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BIBLE AND BECKETT: DRAMATIZATION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE PLAYS OF SAMUEL BECKETT

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Abstract

This research aims at exploring the influence of the Bible on the writing of Samuel Beckett and his dramatization of the religious experience in his plays like Waiting for Godot and Happy Days. The analysis of his works has been done in the light of his biographies by James Knowlson, Enoch Brater and Deirdre Bair to see how he was affected by the Bible and the 'Christian Myth', as he would like to call it. This research is significant for future researchers as in this era of liberal academia, this aspect of Beckett's work is mostly ignored. The analysis clearly shows that the amount of Biblical references, that Beckett uses, cannot be ignored. So the importance of the Bible and the English heritage of Christian thought, while interpreting or discussing Beckett, can never be over-emphasized, and it is becoming more and more relevant with the movements arising in the last few years that emphasize the importance of saving Irish and British culture and Christian heritage.

This research aims at exploring the influence of Bible on the writings of Samuel Beckett, and the use of this material in his works particularly his plays. This has been researched using Beckett's biographies by James Knowlson and Deirdre Bair. He himself admitted on many occasions that he was thoroughly familiar with the Christian Mythology and used it in his works. Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Happy Days and All That Fall use religious material a lot. Then all of Beckett's smaller theatrical works except What Where use 'Good God' motif. But none has ever tried to thoroughly investigate this aspect of his works and this research aims at filling this gap. The study will see the use of Biblical material in some of his works one by one.

According to Ruby Cohn, the seed of Waiting for Godot is St. Luke's Gospel account of Crucifixion and its description by St. Augustine. She quotes Beckett's favorite Augustinian sentence. "Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned."[1] Moreover Lucky, in his famous speech, uses the word 'skull' eight times[i]. Calvary was also called 'Golgotha', which means 'skull'. All of this point to the same direction that the basic plan of the play seems to revolve around faith or hope and its effect on man's existence. The beginning of the play "Nothing to be done" is the state Estragon is in and Vladimir has started to come round to the same opinion. The only thing, that keeps him from trusting this opinion, is that he thinks that he has not yet "tried everything". This can be interpreted as an experience of the soul. One part of it (Estragon) has completely lost faith while the other (Vladimir) has also started to come round to the same opinion. The two tramps can also be interpreted as 'flesh' and

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'soul'. They have lost all hope of salvation and can do nothing to save them. The only hope is 'Godot' but the problem is that they have been waiting for Godot for a long time at the start of the play. Vladimir says to Estragon, "So there you are again." The word 'again' shows the repetitive nature of the action. Their condition or state of hopelessness or near hopelessness is interpreted by Vlidimir when he says, "Hope deferred maketh something sick, who said that?" (11) This is a reference to the famous verse in Proverbs (13:12), "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life." Very obvious answer to "who said that?" is either 'God' or the 'Holy Ghost'. The part, which is not mentioned in the text, of the above given verse gains significance because of the presence of a single tree. The tree stands for hope and life but is also an emblem for death and hopelessness. Here is a quote from Enoch Brater's illustrated biography of Beckett.

The single tree, for example, is arresting, evoking both life and knowledge. When Estragon thinks of hanging himself there, the same prop becomes an emblem for death, betrayal, perhaps even crucifixion. At the beginning of Act II, when we discover a few hopeful leaves, there is also quite unexpectedly, redemption and rebirth.[2]

The quote is self explanatory and is enough to prove Beckett's use of the Biblical material or in his words 'Christian Mythology'. Any further explanation will be far fetched and too imaginative. Then starts the discussion over the Augustinian or better phrased as Calvinistic discussion over the account of Crucifixion. Once again, Estragon is the carnal one who still remembers the colorful maps of the Holy Land in the Bible. Even if the story is just to pass time but still throws light on the religious experiences they are going through. Vladimir is waiting *probably* (at seemingly) a little more knowledgably than Estragon. When Vladimir says they could have repented, Estragon adds "our being born". Applying Jung's theory of 'complexes' and 'fragmentary personalities', this leads to another possible interpretation that the two tramps are Beckett 'himself' and his own 'self'. It is hard to say who is who or what but Estragon seems to be a better contestant for Beckett 'himself', as 'our being born' could very well have been Beckett's response in such circumstances. The kind of religious experiences Beckett is trying to present is most probably that of Jeremiah who, as a representative of disobedient Israel, repents and weeps. This view gains substance when one considers that 'Ah' come from the book of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. This 'Ah' is repeated a good number of times in Jeremiah, starting right from 1:24. Here is an instance,

