

Faulkner's Ultimate Gospel: A Study of a Christ Figure in William Faulkner's *A Fable**

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One of the major questions in the study of Faulkner is how his theological concept is used as a theme of his works.¹⁾ While the view that humanity has a capacity to choose between good and evil, the problem of free will, has been one of the crucial issues among Christian theologians, one theological concept peculiar to Faulkner's is his belief in man's power of will which culminates in his assertion that "man will prevail" (ARN 119). In my previous paper on *Requiem for a Nun*, I vindicated Faulkner's theology, which was not shown to be Pelagianism, because Faulkner's strong belief in man's efficacy is formed through an influence of Jeremy Taylor's practical piety which considers Christ as Great Exemplar.²⁾ In fact in *Requiem for a Nun* which was published

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- 1) On the whole, there have been two widely different points of view in the discussion over his theological themes. One developed by critics like C. Hugh Holman and Cleanth Brooks who have found Faulkner's spiritual tone in accord with the orthodox Christian values. (C. Hugh Holman, "The Unity of Faulkner's *Light in August*," *PMLA*, LXXIII [March, 1958], 166.) On the other hand Harry M. Campbell and Ruel E. Foster in "The Myth of Cosmic Pessimism," stress the sardonic aspects of Faulkner's religious elements. (Harry M. Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, *William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal* [Norman, Oklahoma, 1951], pp. 114-140.) In between these two polarities are all manners and forms of agreement and disagreement. (Cf. Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County* [New Haven, 1963], p. 15.)

Faulkner himself emphasized his intimate associations with the Christian tradition in his early years; "I grew up with that [Christianity], I assimilated that, took that in without even knowing it. It's just there. It has nothing to do with how much of it I might believe or disbelieve—it's just there" (*FU* 86). He repeatedly clarifies that the Christ story is a material for the construction of his work. In fact when he was asked whether he intended any Christ symbolism in *Joe Christmas*, Faulkner answered that Christianity is a part of his own background:

"No, that's a matter of reaching into the lumber room to get out something which seems to the writer the most effective way to tell what he is trying to tell. And that comes back to the notion that there are so few plots to use that sooner or later any writer is going to use something that has been used. And that Christ story is one of the best stories that man has invented, assuming that he did invent that story, and of course it will recur. Everyone that has had the story of Christ and the Passion as a part of his Christian background will in time draw from that. There was no deliberate intent to repeat it. That the people to me come first. The symbolism second." (*Ibid.*, 117)

- 2) See "Salvation for Temple Drake: A Study of *Requiem for a Nun*," in *Sociology Department Studies* No. 82 (Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku, 1998), pp. 59-71.

Considering that atonement signifies "the condition of being at-one after two parties had been estranged from one another" (*The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983], p. 50), T. S. Eliot's explanation might be acceptable. He writes that free-will of the individual man and supernatural grace are both required in co-operation, for salvation:

It is recognized by theology—and indeed on a lower plane it is recognized by all men in affairs of daily life—that free-will of the natural effort and ability of the individual man and also

in 1951, Faulkner expresses the idea that man can solve his problems through “belief” in Christ. Nevertheless, *Requiem* emphasizes Nancy’s state of belief rather than what she actually believed. Only in *A Fable*, on which Faulkner was spending most of the years between 1944 and 1953, does he dramatize for the first time his religious problem, the problem of man’s free will in terms of the Christ figure. Subsequently the aim of this paper is to pluck out Faulkner’s ultimate gospel, anything that is possible if we can recognize what his Christ symbol indicates in *A Fable*.

We can find two testimonies of Faulkner’s intentions in writing *A Fable*. One of these intentions is, as Malcolm Cowley testifies, to write about Christ as he appears in the French army:

. . . he [Faulkner] told me about his new novel, of which he has written 500 pages. It is about Christ in the French army, a corporal with a squad of 12 men . . .³⁾

As a matter of fact, the novel consists of more than one drama which supposedly took place in the French army during a Passion Week. Particularly there are quite a few obvious parallels which can be seen between the life of the corporal and that of Christ. Like Christ, the corporal is born in a stable in winter. He takes up his mission approximately at the age of thirty-three. He has a squad of twelve men, of whom one, Polchek, betrays him like Judas, while another, Pierre Bouc, denies him like Peter. His message is peace and love in opposition to war and fear. He is betrayed for money. As Christ was tempted by the devil in the wilderness with the offer of worldly power, the corporal is tempted with the offer of secular power by the old general who plays the role of Antichrist. As Christ was crucified between two thieves for plotting a sedition against the state, the corporal is executed between two thieves for traitorous action against the military power. Christ’s crown of thorns is paralleled by a circle of barbed wire which happened to be entangled around the head of the dead corporal. Christ’s resurrection and disappearance from his tomb is paralleled by the disappearance of the corporal’s body from his grave. As Mary Magdalene, who became one of the devoted followers of Jesus, was a former prostitute. The corporal’s fiancée was formerly a whore from Marseilles. Marya and Martha, the corporal’s half-sisters, are equated with Lazarus sisters, Mary and Martha. The Runner, who tries to carry on the corporal’s attempt to make an end of the war, is like Paul to Christ, beginning as his enemy but ending up by devoting himself to the corporal’s cause at the end.

