

OCR English Literature GCSE

Jekyll and Hyde: Themes *Religion*

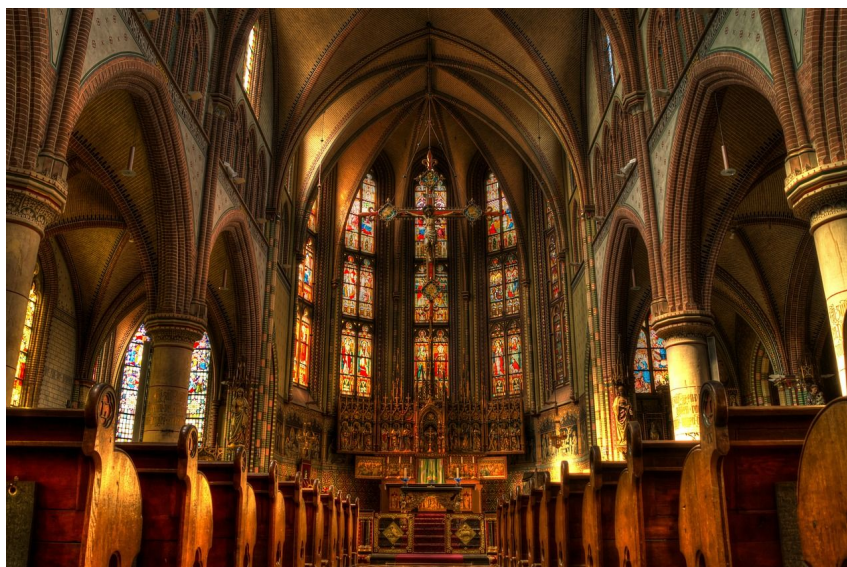
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Religion

As religion was so prevalent in society **religious symbolism** would be universally understood by the readers of Jekyll and Hyde. It is therefore used throughout the text to shape meanings.

As a work of **gothic fiction**, religious references serve to contrast with and highlight the immoral events occurring. Also, as the Bible was, and still is, an immensely powerful text any references to it would have added an element of seriousness to the text which juxtaposed the fantastical concepts explored within it.



Stevenson includes a lot of **biblical allusions**, such as *“really like Satan”*, *“Cain’s heresy”* and *“if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend”*.

Stevenson references the **biblical story of Cain and Abel** in *“I incline to Cain’s heresy”*. Cain and Abel were the first two sons of Adam and Eve. In the story Cain murders his brother Abel as he is jealous that God prefers the sacrifices Abel makes to please God. Some people believe that Cain is therefore the origin of greed and evil. The comparison to the two brothers, one good and one evil, is symbolic of the duality found within Jekyll and Hyde. The story implies that **evil is intrinsic to human nature** - therefore Jekyll cannot truly ever get rid of his evil traits, and does not change as a person himself when he creates Hyde.

In Jekyll’s confession, the reader is shown the way in which he has considered and question the nature of existence. He refers to the *“law of life”*, the phrase is emphasised by Stevenson’s use of **alliteration**. The connotations of human dictated justice in *“law”* are juxtaposed with the natural connotations of *“life”* implying that **he sees society to be at odds with God**. By considering life this deeply, a contemporary reader may argue that Jekyll has earned his punishment by meddling with God’s business.

Overall, religious allusions work to solidify the theme of religion vs science within the text, and ensure that the reader is always aware of this juxtaposition within their own society.