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! (Jeremiah 22:18)

Another worth-noting thing is that this 'Ah' comes from Estragon, the carnal one as soon as he hears the word 'Godot'. It is only a little later in the text that Vladimir joins in this 'Ah'. The religious experience, communicated or presented here, draws its force from the binary opposition of the words 'saved' and 'damned'.

The next most important religious experience is communicated or presented on stage when, talking or 'prayer' and 'supplication' to Godot. They are trying to reason out or explain Godot's delayed answer by suggesting that he has to consult his family, friends and bank account. At this point, Estragon asks a strange question "where do we come in?" (19) The religious experience, presented, is heightened well by the non-availability of the answer and the statement, once again by Estragon, "we don't have rights."

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While Didi and Gogo are playing the game of dialogues, enter Lucky and Pozzo. In this episode, the most important thing is Lucky's speech. (40-42) The speech begins with the words 'existence' and 'personal God'. The most important words are 'divine apathia' (apathy) and "for reasons unknown". When Beckett got fame and his homeland wanted to see his plays, the National Theatre asked him to let them censor the line from Hamm's line in Endgame, "God--- b-----the bastard does not exist", he strongly refused to do so, saying it is no more blasphemous than "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[3] This incident gives us a clue to the experience Lucky is going through and trying to communicate. It is the same kind of experience, which even Christ experienced on the Cross. This is a terrible experience when we consider Bishop Berkeley's dictum "To be is to be perceived". Beckett was quite familiar with Bishop Berkeley's writings and actually his Film is based on the above given dictum.[4] This view gains further strength when the speech ends with the 'unfinished', which reminds us of the last words of Christ on the Cross "It is finished". Another argument is the manner in which the speech is delivered. The agitation and violent protest of the tramps and Pozzo is also very significant, as they represent those forces who do not want to hear such experience. Beckett, through out his life, experienced opposition, even of his own family, because of such opinion as Lucky's. He had a very hard time finding publishers till he got fame through the exceptional success of Waiting for Godot.

After delivering his speech, Lucky is quite violently silenced down the tramps while the tyrannical Pozzo directs them on how to do it but as soon as Lucky (and Pozzo) leave, the two tramps once again are going through the same experience as communicated by Lucky. They practically experience 'divine apathia', when once again they find themselves 'waiting for Godot'. This time Estragon's 'Ah' (45) is a response to this 'divine apathia'. The use of the word 'apathia' is significant, as apathy means 'lack of interest/concern' and 'indifference' on one hand and 'lethargy', 'boredom' and 'droopiness' on the other hand. So the word is used as a double edged weapon; it cuts both ways. The word not only draws the reader's or audience's attention to the lack of concern and indifference on the part of the 'Divine' but also serves as a commentary on the condition (bored, lethargic and droopy) of 'man'.

At this point, a boy, who works for Mr. Godot, comes and the bored, lethargic and droopy tramps see the light at the end of the tunnel but only to be frustrated and pushed further back into their dark ditch 'again'. Estragon remark on the explanations of the boy is very significant. He says,

"That's all a pack of lies. [Shaking the Boy by the arm] Tell us the truth." (47)

Very rarely in Beckett's writing, the physical conveys communicates the same experience that words are communicating. In this case, Estragon, in his frustration, shakes the messenger boy. When Vladimir asks him to release the boy, he relases him, covers his face with his hands, then drops them to reveal a 'convulsed' face. This is followed by this dialogue

Vladimir: What's the matter with you?
Estragon: I'm unhappy.
Vladimir: Not really! Since when?
Estragon: I'd forgotten.
Vladimir: Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays! (47)

Remember that boy is a messenger (prophet) of Mr. Godot and Beckett, all his life, used the word 'Christian Mythology". This, once again, gives some credibility to the view that Estragon is Beckett 'himself' and Vladimir his own 'self'.