The other testimony we get is that in describing a Christ in *A Fable*, Faulkner claims he is also writing the trilogy of man’s conscience:

. . . What I was writing about was the trilogy of man’s conscience represented by the young British Pilot Officer, the Runner, and the Quartermaster General. The one that said, This is dreadful, terrible, and I won’t face it even at the cost of my life—that was the British aviator. The Old General

supernatural *grace*, a gift accorded we know not quite how, are both required, in co-operation, for salvation. Though numerous theologians have set their wits at the problem, it ends in a mystery which we can perceive but not finally decipher. At least, it is obvious that, like any doctrine a slight excess or deviation to one side or the other will precipitate a heresy. The Pelagians, who were refuted by St. Augustine, emphasizes the efficacy of human effort and belittled the importance of supernatural grace. The Calvinists emphasized the degradation of man through Original Sin, and considered mankind so corrupt that the will was of no avail; and thus fell into the doctrine of predestination. (“The Pensées of Pascal,” *T. S. Eliot: Selected Essays* [London: Faber & Faber, 1986], p. 413.)

As for Pelagianism, according to *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (ed. F. L. Cross [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957], p. 1058) “Theologically, Pelagianism is the heresy which holds that man can take the initial and fundamental steps towards salvation by his own efforts, apart from Divine Grace.”

3) Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories 1944-1962* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), p. 105.

who said, This is terrible but we can bear it. The third one, the battalion Runner who said, This is dreadful, I won't stand it, I'll do something about it. (FU 62)

As his speech delivered in Stockholm in December, 1950 shows, what matters to Faulkner is "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat" (ARN 119).

Faulkner explains that even a story of 300 pages about a three-legged racehorse in *A Fable* is another example of such struggle between man and his conscience and his environment, where love contributes crucially to conquer the struggle:

That was simply another struggle between man and his conscience and his environment. The horse was simply a tool—that is, that foul and filthy Cockney hostler was still capable of love for something. That may be if he'd had a better childhood, a better background, he might have been capable of better love, of something more worthy than a horse. But he was capable of love for one thing, that he could sacrifice to and could defend, even though it was only a horse. (FU 63)

It is true that Faulkner sees that love is a crucial element to understand the human situation since he says to have an object of love is man's instinctive nature:

So many people are seeking something and quite often it is love—it don't [sic] have to be love between man and woman, it's to be one with some universal force, power that goes through life, through the world. It could take the form of—the object of it could be a man or woman, because that is a part of man's or woman's instinctive nature to have an object, an immediate object to project that seeking for love on. (FU 95)

In order to make Faulkner's view clearer, I have to refer to Jeremy Taylor. As I have mentioned in my previous paper, though no one has ever mentioned this, we can say that Faulkner has been greatly influenced by Jeremy Taylor, a seventeenth-century Anglican bishop and writer, whose *Holy Living and Dying* is one of Faulkner's favorite books. As Blotner in *The Incarnate Imagination* witnesses, Faulkner kept it at his bedside when he was hospitalized in 1961.⁴⁾

According to Taylor, the reason why every man seeks love is that "every man is wholly God's own portion by the title of creation" (HL 1) and though we are not conscious of it, we are all enclosed in God's circle bound

4) When he knew he was going to enter a hospital, William Faulkner would take with him his standard hospital reading. It consisted of four books. One was The Bible. Two others, Estelle Faulkner said, were *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* and *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying*, by Anglican Bishop Jeremy Taylor. Chaplain to Charles I, apostle of toleration and opponent of Presbyterians, he was called "the Shakespeare and the Spencer of the pulpit, the English Chrysostom and the most eloquent of theologians." A close observer both of man and nature, he has also been praised as "as a prose poet, and as a poet . . . closely a kin to the greatest Elizabethans." (Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* [New York: The Macmillan Company 1935], pp. 545-546.) (Once when I [Blotner] went with Estelle Faulkner to help in the process of Faulkner's being discharged from the hospital, sure enough, there they were on his night table. He had once asked me to see if I could get him seventeenth century editions of the two books and I had ordered them from London.) I do not know what parts of Bishop Taylor's books he read. If not the chapter entitled "Christian Sobriety," perhaps the one entitled "Of Christian Justice." If not the chapter entitled "The Practice of Preparation for a Holy and Blessed Death," perhaps the one entitled "The Practice of Those Graces Belonging to the State of Sickness Which a Sick Man May Practice Alone." Actually, I suspect he read these books as he did the other old favorites to which he returned, skipping about and reading in them, rather than systematically reading through them in a devotional exercise. And I suspect that he liked these books for some of the same reasons that he said he liked the Bible. Lest the readers think that this small library excessively pious, the fourth book was Boccaccio's *Decameron*. (*The Incarnate Imagination*, ed. Ingrid H. Shafer [Bowling Green, Oh.: Bowling University, 1988], pp. 185-96, "Faulkner's Religious Sensibility," p. 194.)

by love:

God is wholly in every place; included in no place; *not bound with cords except those of love*; not divided into parts, not changeable into several shapes; filling heaven and earth with his present power and with his never absent nature. So St. Augustine expresses this article [*De Civitate Dei* c. xxx.] So that we may imagine God to be as the air and the sea; and *we all enclosed in his circle*, wrapped up in the lap of his infinite nature; or as infants in the wombs of their pregnant mothers: and we can no more be removed from the presence of God than from our own being. [emphases added] (*HL* 19-20)

Consequently Taylor reminds us that it is natural that God deserves our love:

For, as God is every where present by his power, he calls for reverence and godly fear: as he is present to thee in all thy needs, and relieves them, he deserves thy love: and since, in every accident of our lives, we find one or other of these apparent, and in most things we see both, it is a proper and proportionate return, that, to every such demonstration of God, we express ourselves sensible of sense; ever obeying him because we love him, and ever obeying him because we fear to offend him. This is that which Enoch did, who thus “walked with God.” (*HL* 24)

Thus according to Taylor to answer Faulkner’s problem of man’s conflict between his conscience and his environment, man’s love for God is the crucial element so as to live in accord with this world.

