

## Impact of the Bible in The Major Novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne

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**Abstract:** Nathaniel Hawthorne's works are deeply influenced by the Bible, both in terms of its religious themes and its literary style. As a writer deeply rooted in the culture and history of New England, Hawthorne was familiar with the Bible from a young age, and it played an important role in shaping his worldview and artistic vision. Hawthorne's use of biblical allusions and imagery also contributes to the richness and complexity of his writing. His stories are filled with references to biblical stories and characters, such as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and the Garden of Eden, which add depth and resonance to his narratives. The Bible's language and style also influenced Hawthorne's own writing, as he incorporated elements of biblical prose and poetry into his own works. This paper analyses the influence of the bible in the select works of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

**Key Words:** Sin, Guilt, Puritanism, Biblical influence.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

One of the most significant ways in which the Bible influenced Hawthorne's works is through its emphasis on sin and guilt. Many of Hawthorne's stories, such as "The Scarlet Letter," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil," explore the themes of sin, guilt, and redemption, drawing heavily on Christian imagery and symbolism. In these stories, characters struggle with the weight of their past transgressions and the fear of divine punishment, grappling with their own moral and spiritual dilemmas. The Bible left an indelible mark on Hawthorne's works and continues to be a major influence on literature to this day. He was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1804, a town with a rich Puritan history and culture, and grew up in a family that valued religion and education.

### 2. THE SCARLET LETTER:

"The Scarlet Letter" is filled with biblical references and allusions. The novel is set in Puritan New England in the 17th century, and it explores themes of sin, guilt, and redemption, which are central to Christian theology. One of the most prominent biblical references in the novel is the use of the scarlet letter itself. The letter "A" that Hester Prynne is forced to wear on her chest as a symbol of her adultery is reminiscent of the mark that Cain receives in the book of Genesis after he murders his brother Abel. This association highlights the idea that Hester's sin has marked her as a social outcast, just as Cain is marked as a murderer.

Another important biblical reference in the novel is the character of Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. Dimmesdale is tormented by his guilt over his affair with Hester, and he struggles to reconcile his public persona as a respected minister with his private shame. This internal conflict is reminiscent of the apostle Paul's struggle with sin in the New Testament, particularly in his letter to the Romans. Dimmesdale's physical deterioration and eventual death also bear similarities to the biblical story of King David's adultery with Bathsheba.

The novel also explores the themes of sin, guilt, and redemption in a broader sense, drawing on biblical stories and parables such as the prodigal son and the woman caught in adultery. Through these references, Hawthorne emphasizes the idea that sin is a universal human experience, and that redemption is possible even for the most morally compromised individuals.

### **3. THE HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES:**

The House of the Seven Gables contains several biblical references and allusions. The novel is set in 19th-century New England and explores themes of guilt, redemption, and the corrupting influence of wealth and power. One of the most significant biblical references in the novel is the opening epigraph, which quotes from the Book of Job: "Man, said the Apostle, is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." This passage sets the tone for the novel, emphasizing the idea that suffering and hardship are an inevitable part of the human experience.

The character of Hepzibah Pyncheon is also associated with biblical imagery. Hepzibah is descended from the Pyncheon family, who are cursed by their ancestor Matthew Maule, who was executed for witchcraft. Hepzibah is depicted as a fallen aristocrat, living in poverty in the decaying House of the Seven Gables. Her physical appearance is described as "gorgonized," referencing the Greek myth of the Gorgon, which is associated with death and transformation.

The novel also contains references to the biblical story of the fall of man. The Pyncheon family's wealth and power are built on the theft of land from the Maule family, echoing the story of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. The Pyncheons are also associated with the sin of pride, which is often cited as the root of all sin in Christian theology.