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The boy does say the Godot will come "surely tomorrow" but this seems to be a routine promise without carrying any weight at least for Estragon. When the boy is gone without saying anything that can change anything, Vladimir asks Estragon, "What are you doing?" and he answers, "Pale for weariness." And then adds after Vlidimir's 'Eh', "Of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us." (49)

Here the experience is more clearly and explicitly conveyed. The phrase "Of climbing Heaven" is also double edged, as it not only refers to the struggle of the one who is seeking Heavenly Kingdom like Jacob but also to the futile attempts of the carnal ones to dethrone God because the phrase reminds us of the Nimrod's attempt of climbing the heaven by building the Tower of Babel. The story is narrated in Chapter 11 of Genesis. The effect is further enhanced by Estragon's decision of leaving his boots. The French word for boots is 'godillot', which is one of the origins of the word 'Godot' that no doubt has some relation with the word 'God'. So Estragon weariness of climbing heaven and gazing on the fellow human beings leads to his leaving God. Remember Beckett's own weariness over the issue of human misery and suffering and its justification. As already narrated in Chapter 1, Beckett's faith was first (notably) shaken by the Pastor Dobbs' sermon in All Saints Church. The pastor tried to justify pain and suffering of humanity and encouraged the listeners to suffer for Christ. Beckett could never understand why God allows innocent people to suffer.[5]

The issue of leaving the boots leads them to the barefooted Christ. Here, at this point in the text, the very name of Christ is mentioned thrice; thus giving credibility to the above-given discussion over the text. Once again, Estragon says, "All my life, I've compared myself to him (Christ). (bracket mine) When Vladimir reminds him of the different circumstances Christ was in, Estragon agrees to him and adds another difference in a very Beckettian manner, "Yes, And they crucified quick". Christ's crucifixion was quick but the misery of the tramps has no end. This again is a religious experience, as crucifixion, in religious terms, stands for pains and sufferings. Beckett, himself, all his life compared himself to Christ, not as God but, as a man who suffered at the hands of the religious people (the Scribes and the Pharisees).

Right after that, Vladimir tries to console Estragon by referring to Boy's statement, "He said that Godot was sure to come tomorrow." But Estragon is not impressed and responds to it saying, "Then, all we have to do is to wait on here." (50)

Then he pities himself for not having a bit of rope and asks Vladimir to remind him to bring a bit of rope the next day. This frustration with hope, that religion gives, leads Estragon to consider suicide as an option. Beckett's own suicidal tendencies are not a secret to anybody who is familiar with his life. After Estragon's "Nothing is certain", the tramps find themselves unable to move at the end of Act I when the curtain falls.

The above given discussion leads to the assertion that it is Estragon that says most of the things that can be ascribed to Becket. So he is a better candidate for Beckett 'himself' and Vladimir seems to be Beckett's 'self', which (or who) was a bit inclined towards religious beliefs.

Act II begins with the most important 'round', the German nursery rhyme, which Beckett translated and versified into French and then later into English. [6] Here is a quote from Hans Mayer's "Brecht's Drums, A Dog and Godot",

In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* the dog already has a prominent position in the dramaturgical structure. The first words at the beginning of Act II are 'A dog came in . . .'. To be sure, there is also the important, silent activity by Vladimir after his entrance which preceded this. As is well

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known, this play is marked by its*repetition*—dramatically as well as dramaturgically. (italics in the original)[7]

This round of the dog is a key to the understanding of the text, particularly when it is studied linguistically. Waiting for Godot , the play is a round and it does convey an experience of humanity on the planet earth. They cannot forget or simply waive away the questions of existence and their significance in the grand scheme of life or universe. Whatever they do to pass the time that is to draw their attention away from these question, is 'nothing, as they are forced back to these questions or in other words back to waiting for Godot that is a hope for messiah or simply a definite answer to these questions. At the end of the play, Vladimir says, "Let's go" but the image on the stage is that they do not move. This image bring us to their automated routine "We can't/why?/Because we are waiting for Godot". This waiting for Godot brings us back to the beginning of the play where the two tramps are waiting for Godot. The use of the word 'again' by Vladimir confirms the repetitive nature of the play. Keeping in view this round structure of the play, this ongoing experience of the humanity has given rise to the frustration. Here I'm talking most particularly about people who are waiting for a Messiah. This experience of frustration is well communicated through a sentence from Endgame "God—b……. the bastard does not exist."

