study, or incorporate the significance of biblical knowledge back into academic scholarship. In the mid-twentieth century, the term "Bible as literature" re-emerges<sup>1</sup> as a signifier of desires to remedy biblical illiteracy. This remedy incorporates strategies that mesh biblical lenses with secular literary lenses. In *The*

---

<sup>1</sup> Though Leland Ryken (PhD, University of Oregon and professor of English at Wheaton College), notes that "the phrase *the Bible as literature* came on the scene in the middle of the twentieth century" (Crossway 1), the term was actually used in the early twentieth century also.

*Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (1993), Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III call these secular lenses “literary approaches,” and stipulate that scholars have respected the application of literary methods to biblical studies since Old Testament authorship (52-53), even though the term “Bible as literature” doesn’t become popular until the mid-twentieth century.

As Ryken and Longman III recognize likeminded efforts throughout history—such as Augustine’s willingness to equate the literary or aesthetic qualities of the Bible to classical writing (55), and Sir Philip Sydney’s proclivity to defend poetry by comparing it with the “literary nature of the Bible” (56)—other scholars use the fusion of scripture and literature as a reputable blueprint or role model for future modern academic study. In her preface to *The Bible Read as Literature* (1959), Mary Esson Reid suggests that “in the past three or four centuries, more than in earlier periods” (vii) the study of “biblical literature” (vii) has been embraced, fostering notions that “knowledge of this Biblical literature is part of our cultural heritage in the western world, and that unless it is made available in the schools, the majority of young people will miss it” (vii). Here, Reid not only concurs with Ryken that “Bible as literature” lenses were present long before the twentieth century, but she also promotes its immediate emphasis among the posterity of academic study.

Unfortunately, the long-lasting bond between literary approaches and biblical studies seems to wane at points in history—such as today—where scriptural knowledge becomes less fashionable, or much less of a priority in secular literary circles. We can thus detect these points in history by locating movements which seek to address biblical disinterest. As it is only reasonable to pursue a scriptural remedy when faced with a biblical deficiency, spotting responses which aggressively incorporate the Bible into literary academics simultaneously identifies periods of inadequate biblical literacy. Requests to promote biblical emphases in

secular academics, whether meagre or prolific, logically respond to inadequate or diminishing bonds between English literary study and Bible study.

The resurgence of the term “Bible as literature” in the mid-twentieth century comes in wake of a rather long period in literary history where “interest in the Bible...can be pictured as an underground stream that finally came to surface around 1960” (Ryken 60). Here, Ryken implicitly describes the state of literary study during the first half of the twentieth century, locating an age of dormant biblical consideration, and a subsequent responding period of scriptural remedy. Ryken goes on to detail this therapeutic period:

By 1960 the underground stream had surfaced. The main spokesperson was Northrop Frye. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, the most influential work of literary theory in our century, the Bible emerged as the chief organizing framework for Western literature...Equally important was Frye’s contention that “the Bible forms the lowest stratum in teaching of literature. It should be taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind, where everything that comes along later can settle on it.” (*Educated Imagination* 110) (Ryken 61-62)

Most interesting to me is Frye’s implication of insufficient biblical education in academic circles before the underground stream of biblical emphasis surfaced in 1960. By claiming that the Bible “should be taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind,” Frye insinuates that the Bible hasn’t been taught early or thoroughly, nor has it been given its due priority. Frye’s sense of immediacy in promoting educational changes speaks volumes about the extent of biblical illiteracy prior to his influential text; a text which calls for aggressive scriptural focus in academia.

Reid’s late 1950’s text reflects a pattern of trending calls for biblical remedies during this time. She claims that “all over the country, courses are offered in Biblical literature—units on the Bible are inclined in survey courses, and books on the Bible are more popular than

before” (vii). The latter phrase, “more popular than ever before,” implies that prior to 1959, some type of scriptural inadequacy or latency was present. This aligns Reid, Frye, and Ryken’s implications of biblical dormancy (pre-1960), as well as their explicit indications of biblical resurgence (post-1960).

The pre-1960 biblical latency follows a swath of Victorian interest in biblical theory that, in my opinion, responds to a dip in religious interest during the Enlightenment period. I and other scholars find that this dip repeats in a much stronger manner sometime after the 1970’s, following a two-decade increase of biblical emphasis in the academy. Ryken claims that “the decade of the seventies saw a plethora of high school and college courses in the Bible, usually taught in the English Departments” (61-62). He also asserts that “courses in the Bible as literature became one of the ten most popular high school English electives” and that “anthologies multiplied [,] scholarly articles on the Bible began to appear in literary journals [and] the topic of the Bible as literature became a nearly constant topic at regional meetings” (61-62). But something happened during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s that led to a siphoning of this enthusiasm. There is evidence to suggest that biblical illiteracy in English and American literary circles somehow increased dramatically, and sadly never recovered.

Presently, Bible as literature courses are mainly taught in English departments at pitifully shrinking rates throughout American’s top universities and colleges (I have conducted my own research on this matter, and will present it in chapter one of this book). Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, when publishing *The Literary Guide to the Bible* in 1987, are two prime examples of scholars who observe dramatic biblical illiteracy after the 70’s:

To most educated modern readers the Bible probably seems both familiar and strange, like the feathers of an ancestor. They will know, if only in a general way, of its central importance in the

history of the culture they have inherited: but they will also be aware that in its modern forms that culture has denied the Bible the kinds of importance it had in the past. (1)

Notice how Alter and Kermode<sup>2</sup> address the “most educated modern readers,” beginning their “General Introduction” by targeting literary academics. Suggesting that the Bible may seem “familiar” and “strange” conveys a deficit in biblical mastery, or insufficient biblical understanding in relation to applicable fields of study. As the latter portion of the quote alludes to a national social culture that suffers from the same type of biblical ignorance, Alter and Kermode see a secular loss for all parties involved. The literary scholar and the common citizen are both ignorant to a central part of their own history. If the literary scholar is unaware of the Bible’s significance in literary history, he or she procures just as much disadvantage as those citizens who can’t fathom the derivational significance of cultural items, or trace the origins of societal culture back to the Bible.

Eight years before Alter and Kermode’s text, in 1979, John H. Gottcent also notices a growing gap between the most educated modern readers and biblical scholarship, as well as literary criticism and biblical understanding. Although Gottcent does notice remnants of biblical fervor during the late 1970’s, especially in Bible as literature courses, he doesn’t deny fundamental scriptural inadequacies within literary studies. As a result, Gottcent dedicates his text—*The Bible as literature a selected bibliography* (1979)—to bridging the gap between secular biblical illiteracy and scriptural mastery, not only conveying a sense of immediate importance concerning biblical literature within the academy, but also signaling the presence of an epidemic.

---

<sup>2</sup> Note: Alter and Kermode are two literary scholars who focus on biblical subjects or the biblical literature. However, Ryken does not consider them to be biblical scholars.

This book attempts to bridge that gap. It is...useful to those interested in the Bible as literature who are looking for a place from which to begin an investigation of the field. Though it should be useful to both biblical scholars and literary critics, it is aimed at those trained in secular literary studies—researchers, teachers at the collegiate and secondary levels, and students—since their training and research tools have more often tended to ignore the subject. (xi)

Appearing to take cue from the biblical saying “they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick” (Luke 5:31), Gottcent targets secular academics because they lack or have fallen short of substantial scriptural knowhow. Gottcent’s exhaustive bibliography of biblical criticism, specific biblical analysis, biblical references, literary forms in the bible, and even biblical pedagogy testifies to the amount of detailed knowledge he feels is pertinent to the academy during the late 1970’s, or just how much knowledge the academy needs in his time.

As Gottcent, Alter and Kermode respond to rising biblical deficiencies in English and American academics in the late 70’s and 80’s, they note their own efforts, and other similar efforts, as solutions to the problem, not existing commonalities. When asserting that “the revived interest of secular writers in the Bible does stem in part from a sense that secular literature is in some degree impoverished by this lack” (Alter, Kermode 3), we see an allusion to a problem that warrants a remedy, not an optimism which notes the kind of blossoming of biblical interest that downplays the problem, or eliminates biblical illiteracy. Whereas some scholars take the Bible as literature movement during the 1980’s as a sure-fire, very popular force within English Departments, Alter and Kermode view it as a possible turning point, or refreshing rebuttal against mass scriptural neglect. In the following passage, Alter and Kermode make a case for biblical literacy by highlighting the dangers of continuing biblical illiteracy, not by exalting or overstating the effects of their own trending efforts:

...the Bible is probably the most important single source of all our literature. That is certainly the case, and an increasing neglect of the Bible in our secularized times has opened a gulf between it and our general literature, a gap of ignorance which must in some measure falsify the latter (3).

As sentiments such as these during the 1980's are later scrutinized by critics like Ryken and Longman III during the 1990's—Ryken claims that “the literary approach to the Bible has become fashionable” during the 80's and 90's (64)—a misleading sense of improvement broadens, causing a masking of biblical illiteracy which actually increases it. As many critics fail to notice or address the ultimate state of academic biblical disinterest in their own times, the benefits of prioritizing biblical literature through academic immediacy and accepting notions of prevailing biblical deficiency as fact become moot. Despite the continuing Bible as literature movement and recent “turn to religion” (which continues from the late 1990s to the present) evidence of a lack of biblical awareness from at least the 1980's to current scholarship is undeniable.

\*\*\*

The significance of the Bible in past English and American literary history is enormous, despite the manner in which many contemporary critics ignore or de-prioritize the Bible. At many points in past history, critics and scholars have realized the vital nature of the Bible, and have consequently produced analysis, education, and/or pedagogy to reflect these realizations. Though Gottcent, Alter, and Kermode are noteworthy examples, larger groups of critics during prior eras, such as the Victorian era, emphasized the Bible among secular academia with astounding, pervasive success. Taking cue from such model periods, Alter and Kermode juxtapose states of modern scholarship with states of past scholarship in an attempt to reveal and/or illuminate an important disparity:

Very few of us have the unconscious assurance of an educated Victorian reading Milton; Matthew Arnold, for example, would have received as he read biblical allusions we have to look up, as well as the silent counterpoint Greek and Latin syntax. Milton is especially biblical. But the point applies in varying measure to almost all major writers in English. (3)

Here, Alter and Kermode appear to urge modern readers and critics of English literature to look backward for edification—much like Reid suggests—to perhaps recollect and reinstitute periods where combinations of biblical studies and liberal arts were commonplace. As an implied remedy, a possible solution for biblical illiteracy exists between the lines: the re-creation of pervasive secularized biblical awareness, and a recouping of firsthand scriptural understanding (or “unconscious assurance” of natural scriptural understanding), realizing the scholarly advantages of linking biblical scholarship with literary studies.

The beneficial proliferation of works which analyze the “Bible in Shakespeare” during the aforementioned Victorian period were largely made possible by recognizing that the Bible and secular literature were not opposing singularities, but one, integral, ordinary combination (Hannibal 47-64). The Bible was such an important part of Victorian culture, and such an established basis of literary comprehension, that scriptural education was required in secular universities, preventing the deficits we so freely ignore today. According to Timothy Larsen, author of “Literacy and Biblical Knowledge: The Victorian Age and Our Own,”

Once state education was established, the Bible retained a place in the core curriculum during the nineteenth century...Moving up the social scale, learning the Bible was also a prominent and essential part of elite education. And going to university did not mean leaving scriptural education behind...For example, one could not gain a bachelor’s degree in any subject from the University of Oxford without first passing an examination on Holy Scripture, the Gospels portion of which was on the original Greek text. (519-520)

In academic societies such as this, the term “Bible as literature” is a foregone conclusion. The heavy intertwining of biblical studies within literary studies reflects a biblical culture that doesn’t need to recognize the label “Bible as literature” or assert some kind of agenda that advertises or promotes the binary of scripture and literary study, but that forms a natural propensity to view the Bible in its secular academic dimensions, organically seeing and embracing the secular benefits thereof.

Prevailing Victorian perspectives which prioritize the idea of biblical studies in the academy echoes natural critical inclinations in early modern literary criticism. Here, biblical theory was so naturally interwoven within literary scholarship and common society, acknowledging it would have been futile, or parallel to noticing the obvious. According to Hannibal Hamlin (a renowned literary and biblical scholar), “while biblical knowledge was deep and widespread, it may not have occurred to anyone to note what was obvious to most readers and audience members” (44). Nevertheless, late early modern critics like Samuel Johnson were aware of the literary power of allusion (44), and worked to examine how frameworks that were linked to biblical underpinnings functioned in literature—working liberally within the literary / biblical binary. Even prior medieval scholars realized the inherent, beneficial values of conflating literary qualities with the Bible. According to Marjorie Reeves, author of “The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages,” “medieval commentators...inherited a literary theory from classical sources and believed that the aspiring exegete of biblical texts must first be attained in the seven liberal arts” (13).

Thus, the “literary turn in biblical studies” (a term that Elizabeth Struthers Malbon of the *New York Times*, and other critics, use for the Bible as literature movement) in the 1960’s and 1980’s attempts to reclaim a fundamental connection that once thrived for centuries. Since the

1980's, some scholars have chosen to focus on incorporating biblical knowledge back into literary fields in a way that aggressively poses resistance to biblical deficits in English studies. Scriptural aids from these scholars, such as *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, largely do not offer biblical knowledge as if it's a luxury within literary studies, but presents it in ways that answers necessary questions which emerge via epidemic scriptural deficits. In a secular manner, these scholars intricately attempt to make the Bible more attractive. In a review of Alter and Kermode's text, Malbon writes: "The editors' stated purpose is to help individuals 'attune themselves' to the Bible in an age when literate people no longer have a daily intimacy with it..." (1). Extolling Alter and Kermode's ultimately secular intentions, Struthers also sees *The Literary Guide* as a representation of motivations behind the 1980's Bible as literature movement: "Readers looking for an overview of the literary turn in biblical studies could do no better than read the general introduction to *The Literary Guide to the Bible*."

But my study seeks not to dissect the actual mechanics of this most recent turn to literature—nor illuminate the importance of Bible as literature courses alone—but to analyze causes which still make the recognition, interpretation, and function of biblical allusions, biblical allegories, and biblical adaptations unnecessary within literary academia. The failures of recent "turns"—including the recent "religious turn"—to actually cure biblical illiteracy is of greater importance, and leads me to ponder other avenues of possible revitalization.

Just to be clear, I do not point fingers at any individual scholar for the virtual ineffectiveness of the last Bible as literature movement and recent "religious turn" in combatting biblical illiteracy (especially those scholars who realize the clear and present danger of gross biblical illiteracy). I do, on the other hand, think it's only rational to investigate why these academic movements or trends do not catch on or change the course of English departments.

Truthfully, I'm more perplexed over other popular critical movements which should have spawned more scriptural emphasis within the academy thus far. The rise and current reign of New Historicism (from the late 1980's), for instance, is a prime example. This authorial-based, socio-political, socio-economic lens should give ample credence to biblical lenses through priorities in cultural significance (specifically long histories of biblical cultural significance). However, we've yet to see a widespread recapturing of the kind of scriptural focus in the academy that prioritizes comprehensive interpretations of literary works written by English and American authors who just happened to be biblical scholars; and for biblically literate audiences. Many of these authors also possessed specific socio-economic and socio-political theological directives that piggyback the Bible. In fact, New Historicism might contribute to the suppression of biblical lenses. Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti, authors of "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies," suggest that

Perhaps it is safer to say that interpretation of religious material and contexts never really ceased in early modern literary study but rather that they had just been pushed somewhat to the side by most New Historicists and cultural materialists, who pursued other topics and, when they dealt with religious issues, quickly translated them into social, economic, and political language. (167)

The most significant of these "pushed aside" religious materials is the Bible, a text full of historical and cultural variables should be totally relevant to New Historicism. Ironically, these variables are discarded by recent historicist mentalities that feel biblical interpretation has already been done before, or is a job for another discipline; or, most importantly, is unattainable due to the gross biblical illiteracy of historicists themselves.

