

Biblical Imagery and Echoes in the Plays of Becket

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Chapter Five

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In chapter four, Time has been analysed as a theme in Beckett's plays. Habit and routine are said to be cancer of Time. The impact of the passage of Time on the characters of Beckett is corrosive leading to privation and decay. Life appears to them a matter of filling up the gaping holes in Time. They seem to realise that to exist is to exist in Time and to exist in Time one must be able to tolerate the guilt of the past, the meaninglessness of the present and the death that lies in the future. Further, we may now concentrate on the Biblical imagery and echoes in his plays.

The abundant Biblical allusions, references, images and metaphors that are sprinkled in most of his works proclaim not only his erudition in the scriptures but also his dependence on them for his literary output. I have made efforts to explore the religious echoes in the plays rather in a chronological order, omitting some, however, wherein religious echoes are relatively absent. In most of his works,

Beckett relies upon the Biblical images and allusions more for the reinforcement of his Absurd views than the glorification of God or other allied religious precepts. The way in which the quotations are inverted, and the ironical and the paradoxical ways in which they are used, point to this direction. When Beckett juxtaposes religious values with his absurd values, his idea is only to express his anguish at the prevailing predicament of human beings rather than converting them into his philosophy. How Beckett has brilliantly and successfully presented the dilemma of man who is incongruent with his surroundings can be discerned from a proper study of his plays against the backdrop of religious echoes in them.

From the very outset of the play, Waiting for Godot, it is clear that the play is set in a religious background. In the first scene itself, there is an allusion to the Biblical verse: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12) when Vladimir utters “Hope deferred maketh the something sick” (10) to show how hope is related to the physical well-being of an individual.

When Vladimir and Estragon allude to the salvation of one of

the thieves, as a result of repentance, the picture of the Samaritan woman comes to our mind. When the woman in the Bible stands near the well, we have Vladimir and Estragon remaining by the tree. Repentance is a precondition for the absolution of sin as far as the Christian faith is concerned. Vladimir's words: "Suppose we repented" (11) are relevant to this proposition. The tone of the following conversation between Vladimir and Estragon is set in the Biblical background:

VLADIMIR. Did you read the Bible?

ESTRAGON. The Bible ... (He reflects) I must have taken a look at it.

VLADIMIR. Do you remember the Gospels?

ESTRAGON. I remember the maps of the Holy land, coloured they were, very pretty. The Dead sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we will go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon we'll swim, we'll be happy.(12)

The first Act of the play refers really to the haunt of Christ.

Vladimir's query how it is that only one of the four evangelists, St. Mathew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John, speaks about the salvation of a thief being saved, and his statement that only one i.e. St. Luke makes a mention of it whereas, of the other three i.e. St. Mathew, St. Mark and St. John do not make any mention of it whereas St. Mark says that both of the thieves abused Christ, and Vladimir's subsequent reference to the Saviour – all these reveal the author's deep insight into the various incidents in the bible. The two tramps waiting by the tree and expressing their desire to hang themselves on the tree brings to our mind the incident of Judas hanging himself by the tree after the betrayal of Christ.

Estragon's words: "What about hanging ourselves" (17) reminds us of the words in the Bible: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). The dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir is resonant with religious terms like "A kind of prayer", "A vague supplication" (18) and sentences like "Your worship wishes to assert his prerogatives"? (19) captures religious atmosphere in the play. The advent of Godot shouting at his

horse as mentioned by Vladimir (19) brings to our mind an association of metaphors depicted in the Bible, “And I saw, and behold a white horse and he that sat on him had a bow and a crown was given to him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2). Moreover, there are references to a red horse, a black horse and a pale horse in the subsequent verses (Rev. 6: 4-7).

The following conversation among the characters also is resonant with religious echoes:

VLADIMIR. (conciliating) I once knew a family called Gozzo. The mother had the Clap.

ESTRAGON. (hastily) We are not from these parts, Sir.

POZZO. (halting) You are human being none the less. (He puts on his glasses) As far as one can see (He takes off his glass) Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God’s image! (23)

The statement ‘Made in God’s image!’ alludes to the story of creation described in the Book of Genesis: “So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God created him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27).

Pozzo’s words given below show the faith of the believers in God:

Pozzo: in that case – (puff) – What happens in
 that case to your appointment with this ...
 Godot ... Godot ... Godin ... anyhow you see
 who I mean, who has your future in his
 hand ... (pause) ... at least your immediate
 future. (29)

The future of Vladimir is in the hands of Godot he is waiting for. It is in tune with the faith of every believer in the protection of God even if the concept of God varies from person to person. Man’s moorings in God give him a sense of security in this world devoid of light, certitude or peace.

Vladimir’s words to Lucky, “How dare you! It’s abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him like that! After so many years! Really!” (34) recalls to our mind that situation in which the disciples of Christ betraying him: “And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crows thou shalt deny me

thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26:75); and “Then Judea, which he betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself” (Matt. 27:3).

Towards the middle of the first Act, there arises a situation when Vladimir experiences that “time has stopped” (36) and everything seems black to him. When Pozzo puts a question to Estragon what his name is, he answers it as ‘Adam’ (36). The cessation of time, the darkness and the name of Adam, (Gen. 3: 31) the first man created by God remind us of the beginning of the world and the creation of the first human depicted in the first chapter of the Genesis in the Bible.

If Estragon takes the appellation ‘Adam’, then all the sufferings that go along with his waiting are in conformity with the fall of the first man and his consequential suffering. The opening lines of Milton’s Paradise Lost are relevant in this context:

Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe

With loss of Eden till one greater Man

Restore us and regain the blissful seat (Book 1:1-4)

The following words of Estragon express his pathetic condition: “All my lousy life I have crawled about in the mud! And your talk to me about scenery! (Looking wildly about him) Look at this much heap! I’ve never stirred from it!” (61). Vladimir tries to divert Estragon’s attention from his present lot and takes him to a new country, the Macon country, where he will have new landscapes and experience big difference: “Things have changed since yesterday” (60). In the changed situation, Estragon would be happy with Vladimir:

VLADIMIR. Say I am happy.

ESTRAGON. I am happy.

VLADIMIR. So am I?

ESTRAGON. So am I.

VLADIMIR. We are happy.

ESTRAGON. We are happy (silence) what do we do
now, now that we are happy?

VLADIMIR. Wait for Godot. (60)

Vladimir states that they were together in the new country and picked grapes for a man whose name they could not remember and the place he lived:

VLADIMIR. But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called ... (he snaps his fingers) ... can't think of the name of the man at a place called ... (snaps his fingers) ... can't think of the name of the place, do you remember ? (62)

Picking grapes or 'Grape harvesting' (53) has association with what is stated in the Bible: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1), and "I am the vine and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). God the Father is said to be the husbandman of the vine yard, Christ is the vine and who believes in him are the grapes. The harvesting of the soul is the paramount duty of the evangelists. Beckett might have read the verse, "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great but the labourers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the

harvest, that he would send forth the labourers into his harvest”
(Luke 10:2).

Pozzo is mistaken for Godot by Estragon whereas Vladimir reiterates that it is not Godot:

VLADIMIR.	Poor Pozzo!
ESTRAGON.	I knew it was him.
VLADIMIR.	Who?
ESTRAGON.	Godot.
VLADIMIR.	But It's not Godot.
ESTRAGON.	It's not Godot?
VLADIMIR.	It's not Godot. (77- 78)

A reading of the verse, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:5) is relevant in this context.

Towards the middle of the second Act, we have a scene where Pozzo is in sleep. Vladimir strikes him and wakes him from his sleep. Estragon makes a query whether Vladimir is sure about the name of Pozzo. Pozzo is reluctant to move closer to them fearing that they would hurt him. They are calling him with different names:

ESTRAGON. To try with other names, one after the other.

It'd pass the time. And we'd bound to hit on
the right one sooner or later.

VLADIMIR. I tell you his name is Pozzo.

ESTRAGON. We'll soon see (He reflects) Abel! Abel!

POZZO. Help.

ESTRAGON. Got in one!

VLADIMIR. I begin to weary of this motif.

ESTRAGON. Perhaps the other is called Cain. Cain!

Cain!

POZZO. Help!

ESTRAGON. He's all humanity. (83)

This passage brings to our mind the story of the two sons of Adam. Cain was a tiller of the ground and Abel was the keeper of the sheep. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him" (Gen. 3:8). Cain represents the fallen humanity in the sense when God speaks: "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond

shall thou be in the earth” (Gen. 3:12).

Beckett has in his mind the Day of Judgement described in the Gospel - “And he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on this right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:33-34, John 21:15-17) - when Vladimir speaks to the boy in the following words:

VLADIMIR. You work for Mr. Godot?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. What do you do?

BOY. I mind the goats, Sir.

VLADIMIR. Is he good to you?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. He doesn't beat you?

BOY. Not Sir, not me.