Returning to the novel, the basic reality from which human experience can be examined is war. War is, as the old general says, man’s sin against order. Such reckless devotion to man’s basic urge towards destination itself characterizes his utmost egoism and his complete disregard for others’ welfare:

. . . war is its hermaphroditism: the principles of victory and of defeat inhabit the same body and the necessary opponent, enemy, is merely the bed they self-exhaust each other on: a vice only the more terrible and fatal because there is no intervening breast or division between to frustrate them into health by simple normal distance and lack of opportunity for the copulation from which even orgasm cannot free them; the most expensive and fatal vice which man has invented yet . . .
(*F* 291)

Hence in addition to the two major motives, Christ in the French army and man’s conscience in conflict, the reader finds that Faulkner sets up one more conflict of human conscience to fight against war. He depicts a Christ figure in order to study how man’s free will, more specifically love for Christ, functions against the background of such an extremely inhuman situation as a war. We will see the trilogy of man’s conscience in the young British Pilot Officer, Levine, the Quartermaster General, and the Runner as well as what makes ultimate differences between them. And then by referring to Jeremy Taylor, we will consider Faulkner’s view of man’s will in relation to Christ in order to know what the Christ figure symbolizes.

The young British Pilot Officer, Gerald Levine, is the first of those who suffer bitter disillusionment when confronted with the reality of war. Levine has involved himself in order to become a hero, to be the flying ace. It is the word “glory” that dominates his world. However, it is spiritual immaturity that characterizes him. On joining the air corps the boy ignores the wishes of his widowed mother. He has dedicated himself to “the old commission in the old glorious corps, the brotherhood of heroes,” “even at the cost of that wrench to his mother’s heart” (*F* 73). He has abandoned mother for unreal abstractions. Thus when he learns of the temporary truce, his reaction is a deep disappointment which culminates in his personal grief:

A door had closed on glory; immortality itself had died in unprimed anti-climax . . .

It was too late; those who had invented for him the lingerie pins and the official slacks in place

of pink Bedfords and long boots and ordnance belt and closed the door even to the anteroom of heroes. In Valhalla's un-national halls the un-national shades, Frenchman and German and Briton, conqueror and conquered alike—Immelman and Guynemer, Boelcke and Ball identical not in the vast freemasonry of death but in the closed select one of flying, would clash their bottomless mugs, but not for him. Their inheritors—Bishop and Mannock and Voss and McCudden and Fonck and Barker and Richthofen and Nungesser—would still cleave the earth-founded air, pacing their fleeing shadows on the scudding canyon-walls of cumulae, furloughed and immune, secure in immortality even while they still breathed, but it would not be his. Glory and valor would still exist of course as long as men lived to reap them. It would even be the same valor in fact, but the glory would be another glory. And that would be his: some second form of Elysium, a cut above dead infantry perhaps, but little more: who was not the first to think *What had I done for motherland's glory had motherland but matched me with her need.* (F 73-4)

Levine is made, on the other hand, an embodiment of Faulkner's persistent theme that what distinguishes man is his concern for fellow men, his humble dedication to the realities of a domestic existence. He is ready to die for people at home:

Because it [sacrifice] begins at home. . . . Home means not just today, but tomorrow and tomorrow, and then again tomorrow and tomorrow. It means someone to offer the love and fidelity and respect to who is worthy of it, someone to be compatible with, whose dreams and hopes are your dreams and hopes . . . (AGP 140)

Nevertheless, Levine is unable to face reality as Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* can not. His intolerance with facing silence proves his lack of solid foundation within himself:

[He was] . . . thinking how his trouble was probably very simple, really: he had never heard silence before; he had been thirteen, almost fourteen, when the guns began, but perhaps even at fourteen you still could not bear silence: you denied it at once and immediately began to try to do something about it as children of six or ten do: as a last resort, when even noise failed, fleeing into closets, cupboards, corners under beds or pianos, lacking any other closeness and darkness in which to escape it . . . (F 80)

However, even Levine cannot keep refusing to face reality. In time he comes to know that all his illusions are false and baseless. In order to nullify the mutiny brought by the corporal, the authorities provide a display of dummy gunfire against the approach of the aeroplane of the German general to the allied lines, when Levine is sent out on a patrol over the lines and shot at with blank German artillery, and without knowing his tracer is also blank, he himself shoots at a German plane. Returning to the airfield, to his desperate attempt to erase his doubt on the strange act of the tracer and to keep his illusion intact, Levine insists that his flight commander fire at him the substituted ammunition, only to find his garment, Sidcott, begins to smoulder while his body remains unharmed. Truly this garment is the symbol of his ruined illusion.

We might say Levine's nationalism is essentially religious in nature. It seems that he looks to the war as an opportunity for salvation. He knew "he even had a future, it would last forever now; all he needed was to find something to do with it, now that the only trade he had been taught—flying armed aircraft in order to shoot down other armed aircraft—was now obsolete" (F 84). However, when he learns the vanity of war, his world falls apart for the lack of solid foundations and he has to "remind himself that he was not waiting for anything" (F 85) and he commits suicide in the latrine. He is so preoccupied with his own pursuit of glory that he is not able to find any other value. Thus the mutiny of the corporal means to him only deprivation of his opportunity for glory and never leaves him any value that sustains his being. He loves the glory of the war, but love for God is totally excluded from his world.

The second man in conflict is the Quartermaster General, described as a weak and sick man. He has spent his life in a false believing that the old general is the son of God. In an incredible speech, he insists furiously that he has been a witness to his hero's promise:

... I knew that first moment eleven years ago when I looked and saw you [the old general] standing there in that gate. I knew. I won't be here to see it of course . . . and at first I grieved a little because once I thought that you might need me. I mean, need me other than for my simple seniority of hope in the condition of man.—That's right,' he said, though the other had made no sound: 'Laugh, at that dream, that vain hope too. Because you will not need anybody wherever it is you are going now in order to return from it. Mind you, I don't ask where. I was about to say "to find whom or what you will need to be your instrument" but I refrained from that in time too. So at least you don't need to laugh at that, since I know that you are going wherever it is you are going, in order to return from it when the time, the moment comes, in the shape of man's living hope. May I embrace you?'