In Waiting for Godot , the same experience is communicated more subtly and artistically by using the word 'Godot'. The letter't' or the sound of the letter is not pronounced, which bring us to 'Godo'. If the play is a round, this brings us to 'godogodogodogodog'. To make sure that this is not a far-fetched idea, here is quote from Dream of Fair to Middling Women, "My God! my true dog! My baby!" (59)

Beckett gave the 'round' of the dog Hegelian 'negative infinity'[8], which is also suggested by Vladimir's silent activity before singing this 'round'. Remember, this round comes from Vladimir at a time when Estragon is not present on the stage. So it is a soliloquy of Vladimir, conveying his thoughts. Vladimir (Didi) is the one who, at the beginning of Act I, had started coming to the same opinion as that of Estragon (Gogo). But here is another twist. The 'round' of the dog is still not from Didi, as he tells Gogo, when question about his singing, "One isn't master of one's moods." (54) Using Jung's vocabulary, one can say that Didi and Gogo are the fragmentary personalities of Becket, whom Beckett's Creative self is analyzing but don't forget that Vladimir is also a character with his complexes, turned into fragmentary personalities. After singing the 'round' Vladimir is back to his usual self when he asks Estragon to be happy because "Things have changed since yesterday." (51). This makes Vladimir, in the view of many critics, a poet. But here is Beckett's idea of poetry. Praising his friend McGreevy's book of poems, called simply *Poems*, Beckett remarked, "All poetry, as discriminated from the various paradigms of prosody, is prayer."[9]

Talking about various things, the two tramps move onto their surrounding. They are not sure of where they were yesterday, what they did or talked about. To this Estragon responds,

Oh . . . this and that, I suppose, nothing in particular. [With assurance] Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent talking about nothing in particular. That's been going on for half a century. (60)

This is significant, as this clearly establishes the two tramps as middle-aged human beings and shows that their 'waiting' is a experience which pertains to their existence. Then they talk about turnips, radish and boots that are lying on stage. They look like the ones Estragon left here (or somewhere) yesterday. Vladimir suggests that Estragon should try the boots on. Estragon

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hesitates but Vladimir encourages him, saying that "it'd pass the time." Remember the French word 'godillot' for 'boot' because just before putting on the boot, Estragon says, "We always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?" Vladimir answers, "Yes yes . . ."(63) This gives more credibility to the view that the play is about the basic experience of existence. In this regard, Vladimir's speeches in Act II are very important. Here is an example,

. . . all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let's make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? [Estragon says nothing] It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes in this immense confusion, one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come. (73)

Then he boasts, "We are not saints but we have kept our appointment. How may people can boast as much?" To this, Estragon answers "Billions". Vladimir boasts of performing the rituals (religious) well but it is important to note that he has started to understand that they are "in the midst of nothingness". (74) Later he says that 'Habit is a great deadener" and almost agree with Pozzo that "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." But we cannot call him a round character because even in Act I, he had already started to come round to Estragon's opinion.

Vladimir says, ". . . all mankind is us". Pozzo says the same when Didi and Gogo, playing the name-game, call him Abel and Cain. So, here is once again a strong Biblical reference to comment upon the nature of man's existence. Man's existence is defined in terms of the Genesis account but it does not end here. Pozzo speech on the torments of 'accursed time' (82) is actually a simple rephrasing of the famous passage on time in Ecclesiastes chapter 3. (Verse 1-7) The reversal in Lucky's and Pozzo's situation is also a reference to the same. This, once again, is the very ecclesiastical way of defining human existence in terms time. It is this Fatalism or Determinist of the Ecclesiast that Beckett is using. The play has nothing to declare but it is anything but boring. It, instead, extracts from the idea of boredom the most genuine pathos and enchanting comedy. Sylvian Zegel was quick to note this pathos.