The "religious turn" in literary criticism, beginning in the late 1990's—which inspires Jackson and Marotti's essay—also should have spawned more aggressive biblical readings by

now. Although a rise in critical works which recognize the importance of theology is apparent in this turn, a driving emphasis on theological allusions overrides calls for biblical literacy, rendering the religious turn largely ineffective against scriptural deficiency. Susan Felch, author of “A Seminar on Christian Scholarship and the Turn to Religion in Literary Studies,” points out that

Christianity looms over Western literature, casting the shadow of its grand narrative and multiple allusions across poems, stories, essays, and criticism. At the same time, biblical and theological illiteracy has never been higher, even among self-professed Christians, and while traditional Christian practices are enjoying a renaissance, disciplined religious lives are often seen as alien to the Academy (214).

The most important academic element of these “disciplined religious lives” lies in scriptural understanding. In pointing out that “biblical...illiteracy has never been higher,” Felch believes that efforts to cure biblical illiteracy, or even recognize its negative weight, have not materialized in wake of recent renewed religious interest. Poised to produce a higher awareness of scriptural knowledge in the academy, the religious turn ultimately falls short of just that:

Of course, the renewed interest in religion, spirituality, and the divine does not automatically translate into an openness for Christian scholarship in the fields of language and literature (214).

Here, Felch uses “Christian scholarship in the fields of language and literature” to allude to biblical literacy, noticing disappointments in the presumptive bond between religious interest and scriptural study. Though the drawbacks of this bond are evident in secular literary circles, the oddity of embracing Christian religiosity or the religious turn without properly acknowledging biblical studies may be a bit unsettling.

The religious turn in literary academia not only leaves thorough scriptural focus unsatisfied, but may directly have an adverse effect on biblical literacy. As increased attention to

religiosity in early twentieth century criticism leads to gravitations away from biblical lenses, the religious turn appears to replace desires for scriptural scholarship with autonomous spiritual agency. As personal devotion in society becomes an ever-increasing focus, long lasting interest in biblical theory simultaneously dissipates. Hamlin notices evidence of this dissipation in critics of Shakespeare:

Twentieth-century Shakespeare critics continue to struggle to claim Shakespeare from one Christian denomination or another. For the most part, however, these arguments tend to be based on biography and religious themes rather than biblical allusions (67).

When noticing recent critical works which do concentrate on biblical theory, Hamlin refers to them as echoes of past biblical focus, not signs of current interest:

Steven Marx's *Shakespeare and the Bible* in some ways hearkens back to Victorian collections of biblical and moral analogies, including many legitimate and significant biblical allusions in Shakespeare's plays (73).

And Hamlin isn't the only one. Other reputable academics explicitly and implicitly note a nationwide lack of elementary scriptural knowledge among institutes of higher learning, and oftentimes do not hold back when voicing concern over such educational regression. I refer to a recent study performed by the Society of Biblical Literature which asks a group of professors about biblical literacy in the academy. I greatly value this study, because it is the only empirical research I've come across that captures an accurate glimpse of theological deficiencies in universities across the nation, and gathers a broad consensus of possible efforts to combat biblical illiteracy. Turns out, even the study itself recognizes the scarcity of research that empirically collects information on collegiate biblical illiteracy. According to the Society of Biblical Literature, "the absence of scholarship regarding current specific Bible literacy requirements made a strong contextual case for researching contemporary academic thought" (1).

Their study, which interrogates English professors from the top colleges in the nation, not only affirms the existence of rampant academic deficits in biblical knowledge, but verifies the presence of key academic voices—which largely go unheard—that still see the importance of addressing biblical illiteracy. The following findings contribute to affirming my overall argument, and facilitates the purpose behind this book:

Interview Question Eight:

Regarding trends in students' Bible knowledge, George Landow, 35 years at Brown, lamented: “The bottom line is...far fewer students know the Bible ...Our students find themselves cut off from the culture 2,000 years—and don't know it.”

Because of their students' Bible illiteracy, twelve professors reported supplementing literature teaching by introducing Bible information. For at least two schools, the trend of less Bible knowledge affected course offerings. Yale's Leslie Brisman, 35 teaching years, explained: “We have a larger population that is not Western, or that is totally secular, so there are students who are missing this piece of fundamental, crucial background. How has this changed how I teach? Well, it's changed what I teach. The Bible course is the only course I have taught without interruption year after year. Even the years I am on leave, I teach the Bible class because I think it's crucial there be such a class.”

Interview Question Nine:

The professors were asked if they had additional comments, “especially if the eight interview questions did not represent your overall perspective of the Bible and education.” The two most common answers reiterated earlier statements: (a) Bible literacy is important; and (b) Bible literacy is missing. New York University's Ernest Gilman, among the twelve professors who re-emphasized the value of Bible literacy, said: “You could argue that basically everything written in English is in some way a footnote to the Bible. You can't read Melville without reading the Bible. You can't read Faulkner without reading the Bible, Absalom, Absalom!, if you don't

know who Absalom is, you can't look at Renaissance art. You're deficient. You just do not have the equipment for understanding Western culture unless you've read the Bible...But read the Bible critically, historically, asking questions like not just what does it mean here, but what does it mean when and to whom and how do we know what it means, and what differences in meaning has it had over the years, and what's at stake in deciding between one meaning or another.”

Princeton's Ulrich Knoefplmacher said: “Any culture that loses a sense of the foundations of its past is in a sense doomed because, yes, it can be well and it can go in new directions, but you have to know on what those foundations sit.”

Interview Question Four:

Every professor, except one, agreed that Western literature is steeped with biblical references. Stanford's Polhemus wryly said: Suppose you were teaching a course in Hemingway and you got a novel called *The Sun Also Rises*, it would be nice to know that he's talking in Ecclesiastes and . . . such instances could be multiplied infinitely.

The professors indicated that contemporary authors also use Bible references. As Tufts' Dunn noted: “I know of no period where it's not just everywhere and always, within the most contemporary kinds of things.”

Interview Question Five:

According to the interviews and school web sites, the professors taught a wide range of courses—autobiography, novels, plays, poetry—from Old English to contemporary literature with authors from Arnold to Updike. The professors indicated that familiarity with the Bible was important for the courses they taught.

Interview Question Three:

When asked, “What do you think about the following statement? Regardless of a person's faith, an educated person needs to know about the Bible,” no professor disagreed. The professors saw Bible knowledge as an academic necessity. Wheaton's Leland Ryken said: “I would rephrase the statement to read that every educated person deserves to know the Bible. The Bible is a

birthright of every educated person, just waiting to be claimed. Not to know the Bible is to be unfairly disinherited.”

Surprisingly, it was actually national realization of widespread *societal* biblical illiteracy which prompted the aforementioned inquiry—not realizations of English academy illiteracy. The number of studies, books, articles, essays, blogs, and websites devoted to the issue of societal scriptural illiteracy are infinite. Stephen Prothero’s *Religious Literacy*, a *New York Times* bestseller, is a prime example. In a section entitled, “A Nation of Biblical Illiterates,” Prothero notes that

According to recent polls, most American adults cannot name one of the four Gospels, and many high school seniors think that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A few years ago no one in Jay Leno’s *Tonight Show* audience could name any of Jesus’ twelve apostles, but everyone was able to list the four Beatles. No wonder pollster George Gallup has called the United States “a nation of biblical illiterates.” (6)

Though Prothero does not explicitly site collegiate entities, his claim of epidemic biblical literacy, without question, includes the academy. To accurately gauge the extent of biblical illiteracy in universities, or specifically English departments, perhaps more inside academics, or English department heads, should step up and perform empirical observations, or studies like Prothero’s examination and the Society of Biblical Literature’s study. Although it’s disappointing that academics have not examined academic biblical literacy with equal fervor, collegiate biblical deficiency is often apparent between the lines of societal concerns. As studies from religious entities—which contribute to the majority of public concern for biblical literacy—point out declines in biblical interest and knowledge in the general public, they deductively allude to or imply analogous trends in spaces of higher learning.

This does not, of course, compensate for the lack of empirical studies which directly gauge the biblical literacy of English and American literary scholarship. In response, I'm compelled to further reinforce my argument by entering as many instances of experiential evidence as possible throughout this study. In a phenomenological sense, I can tell you with all sincerity that I've met scores of biblically illiterate professors in English, American, and comparative literary studies. Moreover, each individual experience seems indicative of collective scholarly estimations. Upon interacting with many professors, I find distinct patterns of biblical ineptitude in too many of them, and can only wonder about the extent of this incompetence when realizing they have students, and likewise convey biblical illiteracy in epidemic fashion.

An English professor once said to me in so many words that identifying biblical allusions and biblical diction in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* was useless, because it'd already been done. Yet, as we covered the text, and subsequently throughout her medieval seminar, I noticed that her own biblical knowledge was scant, preventing the process of locating pivotal allusions or references that were integral to thorough interpretations. Whenever I identified deviations from canonical Greek or Hebrew codices in *Confessio Amantis*, and other applicable middle English texts, specifically *Meditationes de uita Christi*, she offered non-specific answers, claiming that medieval writers made no distinction between canonical (or presumably authentic) codices and uncanonical texts, specifically apocryphal texts. This baffled me, especially being aware of some Catholic rejections of apocryphal texts (going back to Jerome's rejection of Deuterocanonical books in 450 CE<sup>3</sup>) as well as early Catholic proclivities to alter codices in favor of their beliefs.

---

<sup>3</sup> In the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in 1546, however, Deuterocanonical texts were officially considered divine. However, many anti-Catholic sentiments within the church throughout the middle ages, and Protestant sentiments during the early modern period, sharply opposed apocryphal and/or Deuterocanonical texts.

Although this type of biblical knowledge, which corresponds to the history of biblical translation and authorship, was integral to comprehensively distinguishing between canonical scripture and *Meditationes de uitae Christi*, I was more disappointed in my professor's aggressive desire to carelessly wave off comparisons of apocryphal texts and canonical codices of the Bible. I was convinced that if her biblical literacy was up to par, she might have been more eager to consider the topic.

Sure, there are biblically literate instructors out there. I'm not denying this. But the predominant totality of biblical disinterest within English circles renders this minority largely ineffective against biblical illiteracy. As biblically literate teachers experience much difficulty in competing with rampant notions that claim "if everyone else is okay with low or no biblical knowledge, why should I step up?", I can only hope that each suppressed voice which advocates biblical literacy catches on soon.

\*\*\*

This study seeks to address the aforementioned lack of concern for biblical education. More specifically, it evaluates and offers potential remedies for the current state of biblical illiteracy within the academy. By showing the consequences of textual misinterpretation that derive from biblical illiteracy, this essay hopes to educationally and pedagogically promote the adherence of biblical scholarship in English. Through biblical explications of select representational texts, this also study intends to effectively contribute to efforts that value foundational biblical education in secular literary academia.

\*\*\*

Readers should be aware that the term "Bible"—used prolifically throughout this study—does not necessarily possess a singular definition or unilateral context in correlation with every

literary period. The “Bible” in fact can be perceived and defined in many ways. The actual meaning of “the Bible” is multiplicitous and largely relative.

Most readers today think of the Bible in terms of its canonical assembly; sixty-six books which make up an Old Testament and a New Testament. *The King James Version* of the Bible, first published in 1611, is one of the most recognizable English versions of our time. Though it is much older than other highly used English translations today—such as the *NIV* and the *New King James Version*—it definitely is not the first collection of scripture that adheres to the aforesaid assembly structure. *The King James Version* largely reflects the canonical structure used by ancient *Septuagint* editions, the *Vetus Latina* (excluding the apocryphal books), editions of the *Vulgate*, and the *Textus Receptus* (popular Greek editions translated by Erasmus).

All these editions collate individual ancient books that were originally written in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic. Most of these books were not originally written in tandem with each other, or were not intended to be part of a collection, Bible, or canon. Paul, for instance, did not write the book of Galatians in anticipation of John’s book of Revelation.

Even though “New Testament” books were rapidly combined with “Old Testament” books and compiled into complete canonical codices, some as early as 300 CE—such as the *Codex Vaticanus* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*—most individual Gospels, epistles, and other books were not originally drafted in unison with each other, or with the intention of adding to the Torah, Psalms, and prophecies—or for the purpose of forming a complete canonical “Bible.” Moreover, throughout history, biblical books did not always circulate within complete collections. They were disseminated individually, or sometimes piece by piece, passage by passage. According to “Challenging the Paradigms: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe”

There is a tendency to only consider ‘complete’ bibles as measure of the presence of biblical manuscripts....[R]e-arrangements of biblical material according to the liturgical calendar...and translations accompanied by explanations and glosses are often considered less valuable and historically less meaningful than ‘complete’ translations. In spite of the fact that complete Bible translations did circulate at some point in the Low Countries, Italy, and France, both in manuscript and in printed form, the focus on the ‘completeness’ of the text does not take into account the specific practice of diffusion of the biblical text, consisting of several books written at different points in time and in different languages and often delivered to the public, in particular a non-professional public, in the form of passages and pericopes. (Corbellini et al. 177)

We can infer from this passage that “the Bible” does not lose its label, title, or name if it is delivered to the public as an incomplete text, or a series of passages, glosses, or pericopes that deviate from canonical completeness. Even books outside of the canon can retain biblical status. English authors, like John Milton, who knew Hebrew and Greek, possibly studied individual uncanonical books that were excluded from Anglican and Protestant canons. Since deuterocanonical or apocryphal books were taken as sacred scripture by some of the earliest Church Fathers, and eventually the entire Catholic Church by the sixteenth century (as mentioned before), it comes of no surprise that some English authors—even non-Catholic authors like Milton—might have viewed them as part of “The Bible.” *Paradise Lost* itself reflects the spirit of apocryphal texts by amplifying or sensationalizing foundational canonical stories, and is sometimes unconsciously accepted as “the Bible” itself. My father, a Christian preacher, and many other Southern preachers have been known to mistake lines from *Paradise Lost* for canonical scripture. The Miltonian passages they utilize, for all intents and purposes, are “Bible” to them, whether deriving from unconscious mis-memory or not. Hence, the term “Bible” becomes relative to both arbitrary and collective perceptions.

The term “the Bible” is also not relegated to written collections of scripture. Many English speaking individuals throughout history, especially illiterate individuals, became familiar with the Bible through sermons, liturgical cycles, recitations of the Book of Common prayer, and cycle plays. This is a very important variable to consider, especially since most English citizens or English speaking individuals were illiterate for the bulk of English literary history (from the seventh century to roughly the nineteenth century).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, for centuries, the Catholic Church “generally preferred that the populace encounter the Scriptures through the interpretations of its priests, trained to read the Latin translation” (*Norton 673*). Evangelical theologian Leonardo De Chirico suggests that the Catholic Church “has forbidden for centuries the reading of the Bible in vernacular languages...[and] has prevented the people from having access to the Bible until fifty years ago” (1). Even though most Reformation forces began to tear down these barriers by promoting vernacular translations and biblical reading among the laity, not all Protestant leaders trusted the Bible in the hands of common folk. Thus, the desire to control how the public views and defines “the Bible” has been shared by Christians across the board.