VLADIMIR. Whom does he beat?

BOY. He beats my brother, Sir.

VLADIMIR. You have a brother?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. What does he do?

BOY. He minds the sheep, Sir. (51)

The messenger boy may be an evangelist or a prophet or some one engaged in the work of the Gospel and his brother boy may be one who represents a diabolical force as sheep stands for good people and goats for the wicked people.

The symbol of the tree used in the play is to exude hope. The tree can be construed as the Garden of Eden. If so, the characters of the play are waiting for salvation or for the Messiah. The Jews looked forward to the time when God would send them a special leader who would lead them to victory over their enemies or over the empire of which they were part. Many of their prophets spoke about this leader, a man anointed by God (Isa. 9:7, 11:1-9). 'Messiah' means anointed in Hebrew, the Greek word 'Christ' means the same thing. Christians believe that Jesus is this promised Messiah. Very early in the play, the story of the salvation is discussed in the brief dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir concerning redemption:

VLADIMIR. But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved.

ESTRAGON. Who believes him?

VLADIMIR. Every body. It's only the version they know.

ESTRAGON. People are bloody ignorant apes. (13)

A critical examination of the above passage opens a vista of many interpretations. It is argued that the very idea of salvation is dismissed and only the ignorant people believe so. It is also likely that Beckett, born and brought up by Jewish parents, may be throwing light on the concept of 'Messiah'. The belief of the Christians that Jesus was this promised Messiah, caused the conflict between Jewish religion and Christianity. Jews believed that God was one and if Jesus was God, how could he die? According to Helen Baldwin, "the Tree" is symbolic of Christ's cross and "Tradition has it that Christ's cross was made from wood deriving originally from the tree in the Garden" (Baldwin 108). Jaques Guicharnaud also considers 'the tree' a cross (Guicharnaud 212). It is also suggested that the tree mentioned in the play is a metaphor for the 'Tree of Knowledge and Life' which brought death to humanity (Gen. 2:9). It is also symbolic of the rejuvenation of man completely cut off from

his metaphysical roots. Prophet Habakkuk envisages a time of death and privation when “the fig tree does not bud”, (Hab. 3:17) but “as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out”, it is a sign of summer (Matt. 24:32). The sprouting of leaves on the tree where the tramps stood, means the necessity of the hope of the believers.

The messenger boy sent by none the less a God like figure, sleeping in the hay loft in a barn, resembles Jesus in his manger. There are two brothers who live in the barn. The one who keeps the goats, traditionally a symbol of Satan, is well treated while the boy who tends the sheep, a symbol of God’s follower, is beaten. (Mark 13:13, John 15:20). This may be because of the fact that unfair treatment may lie in the existential plight of the righteous. The persecutions and the sufferings, the prophets and the disciples of Christ were subjected to, for no fault of theirs, may be relevant to be remembered in this context. The following verses “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake”, (Mark 13:13), and “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”, (John 15:20), stand in support of the unfair treatment to the just.

Lucky speaks about the antipodal places in Christian teachings,

heaven and hell: "... that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though is intermittent is better than nothing ... (42). We have in this quote the picture of heaven where calm prevails and the picture of hell where fire burns and it is better to look forward to the peace of heaven. Moreover, a reading of the passage: "Given the existence ... tennis ... the stones ... so calm ... Cunard ... unfinished ..." (42-45) gives us an insight into the retributive justice of God. "Who can doubt it will fire the firmament" (43) refers to the verse "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervant heat"? (II Peter 3:12). The constant oblique reference to "Cunard" (43) whose steamships were used in the Crimean War point to the devaluation of the Christian faith as War leads to destruction of human life most special in Christian faith. The reference to 'Berkley' (44) who tried to reconcile science with the Christian doctrine points to the fact that religion and science tend to clash at present.

The following portion of the text points in many direction toward one underlying purpose, viz., a critique of the resurrection of

Christ:

In spite of the tennis on on the the beard the flames the
tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull
the skull in connemara in spite of the tennis the labours
abandoned left unfinished ...(44).

Tennis was originally named Jeu de paume which translates “a game of the palm”. This could to refer Christ’s stigmata that was shown to his disciple Thomas as an evidence of Christ’s identity and resurrection as stated in the verse: “Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). The flames can allude to the pentecostal flames that descended upon the apostles as tongues of fire filling them with the Holy Spirit and allowing them to speak in foreign tongues so as to communicate the work of God to the foreigners as mentioned in the verses: “And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” and “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them”, (Acts 2:1&3). The ‘tears’ appears to refer to the tears shed by Mary

Magdalene when she saw that the tomb of Jesus was empty. “But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping and as she wept. She stooped down and looked into the sepulchre” (John 20:11). She then saw a man and he asked her why she was weeping. She replied that the body of Jesus had been removed from the tomb. That man revealed himself to be Jesus. Thus Mary became the first witness of Jesus’ resurrection. In the same way, the ‘stone’ refers to the giant stone placed over the opening of Jesus’ tomb. The skull refers to Golgotha or skull place where Jesus was crucified. “And it was about the sixth hour and there was a darkness over all earth until the ninth hour” and “And the Sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst (Luke 23: 44-45). This passage lists the evidences of Christ’s crucifixion but its fragmentation and eclecticism work to undermine the value of evidences. The final words of the quote are even more significant: “labours abandoned left abandoned” point to the task of preaching and converting the people to his discipleship entrusted with his followers. Despite all of the witnesses and miracles, words and actions, the campaign of the Christian faith is unfinished and its efficacy is not widespread. Through the words of

Lucky, the dramatist suggests that the Christian faith has its shortcomings and it fails to deliver the goods. The tirade finally ends as Pozzo and the other characters triumphantly tackle Lucky like the mob that silenced Jesus, shouting “Crucify him! crucify him!” (Luke 23:21).

The conversation between Estragon and Vladimir regarding the wearing of footwear throws light on the simplicity of Christian living:

VLADIMIR. Christ! What is Christ got to do with it. You
are not going to compare yourself to Christ!

ESTRAGON. All my life. I’ve compared my self to him. (52)

Vladimir’s statement, ‘What is Christ got to do with it’ looks like an inversion of the words of Legion in the Bible, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus,” (Luke 8:28). Moreover, the words of Estragon appear to be the words of Beckett who is desirous of making an introspection into his life and following the simple Christian life. “To every man his little cross” (62) spoken by Vladimir echo the words spoken by Jesus, “And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:35).

The master-servant relationship between Pozzo and Lucky represents a situation similar to a man under the bondage of sin. He wants to free himself from Lucky. The more Pozzo wants to free himself, the more he depends on Lucky. The same is the hold of sin on man. The more a person wants to extricate himself from the bondage of sin, the more he falls into the quagmire of sin and he becomes helpless. Towards the close of the first Act and the second Act of the play we find both Vladimir and Estragon deciding to move but they cannot. They encounter a situation of helplessness. They are helpless in many ways. In such a situation, the intervention of an external agency or power alone can redeem the situation. It is here that the hope in Christ is relevant. There are so many situations of utter helplessness in the Bible where Christ intervenes and redeems the situation. The occasion of marriage in Cana, of Galilee (John 2: 1-11) and the case of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:2-10) can be cited as some of the examples. It is this figure of the redeemer that overshadows this play and it is the hope in Him that motivates it. Thus we find that this play abounds in Biblical allusions and references. It is replete with Christian imagery and resonant with

religious echoes.

In All That Fall, Beckett maintains that individual suffering produces greater impact on us than the statistics of deaths produces on us. This is the reason why he tries to wring out some kind of meaning out of his own experience. He scales down the suffering to an elementary personal level, orchestrated by sounds alone, and lays bare the reduction of the human to the bestial. A hold-up is caused by the conversation Winnie, the protagonist in the play makes with a carter. She is willing to get along with him. But the hinny that neighed and pawed the ground a moment ago refuses to advance. Further more, the animal gazes at Winnie. She remarks, “How she gazes at me to be sure, with her great moist cleg-tormented eyes! Perhaps if I were to move on, down the road, out of her field of vision”! (9). This alludes to Balaam’s donkey in the Bible (Num. 22:21-23). Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the princess of Moab to destroy the Israelites. God was very angry and the angel of the Lord stood on the road to oppose him. When the donkey saw the angel standing in the road with a sword drawn in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get back

on the road. The Lord opened the donkey's mouth and the donkey spoke to Balaam. Then the angel of the Lord told Balaam that the donkey saw him and turned away from him three times.

In ancient and Renaissance tragedies we witness the lofty sufferings and consequences of great men but Beckett transfers this to the physical and mental degeneration in the simplest beings, such as tramp, the fool, the old, the blind and the lame. In this play, Beckett exhibits low and rustic characters devoid of any intellectual dignity and it is in this situation that the essential passions of the heart find a better soil for the attainment of maturity and are less under restraint and speak a more emphatic language.