The following extract from Sylvain Zegel's article on the first performance of the play is the best and most comprehensive introduction to, and appreciation of the play:

Theatre lovers rarely have the pleasure of discovering a new author worthy of the name; an author who can give his dialogue true poetic force, who can animate his characters, so vividly that *the audience identifies with them, suffering and laughing with them*; who, having meditated, does not amuse himself with mere word juggling;" (Sylvain Zegel in 'Liberation', 88) [italics mine]

This pathos is further enriched by the oft-repeated "What do we do now?" This is a reference to Acts 2:37 when, on the day of Pentecost, the Jews heard Peter's message and the Holy Spirit smote their hearts and they asked him, "What shall we do?" This is translated in certain modern translations as "What do we do?" On page 70, Estragon, the carnal one, asks the same question, and then a few lines later, asks Vladimir whether God sees him or not. Vladimir, like Peter, asks him to close his eyes (to pray). Estragon closes his eyes and say "God, have pity on me!" Vladimir adds to the prayer, "And me." It is exactly at this point that Pozzo and Lucky enter. Even Estragon asks, "Is it Godot?" and Vladimir answers, "At last" but once again they are disappointed. The

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most comic twist it that they were asking for Mercy and Pozzo (They take him for Godot) enters and asks them to have mercy (the word in the text is 'pity') on him.

Once, Lucky and Pozzo go, the messenger boy enters. Vladimir, who thinks they are blessed and is proud of their success in keeping the appointment, is always the one who talks to the boy. This time, he does not ask question; he simply offers the answers for confirmation and the boys simply says, "Yes sir." The only question he asks is about the color of Godot's beard and the boy confirms it is white. This reminds him of the most common presentation of God, the white bearded one, sitting on the white thrown of judgment. The automated response of Vladimir is "Christ, have mercy on us!" (84) When the boy goes, Estragon asks him, "And if we dropped him (Godot)" [bracket mine], he answers, "He'd punish us." (85) Once again the two tramps contemplate their option of hanging themselves. Vladimir says. "We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. [Pause] Unless Godot comes." (86) Estragon asks, "And if he comes?" Vladimir is back to where he started almost half a century ago or where humanity started centuries ago, "We'll be saved." This ending brings us back to the beginning, the account of Calvary and gives credibility to the view that they are waiting for Salvation. Vladimir asks Estragon to 'pull on his trousers' to go. He pulls on his trousers and says, "Let's go" but the image on the stage is that they do not move. That brings us back to "Nothing to be done." This 'Let's go' also brings us back to the oft-repeated routine,

We can't

Why

Because we are waiting for Godot.

In this case, this take us back to the Title and everything begins again. Whatever may happen to Didi and Gogo (all mankind), the earth abides forever.

To warn, the above given discussion is not to prove that Waiting for Godot is nothing but a religious play. It simply proves that the seed of the play is the Biblical story of salvation and the experience it presents and communicates is primarily of religious nature. This was the effect of the text or onstage presentation on the first audience, who were mostly Christians. This is just one interpretation of the text but keep in mind Bishop Berkeley's dictum "To be is to be perceived." The meaning of the play depends on how it is perceived. Words don't have meanings, we give meaning to them when we hear or perceive them. The meaning of the play is different for every individual mind but the above-given discussion gives a clue to the creative process through which the play is brought to life. Once a literary text is complete and reaches the reader's hand, it is an independent entity and its existence is not dependent on its creation or creator but on the perceiver and the perception because "To be is to be perceived". But to remind you once again that no scholar of Beckett can ignore the religious nature of the play, and for a proper reading of the play, this must serve as a basis for further explanations of the play. This play can be interpreted in thousands of ways but never without referring to the religious experience that the play presents.