'Must you?' the other said. Then: 'Should you?' Then quickly: 'Of course.' But before he moved the taller one had stooped, loomed downward from his vast and depthless height and took the smaller man's hand and kissed it and released it and, erect again, took the other's face between his two hands almost like a parent, a mother, and held it for a moment, then released it.

'With Christ in God,' he said. 'Go now.'

'So I'm to save France,' the other said.

'France,' he said, not even brusquely, not even contemptuously. 'You will save man. Farewell.' (F 222-223)

We can see from the quotation above the Quartermaster General's extreme faith in his hero, the old general. The error of the Quartermaster General is increased by the error of the crowds that gather about the old general wherever he goes. While as Faulkner comments, "The old general was Satan, who had been cast out of heaven" (FU 62), who tries to deflect the corporal's martyrdom cunningly, the Quartermaster General is a false prophet. The Quartermaster General insists that his Messiah "will not need anybody." This is the core of his error. Faulkner is suggesting that men are depending upon themselves since he believes that we are "on the same loom."⁵⁾ Unlike Levine the Quartermaster General wants no glory for himself, for he merely wants to be a witness to another's glory.

Faulkner seems to suggest that this concern with heroes is nothing but a denial of self, an evasion of responsibility. As we have seen, the Quartermaster General has placed all his faith and hope in the ability of the old general. Consequently the Quartermaster General has to suffer bitter disillusionments when he learns of the incident at the desert outpost over which the general had commanded. The general permits one of his men, who is a murderer, to be sent on a mission which directly leads to the man's death. The Quartermaster General's disappointment in the old general is culminated when he learns the German general's presence at the meeting where strategy against the corporal has been discussed. Thus to his disappointments' end, the Quartermaster General confronts the old general in grief, and offers his resignation. However, the Quartermaster General is incapable even of resigning his commission once the old general points out to him that his attempt to resign is anything but a gesture, "by your own bitter self-flagellation, you were incapable of risking death and honor for" (F 280).

Thus despite his passionate argument, the Quartermaster General remains a defeated man. Recognizing evil, he continues to bear it. He himself explains that it is "defensive horror" (F 276) that paralyzes his conscience:

You [the old general] didn't even do what you would but only what you could, since you were inca-

5) William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 127.

pable of else, born and doomed incapable of else. While I did have a choice between could and would, between shall and must and cannot, between must and dare not, between *will do* and *I am afraid to do*: had that choice, and found myself afraid. (F 278)

Like Levine, the Quartermaster General suffers from the breakdown of the simple world that he has created for himself. He has confessed, "I'm an old man, finished; I had my chance and failed; who—what—wants or needs me further now?" (F 278). Thus because of his defensive fear, he has put all his faith in his false god and ignored the responsibility of man. In other words he is so obsessed with his own god that he never faces Christ, the real savior to whom his love should have been attended to.

It is the Runner that represents the third kind of reaction to evil or reality. He does not compromise. His is the ultimate perfection of conscience. The label, the Runner by which he is identified in the novel, symbolizes his ready participation. Furthermore, we should not overlook the very fact that the Runner is a growing character; that is, he changes.

At the beginning of the war after having demonstrated his bravery on the battlefield as an enlisted man, the Runner was commissioned as an officer. However after only five months, he asks for a resignation of his commission as an officer to return to the ranks. Here he exposes his initial contempt of man:

'You want to go back to ranks,' the company commander said. 'You love man so well you must sleep in the same mud he sleeps in.'

'That's it,' the other said. 'It's just backward. I hate man so. Hear him? . . . 'Smell him, too.' . . . 'When I, knowing what I have been, and am now, and will continue to be—assuming of course that I shall continue among the chosen beneath the boon of breathing, which I probably shall, some of us apparently will have to, dont ask me why of that either—can, by the simple coincidence of wearing this little badge on my coat, have not only the power, with a whole militarized government to back me up, to tell vast herds of man what to do, but the impunitive right to shoot him with my own hand when he doesn't do it, then I realise how worthy of any fear and abhorrence and hatred he is.' (F 51)

The single reason that the Runner gives for resigning his commission is that he cannot bear participating in a hierarchy. Thus we can say what he hates is not man, but man's muted will against freedom. He resents man for accepting his bondage.

It is notable that what changes his relation to life is the existence of the corporal in the French division. We can trace his change as his process to be a devoted follower of the corporal. At first he heard the essence of the corporal's message from an old porter, that all they needed to do was just say enough of the war:

'Wasn't it just before?' the old porter said. 'Wasn't one enough then to tell us the same thing all them two thousand years ago: that all we ever needed to do was just to say, Enough of this—us, not even the sergeants and corporals, but just us, all of us, Germans and Colonials and Frenchmen and all the other foreigners in the mud here, saying together: Enough. Let them that's already dead and maimed and missing be enough of this—a thing so easy and simple that even human man, as full of evil and sin and folly as he is, can understand and believe it this time. Go and look at him.' (F 56)

However, the Runner, "didn't even try yet. He didn't dare . . . it seemed to him that he durst not be present even on the fringe of whatever surrounding crown, even to walk, pass through, let alone stop, within the same air of that small blue clump of hope; this, even while telling himself that he did not believe it, that it couldn't be true, possible . . ." (F 57).

