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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THEOLOGICAL VISION OF REDEMPTION: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE MOVIE "SILENT HILL"

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ABSTRACT

Elements of horror like curses, witchcraft, etc. which are used in literature or a movie are said to be Gothic literature or Gothic movie. The movie "Silent Hill" is directed by Christophe Gans', who is specialized in Gothic movies. His other movies are Crying Freeman and Brotherhood of the Wolf. The film portrays the life of a child named Sharon who walks at night uttering Silent Hill. So, her mother, Rose, the heroin takes her to the town of Silent Hill. When they arrive there, their car encounters an accident knocking out Rose. When Rose awakes, she finds that Sharon is missing. While searching for her daughter, she fights with a local cult and zombies. Then she discovers the past connection of Sharon with the town and finds out that Sharon's soul is only half of a local girl named Alessa, whose other half is hovering in that town for redemption. The movie ends with the redemption of Alessa's soul. Through this article, the researcher uses Biblical themes to bring the redemption of Alessa's soul concerning Christophe Gans' "Silent Hill".

INTRODUCTION

Gothic literature and film often incorporate elements of horror, curses, witchcraft, death, and dark landscapes. They also employ melodramatic narrative methods and create an atmosphere of mystery, dread, and exoticism. Additionally, Gothic works often feature dreadful secrets and threatening individuals. Dark and gorgeous landscapes, surprising and melodramatic narrative methods, and an aura of exoticism, mystery, and dread are all features of Gothic films. The film also makes use of a dreadful secret that acts as a haven, particularly for terrifying and threatening people. "Gothic is fascinated by the supernatural" (Bowen). In order to interest their readers, Gothic writers have also employed supernatural themes, a touch of romance, travel and adventure narratives. The movie "Silent Hill" is a Canadian-French horror film released in 2006. The screenplay was written by Christophe Gans, Roger Avary and Nicolas Boukhrief and directed by Christophe Gans. Christophe Gans is a famous French film director, who is known for his work in Gothic, fantasy, and video game adaptation films. "Silent Hill" is based on a popular video game series of the same name and follows a woman searching for her adopted daughter in a mysterious and terrifying town. The film incorporates many Gothic elements, including eerie settings, supernatural themes, and a sense of dread.

His other movies are "Crying Freeman" and "Brotherhood of the Wolf." "Crying Freeman" is a 1995 action thriller film based on a Japanese manga series. It explores themes of crime, violence, and romance. "Brotherhood of the Wolf" (Le Pacte des Loups) is a 2001 historical horror-action film set in 18th-century France. It combines elements of horror, mystery, and fantasy, featuring a series of brutal killings by a mysterious beast." Redemption means to secure the release or recovery of persons or things by the payment of a price. It is a covenantal legal term closely associated with ransom, atonement, substitution, and deliverance, thus salvation. Theologically, redemption refers ultimately to the saving work of Christ, who came to accomplish our redemption by giving his life in substitution for our own as the ransom price" (Duncan). This article elaborates on the theme of redemption in the movie "Silent Hill" concerning the character Alessa. The movie "Silent Hill" is an adaptation of Konami's survival horror video game series "Silent Hill." The movie was released on April 21, 2006. The film contains horror, emotional and religious concerns. The movie is about a woman who goes in search of her daughter and fights with the local cult and zombies to rescue her daughter. "Silent Hill" follows the story of Rose Da Silva, a mother who takes her adopted daughter, Sharon, to the town of Silent Hill in search of answers about Sharon's past and her recurring nightmares.