It is worthwhile to examine the major characters in the Biblical context. Mrs. Rooney is a lady in her seventies. She is a woman with a past. Her initial encounter with Christy, a carter, leads to a talk on sty dung and allied matters. She is on her way to the railway station to receive her blind husband by the twelve thirty mail. Otherwise he would have been killed. One is reminded of what Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back" (Num. 22:34).

Mrs. Rooney tries to flee from extraneous perception. The fear of being observed is found in this passage. The animal's stare makes her turn inwards and she perceives her own anguish. The gaze of animal makes her self-conscious and self aware:

Mrs. ROONEY: What I have done to deserve all his,
 what, what? (Dragging feet) so long ago ...
 No! No! (Dragging feet Quotes) "Sigh out a
 something something tale of things, done
 long ago and ill done" (She halts) (9).

The threat of self-perception and the exposure to the raw suffering of the being lie at the crest of this mental focus. Mr. Rooney has a need to escape from the hinny's field of vision. Balaam with his sinful character could not see the angel of the Lord but the donkey could see the angel. Mr. Rooney perhaps fails to realise her moral degradation and the sinfulness of her character but the hinny can perceive it. There have been many instances in the Bible where the birds and animals have helped so many people in a similar fashion: "But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth and it

shall teach thee and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee” (Job 12:7,8). When Elijah, the prophet dwelt by the brook, Cherith, “the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening” (I Kings 17:6). Abraham went and “took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of the son” (Gen. 22:13). Jonah, the prophet remained “in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17).

The wretchedness, the ugliness, and the barrenness of Mrs. Rooney find expression in her own words:

Mrs. ROONEY. How can I go on, I cannot. Oh let me just flop down flat on the road like a big fat jelly out of the bowl and never move again! A great big slop thick with grit and dust and flies, they would have to scoop me up with a shovel (Pause). Heavens, there is that up mail again, what will become of me! (The dragging steps resume). Oh I am just a hysterical old hag I know; destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and church-

going and fat and rheumatism and
childlessness. (9)

Mrs. Rooney's life was full of woes but she was more obsessed with the feeling that she was barren or childless. She expresses this feeling to her husband, putting the question whether hinnies are barren or sterile. Her words in this context allude to the scriptures:

Mrs. ROONEY. Hinnies procreate (silence) You know, Hinnies or jinnies, aren't they barren, or sterile or whatever it is? (Pause) It wasn't an ass's colt at all, you know, I asked the Regius professor (Pause).

Mr. ROONEY. He should know.

Mrs. ROONEY. Yes, it was a hinny, he rode into Jerusalem or whatever it was on a hinny (Pause). That must mean something (Pause). It's like the sparrow than many of which we are of more value, they weren't sparrows at all. (38)

The first part of the passage takes its roots from the verse: "And they

brought the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on him and he sat upon him” (Mark 11:7).

Jesus spent his last Sabbath in Bethany with Lazarus and his sisters. News spread that the Lord was coming to Jerusalem. In preparation for the royal entrance to Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples into the village to bring a colt. If we look at the ancient sculptured slabs of the Roman column, we will be struck by the majesty of kings riding in triumph on horses or in chariots. In contrast to this, here is one who comes triumphant upon an ass, the symbol of the outcast – a fitting vehicle for one riding into the jaws of death. Jesus who was rich became poor for the sake of mankind that they might be rich. Another reference is that about Abraham who “rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son” (Gen. 22:3). The sparrows in the quote from Beckett’s text refer to the verse, “fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:31). The meaning of the verse is that even a small sparrow will not fall to the ground without the knowledge of God; and if so, human beings who possess souls are more valuable than the birds.

Even when Mr. Rooney feels that she “was so plunged in sorrow, that she would not have heard a steam roller go over her” (19) or “just wasting slowly” (18) or that she does not exist (16), she exudes her confidence that “there is that lovely laburnum again” (9). When she slips into the mire of despondency and gloom, Mr. Tyler tries to cheer her up with the words: “What Sky! What light! Ah in spite of all it is a blessed thing to be alive in such weather and out of hospital” (11). The dialogue between Mrs. Rooney and Miss Fitt is a lucid description of worship in the Church on Sundays. We have the faithful kneeling side by side at the same altar and drinking from the chalice. The altar and the chalice bring to our mind the sacrament of the holy communion. A beautiful image of Church worship is created through the words of Mrs. Rooney: “Last Sunday we worshiped together. We knelt side by side at the same altar. We drank from the same chalice. Have I so changed since then” (20). Miss Fitt’s words: “Mrs. Rooney! I saw you, but I did not know you” (19) are seen in contrast to the words of Nathaniel that he saw Jesus and knew that Jesus was the son of God (John 1:49). Here the words of Miss Fitt truly reflect attitude of the church goes and the level of human

relationship that exists between them. Miss Fitt is a typical character showing hypocritical virtue and the ironic effect of church worship. She claims that she is alone with her Maker in church. Even the sexton knows that it is useless to pause before her either with the plate or the bag for collection. When everything is over she goes out into the sweet fresh air oblivious to her co-religionists, the majority of which are very kind and understanding. Her own words are relevant in this context: “I suppose the truth is I am not there, Mrs. Rooney, just not really there at all. I see, hear, smell, and so on, I go through the usual motions but my heart is not in it, Mrs. Rooney, but my heart is in none of it” (20). It is, therefore, evident that the play is replete with Biblical allusions and references.

At the very beginning of the play Endgame, we hear Hamm speaking about his miserable conditions: “Can there be misery – (he yawns) – loftier than mine?” (12). This quote can refer to the Biblical verse: “Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed and my calamity laid in the balance together” (Job 6:2). Like Job, Hamm wants to see that his misery comes to an end: “Yes, there it is, it’s time it ended and yet I hesitate to – (he yawns) – to end (Yawns). God, I’m tired,

I'd be better off in bed". (12-13). Hamm's words echo the scripture: "For now, should I have lain still and been quiet I should have slept; then had I been at rest" (Job 3:13).

Nagg lifts the lid of the bin and listens to the conversation between Hamm and Clov. He learns that Clov was moving to kitchen. He seeks for pap. At this juncture Hamm curses his father calling him, "Accursed progenitor" (15). The context is similar to the situation in which Job curses the day on which he was born: "Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said, there is man child conceived" (Job 3:3).

Nagg, during the course of narrating the story of an Englishman needing a pair of striped trousers stitched from a tailor in a hurry and the delay caused from the side of the tailor, refers to the creation of the world in six days by God: "In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes Sir, no less sir, the world! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" (22). This quote recalls to our mind the span of the creation of the world expressed in the Bible: "And God saw everything that he was made, and, behold, it was very good. And the

evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). When Hamm speaks to Clov, “why don’t you kill me?” (15) and “why don’t you finish us?” (29), we know that Hamm has lost his interest in life and he has realised that he has certain flaws in his character.

The following words are relevant in this context:

HAMM. Routine. One never knows (Pause) Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore.

CLOV. Pah! You saw your heart.

HAMM. No, it was living (Pause. Anguished) Clov!

CLOV. Yes.

HAMM. What is happening?

CLOV. Something is taking its course. (26)

Hamm cannot stand. Clov cannot sit. Hamm is of the opinion that every man has his speciality or in other words every man has his characteristic inherent drawback and he acts accordingly. Even when Clov states: “No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we” (16), he is not prepared to act in a crooked way. It is evidenced by his words: “We shouldn’t” (16). The moral sense of Clov comes to the

surface in this context.

Clov takes leave of Hamm and goes to the kitchen. Hamm wants to know what he is doing in the kitchen. To the reply that he looks at the wall. Hamm responds by the following words:

HAMM. The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene, mene? Naked bodies?

CLOV. I see my light dying.

HAMM. Your light dying! Listen to that I well, it can die just as well here, your light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of your light. (Pause)

CLOV. You shouldn't speak to me like that. (17)

This quote relates to the Biblical story of Daniel the prophet interpreting the words written on the wall of the palace of King Belshazzar. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. As they drank the wine, praising the various gods of gold, silver, bronze,

iron, wood and stone, suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall near the lampstand in the royal palace:

And this the writing that was written, ME'NE, ME'NE, TE'KEL, U-PHAR'SIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: ME'NE; god has numbered the kingdom, and finished it. TE'KEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PE'RES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 5:25-28)

The idolatry, arrogance and lechery led to the destruction of the king. Likewise, the flaw in the character of Hamm accounts for the inevitable doom that awaits him. Clov of course is a contrast to him. His words, "I see my light dying" (17) reveal the fact that the efficacy of his inner light or enlightenment is declining. It appears that Clov is a follower of Jesus. This is evident from the answer "If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted. (violently) They'll never sprout" (17) to the question put by Hamm, "Did your seeds come up?" (17). The sowing of the seeds alludes to the parable of the sower in the Gospels. 'Seeds' stand for the words of God (Mark 4:14).