“The Bible” to an illiterate person listening to a sermon by Martin Luther, John Donne, or a Catholic priest alike may simply be a series of commandments, proverbial sayings, and stories altered by the linguistic structure and interpretative prejudice of the speaker. Some elements of the speaker’s own words may be mixed in with scriptural perceptions or construed as biblical. Without the advantage of literacy—a benefit that heightens the possibility of accuracy, objectivity, and individual discernment—realistic perceptions of what “the Bible” actually means

---

<sup>4</sup> David Mitch claims that “in 1840, two thirds of all grooms and half of all brides in England and Wales were able to sign their names at marriage; in 1900, 97 percent of each group was able to do so. This increase contrasts with the roughly constant proportion signing at marriage between 1750 and 1840” (287)

to literate individuals lost, and becomes the responsibility of opinionated, overly-general, religious devices.

With these points in mind, the definition of “the Bible” in correlation to English and American literature is highly contextual, and depends on authorial perception, intended reader perception, time periods, etc. The type of “Bible” that a particular author may utilize as a source of inspiration—or as an evoked text for allusions, adaptation, allegory, etc.—may actually alter the contextual interpretation of individual, local, regional, or religious collective perceptions of the bible.

While all this may seem complex and problematic, especially when trying to define and grasp biblical literacy, it simultaneously bolsters the need for aggressive biblical education. If biblical illiteracy not only accounts for deficient knowledge in complete written canonical areas, but also incomplete, non-canonical, unwritten, liturgical, biblical areas, then the vastness of biblical education should warrant vast compensatory academia.

\*\*\*

## Chapter 1

\*\*\*

### Biblical literacy should not be exclusive to religious studies

---

As biblical culture and mandatory biblical education no longer exist in English departments, formulating scarce Bible as literature courses, or simply placing biblical studies into religious disciplines—a move that makes biblical study exclusive to religious studies and seminary studies—is now the standard. If universities primarily feel that the Bible is exclusive to religion, scripture thus becomes largely non-literary, and does not necessarily have an essential place in English literary studies.

At the same time, acknowledging the Bible outside of religious realms still sometimes makes academics feel they're somehow compromising religious neutrality, or inviting controversial opinions which perhaps violate lawful separations between church and state. Herein lies the advantage of relegating the Bible to religious studies. If placed in religion departments, academics can diffuse any notion of religious bias. One who majors in religious studies cannot necessarily be accused of preferring, promoting, or embracing one religion when studying the Bible—because it's his or her job to study *all* religious devices. When incorporated into English literature, an emphasis on biblical literacy has the opposite effect—it's often mistaken for Christian devotion.

The reasoning behind incorporating biblical studies into English is hence extremely difficult to rationalize on a secular level, especially if society and the academy naturally fuse the Bible with religion.

Perhaps this is why English majors are not required to take Bible as literature courses, or why biblical education is not an official category in English studies—even though the Bible influences so many of our favorite canonical authors, and thrives within our most beloved canonical poems, plays, and novels. We have areas of focus that are parsed historically and critically, such as early modern poetry, twentieth century American fiction, and literary theory. These sections reflect our value for cultural significance, and consider perspectives that tap into societal pulses across time. Yet strict biblical education, or education which aggressively acknowledges the breadth of biblical influence throughout English literary history, is not normally emphasized, or placed into permanent academic categories to ensure noteworthy attention or mandatory inclusion. The vast majority of English graduate students are not required to take even one Bible course; mandatory scripture classes are unheard of outside of seminary schools. Nor are there enough Bible courses within most English departments—especially public universities—to suffice the saturation of Biblically inspired works in English and American Literature. In the aforementioned Society of Biblical Literature study,

Ten professors noted the lack of Bible literacy and lack of Bible teaching. As Harvard's Kiely said: I certainly do understand that a good education needs to include other than the Judeo-Christian or Western perspective. However, some schools and universities and colleges have gone so far away from that, that what students end up knowing is marginal and trivial and disconnected.

I did my own research to discover just how many Bible courses were available in reputable English departments across the country. Unfortunately, out of the top twenty-five universities in the nation, only one English department offered a graduate Bible course in 2017. Just ten offered undergraduate Bible courses through the English department, but most of these departments only designated one semester or one quarter to a single Bible course. The University

of Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins University, and NYU were the only schools to offer multiple Bible courses to English undergraduates in single semesters throughout 2017.

Although some campuses have seminary schools, such as Harvard University and Duke University, corresponding English departmental sites do not offer cross-listed courses with seminary schools, nor are students encouraged to take them. Not one university even notifies potential or current English undergraduates and graduates of possible options concerning seminary course enrollment.

The following pages display my total findings. These findings are indicative of information that prospective English students and current English students have immediately available to them on English Departmental sites (cross-listed course information is included).

| <u>University English Dept.</u> | <u>2017 Undergraduate Course Offerings</u>   | <u>2017 Graduate Course Offerings</u>                                 |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Harvard University              | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| Yale University                 | 1 ENG Bible as Lit. course in Spring, course is cross-listed with 1 LIT; second section offered only if there's interest | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| Stanford University             | 1 ENG Bible as Lit. course in Winter   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| Princeton University            | 1 ENG Bible as Lit. course in Fall   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| UC Berkeley                     | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| Brown University                | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| University of Pennsylvania      | 1 Playwright's Bible course in Spring;<br>1 Shakespeare's Bible course in Spring   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| Columbia University             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| University of Michigan          | 1 ENG Bible as Lit. course in Spring   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| University of Chicago           | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |
| NYU                             | 1 American Scriptures course Fall.<br>1 Bible as Lit. course in Spring.  | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed course                           |
| Cornell University              | 1 Bible as Lit. course in Fall (No Spring info available)  | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses in Fall (No Spring info) |
| University of Virginia          | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | 1 course entitled "The Bible"   |
| University of North Carolina    | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses   | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                          |

|                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| University of Texas, Austin | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| UC Davis                    | 1 Bible as Lit. course in Winter.  | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| Indiana University          | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses<br>In Spring (No Fall info) | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses (No Fall info) |
| Duke University             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| Johns Hopkins University    | 2 Bible as Lit. courses in the Spring                                    | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| Rutgers University          | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| Northwestern University     | 1 ENG Bible as Lit. courses in Winter                                    | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |
| CUNY                        | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                             | No ENG Bible courses or cross-listed courses                |

I was perplexed when I read the course description for UC Davis' sole Bible of Literature course offered by the English department in the Winter quarter only:

The Bible is one of the most influential literary works ever composed, and worth reading as literature in its own right; in addition, Old Testament figures and events--from Adam and Eve to the Flood, from the plagues of Egypt to the complicated life of King David--provide an essential set of touchstones and contexts for reading later literary works, secular or religious.

This description conflicts with the department's non-prioritized Bible course offering. If the Bible is so important to English studies, and is "essential" to so many "secular or religious" works, why offer just one course in an academic year?

Then again, this course description may have been written by someone with little to no departmental or administrative power. It also could be a plea for more attention to biblical studies.

The Yale entry seems most alarming to me. Only one Bible of Literature course was offered during the Spring semester of 2017. None were available for the following Spring, unless student interest warranted an additional section. Here, Yale's English department seems to view biblical education as elective material, or not important enough to at least regularly offer additional sections. Basing the availability of Bible as literature courses on undergraduate interest sends false messages regarding the pertinence of biblical literacy, especially in correlation to the English major. In fact, the careless treatment of scriptural courses within English departments, or the nonchalant manner in which they're offered, may signify the mass extent of biblical illiteracy within the academy. Many Bible courses fall victim to litanies of less pertinent English courses that unfairly take priority. Surely, English departments that realize the importance of Shakespeare's influence on literature and contemporary media do not hesitate to aggressively offer Shakespearean courses. But if English faculty are unaware of the Bible's

greater influence on English literary history, or suffer so much from scriptural ineptitude they can't tell if biblical allusions, allegories, or adaptations even exist among the canon's most essential works, then suppressing or withholding Bible as literature courses becomes a reflection of sheer incompetence.

A more deleterious aspect considers the competence of Bible as literature instructors. The capability of professed literary scholars of the Bible who learn and operate in times where epidemic biblical illiteracy affects pedagogy too should logically be questioned. I once took a very maladroit Bible as literature course at UC Berkeley as an undergraduate. The instructor was from the comparative literature department, and possessed very little firsthand biblical knowledge. She would often defer to me, a lowly undergraduate junior at the time, when attempting to explain the most common of Old Testament stories. Although the class was poised to analyze evoked texts of the Hebrew Bible, it accomplished little in actually conveying a clear, legitimate view of even one classic Mosaic story, or any other classic Torah story for that matter.

Even if the direction of this course and other Bible as literature courses seek to present the Bible as just another work of literature, I find it counterproductive to leave such tasks to biblically inept instructors. Just as we appoint scholars who are proficient in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Melville to teach "Self-Reliance," *Walden*, and *Moby Dick* respectively, efforts to thoroughly teach biblical works literarily should be left up to those who are very familiar with scripture.

But this standard should be in place for most or all English and American literary scholars and/or professors. Without an advanced awareness of scripture, inter-period works containing many biblical allusions, or integral biblical allusions, are commonly or habitually misinterpreted for lack of biblical literacy. As the mindsets of historical authors who were Bible

fanatics go unconsidered, authorial intent is often inappropriately assessed. Though every strain of English and American literature possesses writers with proficient scriptural knowledge, and contains texts that fundamentally draw from Bible, including those which emerge from specific scriptural inspiration—like “Caedmon’s Hymn,” *Piers Plowman*, and *Pilgrim’s Progress*—an incompetent professor may obliviously overlook these vital contexts, rendering biblical education an unnecessary medium.

\*\*\*

The establishment and decline of  
 biblical theory and biblical literacy in English literary studies

---

In tracing biblical theory across significant periods of English literary history, starting with ancient influences which first began to view the Bible as a literary text is not only logical, but integral. If early English scholars, critics, and authors were able to see the Bible as a piece of literature—or viewed psalms and proverbs as poetry, and the book of Samuel as an epic, for example—they also could perceive their own theological works in bilateral dimensions. Not only did the foremost English critics and authors appreciate or cherish divine contexts, but secular forms such as genre, and secular aesthetics like rhyme and meter, were equally embraced (together with theological counterparts). Biblical theory in English can trace its origin to this type of binary appreciation simply because the fundamental property of distinguishing secular elements from theological elements, and vice versa, is essential to the craft. Being able to locate where God is among mazes of literary tapestry is a basic skill shared communally among biblical scholars and literary scholars alike, or critics of the Bible and critics of texts like *Paradise Lost*.

Ryken sees this binary appreciation coming from authors of the Bible itself. He finds areas where writers of canonical scripture acknowledge the literariness of their own works (or works written by biblical personas, main characters, etc.) through parsing the secular from the spiritual and extolling literary qualities, reminding audiences of every artful talent at hand. He notes a segment in Ecclesiastes where the author (who claims to be Solomon, and speaks about himself, the Preacher, in third person), stresses that

Besides being wise, the Preacher taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find pleasing words, and uprightly he wrote words of truth. (12:9-10)

In identifying signs of literary appreciation, Ryken first notices how the Preacher recognizes himself as a “self-conscious composer” who does not merely relay God’s words but, with literary agency “arranges his material ‘with great care’” (52-53). In one sentence, the Preacher positions the art of finding “pleasing words” in tandem with producing “words of truth” (53). Here, Solomon not only distinguishes the secular from the divine, but advertises literariness in a way that grants it equal status with theology.

Initially, early Christian fathers were not as readily sold on prioritizing the literary qualities of scripture. To most of them, the divine authority, power, and perceived factual leverage of the Bible seemed to elevate its stature above literature. In “The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages,” Reeves asserts that

“the authority of the Bible overshadowed all other works of literature; its reality could be contrasted by their fiction. God’s writing in the Scriptures embodies the ‘real’ in the sense that its words recorded historical ‘fact.’ (12)

Some Christian fathers even deemed it sacrilege to recognize the Bible as literature. According to Reeves, Gregory the Great

...warns the reader not to look for ‘literary nosegays’ because, in interpreters of Holy Writ, ‘the lightness of fruitless verbiage is carefully repressed, since the planting of a grove in God’s temple is forbidden.’ He rejects the idea that he should ‘tie down the words of the divine oracle to the rules of Donatus’ (the grammarian). (13)

Jerome’s similar disdain seems to come from a personal dislike of the Bible’s literary elements, as he feels that “the language of the scriptures was ‘harsh and barbaric’ compared with the classics” (Reeves 13).

Interesting enough, I find that the underlying combination of theology and biblical exegesis, or the prevalent belief among early church fathers and monks that theology and Bible study were the same, fueled inclinations to halt literary consideration. In *The Language and Logic of the Bible*, G.R. Evans posits that

the study of the Bible had always formed the basis of Christian theological endeavor; so much so that it was not until the twelfth or thirteenth century that the word ‘theology’ came into use in the schools of the West alongside ‘the study of the Sacred Page’. (7)

Here, Evans notes that the formulation of the term “theology” followed an originating Christian period where the concept of theology and Bible study had been perceptually synonymous.

Reeves concurs with this claim:

Thus, to the first monks struggling to keep a torch light in a dark age, the Bible was the great encyclopedia of knowledge, both secular and sacred. Biblical exegesis and theology were synonymous. (14)

Since the purpose for studying the Bible had always revolved around theology, church leaders appear to have disregarded other purposes, such as literary appreciation. Reading the Bible with the same lens as one would use on a completely secular poem, such as a classical poem, may have been unproductive or inappropriate.

But Jerome later changes his tone, and actually transforms the face of biblical criticism in early Christianity. After complimenting the Bible's artistry, to the point of praising authors of the Old and New Testaments—above classical authors—a new tradition begins (Ryken 54). Scholars, including the likes of Augustine—who initially, like Jerome, called Old Testament writings “crude and obscure” (Reeves 13)—began to embrace the total qualities of divinity and literariness within the Bible.

As the “human element” of scripture “could not be denied” (Reeves 13-14) among early Christian fathers and monks, their binary appreciation rubs off on later generations. By the middle ages, this tradition multiplies, causing multiple biblical students to fawn over the many possibilities, secular and divine, that scripture had to offer. Beryl Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* not only affirms that “the Bible was the most studied book in the middle ages” and that “Bible study represented the highest branch of learning” (xxvii), but also that “both the language and the content of Scripture permeate medieval thought” (xxvii). This conveys a continuing determination to value literary qualities and view the Bible as something more than just a theological source. Absorbing the Bible into liberal arts, medieval students revel in “the vastness and inexhaustible variety of the treasure contained in the sacred page...It is natural, therefore, to find the Scriptures exalted as the Queen of the Arts” (Reeves 13-14). The diverse treasures offered by the Bible undoubtedly includes an array of secular benefits.