As they arrive, Rose and Sharon become separated, and Rose embarks on a journey through the foggy and eerie town to find her daughter. The movie delves into the dark and nightmarish atmosphere of Silent Hill, a place plagued by a mysterious curse. As Rose explores the town, she encounters grotesque creatures and encounters strange and disturbing phenomena. She discovers that Silent Hill is divided between two parallel dimensions: the foggy, desolate "real world" and the dark, nightmarish "Otherworld." The film *Silent Hill* revolves around the story of nine-year-old Sharon and her mother, Rose. Rose and her husband, Christopher, become increasingly concerned about their adopted daughter Sharon, who exhibits strange behaviour, walking in her sleep and uttering the words "Silent Hill." In an attempt to understand and fulfil her daughter's desires, Rose decides to take Sharon to the town of Silent Hill. As Rose and Sharon approach Silent Hill, they stop at Braham's gas station. It is here that Rose notices a disturbing change in Sharon's drawings, depicting people burning in various buildings, including a church and a school. At the gas station, they encounter a police officer named Cybil Bennett, who becomes sceptical of Rose's motives after witnessing Sharon's panicked state. Undeterred by Cybil's doubts, Rose continues the journey to Silent Hill, with the police officer in pursuit. Along the way, a mysterious child appears on the road, causing Rose to lose control of the car and rendering her unconscious. When Rose regains consciousness, she discovers that Sharon is missing. Silent Hill is enveloped in thick fog, and grey ashes fall from the sky, creating an eerie and unsettling atmosphere. As Rose searches for her daughter, she encounters grotesque and menacing creatures. She battles against local cults and fights off hordes of zombies that populate the town. The journey becomes increasingly treacherous as Rose delves deeper into the mysteries of Silent Hill.

During her exploration, Rose encounters Dahlia Gillespie, a woman who speaks about her daughter, Alessa, who suffered abuse at the hands of the townspeople. Mistaking Sharon for Alessa, Dahlia attempts to steal the locket from Rose. Rose manages to escape and returns to her car, where she reunites with Cybil, who had arrested her earlier. Recognizing the gravity of the situation and driven by a shared experience of Silent Hill's surreal and nightmarish side, Rose and Cybil decide to join forces in their search for Sharon. Together, Rose and Cybil meet Anna, a woman who leads them to a local church, offering a temporary refuge. Tragically, Anna is brutally killed by a monstrous figure known as Pyramid Head. Within the church, Rose and Cybil uncover a cult led by a woman named Christabella. Christabella notices the striking resemblance between Sharon and Alessa when she sees the photo in Rose's locket. Blaming them for the town's curses and condemning them as witches, Christabella instigates a confrontation. As chaos erupts, Cybil is captured by the townspeople, leaving Rose to venture alone into the depths of the hospital basement. It is there that she encounters the burned and tormented Alessa lying on a bed, representing the incarnation of her dark side. Rose confronts the demons within herself and the nightmarish manifestations of Silent Hill's cursed history. In this harrowing journey, "Silent Hill" explores themes of motherly love, sacrifice, and the darkness that resides within humanity. It presents a haunting and atmospheric depiction of the town, blurring the lines between reality and nightmare. The film delves into the psychological and supernatural aspects of Silent Hill, unveiling a story filled with mystery, horror, and a battle against malevolent forces.

Through its visually striking imagery, intense sequences, and exploration of emotional and religious themes, *Silent Hill* takes audiences on a chilling and immersive journey into a world where the line between dreams and reality is blurred, and the horrors of the past continue to haunt the present. In a crucial moment of revelation, Rose delves into an analepsis that uncovers the dark history of Silent Hill. She unearths the town's haunting legacy of witch burnings, which cast a chilling shadow over the events that transpire. It becomes evident that thirty years before Rose's arrival, a horrifying incident befell Alessa, the central figure in the unfolding narrative. Alessa, a young girl seeking solace from her classmates, found herself hiding in a bathroom. Tragically, she became the victim of a heinous sexual

assault perpetrated by a janitor. This traumatic violation would mark the beginning of her journey into despair and torment. Alessa's suffering reached its climax when she was subjected to a ritualistic burning. The townspeople sought to snuff out her existence and purity. However, the ritual took an unexpected turn when the fire pit broke, unleashing chaos and destruction upon Silent Hill itself. The town became a testament to the shattered remnants of Alessa's life. When Dahlia, Alessa's mother, returned to the scene with the police, they made a shocking discovery. Alessa, despite enduring third-degree burns, managed to survive the ritual. Her unimaginable pain and seething rage birthed a dark side within her, a duplicate that embodied the depths of her tortured soul—an incarnation of darkness. It becomes clear that Sharon, Rose's daughter, represents the manifestation of Alessa's remaining innocence and goodness. The connection between the two reveals a complex interplay of souls and identities within Silent Hill, ultimately leading Rose to a profound understanding of the tormented existence of Alessa. With this newfound clarity, Rose is determined to guide Alessa's soul toward redemption. She recognizes the imminent threat that Christabella poses to Sharon, knowing that the cult leader will soon discover her and subject her to the same horrifying fate. The stakes are high, as Rose races against time to prevent her daughter from suffering the same tragic destiny that befell Alessa. The story takes a tragic turn as Cybil, Rose's ally, falls victim to the townspeople's cruel rituals, meeting a fiery demise. As Sharon teeters on the precipice of a gruesome fate, Rose resolves to confront Christabella within the hallowed walls of the church, armed with her newfound knowledge.