The same is true of Beckett's other works. The very first novel of Samuel Beckett, Dream of Fair to middling Women , is no exception and actually this novel is a seed of everything he wrote later. Almost everything that he wrote later, is referred to in this novel and the important thing to note is that this novel is so autobiographical that Beckett could not talk about the novel to the young editor Eoin O' Brien. In the forword, he says that Beckett called Dream of Fair to middling Women (hence forth will be referred to as "Dream") "the chest into which I threw my wild thoughts". During long discussions over the novel with the young editor, Beckett used to suffer from the memories of time past. Eoin O' Brien writes, ". . . he could not tolerate memories of

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times past if the pain became too acute." (Foreword, xiv) On such occasions, Brien noticed how his (Beckett's) joyful face "dissembled into anguish" and the Youngman had to leave him alone. These autobiographical references are important to note because of Beckett's already stated belief that nothing is in the intellect until and unless it has worked on the senses. All of Beckett's writings have come out of his personal experiences whether physical or mental. All physical experiences for Beckett were mental as well because the doctors could never find any physical reason for his physical problems that started in his very youth.

Dream is very important for discussion because Waiting for Godot has a very close relationship to this novel. Just before writing Dream of Fair to Middling Women Beckett "immersed himself deeply in the confessions of St. Augustine. So, the seed of the this novel and the most famous play of the Beckett is the same. He copied out dozens of passages, mostly verbatim."[10] In 1936, when his closest Irish friend, Thomas Mcgreevy was disaapointed with life and not writing as frequently as usual, Beckett, referring to one half of his favorite Augustinian text, commented, "No sign of Tom. So no explain … remember one thief was saved."[11] The scheme of Dream and Waiting for Godot and the conflict, which is the result of Calvinistic doctrine, is clearly reflected in the lines from Geoferry Chaucer that are printed on the page which is precedes the text of the novel.

A thousand sythes have I herd men telle,
That there is joy in heven, and pain in helle;
But—

This is exactly the experience, which every mind and soul, go through in life and the same is communicated in this novel and presented in Waiting for Godot.

Dream begins with the description of the hero Belacqua's meeting with Smeraldina-Rima. Belacqua is a name that comes from Dante's divine Comedy. He is among the souls that are waiting to enter Purgatory. Belacqua is the one whose bliss come from sitting and waiting. Here is an interesting comparison to note. One of Beckett's friends, from the Joyce-circle, was Walter Lowenfels. Once he expounded his theory anonymity, especially in the relationship of art to the desolate condition of society. Beckett, according to Lowenfels, nodded but said nothing:

Finally I [Lowenfels] burst out, "You sit there saying nothing while the world is going to pieces. What do you want? What do you want to do?

He [Beckett] crossed his long legs and drawled: "Walter, all I want to do is to sit on my ass and fart and think of Dante."[12]

So it is not wrong to say that Belacqua is modeled upon Beckett himself. More interesting is the fact that narrator of the novel is a character 'Mr. Beckett'. So, the seed of Film is already there in the structure of Dream. Regarding Smeraldina, most critics agree that she is modeled upon two women, Ethna McCarthy and Peggy. Beckett was in love with these women while and before he was working on Dream.

The novel begins with a description of how the two met but very soon the narrator Mr. Beckett, adds a comment, which will easily remind of our discussion on Waiting for Godot.

No sooner had he admitted to himself that there was *nothing to be done* that he had dried himself quite himself quite with this chamber-work of sublimation, than he was seized with a pang of the darkest dye, and his *Smeraldinalgia was swallowed up immediately in the much greater affliction of being a son of Adam and cursed with an insubordinate mind*. (5) [italics mine]

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These thoughts lead Belacqua to the prayer that he learned from Mammy and Bibby. 'Bibby' is the name of Beckett's nanny and the wording of the prayer (8) is exactly the same that Beckett used to repeat every night before going to bed. Beckett used to say 'Armen' instead of 'Amen' and the same.

This gives us the idea that the same religious experience, as presented in Waiting for Godot, is communicated here. The following quote is more than enough to prove the point.

