

Vampirism and the bible in the picture of dorian grey essay sample

[Religion](#), [Bible](#)



Unsurprisingly for the gothic tale *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, vampirism and a strong biblical reference to a downward spiral from innocence are found lurking within the pages. Corresponding chapters of Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor: Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires* and "...Or the Bible" elaborated on these devices, which enhanced Wilde's novel by adding levels and depth to it that the plot itself could never give.

Unadulterated innocence cannot stand long without a fall, as Wilde emphasizes in the early pages of his novel, playing on our knowledge of this universal truth that we all are familiar with from Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In Chapter II, Basil Hallward has completed his portrait of the young Dorian, describing the boy to his friend Lord Henry Wotton as his masterpiece, unspotted from the world; much like man was when God created him in the Garden of Eden. However, the cynical Lord Henry is soon acquainted with Dorian, following him out into Hallward's garden and beginning to tempt the beautiful boy with corrupted ideas disguised by his "romantic olive-colored face," "low, languid voice," "cool, white, flower-like hands," and "curious charm" (Wilde 23). Henry presents himself to Dorian in the same way that Satan disguises sin, making it seem desirable, even reasonable.

In the garden - and it cannot be a coincidence that this scene occurs in a garden - Dorian receives knowledge about himself that changes his perspective and gives him the desire for passion and youth, culminating in the selling of his soul for eternal beauty. Lord Henry tells him he is unconscious of who he really could be if he had knowledge. Satan used the

same persuasion with Eve, saying “ your eyes will be opened” (New American Standard Bible, Gen. 3: 5) after eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. After Dorian hears these things, life becomes different for him, and he feels things he has never before felt. He is ashamed that his beauty will not last forever, that he is capable of ugliness, and becomes so distressed that he hides his face from his two friends, verbally rebelling against the one who loved him and painted the portrait that comes to represent him. Similarly, Adam and Eve’s knowledge was what made them realize they were naked and grow humiliated, ultimately rebelling against God; without the knowledge, there would be no sin. Dorian and Lord Henry, though they came into the garden separately, leave it together, drink tea together, and leave Hallward’s studio together, representative of the way Adam and Eve became one with sin after their temptation.

As they depart from his studio, Hallward appears to be in great suffering, claiming to hate his greatest work, throwing himself down with a look of pain on his face. This is a clear comparison to God’s pain after casting out his own creation from paradise. After Dorian’s innocence is corrupted, the reader begins to see a rather unholy change in the boy who was once good and pure. Chapter VII of Dorian Gray may seem like nothing but a plot twist to most; however, when compared to Foster’s analysis in his chapter on vampires, it is a clear representation of Dorian Gray taking his first of many victims, Sybil Vane. Vane perfectly embodies Dracula’s type according to Foster: she is young, corruptible, and naïve; beautiful in a way only innocence could make one. Wilde establishes this beauty by devoting

paragraphs to the description of her flower-like features, giving her “ something of the fawn in her shy grace and startled eyes” (Wilde 86). While the image of a fawn brings gentleness, young life, and beauty to mind, it also stirs up the idea that the fawn is ideal game for a hunter, its naivety making it the perfect victim.

Gray easily consumes Vane’s life force with all the stealth of a vampire. Easily captivated by her pure passion on the stage, where she moves in ways so beautiful it is described as otherworldly, he soon becomes intimate with the young teenager. Gray enters a trance whenever he sees her act, simultaneously feeding his passion – much like blood feeds a vampire’s hunger – and stripping Vane of her own passion on the stage. For once Vane comes across Gray, her love for him becomes her only reality, overshadowing her fantasy world of Shakespeare, leaving her “ curiously listless” (Wilde 87) on the stage that once exhibited the vibrancy of her life. Disguised as Sybil Vane’s “ Prince Charming,” Gray acts as a savior to her from a life of both poverty and loneliness. Yet Gray has all the features of a vampire, someone who will end up taking her life. His beauty is emphasized in the scene where he ends his relationship with Vane, further adding to the supernatural image of sustaining his own life force by taking away someone else’s.

It is “ with beautiful eyes” and “ chiseled lips curled in exquisite disdain” that he looks down upon the once vibrant girl whimpering at his feet, lying “ like a trampled flower” (Wilde 92). This comparison to a dead, wilted flower is a stark difference from the original description of Vane’s “ little flower-like

face” and “ lips that were like the petal of a rose” (Wilde 54). Without Gray, Sybil can no longer survive; the juxtaposition of true love with the reality of her life exposed its ugliness to her, and she has nothing more to live for. She is stripped of the innocence and talent that made her great. When Dorian returns home that night, the mark is finalized on his portrait, the first look of ugliness on his actual face spared. It is his first of many acts of vampirism, his life being “ well worth hers” (Wilde, 95). As Basil Hallward later says of all the fallen men Gray had come into contact with, “ They have gone down into the depths. You have led them there” (Wilde 155).

Works Cited

- 1) “ Genesis.” New American Standard Bible. Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1995. N. pag. Print.
- 2) Wilde, Oscar, and Camille Cauti. The Picture of Dorian Gray. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004. Print.