As we move into the early modern period, we begin to witness how this established binary lens—which becomes proficient in parsing, conflating, and/or appreciating divine clues and literary value—is applied to poems, plays, and other texts containing biblical allusions. For early modern critics, traditional processes which give literary appreciation to the Bible prompts heightened attentiveness to the literary qualities of other texts, especially English works

inundated with scriptural allusions. Literary critics like John Dryden, when examining early modern literature containing biblical allusions, chooses not to directly emphasize scriptural elements, but focuses rather on character, morality, and authorial intent (Hamlin 43, 46). Some critics focus on textual religiosity instead of the biblical nature of literature. Jackson and Marotti's "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies" in the book *Criticism* claims that "literary scholars...driven by confessional biases" were present in early modern England (170).

Since derivations and meanings of biblical references were evident to biblically literate readers, critics—even in the eighteenth century—felt that emphasizing scriptural allusions was equivalent to stating the obvious. As ingrained, monotonous, biblical saturation was common among reader mentalities, critics paid more attention to literary qualities, as they were perhaps less discussed. To clarify this point, let's refer to Hamlin's *The Bible in Shakespeare*. Logical enough, one of the best ways to estimate the pulse of biblical criticism within English literary history is to trace the manner in which scholars and critics commented on the most popular English author of all time. Criticism surrounding Shakespeare's works can be used as a critical template, reflecting biblical theoretical cultures across time. Consistently setting the pace for approaches to English literature, the history of Shakespearean biblical criticism is a blueprint for literary scriptural criticism and theological criticism as a whole.

Samuel Johnson, being very aware of the function of biblical allusions in Shakespeare's works, "makes no reference to the Bible in all his notes on the plays, perhaps expecting that his readers could perceive these for themselves" (Hamlin 44). Instead, Johnson focuses on more secular allusions, such as detecting Shakespearean references to the story of Actaeon in the *Twelfth Night*<sup>5</sup>. Here, Johnson enlightens readers with seemingly uncommon information. As the

---

<sup>5</sup> From *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Raleigh (London: Oxford University Press, 1908; repr. 1952), 83.

Bible is highly discussed in his time, secular Shakespearean allusions are not, and hence warrants Johnson's attention. Hamlin asserts that "Johnson is particularly interested in topical allusion, which he suspects to be running through the plays, albeit undetected and undetectable by readers" (44). Taking Johnson's influential works representatively, late early modern or mid-eighteenth century critical emphasis on secular allusions do not seem to imply a deficit in scriptural knowledge, but a deficiency in certain non-biblical examinations of literature.<sup>6</sup>

I believe that seventeenth and early eighteenth century predication on character morality eventually begins to overshadow the very cognitive respect for the Bible which, in prior times, only avoids biblical allusion because of public biblical saturation. As we begin to see an increased number of Enlightenment thinkers in the public draw away from biblical reverence, perhaps small declines in biblical literacy take place. Seeds that literary critics like Dryden sowed—in embracing notions that Shakespeare was "a source of moral and spiritual wisdom" (Hamlin 46)—start to encroach on mental reverences for scripture. As Enlightenment desires cause many to gravitate away from religious authority, perhaps notions of biblical authority, or even the normality of biblical memory, also begins to wane.

Consequently, the nineteenth century surge toward aggressive biblical theory may be a direct response to dips in biblical allegiance. Although Hamlin says that "the leap from Shakespeare as a writer who alludes to the Bible, to Shakespeare as 'moralist' or 'divine' became commonplace in the nineteenth century" (46), the way in which most critics examined Shakespeare obviously changes. It appears to me that critical attentiveness to morality and divineness was now translated into preoccupations with scriptural allusion. Hamlin notes that

---

<sup>6</sup> Hamlin does concede that some eighteenth century critics, like Lewis Theobald, did not ignore biblical allusions (44). Theobald was quite influential, according to Hamlin, and seems to forerun the subsequent widespread nineteenth century critical focus on biblical allusions.

From the nineteenth century on, there was a proliferation of publications premised upon the supporting claim that Shakespeare had somehow tapped directly into God's revelation, and that his works provided wisdom and spiritual knowledge equivalent to the Bible. (49)

This fixation with comparing the playwright's words with scripture hence accounts for a pattern of "Bible in Shakespeare" books that consequently comes into fruition in the nineteenth century. These books represent a renewed, communal infatuation with detecting biblical allusions in English literature, signifying popular methodologies which document and expound upon scriptural parallels. Sir Fredrick Beilby Watson's *Religious and Moral Sentences Culled from the Works of Shakespeare, Compared with Sacred Passages Drawn from Holy Writ* (1843) was the first of many Bible in Shakespeare books. William Dodd's *The beauties of Shakespeare, regularly selected from each play*, produced a century earlier, actually begins the nineteenth century "format of gathering extracts from Shakespeare's plays" (Hamlin 49). These works provide biblical explication, or notes which create successful bridges between literary dialogue and biblical dialogue, literary stories and biblical stories, etc.

But early nineteenth century biblical explication was not without its flaws. Though I applaud this period for its exemplary dedication to biblical inclusion, I do recognize the stumbles along the way. Hamlin points out Watson's inability to discern the contexts for which Hal and Falstaff borrow from Solomon's Proverbs, for example (49). Hamlin also mentions that critics were quoting the *King James Bible* in most Bible in Shakespeare books. Obviously, Shakespeare could not have accessed this 1611 version of the Bible when writing most of his plays. Fortunately, continued critical dedication to comprehensive literary interpretation led to corrections, and eventually mastery of the craft. Bishop Charles Wordsworth not only correctively asserts that Shakespeare most likely used the Geneva Bible in 1864, but his

“*Shakespeare’s Knowledge and Use of the Bible* [also] represents an advance in critical methodology” (Hamlin 62).

As we move into the modern period, an increasing emphasis on religiousness infringes upon trends which emphasize the Bible in literature. Increasing desires to examine texts for religious reasons, and biographical reasons, overpower cravings to comprehend texts by investigating or expounding upon scriptural allusions. Again, we can judge the pulse of the critical field by changes in Shakespearean biblical criticism:

Twentieth-century Shakespeare critics continue to struggle to claim Shakespeare for one Christian denomination or another. For the most part, however, these arguments tend to be based on biography and religious themes rather than on biblical allusions. (Hamlin 67)

By the twenty first century, works like Marx’s *Shakespeare and the Bible*, which emerge from the religious turn (even though the religious turn does not actually represent a biblical turn), are seen as throwbacks to the Victorian era (Hamlin 73), not contemporarily commonplace. This indicates that critical interest in biblical allusions, or the bond between literary theory and biblical lenses, sharply deteriorates after the nineteenth century.

This deterioration seems to follow the aisles of general social history. Prothero claims that modern evangelical movements in the early twentieth century contribute to overwhelming behavioral patterns that replace prioritized biblical understanding with notions of personal religious freedom. David R. Nienhuis shares these sentiments. In “The Problem of Evangelical Biblical Illiteracy: A View from the Classroom,” Nienhuis articulates Prothero’s assertions in clear fashion:

Indeed, a good bit of the blame for the existing crisis has to fall at the feet of historic American evangelicalism itself. In his book *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—and Doesn’t*, Stephen Prothero has drawn our attention to various religious shifts that took place as a

result of the evangelistic Second Great Awakening that shook American culture in the first half of the nineteenth century, key characteristics of which continue to typify contemporary evangelical attitudes. For instance, there was a shift from learning to feeling, as revivalists of the period emphasized a heartfelt and unmediated experience of Jesus himself over religious education. (1)

The shift, which replaces adherences to external influences—like biblical education—with personal internal adherences, mimics the social dips in biblical and theological authoritative reverence that occurred during the Enlightenment period. The only thing is, we’ve yet to see an aggressive academic response equal to Victorian predications on biblical theory, or collegiate responses that insistently combat gross biblical illiteracy.

\*\*\*

The “religious turn” is not necessarily a biblical turn

—

In English and American literary criticism, a pendulum of emphasis has been swinging—from formalism to historicism, New Criticism to New Historicism, and now New Historicism to new formalism—throughout modern times. Yet, as mentioned before, the pendulum has yet to swing back to the same fervor of biblical emphasis indicative of the Victorian era. The “religious turn”—a phrase which describes a recent critical gravitation toward religious lenses (occurring from the late 1990s throughout the 2000s, and beyond)—has not actually compelled the bulk of literary scholars to focus on the Bible. Failing to possess the same pervasive academic impact of New Historicism, the religious turn falls short of changing or conforming the whole of English academia—by a long shot.

The religious turn can best be described as “a greater openness to the study of religious aspects of texts as religious” (Kriner 266). In “the call for papers that initiated the 2007 MLA

seminar on ‘The Turn to Religious Studies,’” (266), a brief invitation responds to growing academic desires to unleash religious literary lenses:

Seminar papers are invited that explore ways in which Christian scholars can participate in the “turn to religion” by strengthening a critical sensibility that weighs the delicate registers of belief and unbelief; by developing more vigorous theoretical paradigms that take religion seriously; and by demonstrating that Christian commitments can lead to greater interpretive clarity. (Kriner 266)

In the mid-1990’s, years before conference invitations like this were on the rise, we find texts that begin to call for some type of unapologetic religious emphasis, or lean toward analyzing the religiosity of texts. Critics who craved to unlock impending religious elements within texts, or those who simply wished to divulge authorial spiritual motives, no longer wanted literary theology to go unnoticed. Placing aside fears of intermixing church and state, critics applied devotional lenses to literature in ways that highlighted both textual spirituality and heightened calls for religious liberation. Tiffany Eberle Kriner’s “Our Turn Now? Imitation and the Theological Turn in Literary Studies” (267) notes that

Jenny Franchot’s piece “Invisible Domain: Religion and American Literary Studies,” even while castigating the discipline for seeming to assume that believing and thinking are mutually exclusive and calling for a greater focus on religion, suggests that a neglect of religious subject matter may reflect “how unimportant religion is in the lives of literary scholars.” Franchot observes in her article that fear of being cast in “the wrong light” means that scholars consistently translate or demystify the religious ideas of writers they study. Seeking to calm the fears of those who worried that the study of religion would compromise their scholarly position, she insists that there is no requirement that “scholars must themselves adopt the religious insights or practices of those they study. (267)

Here, Kriner notes that Franchot, before the religious turn catches steam, notices academic barriers that unfairly accuse scholars who want to focus on textual religiosity of religious

worship. Franchot goes on to intelligently (and boldly) assert that studying religion is not synonymous with divine reverence. Perhaps these same barriers have prevented scholars from acquiring biblical knowledge, or focusing on the interpretation of scriptural allusions. As the religious turn itself does little to advance the idea of heightened biblical scholarship within the academy, and many scholars embrace theology as they ride the religious turn, a significant rise in biblical concentration fails to surfaced.

Thus, the religious turn does not necessarily describe a movement which seeks to obtain or subscribe to biblical knowledge. In a nutshell, it's simply a movement that spreads notions of heightened religious awareness in literary circles. Even Kriner is implicit in conveying the lack of biblical studies within this theological turn, claiming that it "is more religious than it ought to be" (268). Other studies on the religious turn, like Arthur Bradley's "Derrida's God: A Genealogy of the Theological Turn" (2006), also emphasize its connotative, superfluous focus on religiosity, not biblical study (22).

Nevertheless, some helpful biblical aids (though not nearly enough), especially those which examine Shakespeare's plays, have emerged during the religious turn. Examples are *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays* (1999) by Naseeb Shaheen, which intricately catalogues and explicates biblical allusions in each Shakespearean play; and Helen Wilcox's *The English Poems of George Herbert* (2007), which offers very detailed notes and references on biblical allusions for each Herbert poem. Works such as these, some of which are profoundly innovative, have not seemed to remedy the problem of biblical illiteracy. Each integral book fails to draw enough academic attention, or encourage the creation of more biblical curriculums, pedagogies, or collegiate Bible courses. They also fail to spark an increase in conferences which address biblical illiteracy.

Other referential aids have surfaced too, but also haven't garnered the academic recognition they deserve. Although the following dictionaries—which both contain a cumulative knowledge of the entire canonical Bible—may deter students from thinking biblical literacy is attainable, each book can offer significant firsthand biblical knowledge if diligently studied. *The Facts on File Dictionary of Classical and Biblical Allusion* (2003), and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* (2013), are two of the most comprehensive biblical reference aids to emerge from the religious turn.

In contribution, however, I would propose an anthology of biblical allusions which provides biblical explication for scriptural references in applicable canonical English and American literary texts. This anthology would present biblical education in a more feasible way to literary students and scholars. Gradually introducing or exciting students to a craft they may deem foreign or untouchable, this proposed compilation of scriptural references considers learning curves caused by biblical illiteracy.

More predominant in the religious turn, as mentioned before, are texts and articles which emphasize the religiosity of literature, without directly addressing biblical literacy. A prime example is a collection of essays entitled *Shakespeare and Religion* (2011), edited by Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti. For the exception of three essays, the essays in this book emphasize religion so much, they overlook biblical motivations behind literary religiosity, or ignore segments of devotion which may derive from an author's personal admiration of the Bible. This kind of authorial scriptural inspiration—which is prevalent from *Beowulf* to *Moby Dick*—though surrounded with denominational devotion, liturgy, and other forms of traditional religiosity, should be treated with notable attention. Moving away from biblical literacy by focusing wholly on religious motivation is thus a bit irresponsible, and stifles the full possibilities of spiritual

texts. I do applaud a lens that reinvigorates religiosity, but not at the expense of bypassing theological deficiencies.

\*\*\*

## Chapter 2

\*\*\*

### Identifying and examining biblical allusions

---

When should an English scholar read a text with a biblical lens? And how does a biblically illiterate or biblically inept reader identify scriptural allusions?

Despite the fact that English and American literature is saturated with works containing scriptural references, some texts do not incorporate the Bible. Reading Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, for instance, with a biblical lens would probably be futile, given the barrage of allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Here, a classical lens would be sufficient, potentially providing less controversy and research for the average student—specifically those students who've been exposed to Greek and Roman mythology since grade school. In my experience, classical references are more readily identifiable and understood among undergraduates, graduates, and scholars than biblical references. This undoubtedly comes as a result of academic tendencies to give more attention to the classics and less to the Bible. Greek and Roman mythological courses, and courses in classical rhetoric, as well as historical literary theory (where the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato are mandatory), have been extremely plentiful.

Since the days of Jerome, the Bible has competed with classical literature for a place in literary academia. When writing “How can Horace go with the Psalter, Virgil with the gospels, Cicero with the apostle<sup>7</sup>?” (Letters XXII, 29), Jerome heightens the literary quality of biblical

---

<sup>7</sup> As Paul the apostle, like Cicero, was known to write in rhetorical, argumentative fashion as a Roman citizen, it's most likely that Jerome refers to him when indicating “the apostle” rather than other individual apostles or the apostles as a whole.

texts, “enact[ing] what became a standard practice of viewing the Bible as a body of sacred literature parallel to classical literature” (Ryken 55). In juxtaposing prominent classical authors with esteemed biblical authors, Jerome not only conveys that scriptural writers deserve literary categorization, but that classical writers are actually inferior to them. Although Ryken believes that Jerome merely “pairs classical and biblical versions of the same literary genre (lyric, epic or narrative, and rhetoric/epistle/essay, respectively)” (55), I see an effort to defend the Bible’s literariness, and joust for the Bible’s position among society’s most esteemed literature.