While making his usual moan about one thing and another . . . . . Already even he preferred the old one: God or devil or passion of mind, or partly God, partly Devil, partly passion. . . . . poised between God and Devil, Justine and Juliette, at the dead point, in a tranquil living at the neutral point, a living dead to love-God and love-Devil, poised without love above the fact of the royal flux wertering headlong. Suicides jump from the bridge, not from the bank. (27)

Later in the text, Calvinistic doctrine is as explicitly communicated as possible. "There are souls that must be saved and there are souls that must not be saved." (32) The experience and feelings of souls, that must not be saved, is well communicated through the letter of Smerry to Belacqua.

Bel! Bel! How could you ever doupt me? . . . . . Lord Lord Lord for god sake tell me strate away what agsactly I have done. Is everything indifferent to you? Evidently you cant be bothered with a goat like me. (59) [spelling and punctuation mistakes in the original]

The first sentence conveys the same experience of Christ, presented in Beckett's writings again and again. "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Mathew 27:46). A few line later, we read the origin of the name 'Godot', "My God! my true dog! My baby!" The difference between Dream and later writings is that of economy. Beckett loved to say that "the true grace lies in economy." Beckett, all his career as a writer, kept on moving towards maximum economy of words. That's the reason the references, in Dream are more explicit. Comparing Smeraldina-Rima with ulula in the famous paining "Pieta` (mentioned in the First chapter) the very words from the Bible "helmet of salvation" (Isa 59:17, Eph. 6:17, 1 Th. 5:8) are used.

The very experience of Oedipus, "If I be created so, none can deny the savagery of gods" is communicated when Smerry is battered by life. Answering the question, "How long oh Lord has this been going on", she says bitterly "This is a bad dialogue. God has tormented me all my life. . . . That is no way to speak to Ophelia." (82) The narrator, Mr Beckett, describes Belacqua's fate by referring to Apollo, Narcissus and the inaccessible Limbese. (124) Concluding this description, he says, "God's will be done should one description happen to cancel the next, or the terms appear crazily spaced. His will, never ours." (125) Beckett knew well Christ's prayer to Father recorded in Mathew 26:39, "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*." This is one of the reasons why Beckett, in his writings, compares Christ to all mankind. Estragon compares himself with Christ and in Dream, the narrator says "As all mystics, independent of creed and colour and sex are transelemented into the creedless, colorless, sexless Christ". (35)

Pozzo's comment "They give birth astride the grave" and the suicidal attempts of the tramps too have their roots in Dream. Alba's life is summarized in these words, "Living was a growing heavy and dark and rich in days." (166) Later, when Alba sings,

"Woe and pain, pain and woe,/Are my lot, night and noon . . .", Belaqua thinks, "upon my word she is not heavy enough to hang herself." Towards the end of the novel, Belacqua himself finds himself suffering from the same experience when one reads,

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"I can't bear it" said Belacqua, "I can't bear it." (235)
. This is the earlier version of Didi and Gogo's "I can't go on." At the end of the novel, Belacqua "waited for the pain to get better." And when "the pain being so much better, he was only too happy to" move on. It is the ending which is quite different in Beckett's later plays and texts. It is the beginning and ending of Beckett's later plays and novels that improved a lot.

Here is the beginning of Endgame, "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished." This beginning, quite clearly, refers to the last words of Jesus on the cross, "It is finished." But the experienced communicated through these words is different. One goes through this religious experience when one doubts the proclamation of Christ. It is this religious experience of doubt that is communicated by Clov's opening words. Hamm's opening speech is full of the experiences already dealt with in the discussion on Waiting for Godot. He begins with "Can their be misery loftier than mine" (93) and then he compares his suffering with his parents. Important to note is "My . . . dog?" And then he says, "Enough, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to . . . to end . . . God, I'm tired." The words 'finished' and 'end' at the very start of the play make it clear that the play has 'death' as its central concern. Nag's story of the 'Tailor' is a great commentary on the affairs of the world that one had to go through and convey an experience of utter disgust at religious hopes and illusions. All of this fits into the story of Noah's Flood that Beckett was reading time and again when he was writing this play. The end or death of the world and God, himself, was not happy with the world he made.