### **4. THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE:**

The Blithedale Romance contains several biblical references and allusions. The novel is set in a utopian community in rural New England and explores themes of idealism, human nature, and the search for meaning. One of the most prominent biblical references in the novel is the character of Hollingsworth, who is described as a "prophet." Hollingsworth is a charismatic leader who is driven by a single-minded desire to reform society and eliminate poverty and suffering. His mission is reminiscent of the biblical prophets who called for social justice and righteousness.

The novel also contains references to the biblical story of the Garden of Eden. The utopian community of Blithedale is described as a kind of earthly paradise, a place of natural beauty and abundant resources. However, like the Garden of Eden, Blithedale is not immune to corruption and temptation. The characters struggle with their own desires and flaws, and the community ultimately fails to achieve its idealistic goals.

The character of Zenobia, a strong-willed and independent woman, is also associated with biblical imagery. Zenobia is described as a kind of queen, with a regal bearing and a commanding presence. Her name is reminiscent of the biblical Queen Jezebel, who was notorious for her wickedness and her opposition to the prophets of Yahweh.

### **5. THE MARBLE FAUN:**

The Marble Faun contains several biblical references and allusions. The novel is set in Rome and explores themes of guilt, sin, and the search for identity. One of the most significant biblical references in the novel is the character of Donatello, who is named after the famous Italian sculptor. Donatello is a beautiful and innocent young man who is associated with the biblical story of Adam and Eve. He is depicted as a kind of "noble savage," living in a state of nature and unaware of the consequences of his actions. However, like Adam, he falls from grace and becomes aware of his own sin and mortality.

The novel also contains references to the story of the Fall and the Garden of Eden. The characters are often depicted in natural settings, such as gardens and forests, which symbolize the innocence and purity of the prelapsarian world. However, like Adam and Eve, they are tempted by forbidden knowledge and become aware of their own flaws and limitations.

The character of Miriam is also associated with biblical imagery. Miriam is a painter who is haunted by her past and struggles with feelings of guilt and shame. Her name is reminiscent of the biblical Miriam, the sister of Moses, who was punished for her pride and rebellion against God.

### **6. IMPACT OF PURITANISM IN THE WORKS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE:**

Nathaniel Hawthorne was deeply influenced by Puritanism, which was the dominant religious and cultural force in New England during his lifetime. Puritanism emphasized the importance of the Bible as the ultimate authority on religious and moral matters, and this influence is evident in Hawthorne's works. Many of Hawthorne's stories are set in Puritan New England and explore themes of sin, guilt, and redemption. His characters often struggle with the strict moral codes and religious beliefs of their society, and their actions are judged in the context of Puritan morality. Hawthorne's use of biblical imagery and allusions is also influenced by Puritanism. He frequently employs biblical language and references

to explore the moral and religious dilemmas faced by his characters. For example, in "The Scarlet Letter," the character of Hester Prynne is forced to wear a scarlet letter "A" on her clothing as a mark of her adultery, which is reminiscent of the biblical story of the woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John.

Hawthorne's portrayal of the dark side of human nature is also influenced by Puritan theology, which emphasized the inherent sinfulness of humanity. In stories such as "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil," Hawthorne explores the idea of the human soul as a battleground between good and evil, with the potential for redemption through repentance and faith.

## **7. CONCLUSION:**

Hawthorne explores the complexities of human nature and morality within a Christian framework, drawing on Puritan themes and language to create powerful and thought-provoking stories. Nathaniel Hawthorne was deeply influenced by the Bible throughout his life and career as a writer. As a young man, Hawthorne read and studied the Bible extensively, and he continued to draw on its themes and language throughout his literary career. His works are full of biblical references and allusions, reflecting his fascination with religious and moral questions.

In addition to his use of biblical language and imagery, Hawthorne also explored the relationship between faith and reason, and the tension between religious and secular worldviews. His characters often struggle with the conflicts between these worldviews, and their actions and decisions are judged in the context of Puritan morality.

Overall, Hawthorne's engagement with the Bible and his exploration of religious themes and questions in his writing demonstrate his deep engagement with the cultural and intellectual debates of his time.

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