Clov's words are meant to indicate the losing of the hold of the words of Christ on the people.

Towards the middle of the play we are confronted with a world of devastation and destruction. Clov goes towards the ladder with the telescope. First he looks to an auditorium where he sees a multitude in transports of joy. According to him things are livening up: "I see ... a multitude ... in transports ... of joy" (25). This passage has its root in the verse: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9). When Clov looks on the without, he sees the earth, the sea and the ocean where the living creatures are dead. The sun, the moon and the stars were turned dark and the day was dark. A reading of the relevant texts in the play as well as in the Bible will show the striking similarities. The passage in the play is as follows:

CLOV. (after reflection) Nor I (He sets upon ladder, turns the telescope on the without) Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope) Zero

... (he looks) ... zero ... (he looks) ... and
zero.

HAMM. Nothing stirs All is –

CLOV. Zer –

HAMM. (violently) Wait till you're spoken to!
(Normal voice) All is ... all is ... all is what?
(Violently) All is what?

CLOV. What all is? In a word? Is that what you
want to know? Just a moment (He turns the
telescope on the without, looks lowers the
telescope, turns towards Hamm) Corpsed.
(Pause) Well? Content?

HAMM. Look at the sea.

CLOV. It's the same.

HAMM. Look at the ocean!

Clov gets down, takes a few steps towards
window left, goes back for ladder, carried it
over and sets it down under window left,
gets up on it, turns the telescope on the

without, looks at length. He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without.

CLOV. Never seen anything like that!

HAMM. (Anxious) What? A sail? A fin? Smoke?

CLOV. (looking) Light is sunk.

HAMM. (relieved) Pah! We all know that ...

CLOV. (looking) There was a bit left.

HAMM. The base. (25)

The following is the corresponding text from the Bible:

The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up and all green grass was burnt up.

And the second angel sounded and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea and the third part of the sea become blood;

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died and the third part of the ships

were destroyed. And the third angel sounded and there fell a great star from heaven burning as it were a lamp and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became worm wood and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened and the day shone not for a third part of it and the night like wise. (Rev. 8:7-12)

What St. John has been seen in his vision while in the isle of Patmos appears to have been short listed by Beckett in this context. What his character Clov has seen through his telescope creates this imagery.

Through the words of Hamm, the dramatist brings to our mind a picture suggestive of the Flood and Noah's Ark described in the Bible:

HAMM. I once know a madman who thought the end

of the world had come. He was a painter and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take his by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There all the rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All the loveliness! (Pause) He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes (Pause). Forgotten (pause). It appears the case is ...was not so ...so unusual. (32)

'A mad man', 'a painter' and 'engraver' mentioned in the quote refer to Noah. In deference to the command of God, Noah began to build an ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Predicting the doom of the earth with the flood, he built it and it was regarded as an act of madness by the people. Because of the carpentry and painting the ark with pitch, he is called a painter and engraver by the dramatist. It will be appropriate if the relevant verses are quoted in this context: "So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all

people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood, make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out” (Gen. 13:14).

The sound of the trumpet heralding the second coming of the son of man and the resurrection of the dead are expressed through the following words:

CLOV. I'll go and see. (Exist Clov. Brief ring of alarm off. Enter Clov with alarm-clock. He holds it against Hamm's ear and releases alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end. (Pause) Fit to wake the dead! Did you hear it?

HAMM. Vaguely.

CLOV. The end is terrific! (34).

The ringing of the alarm clock refers to the sounding of the trumpet evident from the holy verse: “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cori. 15:52) and the description of the terrific end is seen in the verse: “But the

day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:10).

Hamm is seen narrating stories to Clov. All these stories have their roots in the Bible. One such story relates to a man who came before him begging for grains. Hamm’s words, “I’m a busy man, the final touches before the festivities, you know what it is” (36) recall to our mind the picture of Joseph, who was the governor of the land of Egypt and “come on now, come on, present your petition and let me resume my labours” (36) point to the question that was put before his brother Judah why he appeared before him. Judah’s description about the place where a man and his child alone live allude to his father Jacob and his brother Benjamin. “Corn, Yes, I have corn, It’s true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound , a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him – it he’s still alive – a nice pot of porridge (Nagg reacts) a nice pot and a half of porridge full of nourishment” (36) refer to the verse: “Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every

man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way" (Gen. 42:25). The words of Hamm, "There is English for you, Ah well ... (Narrative tone). It was then he took the plunge. It's my little one, he said, Tsstss, a little one, that is bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered" (36) mirror the idea in the verse: "And Reuben answered them, saying, spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter" (Gen. 42:22-23). They did not realise that Joseph could understand them since he was using an interpreter.

Hamm refers to another man crawling on his belly whining for bread for his brat:

HAMM. Crawling on his belly, whining for bread for
 his brat. He's offered a job as gardener.
 Before – (Clov bursts out laughing) What is
 there so funny about that?

CLOV. A job as gardener! (40)

The quote alludes to the verse in the Bible, "And the Lord God took

the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Adam referred to as gardener listened to his wife and ate the forbidden fruit and God said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3:17). Hamm’s further words gives us the clue to the story of Jonah, the prophet:

HAMM. I don’t know (pause) I feel rather drained.
 (Pause) The prolonged creative effort
 (Pause). If I could drag myself down to the
 sea! I’d make a pillow of sand for my head
 and the tide would come. (41)

Hamm is persuaded by Clov to tell another story. Stating that he is tired and drained because of the prolonged creative effort of telling two previous stories, Hamm ventures to touch upon the story of the hardship that Jonah faced at the bottom of the sea. The above passage alludes to the Biblical verse: “You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me all your waves and breakers swept over me” (Jonah 2:3).

Through the depiction of Hamm, the protagonist in the play,

Beckett creates in our minds the image of the suffering Job, Joseph, Adam, and Jonah, the prophet.

Clov is trying to ascertain the time of the Flood of Hamm who narrates the story of how Noah alone was spared and Hamm's words in this context: "Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living" (32) refer to the verse "Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin. He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent, he will uproot you from the land of the living" (Psalm 52:5). Beckett's intention is to prove that God is one who brings people down to everlasting ruin and responsible for the suffering of human beings but in the back drop of Christian faith, one may assert that the guilty and the sinners can perceive God only as a destroyer who punishes the mighty men who boast all day long, whose tongues plot destruction and who practice deceit, who love evil rather than good, as the reading of Psalm 52 reveals.

Hamm refers to the incurable ills of the earth when he utters "All those I might have helped (Pause) Helped! (Pause) saved (Pause) saved (Pause). The place was crawling with them! (Pause violently). Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth,

there's no cure for that! (Pause). Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbour as yourself!" (44). The last part of the quote is the inverted form of the verse in the Bible, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:19).

Towards the end of the play, the picture of John, the Baptist appears before us when Hamm speaks the words given below:

HAMM. You don't want to abandon him? You want to bloom while you are withering? Be there to solace your last millions last moments? (Pause): He doesn't realise, all he knows is hunger and cold and death to crown it all. (52)

There is close similarity between the quote and the verse in the Bible: "He must increase but I must decrease" (John 3:30). When we read the above from the text, we find oblique references to the sufferings of John the Baptist as well as to the solace which millions of people are likely to get from Christ.

Compassion or pity for the sufferings of others is a dominant Christian virtue. It is the compassion for the suffering sinners that

ultimately led to the crucifixion of Christ. His whole embracing love for the entire human kind was manifested through his sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Therefore, charity is considered to be the greatest of all Christian qualities. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (I Cori. 13:13). It was because of his compassion, Christ healed the sick, the deaf and the dumb. “Jesus wept” (John 11:36) when he saw Mary weeping over the death of her brother Lazarus. The value of this feeling is stressed in various verses in the Bible. “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matt. 12:7). Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy (Matt. 5:7) and “shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had on you”? (Matt. 18:33) and “For great is your love, reaching to the heavens” (Ps. 57:10). It is this compassionate face of Christ that appears before us when we hear Hamm speaking the following to Clov: “No ... perhaps it’s compassion (Pause). A kind of great compassion (Pause) Oh you won’t find it easy, you won’t find it easy” (48).

In Hamm’s room, the objects lie scattered. He ends his revels. He throws his pet toy dog away. Clov tries to pick up the objects and

puts them in order. Clov expresses his desire for order:

HAMM. Order!

CLOV. (Straightening up) I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust. (39)

The quote points to a new order of things or in other words, a new heaven and a new earth from where God shall wipe away all tears from their eye, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4). Thus a careful study of the play reveals a host of oblique and inverted allusions to various events and stories in the Bible.

In Act without Words the protagonist is in the reflective mood and the scene is set in a dessert with dazzling light. "A little tree descends fro flies lands. It has a single bough some three yards from ground and at its summit a merge tuft of palms casting at its foot a circle of shadow" (57). It brings to us a cluster of Biblical images. The image of Jonah the prophet, who became displeased and angry at

the Lord's compassion shown to the people of Nineveh, went out and sat down at a place. Then the Lord provided a vine and made to grow over him to give shade for his head and Jonah was very pleased about it.