Then the mutiny occurred and the Runner at last meets the corporal directly and his will becomes mobilized to support the mutiny:

'Nah,' the corporal said. 'It was just one regiment. Fact is, they're putting one of the biggest shoots yet in Jerry's support and communications along the whole front right this minute. Been at it ever since dawn—'

'But one regiment quit,' the runner said. 'One did.' Now the corporal was not looking at him at all.

'Have a wet,' the corporal said.

'Besides,' the runner said gently, 'you're wrong. The whole French front quit at noon.'

'But not ours,' the corporal said.

'Not yet,' the runner said. 'That may take a little time.' (F 60)

Here the Runner is not an intellectual observer any more. It is remarkable that the Runner repeats the corporal's message and he tries every effort to incite the British sentry to lead a revolt among the British troops:

'One regiment,' the runner said. 'One French regiment. Only a fool would look on war as a condition; it's too expensive. War is an episode, a crisis, a fever the purpose of which is to rid the body of fever. So the purpose of a war is to end the war. We've known that for six thousand years. The trouble was, it took us six thousand years to learn how to do it. For six thousand years we labored under the delusion that the only way to stop a war was to get together more regiments and battalions than the enemy could, or vice versa, and hurl them upon each other until one lot was destroyed and, the one having nothing left to fight with, the other could stop fighting. We were wrong, because yesterday morning, by simply declining to make an attack, one single French regiment stopped us all.' (F 62)

Truly it is the Runner that carries the corporal's message of stopping the war. Two of the most notable speeches that the Runner makes in order to instruct the corporal's message to the people are as follows:

. . . We dont even need to start it; the French, that one French regiment, has already taken up the load. All we need is not to let it drop, falter, pause for even a second. We must do it now, tomorrow—tomorrow? it's already tomorrow; it's already today now—do as that French regiment did, the whole battalion of us: climb over this parapet tomorrow morning and get through the wire, with no rifles, nothing, and walk toward Jerry's wire until he can sees us, enough of him can see us—a regiment of him or a battalion or maybe just a company or maybe even just one because even just one will be enough. (F 70)

'Don't you see?' the runner said. 'If all of us, the whole battalion, at least one battalion, one unit out of the whole line to start it, to lead the say—leave the rifles and grenades and all behind us in the trench: simply climb barehanded out over the parapet and through the wire and then just walk on barehanded, not with our hands up for surrender but just open to show that we had nothing to hurt, harm anyone; not running, stumbling: just walking forward like free men—just one of us, one man; suppose just one man, then multiply him by a battalion; suppose a whole battalion of us, who want nothing except just to go home and get themselves into clean clothes and work and drink a little beer in the evening and talk and then lie down and sleep and not be afraid. And maybe, just maybe that many Germans who dont want anything more too, or maybe just one German who doesn't want more than that, to put his or their rifles and grenades down and climb out too with their hands empty too not for surrender but just so every man could see there is nothing in them to hurt or harm either—. (F 263-4)

At last the Runner succeeds in getting the men to leave the trenches, and even under the barrage which destroys the British and German battalions we can hear "the runner's voice crying out of the soundless rush of flame which enveloped half his body neatly from heel through navel and chin: 'They cant kill us! They cant!

Not dare not: they cant!’ ” (F 272). And at the end though the crowd has beaten him, he looks up from the ground where he lies wounded and bleeding, but warning, “That’s right . . . Tremble. I’m not going to die, Never” (F 370). Thus of the three who face the struggle caused by the mutiny which the corporal brought, he alone fights against evil with “that peaceful and terrible patience” (F 263) for he joins actively on the side of good. He is the one who said, “This is dreadful, I won’t stand it, I’ll do something about it” (FU 62).

Whereas both Levine and the Quartermaster General move from illusion to disillusion, the Runner starts first in disillusion, but moves towards the recovery of faith at last. Ever since he heard the mutiny, he comes back from his retirement and begins struggling desperately for his belief to carry out the corporal’s intention of peace without being preoccupied with any of own selfish intentions. Thus as the corporal epitomizes Christ, the Runner epitomizes the corporal, the Christ figure. Of all the three characters in *A Fable* it is only the Runner to whom the love for the corporal, a Christ figure makes any difference at all. The other two have been too busy preserving their own world.

We can say that these three are good examples of Jesus’s teaching, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (RSV Mt 16:24-25). As the Runner, when a man sacrifices himself for the sake of others, he is able to find life.

Truly sacrifice is the value that Faulkner connotes in his remarks that he intends the novel to show the value higher than pacifism:

This [*A Fable*] is not a pacifist book. On the contrary, this writer holds almost as short a brief for pacifism as for war itself, for the reason that pacifism does not work, cannot cope with the forces which produce the wars. In fact, if this book had any aim or moral . . . it was to show by poetic analogy, allegory, that pacifism does not work; that to put an end to war, man must either find or invent something more powerful than war and man’s aptitude for belligerence and his thirst for power at any cost, or use the fire itself to fight and destroy the fire with; that man may finally have to mobilize himself and arm himself with the implements of war to put an end to war; that the mistake we have consistently made is setting nation against nation or political ideology against political ideology to stop war.⁶⁾

We might say so often that his Christ figure plays a sacrificial role of atonement for sin. The most morally complete example of a sacrificial character Faulkner depicts is the corporal in *A Fable*. He perfectly prevails

6) “A Note on *A Fable*,” *Mississippi Quarterly*, 26 (Summer 1973), p. 416.