Even if, as Ryken mentions, Jerome stimulates changes that cause future readers to possess higher literary appreciations for the Bible, the same historical competition between classical texts and the Bible is still relevant today. The Bible’s secular tentative association with contemporary literary academia remains hampered by desires that wish to strip away its place in literature, and tuck it away into religious studies, seminary studies, Sunday schools, etc. (as mentioned before). When professors were asked about prerequisite classical knowledge and prerequisite biblical knowledge, a sense of immediate concern regarding biblical illiteracy could be read between the lines:

Interview Question One:

When asked about the value of classical literacy, the professors answered that knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology was an academic advantage. Corban's Martin Trammell explained: Knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology advantages a student by providing an understanding of the context the allusions create in a piece.

Interview Question Two:

English professors overwhelmingly agreed that knowledge of the Bible was an academic advantage. Responses were “indispensable,” “terribly important,” “absolutely crucial,” “reasonable acquaintance is an advantage,” “enormous advantage.” Gerald Bruns, Notre Dame,

said: “You can't really study Western literature intelligently or coherently without starting with the Bible...you're simply ignorant of yourself.”

The almost desperate answers corresponding to Bible knowledge, versus the non-spirited answers concerning classical knowledge, point to a significant disparity between the two. It is safe to say that each professor was not too worried over prerequisite classical understanding, knowing the existence of ample sources that cater to Greek and Roman studies. In contrast, the lack of educational sources for the Bible appears to create anxiety.

Out of the twenty-five top colleges mentioned in chapter one, most have classical studies departments. Again, none of them have Bible departments, though English departments, comparative literature departments, and religious studies often assume the responsibility of offering few biblical classes. Given the more common amount of biblical courses within religious studies departments—as opposed to scant amounts among English departments—the prevailing notion in the academy seems to be (as mentioned several times earlier) that biblical studies should be a branch of religious studies. This is highly prejudicial, especially since classical studies—which predominantly offers religious mythology—is not historically recognized as a branch of religious studies. Nor are there significant desires to absorb the classics into religious academics.

\*\*\*

Picking up where we left off, reading poems that obviously draw heavily from classical studies can readily—and quite naturally—be accomplished without a biblical lens. But students should be very careful. Reading Milton's *Lycidas*, for example—a poem which also draws heavily from classical literature, but also scripture—without a biblical lens would be disastrous (a biblical analysis of *Lycidas* appears later in this chapter). And, when assessing the amount of English and American literature similar to *Lycidas*, as well as works which may have smaller

quantities of biblical allusions that are still thematically significant, biblical knowledge becomes an extremely beneficial asset. This knowledge compensates for a variety of unprepared or unfortunate circumstances, such as interacting with insufficient textual annotations that poorly or scarcely explicate biblical allusions in commonly used English and American literary anthologies. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* and the *Broadview Anthology of English Literature*—two widely utilized texts in English departments across the nation—for example, oftentimes do not point out or explain biblical allusions that are absolutely pertinent to the meaning of applicable texts. Both anthologies do a disservice to *Lycidas* by failing to provide endnote or footnote information for the most important allusions.

However, we must know that reading texts like *Lycidas* with a biblical lens may cause problems if not carefully, intelligently initiated. When scholars try to identify allusions without the ability to readily notice a scriptural phrase, story, name, principal, symbol, archetype, etc., interpretive difficulty is imminent. As mentioned before, this conflicts with readers of past periods who didn't need a forced biblical lenses to catch theological significances in literature, because they relied on firsthand knowledge acquired from cultural saturation. In an array of situations, embracing the same sense of cultural reflex and/or memory that made past readers biblical scholars would not be such a bad idea. A cultural equipping of scriptural memory allows allusions to not just stand out commonly or naturally, but more accurately. The natural propensity of a biblical scholar to see allusions negates the need for forced and often speculator formal lenses, sidestepping approaches which might very well impede the swift, comprehensive progression of academic study. Notwithstanding, the current pervasive lack of biblical knowledge in the academy facilitates the need for some type of elementary biblical perspective,

even though it amounts to just a sliver of biblical mastery. Forced scriptural critical lenses should thus be seen as a start, and not an ultimate cure for academic voids in theological literacy.

Beyond these potential standards, highly proficient prerequisite biblical understanding as a norm is what, in my opinion, the academy should expect from undergraduates before they reach upper level English literary courses, or before English graduate students attain an MA. Surely, a PhD student in any facet of English literature and most sections of American literature should be required to undergo some type of biblical proficiency test before graduation. If the majority of English PhD programs find it necessary to require foreign language proficiency, then surely we should be able to realize the importance of garnering the type of “foreign” biblical knowledge that will help us better understand a vast number of authors in our field who ate, slept, and drank the Bible. This proficiency can effectively be achieved through heightened emphases on biblical studies in pre-graduate or early graduate curriculums. Mandatory Bible as literature courses can equip students with enough firsthand scriptural knowledge to recognize how much the meaning of texts depend on scriptural interpretation, symbolism, allegory, and authorial inspiration rooted in theology.

These curriculums on the graduate level should also be careful when meshing biblical education with theoretical education if the desired effect is to produce high scriptural IQs as opposed to prompting savviness in biblical theory. Taking on biblical theory in the same manner that a scholar might take on postcolonial theory can be very problematic. Simply put, the fundamentals of postcolonial theory lie within the perspective of the oppressed, or a sense of empathy toward anti-colonial views. Although knowing a breadth of postcolonial texts can help improve this type of view, an elementary gist of postcolonialism can be achieved without prolific research. In other words, successfully grasping a postcolonial lens is much more cognitively

qualitative than cognitively quantitative. One can't, on the other hand, attain an elementary biblical perspective without knowing a breadth of biblical texts.

Which leads me back a prior point which considers the benefits of forced biblical theory (despite its inferiority to ingrained, natural biblical scholarship). Although forcing ourselves to see the Bible in texts without masterful scriptural understanding is less efficient than prompting a reflexive ability to spot allusions, the prospect of radically incorporating biblical curriculums into English departments may be unattainable. Those of us who've studied the Bible for decades not only see a higher quantity of obscure allusions, but wish that others could also. A much more collectively inclusive concept thus lies in calling for textual aids that gradually introduce students to the Bible. Perhaps a central assistive text, or anthology of biblical allusions (as previously mentioned) can reveal canonical interpretations in ways that convey standards indicative of authorial mentalities and historical reader mindsets; interpretations that do not stop at educating the student, but reach for pedagogical heights.

\*\*\*

### Biblical Analysis of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

—

Teaching Shakespeare's *King Lear* without sufficient biblical literacy runs the risk of limiting the amount of potential interpretations, and siphoning the richness of the story. Though the Bible is not the only influence behind the creation of *King Lear*, it is definitely the primary influence.<sup>8</sup> Knowing the Bible, or being able to make biblical parallels between the play and the

---

<sup>8</sup> The four primary foundational vehicles used by Shakespeare—*Historia Regum Britanniae*, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, an anonymous play called *King Leire*, and, chiefly, the story of Jacob, Esau, and Isaac in Genesis—are essentially contributory springboards for the author's sprawling imagination. Although some striking similarities occur, especially between the dialogues of *Leire* and *Lear* (Mabillard), the principal elements of Shakespeare's play contain amplified representations of each resourced subject, notably the resourced Genesis story. This leads the trained eye to view most Biblical resemblances as products of Shakespeare's opportunity for capitalization, not just imitation. *Lear*, primarily, is an imaginative adaptation of the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau in Genesis.

book of Genesis, allows the reader to better grasp character motivations, articulate character dimensions, and comprehend various circumstances which befall each character. Most importantly, biblical literacy brings us closer to gauging authorial intent.

In *Lear*, evidentiary clues pointing toward potential links to the story of Jacob, Esau, and Isaac in book of Genesis begin when certain distinctive, biblical attributes concerning Edgar and Edmund are introduced. For instance, early in the play, Edmund expresses a desire to usurp his older brother's birthright<sup>9</sup> through trickery. This corresponds to Jacob's aspiration to win Esau's birthright by means of utilizing outright deception. Although Edmund is not actually Edgar's brother, but a bastard, his resemblance to Jacob sustains, because Gloucester, Edgar's biological father, considers Edmund a son, creating an equivalent playing field between their relationship and Isaac's relationship with his sons, Jacob and Esau. This analogous link formulates in the first scene when Gloucester explains to Kent that, although Edmund's mother "grew round-wombed, and had, indeed...a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed...his breeding...hath been at my charge" (1.1.12-14).

In the second scene, Edmund gives the audience an intense monologue, conveying dissatisfaction for not being the chosen heir of Gloucester's inheritance. He asks "Wherefore should I / Stand in the plague of custom, and permit / The curiosity of nations to deprive me / For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines / Lag of a brother" (1.2.2-6). This state of envy directly parallels Jacob's envious state. Just as Edmund is displeased with falling short of the birthright by a slight difference in age, Jacob is displeased for being born just moments after Esau, the firstborn. Jacob's legendary attempt to prevent Esau from becoming the firstborn occurs during their birth: "So he that came out first was red...and they called his name Esau. And

---

<sup>9</sup> Traditionally given to the firstborn son, a birthright, in ancient Judeo culture, is a rightful claim to the family inheritance.

afterward came his brother out, and his hand held Esau by the heel; therefore his name was called Jacob” (Genesis 25.25-26).

Edmund’s dissatisfaction is first introduced during Act one. Here, Gloucester—though acknowledging that Edmund is “yet no dearer” to him than Edgar is (1.1.19)—calls him a “knave” and “whoreson” (1.1.20-22). This principally compares to Isaac’s lack of fatherly appreciation for Jacob, or unfair feelings which favor the oldest son over the younger: “And Isaac loved Esau” (Genesis 25.28). To illuminate this parallel, Shakespeare effectively uses Gloucester’s distasteful language toward Edmund. The term “whoreson” derives from a Middle English combination of “whore” and “son,” which takes on the same negative meaning as “bastard” (OED). In Shakespeare’s time, the word retains a negative context. In fact, there is no etymological evidence that “whoreson” was sometimes used positively in early seventeenth century texts. As for the word “knave,” there is evidence of scant positive use in early modern English. Though sometimes referring to a “boy” or “fellow,” it is mostly utilized in a negative context in Shakespearean plays, referring to a scoundrel, rascal, or rogue. Moreover, later in Act one, it becomes clear that Edmund not only feels slighted for want of a birthright, but also feels psychologically scarred from being called or known as a bastard: “Well, then, / Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land. / Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund / as to the legitimate...I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing” (1.2.16-18, 1.2.131).

Perhaps Shakespeare, when forming the Genesis analogy, seizes the opportunity to link the origin of Jacob’s motives to that of Edmund in order to create an ambiguous, humanistic understanding—and maybe even a little empathy—toward the bastard son’s subsequent deceptive actions. After all, even the Bible seems to legitimize Jacob’s deceptive actions. Not

only does it disclose Isaac's partiality (in favor of Esau) prior to Jacob's underhanded deed, but it also counterbalances Jacob's trickery by divulging Esau's carelessness. This materializes when Esau—who "was a cunning hunter; a man of the field" (Genesis 25.27)—comes home from work one day feeling famished, and sells his birthright for a portion of Jacob's pottage: "And Esau said, Lo, I am almost dead, what is then this birthright to me? Jacob then said, Swear to me even now. And [Esau] swear to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob...So Esau contemned his birthright" (Genesis 25.30-34). Many years later, Isaac, who is unaware that Esau sold his birthright, grows very old and decides to relinquish to Esau before his death. Jacob then manipulates his father and receives the official "blessing" himself, behind his brother's back. Subsequently, Esau seeks to kill Jacob in a mad rage, despite agreeing to barter the birthright years before: "Therefore Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing, wherewith his father blessed him. And Esau thought in his mind, The days of mourning for my father will come shortly, then I will slay my brother Jacob" (Genesis 27.41).

If audiences link the hatred and carelessness of Esau to Edgar—who is neither angry nor careless, but nonetheless remains analogously linked to Esau in the initial stages of the play because he's Gloucester's firstborn and possesses the family birthright—they should deductively apply Jacob's persona to Edmund, and somewhat forgive his craftiness, just as Christians historically forgive Jacob. In short, the Gloucester subplot seems to rely on the audience's knowledge of two biblical accomplices which are responsible for Jacob's deceptive actions and envious persona: first, Esau's careless and irrational ways, and second, Isaac's lack of love for Jacob. Trusting that audiences will successfully make the initial connections between Edmund and Jacob, Edgar and Esau, then Isaac and Gloucester, Shakespeare appears to foresee that Edmund will not wholly be blamed for desiring and/or attempting to steal Edgar's birthright (just

as countless Christians throughout medieval and early modern history fail to hold Jacob wholly culpable for coveting Esau's blessing, let alone chicanery and theft). As a result, Shakespeare preserves Edmund's "human" side, preventing audiences from deeming him completely evil.

As Isaac's biased love for Esau influences Gloucester's biased love (and hence, Edmund's misdeeds), Rebekah's love for her son, Jacob, and her willingness to help him deceive Isaac, allows the relationship between Goneril and Edmund to develop and communicate with Genesis. The Bible states that "Rebekah loved Jacob" (Genesis 25:28), and, via this love, she comes up with the idea of deceiving Isaac, then urges Jacob to dress up in goatskins to receive the birthright: (Genesis 27). This directly parallels Goneril's willingness to unethically assist Edmund's hierarchical advancement (4.1).

Moreover, Rebekah's love for Jacob appears to be interpreted immorally through Goneril's adulterous love for Edmund. Here, we see a kind of lust that also feels incestuous, because Edmund, just prior to engaging Goneril, disowns his father for Cornwall, Goneril's husband. Cornwall oddly offers to become Edmund's father, making Goneril's love for Edmund incestuous (3.5.22-23). This possible allusion to incestuous properties is consistent with other hints and examples of incest in select Shakespearean plays. The introduction to *Shakespearean Criticism*, edited by Lynn Zott, affirms this assertion when suggesting that "the threat of incest is a motif featured in a considerable portion of Shakespeare's works" (1). In addition, Shakespeare's possible tactic of associating Edmund with incest may derive from Jacob's future incestuous actions. In Genesis, the patriarch marries two of his own cousins, Leah and Rachel.

Knowing the divine destiny of Jacob, however, moves early modern Christians to also look past this, and further condone his deceptive actions by categorizing them as common, "human" portions of God's will (which must eventually work for the greater good, like Adam

and Eve's disobedience, Lot's incestuous actions with his daughters, David's sin with Bathsheba, etc.). Even Genesis chapter twenty-five confirms Jacob's predestined, heavenly right to Isaac's birthright before his birth: "And the LORD said to [Rebekah], Two nations are in thy womb; and two manner of people shall be divided out of thy bowels; and the one people shall be mightier than the other; and the elder shall serve the younger" (25.23). Thus, Shakespeare's potential ingenious option to connect Edmund's mischief to the mischief of the destined father of Israel<sup>10</sup> additionally excuses the bastard son's naughtiness, showering him with a kind of understandable, humanistic duplicity.

\* \* \*

As Edmund explains his manipulative intentions to the audience early in the first act—while holding a letter of defamation in his hand, written to frame his brother Edgar—the full schematics of Jacob's deception comes to mind. Both analogous parties mislead their fathers by using disguised vehicles which portray and betray their older brothers. The two vehicles of deception are as follows: Jacob uses a set of Esau's clothing and goatskins to disguise himself as Esau in order to attain the God-given birthright from Isaac (Genesis 27.15-29), and Edmund devises a letter forged in Edgar's hand in order to gain Gloucester's favor and supplant his brother's place as heir (1.2.51-59).