Towards the end of the play, we find that "The tree is pulled up and disappears in the flies" (60). Similarly, in the story of Jonah, we find that the vine that had sheltered him withered away the next day and the sun blazed in Jonah's head.

The descent of the cube and its subsequent withdrawal is described in the play: "A big cube descends from flies, lands (59) and "The big cube is pulled up and disappears in flies" (59). The quoted passage unfolds the vision of Peter described in Acts 10:9-16. Peter on his journey became tired and hungry. He fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. This happened three times and finally it has taken back to heaven.

Another picture is that "a tiny carafe to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from flies, comes to rest

some three yards from ground” (57). ‘WATER’ in the Biblical sense is used for baptism or it may connote the words of Christ. The protagonist, in the midst of his adversities and sufferings, may either have to cleanse himself or to obey the words of Christ for the alleviation of his sufferings.

The Beckettian critic Jan Kott maintains that Beckett presents Job through the character of the protagonist (Hayman. 32). Satan is allowed to bring several major tragedies into the life of this good and religious man. There is a discussion between Job and three friends as to why Job has suffered so much trouble. A fourth one makes a brief appearance. The questions raised are not only about human suffering but about God: is he fair? Is he even good? Traditional, trite answers are shown to be inadequate. Beckett’s concerns about his fellow beings also are on the same line.

It will be worthwhile to quote some passages from the text to show that the image of Job overshadows the entire play. At the very outset of the play, we find the protagonist, falling, getting up, dusting himself and reflecting. In the same vein, we find Job in his travails. “Therefore I despise myself and repeat in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

The nameless protagonist is made to suffer. The palm tree that offers him shade closes like a parasol. A bottle of water appears before him only to elude his grasp. He wants to hang himself but the bough of the tree does not oblige him. He tries to cut his throat with a pair of scissors but it is whisked away.

A reading of the Book of Job, shows that God allows Satan to take everything from Job except his life. This is to prove that Job will remain steadfast and upright even in the face of unbearable hardships but in the mime, Beckett brings the belief in a punitive exterior force sadistic and irresponsible into much clearer relief. The striking similarity between the nameless protagonist in the play and Job in the Bible is in their unmerited suffering.

In Krapp's Last Tape the protagonist is presented as a man of 69 sitting "before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from the husks" (12). The quote refers to the idea contained the verse: "His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). Moreover when Krapps says: "The new light above any table is a great improvement with all this

darkness round me I feel less alone” (12) he is inclined to look at the light above that will remove the forces of darkness from his life with reference the verse: “who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (I Pet. 2:9).

Krapp tires to lead a life just as others do, having good relationship. For the purpose he makes efforts at church going but “went to sleep and fell of the pew” (19). Even when Krapp tries to overcome his weaknesses of the flesh, he tends to fail. The dilemma Krapps faces is analogous to the dilemma faced by St.Paul: “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:19). A desire for change in his character is visible when Krapp speaks: “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I look myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that’s all done with any way (pause)” (17).

The instance of David, the king of Israel praying to God for the absolution of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba when the prophet Nathan came to him immediately after his sinful act, is relevant in this context of Krapp’s words:

The dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most – (Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again) – unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and might with the light of the understanding and the fire – (Krapp curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again) – my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved and moved us, gently, up and down and from side to side. (16)

‘The new light’, ‘the vision’, ‘miracle’, ‘the fire’, ‘the pew’, ‘Christian Eve’, ‘Sunday morning’ are some of the words used in the text that contribute to the religious atmosphere in the play.

At the beginning of the second Act in Happy Days we find Winnie embedded up to neck. She can no longer turn or raise her head. She is capable of moving her eyes. She gazes front and sees:

WINNIE. Hail, holy light (Long pause. She closes her eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens eyes at once. Bell stops. She gazes front. Long

smile. Smile off. Long pause) Some one is looking at me still (pause). That is what I find so, wonderful (pause) Eyes on my eyes. (Pause). (37)

The passage gives us the image of a woman who has sunk in the quagmire of sin trying to emerge out of it, thanks to the holy light that radiates from a holy person who is looking at her and caring for her. It alludes to the story of the sinful woman who went to the Pharisee's house where Jesus, the Light of the world, turned towards the woman and said, "your sins are forgiven" and "your faith has saved you, go in peace" (Luke 7:48, 50). Winnie's words, "so that I may say at all times even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard. I am not merely talking to myself that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do" (18) echo the words of John the Baptist, preaching in the Desert of Judea "A voice of one calling in the desert" (Matt. 3:3) that went unheeded.

Winnie is enquiring whether Willie who is hidden by mound can see her from the position where he is even if he raises his eyes in

her direction. Her words: “Lift up your eyes to me, Willie” (23) resemble the Biblical verse: “I lift up my eyes to the hills” (Ps. 121:1). Moreover, the reading of Winnie’s words: “One does not appear to be asking to great deal indeed at times it would seem hardly possible – to ask less – of a fellow creature – to put it mildly – where as actually – when you think about it – look into your heart – see the other – what he needs” (23) lead us to the verse in the Bible, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12).

Winnie is seen giving instructions to Willie with regard to his movement in the mound and the way in which he moves or crawls is not to her liking. In this context Winnie says, “Oh I know it is not easy dear, crawling backwards but it is rewarding in the end” (21). It echoes the words of the Psalmist “and in keeping of them there is great reward” and “who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:11-12). These words highlight the need for introspection. Men who can understand their errors and correct them are capable of reaping reward from their upright life.

Winnie makes an attempt to understand why there are the

poorer ones, who are mere trifles irreverent and she makes the statements with sarcasm! “How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes particularly the poorer ones”? (24). When Beckett makes Winnie speak so, he may have in his mind the instance in which the disciples of Jesus asked him whether a man blind from his birth became blind because of his sins or the sins of his parents, and to which Jesus replied that it was neither of that man nor of his parents: “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:3).

Winnie’s desire to sing a song too soon is considered a mistake but she sees the bag. The bag contains many things. Any way, it is the bag that takes her forward and enables her to cast her mind forward. The bag may refer to her previous life. She supposes that it was a comfort to know that Willie was there in her proximity but she is tired of him:

WINNIE. I will leave you out, that is what I will do,
 (She lays revolver in the ground to her
 right). There, that’s your home from this
 day out. (smile). The old style! (Smile off)

And now? (Long pause) is gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not (pause) Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held – (gesture) – in this way, I would simply float up in to the blue. (Pause).(26)

This quote gives us the image of the soul longing for the liberation from the body as described in the Bible: “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (II Cori. 5:4).

Moreover Winnie’s words: “And that perhaps some day, the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out” (pause) (26) create the semblance of the situation arising out of the death of Christ depicted in the Gospels: “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose”(Matt. 27:51-52).

Winnie's sinking in the mound up to the neck and her immobility represents the wickedness of the world, it has plunged into and the predicament of the humanity to come out of this dilemma. The main protagonist grows into a character that represents the plight of the human kind when she says: "I cannot (Pause) I cannot move (Pause) No, something must happen in the world, take place, some change I cannot if I am to move again" (28).

Towards the end of the play, Willie is seen slithering back to foot of mound and lying with the face to ground. He rises to hands and knees, raises his face towards Winnie. Winnie's words in this context, "you were always in dire need of a hand" (47) point to the need of a person capable of lifting. This situation alludes to the redemptive power of Christ "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In Act II, Winnie makes the mention of "great mercies, great mercies" (42) and the day is well advanced but because of some problem, one cannot sing. At the same time, another one says, "Now is the time, it is now or never and one cannot" (42). The quote resembles the words in the Bible, "behold, now is the accepted time,

now is the days of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

Towards the middle of the first Act, Winnie is visualising how she is going to die. This is evidenced by the following words:

WINNIE. Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end
or burn, Oh I do not mean necessarily burst
into flames, no, just little by little be
charred to a black cinder, all this (ample
gesture of arms) – Visible flesh (pause). (29)

These words mirror the image of hell where the wicked people suffer. Hell is described in the Bible as a place where there are unquenchable fire and undying worms. The above quote reflects the idea in the verses: “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and severe the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:49-50).

Willie is seen reading the pages of a newspaper and he reads out: “His grace and Most Reverend Father in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub” (14). The way in which Willie reads the news brings to

our mind the picture of a priest reading out notices as a part of the service in the church. Willie's words conjure up the atmosphere of the church service before us.