According to Faulkner from the very beginning crucifixion is an important concept in *A Fable*:

That was *tour de force*. The notion occurred to me one day in 1947 shortly after Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the last great war, Suppose—who might that unknown soldier be? Suppose that had been Christ again, under that fine big cenotaph with the eternal flame burning in it? That He would naturally have got crucified again, and I had to—then it became *tour de force*, because I had to invent enough stuff to carry this notion. . . . That’s right, that was an idea, a hope, an expressed thought that Christ had appeared twice, and had been crucified twice, and maybe we’d have only one more chance. (FU 27)

In fact Colwey witnessed on October 25, 1948, when Faulkner was 51 that the original title Faulkner thought was *The Cross: A Fable*:

He had an idea for the jacket of the novel. Instead of carrying the usual title, illustration, and descriptive text, it would show nothing but a cross—with perhaps below it in the right-hand corner, and not in large type, the two words “A Fable.” [Apparently, if Faulkner’s idea had been carried out, the novel would not have been *A Fable*. Its real title, shown as in a rebus, would have been *The Cross: A Fable*. (Malcolm Cowley, ed., *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962* [New York: The Viking press, 1967], p. 105.)

over his “glands” (ARN 120) though he is tempted several times to give in. He never deserts his followers. He never loses his concern for his followers even when he is under a crucial temptation by the old general immediately after his trial and condemnation. The general speaks at length, offering variations on the temptations which Satan presented to Christ. “Give me Polchek, and take freedom” says the old general, and the corporal responds “There are still ten.” Then the old general offers, “Take the earth.” Again the corporal responds. “There are still ten” (F 293). The final temptation is the most difficult to resist. It is the opportunity to live. But the corporal’s final answer is still the same: “There are still ten” (F 297). He is aware that to fulfill his destiny he must sacrifice his life, so that he might live up to his message. He asserts that man will endure and he maintains his belief in man’s goodness to the last. It is marvellous that the corporal keeps with himself, “the high calm composed, not worry but merely watchful, mountain face looking, courteous and merely watchful” (F 275-6).

While the corporal believes in man’s goodness and spiritual possibilities of salvation, the old general sees the evil in man and his limitations. The old general claims that the difference between the corporal and himself is only in their standpoints:

We are two articulations, self elected possibly, anyway elected, anyway postulated, not so much defend as to test two inimical conditions which, through no fault of ours but through the simple paucity and restrictions of the arena where they meet, must contend and—one of them—perish: I champion of this mundane earth which, whether I like it or not, is, and to which I did not ask to come, yet since I am here, not only must stop but intend to stop during my allotted while; you champion of an esoteric realm of man’s baseless hopes and his infinite capacity—no: passion—for unfact. (F 294)

The struggle between the two is reduced here to one between the self preserving general who is possessed by self-interest, and the self sacrificing corporal who is oriented by love. Throughout the novel the old general has been shown as a figure of infinite power. However, he never takes responsibility while he always gives man the choice. Like Pontius Pilate, who also washed his hands of responsibility, the old general merely acceded to the will of the corporal to die, and to the cry of the people who had “a protagonist for anguishment, and object for execration” (F 108). We can say that the corporal’s successful defiance against the old general represents the victory of good over evil, the triumph of self-denial and sacrifice over self preservation.

Truly sacrifice which is defined by Taylor, Faulkner’s religious mentor, as “the greatest love that God requires of man” (HL 181) is the very quality that the Runner sees in the corporal which changed his way of life. In fact Faulkner sees that Christ is the highest criterion of a moral code of “matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope,” as Faulkner once made clear as the proof of Christianity:

No one is without Christianity, if we agree on what we mean by the word. It is every individual’s individual code of behavior by means of which he makes himself a better human being than his nature wants to be, if he followed his nature only. Whatever its symbol—cross or crescent or whatever—that symbol is man’s reminder of his duty inside the human race. Its various allegories are the charts against which he measures himself and learns to know what he is. It cannot teach man to be good as the textbook teaches him mathematics. It shows him how to discover himself, evolve for himself a moral code and standard within his capacities and aspirations, by giving him a matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope.⁷⁾

Learning from the quotation that “a matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope,” we can say that in Faulkner’s view of things, what ultimately distinguishes man as divine is his ability to make commitments on his faith at the cost of his own life. People courageously go out of themselves to make

7) *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1958), p. 132.

small personal sacrifices. It is the personal response which is the most important of all for Faulkner. Truly the crucifixion of the corporal is the symbol of man courageously sacrificing himself by making a deliberate choice on faith against evil at the cost of himself. As Christ's story is repeated in one's mind as "a matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope," man is continuously challenged with the responsibility to take his cross on faith; to choose between good and evil and to accept the consequences of his choice.

Here the further crucial problem of Faulkner's theology appears: the problem of man's free will which reveals itself in relation to the figure of Christ. In other words, we must look into what makes the ultimate difference between the Runner and the other two, Levine and the Quartermaster General. And in order to consider this problem, it is necessary to repeat the argument of Faulkner's concept of free will by referring to Jeremy Taylor, by whom I believe Faulkner was definitely influenced.

Taylor stresses the importance of reason and believes that men have enough knowledge within them to know the will of God, saying, "[Reason is] not guided only by natural arguments but by divine revelation and all other good means,"⁸⁾ and "Every man hath enough of knowledge to make him good if he please."⁹⁾ Thus Taylor concludes, "Therefore no man can in the universal lines and measures of salvation pretend ignorance: I am sure we cannot, and that is all that concerns us."¹⁰⁾

Furthermore, Taylor takes up the importance of will more seriously since it is the will that decides whether to follow one's reason or not. Taylor asserts, "To will and to choose is so necessary, and if we can, to do it is so required of us, that the very avoiding evil is exacted in that manner."¹¹⁾ Consequently Taylor's theology might be called practical piety as he stressed the importance of man's will to be perfected in holiness.¹²⁾ In the beginning of *Holy Living and Dying* Taylor says, "that we have to consider the general instruments and means to serve to a holy life:"

It is necessary that every man should consider, that, since God hath given him an excellent nature, wisdom and choice, an understanding soul, and an immortal spirit; having made him lord over the beasts, and but a little lower than the angels; he hath also appointed for him a work and a service great enough to employ those abilities, and hath also designed him to a state of life after this, to which he can only arrive by that service and obedience. And therefore as every man is wholly God's own portion by the title of creation, so all our labours and care, all our powers and faculties, must be wholly employed in the service of God, and even all the days of our life; that this

8) *Works* V 495.