Happy Days is even more religious in nature than Waiting for Godot and presents a religious experience that almost every common and nominal Christian (religious) man goes through in life. The only thing is that experience is given a female twist. Winnie's state is even worse than that of Vladimir, Estragon, Clov and Hamm yet her first words are "Another heavenly day." After this she offers prayer. This play has the 'good God" motif which is shared by "All that fall" and almost all the short plays of Beckett. Contrasted with her 'heavenly day', 'prayer' and 'good God' are the phrases like 'can't be helped', 'cannot be cured', 'no better, no worse'. She mentions 'mild migraines' that come and go. After talking about 'mild migraines', she mentions 'many mercies', 'great mercies' and says "prayers perhaps not for naught". The word 'perhaps' betrays the hollow nature of her faith.

When the curtain opens at the beginning of Act II, Winnie is further embedded in the earth. She is embedded up to neck. Even the movement of head is denied to her, yet she begins with "Hail, holy light." She smiles saying, "Someone is looking at me still. [Pause] Caring for me still. [Pause]That is what I find so wonderful. [Pause] Once again, it's Bishop Berkeley dictum, "To be is to be perceived." She is happy just because she exists though her existence is restricted to mere breathing and talking. This time she mentions her head full of 'faint confused cries', but she is *happy* because these come and go. Once again she mentions "great mercies, great mercies." It is important to note that she names the pains but mercies cannot be specified. Her pains and suffering are obvious but mercies of 'good God' are never specified. The very appearance of Willie is described by her as "Well this is an unexpected pleasure." So, just the nature of existence (perceived-ness) is a source of happiness. Willie is in terrible state because of the anthrax on his neck. Then she describes life as 'a mockery without Win.' Then she hears 'cries' and utters the very Beckettian 'Ah!' In the end, she is unable to offer her hand to Willie who is unable to kiss her yet she manages to sing her song and smile. This play is a wonderfully comedy of faith.

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Beckett either mocks or admires faith or probably both. But the play produces genuine pathos, as the audience and reader can really identify themselves with Winnies and share her experience.

All that Fall is a dramatized version of Beckett's earlier short story "Dante and the Lobster." In that short story, the protagonist is more concerned about the tragic fate of the Lobster, who has been fried alive, than the human tragedy around him. In this play, everybody is more concerned about the delay of the train; everyone is asking about the 'hitch', which delayed the train. This 'hitch' is described by Jerry in the last lines of the play; the 'hitch' was 'a little child' who 'fell out of the carriage. . . Onto the line. . . Under the wheels.' This reminds us of Psalms 145:14, the text, which Mrs. Rooney quotes, (198) "The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down." This text, quite clearly, presents and tries to communicate the same kind of emotion that Beckett must have felt when he heard that sermon by Pastor Dobbs, which actually produced disgust in him for Christianity. On one hand, the reader is faced with the issue of the justification of the tragedy that fell on the boy but on the other hand, Mrs. Rooney, Miss Fit, and other characters, though they have their share of human weaknesses, are clearly 'bowed down' but their lives do not show any signs of being 'raised up' by the Lord.

The above given discussion clearly shows that the amount of Biblical references, that Beckett uses, cannot be ignored. So the importance of the Bible and the English heritage of Christian thought, while interpreting or discussing Beckett, can never be over-emphasized, and his insistence and emphasis upon his being born on Good Friday shows how his thoughts and naturally his works are affected by the 'Biblical myth', as he would have liked to call it.

Notes

All the textual references, from Beckett's Plays or other theatrical works, in this research have been cited from Samuel Beckett: Complete Dramatic works (London: Faber & Faber, 1985).

[1] Ruby Cohn, Introduction. Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot Casebook Series. 17.

[2] Enoch Brater, The Essential Samuel Beckett: An illustrated Biography (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003) 73.

[3] James Knowlson, Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett (London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 1996) 449.

[4] Brater 114.

[5] Knowlson 67.

[6] Hans Mayer, "Brecht's Drums, A Dog and Godot", Samuel Beckett: Waiting for Godot Casebook Series.130.

[7] Mayer, 134.

[8] Mayer 134.

[9] Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett: A Biography (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978) 118.

[10] Knowlson 109.

[11] Bair 232.

[12] Bair 145.