Happy Days, too, deals with a situation arising out the alienation and lack of love. According to the Christian faith love is the most sublime action since "God is love" (I John 4:9). All the ills in the world are ascribed to the dearth of love. St Paul after elaborating the qualities of charity concludes that faith, hope and love are the three things that remain "But the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:13). The predicament of Willie and Winnie, the main protagonists in the play, can be traced to the absence of love between them. This can be evidenced from their words:

WINNIE. I think you would back me up there Willie
 (pause) or were we perhaps diverted by two
 quite different things? (pause) Oh well,
 what does it matter, that is what I always
 say, so long as one ... you know ... what is
 that wonderful line ... laughing world ...
 something something laughing wild amid

severest woe. (Pause) And now? (long pause) Was I ever lovable? (pause) Do not misunderstand my question. I am not asking you if you found me lovable – at one stage (pause) No? (Pause) You can't? (Pause) Well, I admit it is teaser.

WILLIE. Sucked up?

WINNIE. Yes, love up into the blue, like gossamer.
(25-26)

Though this problem of alienation may appear to be the dilemma of these two characters, it is really the problem that besets the entire humanity. It is moving from the specific to the general. The feeling of alienation is the result of lack of faith. The mound or the hill that lies in between Willie and Winnie represents the hill of insurmountable problems and unending woes that stare at human beings. To surmount this heap of hardship, she has recourse to prayer. Just as the Psalmist prays, “Save me Oh God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, Where there is no foot hold” (Ps 69:1-2), Winnie, embedded in the mound up to the waist prays to God for help. Jesus’ words: “For verily I say unto you,

if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain. Remove hence to yonder place and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. How be it this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:20-21) are pertinent to the subject.

The repeated use of the words like ‘Amen’, ‘Good Lord’, ‘Good God’, ‘Holy Light’, ‘Prayer’, ‘Worship’, ‘Graces’, ‘reverend’, ‘love’, ‘happy days’ and ‘hell’ contribute to the religious tone and mood of the play.

In Embers Henry, the protagonist, wants to communicate with his dead father. But his father does not help him by responding:

HENRY. Can he hear me? (Pause) Yes, he must hear me (pause). To answer me? No, he does not answer me (Pause). Just be with me (Pause). That sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand (pause). I mention it because the sound is so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn't see.

What it was you wouldn't know what it was. (Pause) Hooves! (Pause. Louder.) Hooves! (sound of the hooves walking on hard road). They die rapidly away. (pause) Again! (Hooves as before. (Pause) Excitedly). (21-22)

The above quote again alludes to the Biblical verse: "at the sound of the hoofs of galloping steeds at the noise of enemy chariots and the rumble of their wheels. Father will not turn to help their children;" (Jer. 47:3).

Henry is trying to create the presence of certain people so that someone other than himself can reveal something about himself. Since he can not know himself, he needs a perceiver who can help him to see. He finds in Christ a perceiver of this sort and makes appeal:

HENRY. Not Yet! You needn't speak. Just listen. Not even. Be with me (Pause) Ada! (Pause. Louder) Ada! (Pause) Christ! (Pause). (37)

Henry used to walk along with his daughter Addie in the fields and ask her to look at the lambs:

‘Run along now, Addie and look at the lambs’

(imitating Addie’s voice) ‘No papa’. ‘Go on

now, so on’. (Plaintive) ‘No papa’.

(violent) Go on with you when you’re

told and look at the lambs!’ (26)

This passage reminds us of the words of Jesus to his disciple: “Simon son of John do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord”, he said, “You know that I love you?” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs”. (John 21:15).

In the end, to the extent that Henry is mad, fragmented in his personality and is desirous of composing himself with the riddance of guilt by the intercession of an external agency, Legion a lunatic depicted in the Gospel (Mark 5:1-15) can be fitted into the framework of the character of Beckett’s protagonist.

In Words and Music, the textual descriptions of age and sloth also refer to the Biblical verses. For example the passage “Age is ...

age is when ... old age I mean ... if that is what my Lord means ... is when ... if you're a man ... were a man ... huddled ... nodding ... the ... waiting" (129) echoes the idea of transience of human life as expressed in the verse: "The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength, yet their span is but trouble and sorrow for they quickly pass and fly away". (Ps. 90:10). Sloth is considered a vice and it is so expressed in the verses: "Lazy hands make a man poor" (Prov. 10:4) and "the lazy man does not roast his game" (Prov. 12:27) and laziness ends in slave labour (Prov. 12:24).

Eh, Joe presents another typical Beckettian protagonist in whose head the voices of different persons are reproduced. A monologue goes on in his head. The voices of his father, mother and another woman assail him but he has vanquished the voices of his dead father and mother but the voice of the woman persists. It is the voice of the woman he seduced and discarded and who died by the stand, a place for her face scooped out in the stones.

This play is also not free from religious echoes. Among the voices Joe hears, is the voice of God. This voice creates fear in his mind and wants to escape the confrontation between his

consciousness and himself. There are just nine movements for the camera and in the fifth movement, we are taken into the mind of Joe, where his religious and moral scruples assail him:

How's your Lord these days? ... Still worth having? ...
 Still lapping it up? ... the passion of our Joe ... Wait till
 He starts talking to you ... When you're done with
 yourself ... All your dead dead ... sitting there in your
 foul old wrapper ... very fair health for a man of your
 years ... Just that lump in your bubo ... silence of the
 grave without the maggots ... To crown your labours ...
 Till one night ... "Thou fool thy soul" ... Put your things
 on that ... Eh Joe " ... Ever think of that? ... When he
 starts on you ... When you're done with yourself ... If
 you ever are. (204)

The words 'Thou fool, thy soul' in the passage allude to the parable of the Rich Fool in the Bible. The story says that the ground of a rich man produced good crop. Since he had not sufficient place to store the crops, he thought of tearing down his barns and building bigger one. Then he said to himself, "You have plenty of good things

laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry” . But God said to him, ‘You fool’. This very right your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself”? (Luke 12:19-20). Moreover, “Wait till He starts talking to you” in the quote is based on the belief that the spirit of God speaks to the person under temptation, and prevents him from falling into it: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: or if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will sent will unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement:”(John 16:7-8). The play is littered with other Biblical references such as “great love god knows only”, (204) and “on Mary’s beads we plead her needs and in the holy mass” (205).

In Breath, the image that comes to in us is the picture of God creating the first man. According to the story in the Bible “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). The brief cry is symbolic of a transitory life with its attendant misery and torments, ending in death. The transience of

human life is graphically drawn in the verses: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth” (Ps. 103:15); “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity” (Ps. 62:9); “But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” (Job 14:10); “As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath” (Eccles. 3:19).

In Not I there are references to God and sin. The utterances of the woman in the play, “God is love ... she will be purged” (121) and “God is love ... tender mercies” (221) and “answered... prayer unanswered” (223) are pointers in this direction.

Moreover, the parallel story of Mary Magdalene, a sinful woman in the Bible is relevant in this context. The woman who had lived a very sinful life in the town learned that Jesus was at a pharisee’s house. She was a tormented and shattered soul who had lost her peace of mind. She went to the house with an alabaster jar of perfumes. She stood behind him weeping and then poured perfume on his feet and wiped them with her hair. Jesus forgave her sins and asked her to go in peace. The story of the sinful woman narrated in

the Gospels can fit into the framework of the character of the woman represented by Mouth up to the extent of feeling remorse-stricken on account of her sins, though in the play, the prayer of the woman remains unanswered. We can view the narrator and the listener of the story in the light of the Biblical verse: “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). “That time in court” (221) mentioned in the text may allude to the judgement seat of Christ and the listener who is an AUDITOR, may allude to Christ himself or his representative, preparing the accounts of her deeds or misdeeds. Even the title of the play might originate from the verse: “Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it but it is sin living in me that does it” (Rom. 7:20). The quote refers to the words of St Paul spoken at the time when he too was struggling with sin.

In The Catastrophe the protagonist is pictured as one with ash coloured night attire and with lovely head, resemble the mighty angel in Revelation: “Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head”

(Rev. 10:1-2). Director gives instruction to the assistant to take down the words he is going to dictate:

D. Down the head (A at a loss. Irritably), Get going. Down his head. (A puts back pad and pencil, goes to P, bows his head further, steps back.) A shade more. (A advances, bows head further) stop! (A steps back) Fine. It's coming. (Pause) Could do with more nudity.

A. I make a note.

(She takes out pad, makes to take her pencil). (300)

Similarly we find that St John also begins to write when the angel instructs him: "And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write" (Rev. 10:4). Moreover, when the Director speaks: "For God's sake! What next? Raise his head? Where do you think we are? In Patagonic" (300), we think of St. John in ecstasy while in the island of Patmos. According to Michael Guest,

Catastrophe's depiction of the process of theatrical creation serves as a model for divine creation, in a

variation upon the theatre metaphor. Hence, the theatre hierarchy becomes a metaphysical scheme that includes an angelic Assistant and the evangelistic Luke as agents of the creator's will. Human existence is created as an iconic object of art, complementing the arrogant creative will and literally 'For God's sake' (300). Ultimately its purpose is no more than for the trivial amusement of the bogus angelic hosts, applauding from the stalls in a heavenly theatre. (Guest 3)

The atmosphere in the play is sequel to the catastrophe or woe caused by "the heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths" (Rev. 9:17-18). This second catastrophe is the prelude to the last woe as "final touches to the last scene" (297).