Because Esau is a "rough" or hairy man (Genesis 27.11), Jacob uses the goatskins to mimic his brother's body, taking advantage of Isaac's blindness (a disability which arises in his old age): "And when Isaac was old...his eyes were dim (so that he could not see)... And...fair clothes of [the] elder son Esau...clothed Jacob...And [upon] his hands and the smooth of his neck [were] the skins of the kids of the goats... And when he came to his father...Jacob said to his

---

<sup>10</sup> Jacob was renamed "Israel" by God in the book of Genesis.

father, I am Esau thy firstborn” (Genesis 27.1,15-16). Congruently, Edmund mimics his brother’s handwriting, penning a letter which implicates Edgar in a plot to kill Gloucester (1.2.51-59).

Subsequently, when Edmund shows the letter to his father, Gloucester is initially wary of its authenticity, creating deeper analogous ties with Isaac who, when approached by Jacob in disguise, is also doubtful. Though completely blind and ossified in mind, Isaac relays skeptical inquiries, verbal and sensory, when facing the disguised Jacob: “Who art thou, my son?...Come near now, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be that my son Esau or not (Genesis 27.18-24). Equivalently, Gloucester is suspicious when Edmund gives him the forged letter: “My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?...You know the character to be your brother’s?...Hath he heretofore sounded you in this business” (1.2.56-63).

Despite his skepticism, Gloucester succumbs to Edmund’s falsified device, just as Isaac succumbs to Jacob’s. Immediately flying into a rage, Gloucester fully accepts the letter as truth (1.2.76-79). And Isaac, though acknowledging that “the voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau” (Genesis 27.22), fully accepts Jacob as Esau, and gives him the birthright/blessing (Genesis 27.27).

The aforementioned links to Genesis greatly illuminate when Gloucester’s striking physical similarities to Isaac are introduced later in the play. Gloucester’s sudden blindness—which transpires when Cornwall and Regan order their servants to pluck his eyes out (4.1.70-74)—is central to reinforcing all the plays parallels to Genesis. Not only does Edmund and Edgar’s correlation to Jacob and Esau receive added evidentiary preponderance, but Genesis and *Lear* become utterly synonymous by means of quantitation.

Heretofore, denying Biblical connections within *Lear*'s thematic arena becomes very irrational, because *any* seventeenth century play containing two twin sons vying for their blind father's inheritance would naturally and deductively be indicative of the Genesis story (especially since ancient Biblical stories had become iconic in theater by Shakespeare's time via popular cycle plays or morality plays in previous centuries). Moreover, Genesis is virtually the only influential work prior to *Lear* that contains such distinctive thematic paradigms ("Sub Plot of *King Lear* Echoes Jacob-Esau" 1).

I was prompted to look carefully for parallels between *Lear*'s characters and Genesis icons after reading a non-academic, online blog entitled "Sub Plot of *King Lear* Echoes Jacob-Esau." Being very familiar with the Genesis story and the play already, I did not immediately corroborate the blog's claims with reputable academic sources. Initially, as I connected the dots between the Bible and the play, I relied on firsthand scriptural knowledge. Estimating and evaluating biblical links via memory while recalling patterns of Shakespeare's use of biblical allusions in other plays, I qualified tentative connections through critical thinking. Later, I reinforced my findings with careful textual juxtaposition, researching Bible passages in detail and re-comparing them with *Lear*'s corresponding dialogue and action.

Subsequently, I only found two modern or recent academic sources that reinforced my analysis. These were unique as other biblical analyses failed to make any connections to Jacob, Esau, and Isaac. To my disappointment, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature 9th Edition, Vol B*, which features *King Lear* in its entirety, does not mention any possible allusions to Jacob, Esau, or Isaac in its introduction to the play or footnotes. Other texts, like Hannibal Hamlin's "The Patience of Lear," were nonetheless stimulating. Here, Hamlin suggests that *Lear* articulates thematic "pain" or "suffering" by making biblical connections to the story of Job.

Though remarkable, I chose to focus on the two secondary texts that contained information which reflected my own analysis: Cherrell Guilfoyle's "The Redemption of King Lear" (1989) and chapter twenty-five of Simon Palfrey's *Poor Tom: Living King Lear* (2014). Unfortunately, neither one of these academic works have been very popular in academic circles.

Palfrey devotes about three pages to potential scriptural parallels that, in his opinion, do not exclusively align single Shakespearean characters to single characters of the Genesis story. According to Palfrey, "Shakespeare does not make each brother correspond to a single figure, but rather swaps and merges the two, so that both Edgar and Edmond draw upon both Jacob and Esau" (225). These findings are very interesting as they correspond to Shakespeare's unrestricted meshing of sources.

In Guilfoyle's article, parallels are immediately made between Edmund and Jacob, and Gloucester and Isaac, but not between Edgar and Esau. Oddly, Guilfoyle also does not spend time rationalizing a large quantity of other biblical parallels, nor does the critic articulate reasons behind scriptural analogies and allusions. Instead, Guilfoyle gives a laundry list of biblical connections which range beyond the Jacob and Esau story, finding equivalencies between Goneril and Adam, Lear's dialogue and God's dialogue (during Noah's time), and many more. The author is extremely exhaustive and comprehensive, providing valuable information for students and teachers who wish to trace *Lear's* many biblical roots. However, Guilfoyle's chapter would perhaps be more effective if the critic periodically broke away from cataloguing biblical connections by offering supplementary commentaries or critical thinking.

In all, there seems to be a deficiency in current biblical commentary on *King Lear*, one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. In order to ensure thorough analysis within pedagogical

courses and educational courses, perhaps more focus should be placed on scriptural references which provide key authorial information, unlocking the play's innermost academic treasures.

\*\*\*

### Biblical Analysis of Milton's *Lycidas*

---

Examining binaries in Milton's *Lycidas* can help readers detect and interpret biblical allusions. By finding binaries that allude to or identify biblical personas, or bilateral phrases that strategically remind us of scriptural tenets, readers can see how Milton uses *form* to produce patterns of striking word association. In essence, Milton appears to extract popular pairs of signifiers from biblical stories to create optimal reader reflection or enact successful referential cognition. The author's utilization of allusive binaries lowers the possibility of ambiguity (without taking away the indirect, clandestine feel of literary allusion) and enhances the possibility of identifying allusions. Drawing from Caroline Levine's study on binary forms—in the "Hierarchy" chapter of *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*—I suggest that Milton's use of non-hierarchal binaries eliminates disjointed interpretations that sometimes arise from poststructuralist lenses which employ hierarchies.

Seeing Milton's binaries as non-hierarchal—or as mechanisms that primarily function as tools for identifying allusions—allows readers to focus on what each binary member equally offers. As Levine asserts, examining non-hierarchal binaries without incorporating or imposing poststructuralist philosophies used for "colliding" hierarchal binaries removes troubling interpretations:

As many different hierarchies simultaneously seek to impose their orders on us, they do not always align, and when they do collide, they are capable of generating more disorder than order (103)...While it may not be particularly interesting to discuss nonhierarchical binaries in literary

and cultural studies, because these are precisely the ones that have few troubling implications, a rigorous formalism keeps these two forms separate for analytical purposes, the better to grasp what each affords and how each works. (102)

The two forms Levine refers to here are hierarchal binaries and non-hierarchal binaries. In a nutshell, she wishes to separate notions of hierarchy from binaries that can function without them in order to eliminate the possibility of interpretive disruption (which the imposition of hierarchies can cause).

This is not to say that all scholars believe—or have believed—that hierarchal binaries cause disruption. Levine points out how influential theorists, namely structuralists during the 50's and 60's, do not see hierarchal binaries as hierarchal at all, but simply as organized units that arrange culture, politics, social structures in an orderly manner:

Since the 1970s, theorists have paid especially close attention to the binary oppositions that organize a great deal of cultural and political experience: masculinity and femininity, public and private, mind and body, black and white. These had seemed universal and simply neutral to structuralist thinkers like anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1950s and 1960s. (101)

Levine then reveals how subsequent poststructuralists see fundamental hierarchies in these same institutions.

But the poststructuralists who followed argued that these binaries were always covertly hierarchical and that their seeming neutrality had justified violence and inequality for centuries. (101)

However, she concedes that these poststructuralists agreed that hierarchal binaries work together, reinforcing structuralist attitudes after all, and emphasizing the organizing power of each privileged singularity. Levine uses the poststructuralist Elizabeth Grosz as an example:

Grosz, like many others, has argued that foundational hierarchical binaries typically work together, coordinating with one another to strengthen whole structures of power. By this account, the privileged term in each binary reinforces the privileged terms in all of the supposedly foundational binaries; thus the rational, masculine, public subject governs the emotional, private, woman object: he is all mind, she body. And as these binaries align, the theory goes, they consolidate power and agency in the hands of white, male subjects. (102)

Yet between the lines, Grosz seems to detect inherent disruptions in hierarchal binaries. Though each privileged singularity reinforces other privileged binary singularities, the underprivileged singularities seem unfairly subjugated, and siphoned of potential beneficial functionalities.

Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace; the primary term defines itself by expelling its other and in this process establishes its own boundaries and borders to create an identity for itself. (Grosz 3)

Here, Grosz not only notices the apparent discriminatory disruptions, collisions, and instabilities that seem intrinsic to hierarchal binaries, but foreruns a second wave of poststructuralism that chooses to expose these instabilities as real interpretive problems. Levine articulates this second wave:

Many theorists in the humanities since the first wave of poststructuralism have sought to disrupt these painful hierarchical binaries by revealing their instability and conventionality... (102)

Like this second wave of poststructuralists, I see deep-rooted problems with hierarchal binaries. At the core of these problems, in my opinion, is reader perception. I believe interpretive collisions often begin with the manner in which a reader chooses to perceive or articulate a binary. This articulation can grossly alter the manner in which a binary functions. If gender is seen as a hierarchal binary, for example, its primary function hence encompasses power

struggles, subjugation, discrimination, etc. Yet, if gender is viewed as a non-hierarchal binary, its function changes, and can contribute to fair character identifications, and other beneficial textual interpretations. Masculine and feminine, as equal singularities in a non-hierarchal binary, become terms used strictly to classify individuals, failing to embrace or impose any sort of subordination or power. The possibility of undoing the disruptions caused by hierarchies is thus contingent upon removing any notions of hierarchy from a binary. Levine and Judith Butler seem to concur with the rudiments of this philosophy:

Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized. (Butler qtd in Levine 102)

Gender, as “mechanism” and “apparatus,” is no fact of nature, but an instrument or device that produces hierarchical distinctions. And in generating distinctions it also affords the possibility of undoing them. (Levine 103)

As I employ this philosophy on some texts which contain many biblical allusions, particularly Milton’s *Lycidas*, I find that viewing binaries as non-hierarchal lends to heightened interpretative accuracy, because each singularity functions to equally identify an allusive subject. (Taking away hierarchies removes non-troubling implications from each element of *Lycidas*’ non-hierarchal binaries, allowing readers to appreciate the systematic order of the poem, or the ease in which comprehension and aestheticism is contingent upon organization.) Formalist bilateral mechanisms in *Lycidas* appear to organize allusive messages in ways that don’t obstruct interpretation but emit optimal definitive understanding from each non-conflicting singularity. Basically, non-hierarchal binaries correct potential interpretative contradictions made by the imposition of hierarchies.

I can clearly see how the transmission of biblical allusion is positively affected by the neat, non-conflicting bilateral combination of singularities, because successful allusions rely on the reciprocal benefits of both singularities. With this in mind, perhaps Milton is also aware of the simplicity of succinctly conveying compounding biblical evidence through non-hierarchical binaries which (among other concise textual structures) may come in the form of two harmonious lines, or two phrases, or two words.

For instance, to introduce an important biblical figure midway through *Lycidas*, Milton offers succinct binaries that contribute to the figure's identity. Milton never mentions the actual name of this individual, but, through a host of biblically allusive binaries, the author trusts the seventeenth century reader to make an accurate assessment. In line 109, Milton mentions "The pilot of the Galilean lake," stating the first element of the character binary. In line 110, he notes "Two massy keys he bore of metals twain."

"The pilot of the Galilean lake" + "Two Massy keys" = non-hierarchical binary

On the surface (and certainly before ascertaining the identity of the figure in question), we can intelligently estimate that the purpose of these two elements lies in character identification. When combined for reasons of identification, the elements should create a non-hierarchical binary. If the primary or sole purpose of both singularities is to form the best possible allusive picture of an iconic figure, we must deduce that each singularity wishes not to impose dominance, agency, or independence, but act in tandem toward one goal.

After making the most viable parallels between the most popular Galilean fisherman in Western literature and the only man in the Bible who was destined to receive keys to the kingdom of heaven, we can confidently assume—without glancing at footnotes or tapping into

maximum biblical literacy—that Peter is the figure. Meshing information from both sides of the binary, or assessing the figure’s identity with preponderant clues (from such a clear bilateral combination) ensures interpretive accuracy here.

With just one side of the binary, three possible choices emerge instead of one. The most popular literary figures associated with “the Galilean lake,” first of all, by deduction, should be biblical, given the central importance of the sea of Galilee in the Gospels, and the virtual nonexistence of the term “Galilee” in classical literature and other popular historical sources.<sup>11</sup> Second, in correlation with the Gospels, only Jesus, Andrew, and Peter can be directly connected to the sea of Galilee. According to a very popular Christian passage in the fourth chapter of Matthew, “Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers” (Matthew 4:18). Though the only pilots here would be the two fisherman (Peter and Andrew), we can still consider a connection between Jesus and the term “pilot of the Galilean lake” by taking a later Matthew scripture into account. In chapter fourteen, the disciples view Christ walking on the water, upon the sea of Galilee (14:26). However, as Peter asks Christ’s permission to walk on the water also, and begins to do just that (14:28-29), we reinforce connections between Peter and the “pilot” term. Both figures here seem to pilot the sea at the same time, preventing us from narrowing our choices down just yet.

Absorbing the second part of the binary in line 110, however, allows us to exclude Christ as a possible allusive figure; this absorption is contingent upon realizing—as with the first part of the binary in line 109—that analyzing the second part by itself may not give us a solid, confident

---

<sup>11</sup> We can consider a classical contextual precedence, because—before introducing Peter via biblical allusion—Milton uses several classical allusions in *Lycidas*. In fact, the introduction of Peter serves as a shift from predominant classical allusions to predominant biblical allusions in the poem.

assessment. The “two massy keys” could actually mean anything if isolated from line 110, the “Galilean pilot” part of the binary. Only when put together with line 109, or viewed as inseparable, a biblically aware reader can automatically refer to the keys of the kingdom of heaven that Christ promises Peter, the Galilean fisherman, in the book of Matthew (16:19). Incorporating a pertinent Catholic tradition into the mix can answer for the quantity of keys, since Christ never actually designates how many keys He will give to Peter in the Bible. The “cross keys” in the coat of arms of the Holy See—a staple in Catholic tradition since the fourteenth century<sup>12</sup>—gives a quantity to the aforesaid keys promised to Peter. Encompassing historical notions that name Peter as the first pope, the keys also signify divine papal authority in the Catholic tradition.