9) *Works* X 617.

10) *Works* X 617.

11) *Works* X 556.

12) According to John Booty who wrote the preface of *Jeremy Taylor*, "As a theologian Taylor was involved in the dominant controversies of his time: (1) the divine institution, apostolic tradition and catholic practice of the hierarchy in *Episcopacy Asserted*, and the ordained ministry in *Clerus Domini*, . . . (2) original sin in *Unum Necessarium*, and *Deus Justificatus*; and (3) religious toleration in the *Liberty of Prophecy*. As a priest he was more intimately and personally involved in (1) the spiritual direction and care of souls in *the Great Exemplar*, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*; (2) the sacramental life of the church in the *Worthy Communicant and the Real Presence*; and (3) the prayer life of the church in manuals like a *Collection of Offices*, and *Psalter of David*, . . ." (*Jeremy Taylor: Selected Works*, ed. Thomas K. Carroll [New York: Paulist Press, 1990], p. 53. All subsequent references to this book will be identified in the text by the abbreviation SW, followed by the page number.) And "Taylor's practical piety cannot be fully understood without taking into account his sacramental theology. Grace is from above. And yet Taylor time and again stressed the importance of practical piety and objected to the doctrine of original sin, in part because such doctrine tended to undermine piety and was used as a defense by habitually sinful men" (SW 12). "Taylor's understanding of man and his fall is totally biblical, however controversial his interpretation. Ironically, his passion for piety and his desire to perfect man in holiness led him in *Unum Necessarium*, the sixth chapter, to emphasize man's moral responsibilities and capabilities, which friend and foe alike denounced as pelagian in tone and inspiration" (SW 63).

life being ended, we may live with him for ever.

Neither is it sufficient that we think of the service of God as a work of the least necessity, or of small employment, but that it be done by us as God intended it; and that it be done with great earnestness and passion, with much zeal and desire; that we refuse no labour; that we bestow upon it much time; that we use the best guides, and arrive at the end of glory by all the ways of grace, of prudence, and religion. (*HL* 1)

Taylor's concern for practical piety and his emphasis on "growth into personal maturity—every man his own casuist" (*SW* 13) comes to climax when he asserts that by following Christ, the Great Exemplar, "Every man is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling." (*HL* 239).

Faulkner also believes the importance of free will and expresses in "Address to the Graduating Class, Pine Manor Junior College," that free will is our innate heritage and we are endowed with the courage to elect the right:

So He [God] used that split part of the dark proud one's character to remind us of our heritage of free will and decision; He used the poets and philosophers to remind us, out of our own recorded anguish, of our capacity for courage and endurance. But it is we ourselves who must employ them. . . . It is us, we, not as groups or classes but as individuals, simple men and women individually free and capable of freedom and decision, who must decide, affirm simply and firmly and forever never to be led like sheep into peace and security, but ourselves, us, simple men and women simply and mutually confederated for a time, a purpose, and end, for the simple reason that reason and heart have both shown us that we want the same thing and must have it and intend to have it.

To do it ourselves, as individuals, not because we have to merely in order to survive, but because we wish to, will to out of our heritage of free will and decision, the possession of which has given us the right to say how we shall live, and the long proof of our recorded immortality to remind us that we have the courage to elect that right and that course. (*AGP* 138-139)

We must also consider the fact that it is consistent with Faulkner's theology that God the father remains detached and inaccessible. God only offers man a choice. The concept of free will and of the need for response to evil is so strong in Faulkner's mind that this sort of non-involvement on God's part makes it necessary for man to save himself. In the same speech describing such a relationship between God and man, Faulkner affirms that from the beginning God knew that man was capable of saving himself:

In the beginning, God created the earth. He created it completely furnished for man. Then He created man completely equipped to cope with the earth, by means of free will and the capacity for decision and the ability to learn by making mistakes and learning from them because he had a memory with which to remember and so learn from his errors, and so in time make his own peaceful destiny of the earth. It was not an experiment. God didn't merely believe in man, He knew man. He knew that man was competent for a soul because he was capable of saving that soul and, with it, himself. He knew that man was capable of starting from scratch and coping with the earth and with himself both; capable of teaching himself to be civilized, to live with his fellow man in amity, without anguish to himself or causing anguish and grief to others, and of appreciating the value of security and peace and freedom, since our dreams at night, the very slow evolution of our bodies themselves, remind us constantly of the time when we did not have them. He did not mean freedom from fear, because man does not have the right to be free of fear. We are not so weak and timorous as to need to be free of fear; we need only use our capacity to not be afraid of it and so relegate fear to its proper perspective. He meant security and peace in which to not be afraid, freedom in which to decree and then establish security and peace. And He demanded of man only that we work to deserve and gain these things—liberty, freedom of the body and spirit both, security for the

weak and helpless, and peace for all—because these were the most valuable things He could set within our capacity and reach. (AGP 135-136)

Insisting that any values are imposed from within rather than from without, Faulkner suggests man's work should be to participate in salvation. He was once asked if he thought men worked out their own salvation. He answered, "I do, yes" (*FU* 73). When we listen to his "Address to the Graduating Class Pine Manor College," we understand Faulkner sees that the being of man is never wholly separated from its divine matrix, even in the distortions. Man's works, Faulkner suggests, can save man:

What's wrong with this world is, it's not finished yet. It is not completed to that point where man can put his final signature to the job and say, "It is finished. We made it, and it works."