The climactic confrontation between Rose and Christabella becomes a pivotal moment. In a harrowing act, Christabella stabs Rose with a knife, causing her blood to stain the church floor. This sacrificial act becomes the conduit through which Alessa is granted the strength to cross the threshold of the church. "Silent Hill", a realm of blurred realities and engulfing darkness, reaches its apex as Alessa's struggle for salvation takes centre stage. Through acts of bloodshed and sacrifice, the film explores profound themes of suffering, innocence, and the pursuit of light amidst overwhelming darkness. It delves deep into the recesses of human despair, culminating in a resolute spirit's confrontation with the darkest corners of the soul. In the gripping tale of "Silent Hill", the intertwined destinies of Rose, Sharon, and Alessa unravel, revealing a tapestry of pain, redemption, and the power of sacrifice. Through Rose's unwavering determination, the blood spilt upon the church floor becomes the bridge that allows Alessa to transcend her anguish and find solace in the very heart of the town that was once her crucible. In the Old Testament the redemption of sins is made with the sacrifice of an innocent and pure lamb, with that sacrifice they believe that the sins are purified and that they can enter the church without any shyness. Likewise in the New Testament, we can see that the innocent and sinless Jesus Christ shed his blood for sinners, for the remission of their sins. Here in this movie Rose enters the church and tried to convince the cult, but it was in vain and Christabella stabs Rose with a knife, causing the blood to drip on the floor of the church. This blood made Alessa's soul enter the church "...Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (The New King James Version, Heb. 9. 22). The blood of Rose broke the barrier that denied Alessa from entering the church. After entering the church Alessa is seen to avenge the people who tried to burn her. This is similar to what is told in the Bible that Jesus would come back to judge the Earth and to implement punishment for all sinners. Before the LORD: "For He is coming, for He coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Ps. 96. 13).

The notion of redemption and the peaceful rest of the soul after an act of shedding innocent blood is a concept that resonates with classical beliefs as well as biblical themes. In the case of Alessa in *Silent Hill*, her soul finds redemption through a sacrificial act, drawing parallels to the redemptive power of Jesus's blood in Christian theology. The shedding of innocent blood, as seen in Alessa's story, catalyses her soul's redemption. It is reminiscent of the biblical concept of redemption through the shedding of Jesus' blood. The verse from Colossians 1:14 states, "In whom we have redemption through His

blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Here, the shedding of Jesus’ blood is believed to bring about forgiveness and redemption for all sinners. In a similar vein, Alessa’s story reflects this theme by utilizing the idea of innocent bloodshed as a means of redemption. Through Rose’s sacrifice and the shedding of her blood on the church floor, Alessa’s soul is allowed to find peace and redemption. This connection to the biblical theme highlights the universal human desire for forgiveness, “the cure to all wrongdoings” (Carly); salvation, “for our future” (Carly) and restoration, “the ability to make change” (Carly) of a troubled soul. The film effectively employs the biblical theme to provide a sense of peace and redemption for Alessa. By drawing upon the powerful symbol of innocent bloodshed, the narrative creates a parallel between the redemptive power of Jesus’s blood and the sacrificial act that allows Alessa’s soul to find solace. In this way, “Silent Hill” weaves together classical beliefs and biblical themes to explore the journey of the troubled soul and the possibility of finding peace and redemption. It delves into the human yearning for forgiveness and the ultimate hope for a troubled soul to find tranquillity after a tumultuous existence.

The utilization of the biblical theme within the narrative adds depth and resonance to the story of Alessa, presenting a poignant exploration of redemption, forgiveness, and the longing for a peaceful afterlife.

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