Now, before mentioning any further information regarding the two keys, it’s important to note that Milton was not a Catholic. However, in relation to alluding to Peter, the author may still rely on signifiers made popular by Catholicism. Utilizing these signifiers does not necessarily mean that Milton endorses papal authority. In fact, Martin Luther refers to “two keys” in a sermon entitled “The Keys.” Here, the preacher seems to accept the traditional notion that Christ offers Peter two keys in the Bible, but fails to endorse papal interpretations as to the meaning of the keys (365-66). Luther sees these keys as a metaphor for the gift of preaching that Christ gives Peter, not an authority that can be handed down or given again to others. To Luther, the keys signify Peter’s individual “office” as a premier minister (365-66). Consequently, this

---

<sup>12</sup> Pastoureau, Michel. “Keys” in Philippe Levillain, *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge 2002 ISBN 9780415922302), vol. 2, p. 891;

Galbreath, Donald Lindsay. *A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Heraldry* (W. Heffer and Sons, 1930). p. 9;

“From the beginning of the 14th century, the two crossed keys constitute the arms of the papacy. The field of the shield is generally gules (red) and the cord is azure (blue). Most often the key placed in bend is gold and the one placed in bend sinister, silver; sometimes they are both gold, or, less often, silver” (Michel Pastoureau, “Keys” in Philippe Levillain, *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge 2002 ISBN 9780415922302), vol. 2, p. 891).

Protestant interpretation or acceptance of the quantity of keys may have been universal among Catholics and Protestants in Milton's time, or specifically Milton himself. However, what's most important to the interpretation of the poem is not the way Christians digested these religious distinctions, but the immediacy in which their memory of the distinctions can contribute to identifying the allusion.

I distinguish the two keys in *Lycidas* from the two keys that Christ refers to in the book of Revelation (1:18) because Milton incorporates another piece of symbolic Catholic material that seems to illuminate notions of Peter's identity, and suppress connections to Christ's identity. Just after introducing Peter in lines 109 and 110, Milton further identifies the apostle in line 112 by mentioning a "miter" on Peter's head (through the binary of "mitered" and "shook locks"; we will examine this binary in its entirety later in this chapter). This miter has been historically used by Catholic popes and bishops. It is not historically associated with Christ. And, as longstanding Catholic traditions consider Peter the first bishop of Rome, it would only be logical that the miter serves to further exclusively identify the apostle. Again, this would conflict with Milton's Protestant beliefs, as well as the beliefs of his primary audience.

As a result, many critics ask why Milton chooses to repeatedly use Catholic or prelatical signifiers to classify or allude to Peter. M.J. Edwards, in the article "The Pilot and the Keys," questions the relevance of associating Peter with prelatical signifiers instead of Christ:

...we may ask (as Milton would ask) when Peter was a bishop and why this should confer the privilege of the miter. Carey and Fowler may reasonably be challenged to say whether Peter was ever the pilot of a vessel and in what respect the keys resemble those of Peter rather than those of Christ. (606)

Here, Edwards addresses predominant critics (in the vein of Carey and Fowler) that automatically associate Peter with the poem's prelatical devices—the miter, the two keys—and also the “Galilean pilot” term. His argument stems from Ralph E. Hone's assertions that deem Christ as the central figure who's associated with the above terms, not Peter.<sup>13</sup> In “Pilot of the Galilean Lake” Hone himself suggests that

Regularly and unhesitatingly, annotators and exegetes of Milton's *Lycidas* have identified “The Pilot of the Galilean lake” (1.109) as Saint Peter. He was a fisherman, hence a pilot. Milton's pilot, moreover, wears a mitre, carries keys, and fulminates against the corrupt clergy virtually ex cathedra. All of this is taken to point only to the first Bishop of Rome, according to traditional Catholic theology and church history. I suspect that this identification was early attached to *Lycidas* because the earliest and most influential annotations were supplied by Anglican clergymen (the Reverend Thomas Warton, Bishop Thomas Newton, and the Reverend Henry Todd) who read into the poem their own theological assumptions (just as generations of readers of *Paradise Lost* had done until the early nineteenth century), without recognizing the possibility of a variance of thought through Milton's somewhat protective ambiguities. (55)

Noticing the predominant consensus of scholars who've attributed the above-mentioned biblical allusions to Peter, Hone begins his dissent by claiming that initial scholars made these associations without substantial evidence. He believes that “the earliest and most influential” annotations were somehow distorted by Anglican motivations; motivations which perhaps ignored *Lycidas*' Catholic material clues, as well as clues that point to authorial “protective ambiguities.” Essentially, Hone does not believe that Milton is straightforward with his allusions,

---

<sup>13</sup> Seeking reinforcement for his own perspective, Edwards appears to use Hone's foundational dissenting opinion because of its tentative scriptural backing: “Hone argues that this figure is not Saint Peter, but Christ, who is described as a bishop in 1 Peter 2:25 and in Milton's *Animadversions*, who carries keys in Revelation 1:18, and who saves the disciples' boat from shipwreck in John 6:15–21” (606).

or unfolds processes of allusive identification neatly and systematically, free from implied uncertainty. Hone goes on to say that predominant interpretations of *Lycidas* actually make Milton a prelate sympathizer; something, according to Hone, Milton surely was not:

This unilateral interpretation seems to me to make Milton needlessly concessive to prelacy at a time when he was surely far along the way toward the anti-prelatical tract (55).

Basically, Hone feels that Milton would not have attached clues indicative of the prelacy to Peter, because the author's contemporary indignation toward prelates at the time of *Lycidas*' inception would have prevented such an endorsement. If Peter is a positive figure who criticizes other prelates in the poem, Milton, in Hone's view, would not have associated the apostle with corrupt prelacy in the first place. Hone includes an actual quote from Milton's *The Reason of Church-government* to support his argument:

No lesse to the contempt of him whom they fain to be the archfounder of prelacy S. Peter, who by what he writes in the 5 Chap. of his first Epistle should seeme to be farre another man then tradition reports him. And this all Christians ought to know, that the title of Clergy S. Peter gave to all Gods people, till Pope Higinus and the succeeding Prelates took it from them, appropriating that name to themselves and their Priests only. (qtd in Hone 55-56)

Though Milton clearly believes that Peter has been misappropriated to a culture of prelacy, I disagree that this variable factors into the author failing to associate Peter with allusive clues indicative of prelates.

Yes, Milton clearly produces a body of work which criticizes clergymen—including *Lycidas* itself—but this precedence does not deter the author from utilizing Peter's persona to relay criticism against prelates. In fact, a particularly effective way to reprimand Christian priest cultures, especially Catholic priest culture, lies in the conveyance of messages through a so-called renowned priest. Milton may be using terms like "miter" and "two keys" to tap into an

internal culture in ways that make chastisement intimate.<sup>14</sup> If Milton creates the perception that Peter is an authentic pope—using terminology and identification binaries that zero-in on common Catholic liturgy—his religious admonishment thus comes from one of their own, not an outsider. This internalized criticism may lead to more intelligent responses and less antagonistic retorts.

With this in mind, I find significant flaws within Edwards' fundamental argument (which, as mentioned before, branches from Hone's argument). Let's take a closer look at Edwards' assertions:

No text from the Bible, and no authority that was likely to convince a Protestant of Milton's day, has been adduced for Peter's wearing of the miter. If the argument is that the miter is the sign of episcopal office and that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, it has yet to be shown that either of these assumptions would have been palatable even to the young Milton. In his later years he was certainly aware (as all Protestant controversialists were) that the ancient authorities do not make Peter a bishop; Irenaeus, our earliest witness, states that because an apostle cannot make his home in any one city, Peter and Paul concurred in appointing another man as superintendent of the Roman flock. As to the miter, a search of Milton's writings suggests that, even had he granted Peter his bishopric, he would not have thought that a prelate of any church could enhance his dignity through such an increment to his stature. (607)

Let's pick apart these assertions chronologically, one by one. First of all, of course there's no biblical evidence that Peter wore a miter in the Bible. Nor is there any evidence that early Christians believed he wore a miter, or was made a bishop by their "ancient authority." Milton is drawing from popular, religious associations that of course arise from post-Constantine

---

<sup>14</sup> Even Edwards concedes how this terminology coincides with Peter in relation to Catholic priest culture: "A miter surmounting two crossed keys, one of gold and one of silver, was Peter's emblem in the Roman church" (608).

Christianity, or Catholicism since the fourth century. These associations were so well known by Milton's time, they could have been made by Catholics *and* Anglicans (as previously mentioned), even if they were detached from biblical reality. (Given the pervasiveness of centuries of Catholic folklore, before and after the Reformation, Anglicans and Protestants would most likely recognize the association between Peter and the miter as remnants of cultural memory, not notions of biblical fact.) Since Peter was hailed as the first bishop of Rome for a large part of Christian history, it would be irrational to believe that all Anglicans and Protestants immediately cut off their mental switches to this notion, especially since several Protestant sects closely resembled the Church in the seventeenth century. As to whether or not intermixing Peter with Catholic material was palatable to Anglicans and Protestants, we must realize that the poetic purpose behind the correlation does not ultimately serve to uplift Catholicism in the poem, but to denounce or criticize Catholic priests, as well as Protestant priests. Recognizing the Catholic portion of the binary in connection to Peter's persona is not the end. Milton doesn't stop there. He goes on to issue a polemic against *all* prelates, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant, through the mouth of a figure that *both* religious sects can relate to. The miter, in my opinion, is only a start. It simply contributes to Peter's perceived identification, seeking to spark notions of mental relatability, religious association, and internal intimacy. The miter does not actually absorb Peter into Catholicism or into the prelacy for the sake of reflecting his true loyalties, nor does it seek to genuinely "enhance his dignity" via Catholic accessories, but sheds light on how the public sees the apostle—a process which may make subsequent admonition palatable. The miter thus becomes an artifice, not a token of true esteem.

As mentioned before, if we view each singularity within each allusive binary associated with Peter as tools for identification, we can prevent falling into the same trap that Edward and

Hone fall victim to. If we see the miter as a hierarchal portion of the “miter” / “shook locks” binary, we might place so much emphasis upon the miter, that it exceeds its own classifying function. If the miter suddenly becomes the essence of Peter, instead of just one puzzle piece that adds to his identification, the author’s intention becomes vulnerable to misappropriation, causing the possibility of interpretative collisions and distortions. Both Hone and Edwards uplift the rank of the miter and the keys by accusing scholars of attaching these items to authorial directives which endorse prelates and/or Catholicism. They see these items as singularities of hierarchal binaries, holding other singularities as subordinates instead of equal contributory partners. If the purpose of the miter is to reflect some type of religious agenda, it would obviously hold more interpretative weight than “pilot of the Galilean lake.” And, if we wish to impose a more divine perception of this figure, and see him as Christ, lowering the status of the miter and raising the importance of “walking on the water” might also suffice, especially since the term bishop (which is associated to the miter) is only equated to Christ once in the Bible (Peter 2:25) (Peter’s equation to the term is, however, much more prevalent in historical Christian tradition<sup>15</sup>.)

For the most part, Edwards and Hone, throughout their articles, are determined to prove why Milton would not use prelatial or Catholic articles in identifying Peter. They believe these items would not have extolled Peter, or accurately depicted him in a pure, scriptural sense. Especially since the Bible does not verify Peter’s association to liturgical articles. They point to evidence of Milton’s anti-prelatial views, attempting to omit the author from using these objects to his benefit. I contest their pursuits, and deem them unsound, because they assume that Milton utilizes singularities in hierarchal ways, and hence divert the function of Milton’s binaries away

---

<sup>15</sup> This responds to Edwards’ claim that Peter 2:25 is part of the reason why Christ is the figure in *Lycidas*, not Peter. He believes that the Milton associated Christ with the miter via this scripture (606).

from identification to agendas that collide authorial intent with corresponding texts, and crash scriptural fact with religious tradition.

In line 113 (after alluding to Peter by using the “Galilean pilot” / “two keys” binary), Milton incorporates the “mitered” / “shook locks” binary not only with the intention of alluding to Peter, but Samson also, a popular Old Testament figure. The “mitered” / “shook locks” binary points us to Peter and Samson respectively. This binary might be a little hard to notice, given the intertwining of terms: “He shook his mitered locks, and stern bespake” (112). However, if we’re aware that Samson shook his locks of hair to free himself from Delilah’s deceptive snares (Judges 16), we can determine that the “mitered locks” is a classifying binary that seeks to tap into memories of Peter and Samson’s persona. In identifying Samson as the recipient of one-half of the binary, the term “shook” and “locks” are key. English versions of the Bible during Milton’s time, notably the *King James Version*, contain the words “shake” and “locks” during Samson’s most popular scene with Delilah. Samson’s seven locks of hair, first of all, were exclusively popular in regard to his overarching legacy. As identification signifiers, his seven locks are just as historically recognizable as Delilah. The term reflexively reminds biblically literate readers of the Old Testament hero.

Conflating two biblical icons, Peter and Samson, definitely widens the *Lycidas*’ interpretive scope. Peter’s subsequent polemic against religious priests seems to coincide with Samson’s struggle against the deception of Delilah. In the Bible, Delilah attempts to capture Samson four times. The first time, she attempts to tie him down “seven green withs” unsuccessfully, and he awakens and shakes himself free (Judges 16:8-9). The second times she tries ropes, but he frees himself again (Judges 16:12). The third time, she fastens his seven locks of hair—the source of his strength—with a pin. But he shakes himself free again (Judges 16:14).

The last time, after Delilah “called for a man [and] caused him to shave off the seven locks of {Samson’s} head” while he sleeps (Judges 16:19). When Samson awakens, he says, “I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself” (Judges 16:20). (By this statement, we know that that he shook himself free the three previous times.) Unfortunately, since his hair is gone, his strength has also diminished, and he’s immediately captured. The implication in all three occasions—especially the second occasion—is that shaking his locks will not only detach him from deception, but serves to muster his strength; or is a sign of Samson’s strength itself. By having Peter shake his mitred locks, Milton incorporates the apostle’s persona with Samson-like strength—the kind of strength that specifically overcomes deception. In *Lycidas*, Peter’s rhetoric—after he “shook his mitred locks”—is poised to challenge the deception of the prelacy, or maybe even break free from deceptive religions corruption.

Although Samson succumbs to Delilah’s deception the fourth time, he is not defeated. As “the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven” (Judges 16:22), he manages to defeat several Philistines one last time. Scripturally, this act is considered an act of divine judgment, because the Bible makes clear that each “judge” in the book of Judges serves to punish individuals through the will of God. This style of punishment coincides with Peter’s verbal punishment toward prelates in Milton’s poem. Its divine justification works to make it authoritative, necessary, and perhaps distances it from potential authorial controversy. All these implications are made possible by two simple non-hierarchical binary singularity that alludes to the identification of Samson.