It would be appropriate to devote a few pages to prove the point that his poems as well as novels also abounds in Biblical echoes and images.

Beckett wrote “Whoroscope” in 1929. It is a poem on ‘time’. It is concerned with man’s existential anxiety in the midst of the ephemeral agitations that disturb the surface of life. It is replete with Biblical allusions:

So we drink Him and eat Him
 and the watery Beaune and the stale cunes of Hovis
 because He can Jig
 as near or as far from His jiggling Self
 and as sad or lively as the chalice or the
 tray asks (60-65).

We get the picture of the wine mixed with water and the bread during the Holy Mass. The idea of the movement of the bread and wine from one place to another also is indicated in the above stanza.

‘Rahab’ referred to in line 90 of the poem (“Then I will rise and move, moving towards Rahab to the shows”) is a Biblical character (Josh. 2:6) who gave asylum to the Israelite spies in the town of Jericho. Our failure to unravel the mystery of God and the world figures out in the line “starless inscrutable hour” (198). Saint Augustine’s revelation in the shrubbery and his reading Saint Paul

and his subsequent spiritual conversion are evident in the lines:

He tolle'd and legge'd

and be buttoned on his redemptionist waistcoat. (75-76)

Moreover, the closing lines of the poem reveal the cruel fate of man and his revolt as an abortive being in the dark and ignorant egg like universe. Half-egg, not yet a fledgling represents the excrement of creation or the fate of the egg is the fate of man or the relation of the destiny to man:

How rich he smells,

this abortion of fledgling

I will eat it with a fish fork.

White and yolk and feathers. (86-89)

“Dortmunder” is a poem in which the notion of passivity is stressed. The narrator in the poem is a scribe who writes what he sees and hears. He is compared to Habakkuk, one of the Jewish Prophets mentioned in the Old Testament:

Then, as a scroll, folded

and the glory of her dissolution enlarged

in me, Habakkuk, mard of all sinners. (10-12)

The choice of Habakkuk in this context is to raise the question why God contributes to the triumph of the unjust by allowing the barbarian Chaldeans to defeat the sinned Judah.

Moreover, through the lines like “Past the red spire of sanctuary” and “She stands before me in the bright stall”, other religious metaphors are introduced in the poem. “Serena – I”, a poem that envisions the world as a cruel and painful place, has certain lines that describe the destiny of the house fly. The fly in its self-enjoyment dooms itself giving up its servile role as a carrier of disease. It is in a way a service to man though in a negative way. In this context the poet says:

It is autumn of his life

he could not serve typhoid and mammon. (52-53)

The last line in the quote is a parody of the verse: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). The Biblical lines on serving two masters are changed to show that God permits the existence of evil and suffering in the world. In another poem “Serena III”, the poet

describes the poignant evocation of the separation of the lover through the Biblical image of the separation of Mary and Joseph reflected through the line, “something heart of the Mary” (13).

“Sanies II” ends on the note of a supplication:

Lord have mercy upon

Christ have mercy upon us

Lord have mercy upon us. (41-43)

Beckett’s poem “Vulture” presents the picture of the palsy-stricken man obeying the words of Christ “, Arise, take up thy bed and walk” (Mark 2:9). But in the poem, the meaning of the Biblical quote is reversed: “stooping to the prone who must soon take up their life and walk” (3-4). This is expressed in the context of the idea that poetry is a residue of life and the materials of the outer world perish and become an offal before it can serve as material for poetry. In another poem “Enueg I” the line “Above the mansions the algum-trees” (10), refers to algos (pain) represented by algum-trees mentioned in the Old Testament (I Kings 10:11 ; II Chron. 9:10). The poem “Alba” also has religious tones. The second line in the poem “and Dante and

Logos and all strata and mysteries” reads along with the ninth and tenth lines “who though you stoop with fingers of compassion to endorse the dust”, gives us the image of Logos (Christ) coming down to earth to forgive the sinners, as revealed in the first chapter of St John. Moreover, the story of the woman taken in adultery and Jesus stooping down and writing on the ground and finally forgiving her are brought to our minds.

“Enueg II” is a poem based on religious theme of Veronica wiping the face of Christ with a cloth during his journey to Calvary. Jesus Christ has become a universal figure of compassion who takes pity on every man in distress. The dying narrator in the poem has his policeman as Christ has the soldiers to prod him on in his fatigue. There is a reference to Judas. The narrator is compared with him.

The following lines of the poem reveal the religious metaphoric structure:

Veronica mundi

Veronica munda

Give us a wipe for the love of Jesus

Sweating like Judas
 tired of dying
 tired of policemen. (9-13)

At the end of “Sanies I” there is a Biblical allusion to the story of Peter jumping into the water in response to Christ’s summons when he sees Christ walking on the sea (Matt. 14:25-31). This is evidenced from the lines:

her whom alone in the accusative
 I have dismounted to live
 Gliding towards the dauntless hautch-girl on the
 face of the waters. (44-46)

In “Serenea III”, the narrator speaks, “hide yours not in the Rock, keep on the move. Keep on the move”. The quote is an inversion of the well-known Christian hymn: “Rock of ages cleft for me. Let me hide myself in Thee based on verse” (Isa. 26:4). “Ooftish” deals with the theme of suffering from disease. The disapproval of the view that suffering has positive spiritual value is expressed in it. The lines “Golgotha was only the potegg” and “it all

boils down to the blood of the lamb” create religious atmosphere in the poem. The contribution of money to the kitty for the mitigation of pain and suffering advocated by the preacher during his visit to a sick person is viewed with bitter irony and satire. “Calvary by night” as the title indicates, is Biblical in character as it relates various scenes connected with the crucifixion of Christ. It also means everyman’s journey through darkness of life to his destiny as victim and it has a religious tone. The religious imagery suggests a resurrection to come and the lines noted below prove it:

Till the clamour of a blue flower
 beat on the walls of the womb of
 the waste of
 the water. (15-18)

The poem “Casket of Pralimen for a Daughter of a Dissipated Mandarin” indicates concern with a religious dimension and its religious theme provides it a unity though it is loosely constructed. There are many religious images in the lines quoted below:

Radiant lemon – whiskered Christ

and you obliging porte – phallic – portfolio
 and blood – faced Tom
 disbelieving
 in the Closerie cocktail that is my
 and of course John the bright boy of the class
 swallowing an apostolic spit

THE BULLIEST FEED IN 'ISTORY

if the boy scouts hadn't booked a through
 for the eleventh's eleventh eleven years after.(15-24)

The lines under reference give us the picture of Christ. Judas with his scrotum-shaped purse, the doubting Thomas, John the disciple and the Last Supper and moreover, the lines: "Fool! Do you hope to untangle / the knot of God's pain" (41-42) contribute to the religious tenor of the poem, apart from taking us to the crux of the problem raised in the poem. The following lines allude to the story of the devils entering into the herd of swine and the swine possessed with devil running down to the sea and their eventual death (Matt. 9:28-32):

Though the swine were slaughtered
 beneath the waves

not far from the firm sand
 they're gone they're gone. (71-74)

“Text”, one of Beckett’s early poems, also is concerned with the religious problem of suffering. The Bible also contributes to the making of this poem. One of the sections of the poem brings in Job and his unmerited suffering to the reader’s mind:

Open Thou my lips
 And
 (if one dare make a suggestion)
 Thine eye of sky flesh
 Am I token of God craft?
 The masterpiece of a scourged apprentice?
 where is my hippopot’s cedar tail?
 and belly muscles?
 shall I cease to lament
 being not as the flesh sneezing
 non-suppliant airtight alligator. (20-30)

The Biblical Job is different from the Beckettian Job. Job in

the Bible is asked to remember that he has eyes made of flesh and he should see with them. God made his hands and he now wonders why his hands are turned against Him. Because of his unbearable hardships he wishes that he should not have been brought out of the womb and he had died before any eye saw him. Job is reminded of the strength of the creatures like the leviathan and is brought to the knowledge of God's power. When Job is an example of the suffering servant, Beckett's job in the poem remains unreconciled to his sufferings and laments that he cannot suffer the afflictions.

“Hell Crane To Starting” is an indictment against the erotic experience and it abounds in many Biblical references.