Toward the end of the poem, Milton continues to allude to Peter, this time intending to attach elements of Peter’s biblical persona to Lycidas, a figure who actually represents Edward King (a classmate of Milton who tragically dies). Just as before, each allusive binary serves to

identify Peter, or functions as organized combinations that readily classify the biblical figure in question. In line 172, Milton writes that “Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high.” Attempting to extol his deceased friend, the author fuses Edward King’s persona to Peter’s persona by producing a binary that directly points to the apostle. The first half of the binary can be traced to an instance I touched on before, in the book of Matthew, chapter fourteen. When Peter sees Christ walking on the water (upon the sea of Galilee), he asks Jesus to walk with Him. After the disciple’s request is granted, he joins Christ on the water, but begins to sink when overcome by fear and faithlessness:

And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. (14:28-30)

Although this historically famous sinking is attributed to a lack of faith, Peter receives credit for being the only man in the Bible (other than Christ) to walk on water. Peter’s deficient faith here, and impending sinking—as well as his periodic clumsiness throughout the New Testament—is overshadowed by his unmatched spiritual feats. The fact that Peter even asks to walk with Christ on water, and accomplishes just this, though just for a moment, implies that Peter possesses a kind of faith that other disciples—who were watching him walk on a ship—did not have. Peter’s bilateral persona which juggles humanism and spirituality, greatness and disloyalty, is a consistent biblical trait for him. Before Peter denies Christ, for example, he defends the Son of God by cutting off the ear of a soldier who wishes to incarcerate Jesus (John 18:10). On another occasion, Christ tells Peter to “Get thee behind me Satan!” (Mark 8:33). Yet Peter does not lose any spiritual gifts that Jesus promises him.

So, by pairing Lycidas with the same type of dichotomous attributes—or by attaching him to Peter via the binary “sunk low, but mounted high”—Milton is able to justify Edward King’s potential imperfections (if there be any), or eradicate any negative notions behind his tragic death. The fact that Lycidas “sunk low” is of no perpetually negative consequence, because he, like Peter, is beholden to a binary that constantly compliments or follows drawbacks with divine positives.

In the poem, Lycidas is “mounted high” in several different ways. As one part of a binary, “mounted high”—as it pertains to Peter’s binary persona—can draw from Peter’s rising from the Galilean sea:

And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matt 14:31)

Here, Peter’s salvation from sinking is a testament or metaphor for his soul’s salvation.

Symbolically, Peter’s spirit is saved from peril or resurrected from the dead. These paradigms reflect archetypal New Testament directives offered by Christ to destined saved individuals.

These models, inherently, incorporate bilateral forms, and take on categorical functions when separate from hierarchal notions. In other words, salvation binary forms, if used in non-

hierarchal ways, are essential to the archetypal saved individual. Again, this historically popular

figure experiences danger and salvation (one binary) on earth, then death and resurrection

(another binary) in the afterlife. Perhaps Milton also sees Lycidas’ life and future unfolding in

the same manner, and poises him to be the poem’s archetypal saved individual. Edward King,

though dead now, could be destined to rise “high.” In prior lines, Milton similarly alludes to this death / resurrection binary:

For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
Sunk through he beneath the wat’ry floor;

So sinks the daystar in the ocean bed  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky (166-171)

If we look at the first three lines, Milton is dedicated to symbolically alluding to the “death” side of the binary. This singularity, which coincides with water—“wat’ry floor” (167) and “ocean bed”(168)—may dually refer to baptism. As Paul the apostle equates baptism to death (Romans 6:3), and the process of rising out of the water to salvation (Romans 6:4), Milton may want us to realize that Lycidas’ death reflects a divine trend on earth that ends in salvation; a trend that Peter metaphorically undergoes when he sinks into the Galilean lake and is brought up by Christ.

How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Paul the apostle, Romans 2-4, 7)

So, if Lycidas’ death is synonymous with baptism and freedom from sin on earth, then we see why “Lycidas’ sorrow is not dead” (166), because his impending resurrection must come, since it correspondingly parallels the process of coming out of baptismal water. Milton illuminates these binaries by using the setting sun to represent Lycidas’ baptism and death in three lines (166-168), and the rising sun to reflect Lycidas’ baptismal emergence and resurrection in the next three lines (169-171). Thus, Milton gives three lines to the binary of death and water submergence, and three lines to the binary of **resurrection and rising up from baptismal waters**.

For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,

Sunk through he beneath the wat’ry floor;

So sinks the daystar in the ocean bed

**And yet anon repairs his drooping head,**

**And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore**

**Flames in the forehead of the morning sky (166-171)**

\*\*\*

Thus, the entire poem of *Lycidas* seems dedicated to the principle of non-hierarchical binaries. In fact, the poem itself appears to work as a singularity or forerunner to a second, subsequent work. Milton is very aware of a long-standing literary tradition of creating a pastoral poem before an epic poem, or signaling readers to an upcoming epic poem by writing masterful pastoral verse. Just as Spenser writes *The Shepheardes Calendar* before the *Faerie Queen*, and Virgil pens *The Eclogues* and *The Georgics* before *The Aeneid*, Milton sees *Lycidas* as one-half of a binary literary convention. Although *Lycidas* is much shorter and largely considered inferior to *Paradise Lost*, it serves to identify a dual body of work. Mimicking the purpose of each non-hierarchical binary within the poem, *Lycidas* as a whole alludes to an authorial process which conforms to an inter-genre binary form. This form reflects a popular convention that historically grants literary notoriety. With *Lycidas*, Milton wishes to align himself with the greats by accomplishing a poetic singularity, or writing a pastoral poem in anticipation of an epic. One serves the other by owning up to the limits of applicable genre, and thus complements one another's identifying mechanism. If the epic stands alone, Milton cannot receive the same type of credit that Spenser and Virgil garner. The same is true if *Lycidas* stands alone. Therefore, the potential greatness of both poems—in correlation to the literary tradition in question—is contingent upon how well both poetic singularities adhere to the requirements of the tradition, and identify each other in the process. Once again, the very existence of *Lycidas* identifies the formulation of an upcoming epic, and the epic—*Paradise Lost*—confirms the identification of

*Lycidas* as a forerunner. Since the overall purpose of each poetic singularity is identification, then the binary as a whole should remain non-hierarchical.

\*\*\*

Diverting our attention back to *Lycidas*' in-text properties, we've affirmed that Milton's organized binaries produce valid character identifications as they rely on biblically allusive combinations which accumulate preponderances of evidence, and solve empirically deductive equations. Neither side of each binary is at odds with each other, but thrives off of reciprocal allocations of information. If binaries such as these were seen as hierarchical binaries, the very jostling of each side, or domination of one side over the other, would disrupt the kind of order that's essential to connecting inseparable pairs of phrases to the Bible, or pairs of words to biblical characters, stories, themes, or ideas.<sup>16</sup> Analyzing each individual side of non-hierarchical binaries, as we've just done, contributes to our overall process of exegetical interpretive deduction, allowing confident biblical determinations via thorough examination. Incorporating hierarchies can shift the direction of core information that each side provides and/or depends upon. If Levine asserts that non-hierarchical binaries should be kept separate from hierarchical binaries for the sake of examination, or stresses that "a rigorous formalism keeps these two forms separate for analytical purposes," we can assume that incorporating hierarchies stifles effective interpretative analysis that depends on identifying characters and objects in biblical allusions.

---

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps a lack foundational biblical understanding in relation to allusive identification moves some to apply hierarchies to otherwise balanced non-hierarchical binaries. Levine notes that "poststructuralist theory has alerted us to the troubling fact that seemingly neutral binaries can hide hierarchies" (103). Motivations like these which try to find nonexistent hierarchies can lead readers and critics to misappropriate understandings or offer problematic interpretations (as mentioned in my study). If we misconstrue non-hierarchical binaries within biblical allusion, the chances of misreading or mis-memory are eminent (depending upon our predication on drawing closer to authorial intent). Some hierarchical collisions that merge while analyzing biblically allusive works, in my opinion, can be prevented by incorporating adequate biblical literacy that attempts to primarily identify allusions as a formalist principle.

## Conclusion

---

An appropriate conclusion to this study, in my opinion, should follow many more biblical analyses of English and American literary texts; analyses which bring vital scriptural information to the academic table. The fact that this information is uncommon within the academy, or has received scant academic attention, does not take away from its literary importance. Biblical analysis can obviously bring us closer to authorial mentalities that treasured or were ensconced in scriptural education. It can also reflect the mentalities of intended audiences throughout literary history. This is exceedingly imperative to the English major given the infinite amount of English and American readers who ascribed to biblical cultures. Myriad examples of scriptural analyses which affirm why biblical education is the most important element of literary studies can lead to a more open-minded, intelligent view of the subject, paving the way for a conclusion that does not continue to seek proof, but stimulates confidence in such a logically essential agenda. Perhaps a dissertation, and not a master's thesis, is the appropriate genre for such a conclusion.

TO BE CONTINUED...

## Bibliography

“About the GNV.” *1599 Geneva Bible*. BibleGateway. n.d.

Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode. “General Introduction.” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*.  
Cambridge: Harvard, 1987.

Bradley, Arthur. “Derrida’s God: A Genealogy of the Theological Turn” *Paragraph*, Vol. 29, No  
3, 2006.

Corbellini et al. “Challenging the Paradigms.” *Church History and Religious Culture*, vol 93,  
*Issue 2*. 174–75.

Cicero. Letters XXII, 29. Letch Worth: at the Arden Press. Google.

archive.org/stream/L007NCiceroXXIILettersToAtticusI189/L007N-

Cicero%20XXII%20Letters%20to%20Atticus%20I:1-89\_djvu.txt. Accessed 12 Apr  
2017.

De Chirico, Leonardo, “The Vatican Files, N. 4,” *reformation21*, July 2011.

Online: <http://www.reformation21.org/articles/the-vatican-files-n-4.php>.

Dodd, William. *The beauties of Shakespeare, regularly selected from each play*. Jones &  
Company, 1826.

Edwards, M.J. “The Pilot and the Keys: Milton’s *Lycidas* 167-171.” *Studies in Philology*, vol.  
108 no. 4, 2011, pp. 605-618. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/sip.2011.0025. Accessed 2  
May 2017.

Ecclesiastes. *King James Bible*. BibleGateway, n.d.

Evans. G.R. *The Language and Logic of the Bible*. Cambridge, 1984.

*The Facts on File Dictionary of Classical and Biblical Allusion*. Ed. Martin H. Manser. Facts on

- File, 2003.
- Felch, Susan. "A Seminar on Christian Scholarship and the Turn to Religion in Literary Studies." *Christianity and Literature*, Vol 58, No 2 (Winter 2009).
- Galbreath, Donald Lindsay. *A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Heraldry* (W. Heffer and Sons, 1930). P. 9.
- Genesis. *1599 Geneva Bible*. BibleGateway. Tolle Lege Press, n.d.
- Gottcent, John H. *The Bible as Literature a Selected Bibliography*. GK Hall & Co, 1979.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 3.
- Hamlin, Hannibal. *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature*. Cambridge University, 2004.
- Hamlin, Hannibal. *The Bible in Shakespeare*. Oxford, 2013
- Hone, Ralph E. "The Pilot of the Galilean Lake." *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Jan., 1959), pp. 55-61. University of North Carolina Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173263>. Accessed 15 May 2017.
- Jackson, Ken and Arthur F. Marotti. "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies." *Criticism* 46.1 (2004) 167-190.
- John. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Johnson on Shakespeare*. ed. Walter Raleigh. London: Oxford University Press, 1908; repr. 1952. 83.
- Judges. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.
- Larsen, Timothy. "Literacy and Biblical Knowledge: The Victorian Age and Our Own."

*JETS* 52/3 (September 2009) 519-35.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms, Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton University, 2015.

Google ebook.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude.,. *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), reprinted as *Mythologiques* , vol. 1, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

*The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Eds. Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode. Cambridge: Harvard, 1987.

Luther, Martin. "The Keys." Ed. Trans. Earl Beyer and Conrad Bergendoff. *Luthers Works*, vol 40, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958, pp. 365-366

Mabillard, Amanda. "Shakespeare's Source: The True Chronicle History of King Leir".

*Shakespeare-online.com*, 2012. [shakespeare-online.com/plays/kinglear/kingleir.html](http://shakespeare-online.com/plays/kinglear/kingleir.html)

Accessed 17 Apr 2017.

Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers. "The Old Stories Made New." *The New York Times*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/06/25/specials/kermode-Bible.html> Accessed 17 Apr 2017.

Mark. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.

Marx, Steven. *Shakespeare and the Bible*. Oxford, 2000.

Matthew. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.

Milton, John. *Lycidas*. *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature, Concise Ed, Vol A*. Broadview, 2011.

- Milton, John. *Lycidas*. *The Norton Anthology, English Literature, 9th Edition, vol B*.  
Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen. WW Norton & Company, 2012.
- Mitch, D. (1983). The Spread of Literacy in Nineteenth-Century England. *The Journal of Economic History*, 43(1), 287-288. doi:10.1017/S0022050700029326.
- Nienhuis, David R. "The Problem of Evangelical Biblical Illiteracy: A View from the Classroom." *The Battle Cry*. Wordpress, 2013. thebattlecry49.com/2013/07/24/the-problem-of-evangelical-biblical-illiteracy-a-view-from-the-classroom-david-r-nienhuis/  
Accessed 1 Apr 2017.
- Nicolas Verdier. "Hierarchy: A Short History of a Word in Western Thought," in Denise Pumain, *Hierarchy in Natural and Social Sciences* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 13.  
*Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Steven L. McKenzie. Oxford, 2013.
- Pastoureau, Michel. "Keys" in Philippe Levillain, *The Papacy: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge 2002 ISBN 9780415922302), vol. 2, p. 891
- 1 Peter. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.
- Prothero, Stephen. *Religious Literacy: What every American Needs to Know—and Doesn't*. San Francisco: Harper, 2007. Kindle Edition.
- Reid, Mary Esson. *The Bible Read as Literature*. Howard Allen, 1959.
- Reeves, Marjorie. "The Bible and Literary Authorship in the Middle Ages." *Reading the Text: Biblical Criticism and Literary Theory*. Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Romans. *The King James Version Bible*. The Bible Hub, 2016. Biblehub.com. Accessed 30 April 2017.
- Ryken, Leland. "The Bible as Literature: A Brief History." *The Complete Literary Guide to the*

- Bible*. Eds. Ryken, Leland and Tremper Longman III. Zondervan, 1993.
- Ryken, Leland and Tremper Longman III. "Preface." *The Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*.  
Eds. Ryken, Leland and Tremper Longman III. Zondervan, 1993.
- Shaheen, Naseeb. *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*. University of Delaware, 1999.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear. The Norton Anthology, English Literature, 9th Edition, vol B*.  
Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen. WW Norton & Company, 2012. 1254-1337.
- Smalley, Beryl. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Basil Blackwell, 1952.
- Society of Biblical Literature. <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=757>  
Accessed 1 Apr. 2017.
- "Sub Plot of King Lear Echoes Jacob-Esau." *Myth Art Culture. Wordpress.com*, 26 Jan 2013.  
[mythartculture.wordpress.com/2012/01/26/sub-plot-of-king-lear-echoes-jacob-esau/](http://mythartculture.wordpress.com/2012/01/26/sub-plot-of-king-lear-echoes-jacob-esau/)  
Accessed 27 Apr 2017.
- Watson, Sir Fredrick Beilby. *Religious and Moral Sentences Culled from the Works of  
Shakespeare, Compared with Sacred Passages Drawn from Holy Writ* (1843)
- Wilcox, Helen. *The English Poems of George Herbert*. Cambridge University, 2007.
- "William Shakespeare". *The Norton Anthology, English Literature, 9th Edition, vol B*.  
Ed. Greenblatt, Stephen. WW Norton & Company, 2012. 1166-1169.
- Wordsworth, Bishop Charles. "*Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible*
- Zott, Lynn. *Shakespearean Criticism*. Cengage Gale. 2002.