Oholiba charm of my eyes
 there is a cave about Tsoar
 and a spanish donkey there. (1-3)

Aholah and Aboliba were the daughters of a woman and they were whores. ‘Oholiba’ in the poem alludes to Aholiba in the Old Testament (Ezek. 23:4). ‘Tsoar’ refers to the city of Zoar where Lot entered. “Then Lot went out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain” (Gen. 19:23-30). ‘Donkey’ in line 3 and ‘ass’ in line 22”, and “But

there is a bloody time ass”, refer to the Biblical verse: “For she doted upon their paramours whose flesh is as the flesh of asses and whose issue is like the issue of horses” (Ezek. 23:20). A reading of lines (5-12) brings in to our mind the story of Jacob, narrated in chapter 32 of Genesis where Jacob comes carrying gifts for his brother Esau. He wrestles with the angel and Jacob’s thigh is put out of joint. There his name is changed to Israel and the place is called Peniel. The lines are as follows:

And he won’t know

Who changed his name

When Jehovah sprained the seam of his haunch

in peniel in peniel

after he’s sent on the thirty Camels

Suckling for dear death

and so many fillies

that I don’t want log tablets. (5-12)

Moreover the line “Bilha always blabs” alludes to Reuben’s illicit relationship with Bilhah who was the concubine of his father (Gen. 22).

The lines “Because Benoni skirted after crop of my aching lions”

refer to Benoni (son of pain), the last child of Jacob (Gen. 35:18). The use of the erotic and the Biblical in the poem reflects the uncertainty of a puritan conscience anxious for amorous experience familiar with religious scruples. In another poem “From the only poet to a shining Whore”, the same conflict finds expression. The first ten lines of the poem, plentiful in Biblical allusions, depict the character of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho in the Bible, who was saved by the power of faith:

Rahab of the holy battlements
 bright dripping shaft
 in the bright bright patient
 pear-brow dawn-dush lover of the sun.
 puttanina mial.
 you hid them happy in the high flax
 pale before the fords
 of Jordan and dry red waters
 and you lowered a pledge
 of scarlet hemp. (1-10)

Rahab was a prostitute who sheltered two Israelites sent by Joshua.

She took them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax. “The dry red waters” alludes to the story of the Lord drying up the waters of Jordan when the Israelites came out of Egypt. ‘Scarlet hemp’ refers to the incident of tying the scarlet cord in the window of Rahab’s house as a proof for keeping the oath between her and the two men.

The title of the entire collection of the short stories is known as More Pricks than Kicks (1934) and the very title is taken from the Bible and is based on the verse spoken by Jesus to Paul on his way to Damascus: “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5 and 26:14). In “Draft”, the last story in this collection, there is statement “O. Anthrax where is thy pustule?” (272) is a changed form of the verse “Where, O death is your victory?” (I Cor. 15:55).

In his novel Watt (1953), Biblical allusions give a Christian tone to the religious atmosphere in it. The word “Witness” occurs many times in the novel. ‘God is my witness’, ‘God is a witness that cannot be sworn’ (6) and “glad he witnesses and is witnessed” (40) are cited here as a few instances. This is a word very profusely used in the scriptures. The following passages,

I blush to say even blasphemous words and expressions, and perhaps also because what we know partakes in no small measure of the nature of what has so happily been called the unutterable or ineffable so that any attempt to utter or elf it is doomed to fail, doomed, doomed to fail.... for the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something, just as the only way one can speak of God is to speak of him as though he were a man. (61-74)

add to the religious echoes in the novel. The reference to the dog as “the one to eat the food left over by Mr. Knott in the manner described until it died” may allude to the verse in the Bible, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table”, (Matt. 5:27). The allusions to the well known prayer strengthens the religious atmosphere. The expression in the Sign of the Cross “as it was the beginning, is now and ever shall be” is adapted as, “as it was now, so it had been in the beginning and so it would remain to the end” (129). The activities of Sam and Watt in the mental institution provide them opportunities to come nearest to God. Their actions are

stoning birds, grinding the eggs of the larks and feeding their favourite friends that are rats. They take a plumb young rat and feed it. “It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God” (153). Close to this passage comes a juxtaposition that associates “knott, Christ, Gomorrah, Cork” (154). Though these passages border on black humour and ironic savagery, they contribute to the religious atmosphere. The description of the asylum as “mansions” (151) alludes to the description of heaven in the Gospel “in my father’s house there are many mansions”, (John 14:2). It appears that Watt has come to Mr. Knott’s house fundamentally for religious purposes. Watt explains his search to Sam later in the following words:

Of nought. To the source. To the temple. To him I
bought. This emptied heart. These emptied hands. This
mind ignoring. This body homeless. To love him my little
reviled. My little rejects to have him. My little to learn
him forgot. Abandoned my little to find him. (164)

Moreover, the following description of Knott resembles the suffering of Jesus: “His face was bloody, his hand also and thorns

were in his scalp” (157). The symbolic structure of Watt is that Watt can identify himself with Knott as well as Christ. The theme of alienation also is very obvious in this novel. Thus various religious metaphors push Beckett’s art towards a starker goal.

Molloy (1955) also depicts an absurd journey. Molloy begins his story by recalling that he once crouched on a hilltop watching two men approach one another on a country road.

They have become A and C, a possible reference to Abel and Cain whose legend (which first got mentioned in “Dante and the Lobster”, 1934) illustrates Beckett’s preoccupation with the unpredictable nature of God’s favours, for Cain was ‘cursed from the earth’, after seeing his brother’s offering preferred to his own for no apparent reason. But A and C also recall Camier and Mercier respectively: they ‘know each other perhaps’, one is short, the other tall, one of them at least look old and A, like Camier at one point in the manuscript walks with his head bowed on his chest. (A and C also suggest, moreover, the two thieves of whom so much is already

said in Godot, for Molloy later on refers to them unambiguously as mes deux larrons)” (Fletcher 121).

Towards the end of the novel, the novelist makes Moran parody certain questions of theological nature. They are transcribed here:

1. What value is to be attached to the theory that Eve sprang not from Adam’s rib but from a tumour in the fat of his leg (arse)?
2. Did the serpent crawl or, as Comestor affirms, walks upright?
3. Did Mary conceive through the ear, as Augustine and Abobard assert?
4. How much longer are we to hang about waiting for the ante Christ?
5. Does it really matter which hand is employed to absterge the podex.

6. What is one to think of the Irish oath sworn by the natives with the right hand on the relics of the saints and the left on the virile member?
7. Does nature observe the Sabbath?
8. Is it true that the devils do not feel the pains of hell.
9. The algebraic theology of Craig. What is one to think of this?
10. Is it true that the infant Saint-Roch refused such on Wednesday and Fridays?
11. What is one to think of the excommunication of Vermin in the sixteenth century?
12. Is one to approve of the Italian cobbler Lovat who, having cut off his testicles crucified himself.
13. What was God doing with himself before the creation?

14. Might not the beatific vision become a source of boredom in the long run?
15. Is it true that Judas' torments are suspended on Saturdays?
16. What is the mass for the dead over the living? And I recited the pretty quietist Peter, Our Father who art no more in heaven than on earth or in hell, I neither want nor desire that thy name be hallowed, thou knowest best what suits thee, etc.. The middle and the end are very pretty. (167-168)

Thus we find that most of Beckett's works are littered with Biblical references and allusions, religious imagery and metaphors. The preceding pages have shown the extent of Christian echoes in the literary art of Beckett. Robert Pinget in his tribute on the mystique of Beckett, creates an image of Jesus transforming an immoral girl into a saint:

'But she did have the good luck to meet Jesus on evening when he was making a point of passing through her infamous district. As it is impossible to resist this

man with his soft eyes, she went up to him and caught his attention. And he, he did not look at her with concupiscence. She suddenly felt embarrassed, something that had never happened to her before. They continued to look at each other. Then, all of a sudden, everything that Mary had lacked with her one-night stands, all her young girl's aspiration, all the goodness, the calm, the joy of loving, started to turn her head and she did not think any longer, but fell on her knees and cried like a mad woman, like the poor little mad girl that she was. One should not think that she was crying from shame, it would be better to think that she was crying from joy. She had found her man. He gives her his heart. It is all she needs. She has no further use for bodies, she has been more than saturated with them. And so she continued to cry from joy for many years, and never stopped pronouncing the name of her lover, and she is dead'. (qtd. in Calder 85)

The entire quote reverberating with Christian echoes is indicative of

Pinget's understanding and appreciation of Beckett's affinity with Christ. Maria Jolas in her reminiscences of Beckett refers to him: "Like Joyce, he is also a Christ haunted man, not yet of the new barbarism" (qtd. in Calder 165).

In short, Beckett's disillusionment with the post war conditions coupled with his own bitter experiences in life made him a tormented soul. His sincere efforts to comprehend the rationale behind the incongruities and the absurdities of the human conditions failed him and that led to his mordant and bleak view of life. In order to affirm the various aspects of Absurdity, he turns to the Bible and makes it his major target of attack. Bitter reflections on God's created world are cast. God and Christ are ironically presented. In most of his plays, Christian echoes are mocking echoes. They are presented to produce cosmic irony and comic despair. Most of the stories, references and allusions from the Bible are meant to show misery and suffering. Thus Beckett uses the Scriptures as an instrument for asserting the different aspects of the human predicament.