Because only man can complete it. Not God, but man. It is man's high destiny and proof of his immortality too, that his is the choice between ending the world, effacing it from the long annal of time and space, and completing it. This is not only his right, but his privilege too. Like the phoenix it rises from the ashes of its own failure with each generation, until it is your turn now in your flash and flick of time and space which we call today, in this and in all the stations in time and space we call today and yesterday and tomorrow, where a handful of aged people like me, who should know but no longer can, are facing young people like you who can do, if they only knew where and how, to perform this duty, accept this privilege, bear this right. (AGP 135)

Faulkner's concept of faith with his strong belief in man is most intensely expressed by the sentence, "he will prevail" in his "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature:"

. . . I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. (ARN 119)

Such theology of Faulkner which emphasizes the efficiency of man's will seems to be Pelagianism. However, as there is no event that Christ's redemption does not cover and because of His Cross the world goes on as it is, it is the redeeming power of the corporal that is omnipresent in the novel. Though physically the corporal is only an obliquely seen figure in the novel, throughout the novel he pings on others' consciousness. Because the corporal personifies the repressed good will of men, with his healing power, his presence awakens the hidden good will in men so that they respond to the needs of others. Here a major describes incidents involving a blind child, an old man, and a poor couple helped by others' good will because of the corporal's redeeming power:

. . . a child going blind in one of the Aisne towns for lack of an operation which a certain famous Paris surgeon could perform, the corporal levying upon the troops of two nearby division, a franc here and two francs there until the surgeon's fee was raised and the child sent to him. And an old man; he had a wife, daughter and grandson and a little farm in 1914 but waited too long to evacuate it, unable until too late to tear himself away from what he possessed; his daughter and grandson vanished in the confusion which ended at the first Marne battle, his old wife died of exposure on the roadside, the old man returning alone to the village when it was freed again and he could, where, an idiot, name forgotten, grief and all forgotten, only moaning a little, drooling, grubbing for food in the refuse of army kitchens, sleeping in ditches and hedgerows on the spot of earth which he had owned once, until the corporal used one of his leaves to hunt out a remote kinsman of the old man's in a distant Midi village and levied again on the regiment for enough to send him there. . . and . . . a village behind Montfaucon and only this past winter because they were American troops; they had just been paid, a dice game was going on, the floor littered with franc notes

and the half the American company crowded around them when the French corporal entered and without a word began to gather up the scattered money; for a time a true international incident was in the making until the corporal finally managed to communicate, explain, what it was about: a wedding: one of the young American soldiers, and a girl, an orphan refugee from somewhere beyond Rheims, who was now a sort of slavey in the local estaminet; she and the young American had—had—

‘The rest of his company would say he had knocked her up,’ the American captain said. ‘But we know what you mean. Go on.’ So the major did: the matter ending with the entire company not only attending the wedding but adopting it, taking charge of it, buying up all the wine in the village for supper and inviting the whole countryside; adopting the marriage too . . . (F 237-8)

Surely Christ the Exemplar is also the Redeemer. Taylor explains that it is Christ’s redeeming power that could give new nature to man:

He, who was the Lord of the creature, who in their first seeds have an obediencial capacity to receive the impresses of what forms He pleases to imprint, could give new natures, and produce new qualities in that subject which He chooses to glorify His Son.¹³⁾

It is also Christ’s redeeming power by which the Runner has undergone all his changes to be a participant of the good.

To return to our problem again, the difference between the Runner and the other two, Levine and the Quartermaster General, is that the Runner is not closed within his own self, so that the grace of the corporal could intervene in him. As Taylor says, we need “A humble, willing, and docile mind, or desire to be instructed in the way of God” (HL 165), the Runner is humble enough to know his defects, saying “*I was the one who failed; I was the debaser, the betrayer*” (F 124). And he knows the need of belief: “Maybe what I need is to have to meet somebody. To believe. Not in anything; just to believe. To enter that room down there, not to escape from anything but to escape into something . . .” (F 171). However, it is love that motivates him deadily, as Taylor says, “Every man understands by his affections more than by his reason . . .”¹⁴⁾ It is marvellous that the love of the Runner has made him epitomize the corporal as time goes by.

It is no wonder that the Runner could be a Christ, since Faulkner definitely asserts that we are created in the image of God:

That is what we must resist, if we are to change the world for man’s peace and security. It is not men in the mass who can and will save Man. It is Man himself, created in the image of God so that he shall have the power and the will to choose right from wrong, and so be able to save himself because he is worth saving;—Man, the individual, men and women, who will refuse always to be tricked or frightened or bribed into surrendering, not just the right but the duty too, to choose between justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, sacrifice and greed, pity and self;—who will believe always not only in the right of man to be free of injustice and rapacity and deception, but the duty and responsibility of man to see that justice and truth and pity and compassion are done.

(AGC 123-124)

Truly, as Taylor says, “God dwells in our heart by faith” (HL 22) and “Let us remember that God is in us, and we are in him, we are his workmanship” (HL 25), Faulkner also believes that Christ is part of us, our ontological substance since Christ embodies the image of God [Cor. 4 : 4 ; Phil. 2 : 6 ; Col. 1 : 15]. We have seen the corporal restores the image of God in the Runner and the Runner pursues the way of his supreme example as we have discussed.

13) *Works* II 287.

14) *Works* VIII 369.

Certainly, Christ the Exemplar and the Redeemer changes man by love to be a participant of love, which is the great gift of God as Taylor asserts:

Love is the greatest thing that God can give us; for himself is love: and it is the greatest thing we can give to God; for it will also give ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. . . . For, as the love to sin makes a man sin against all his own reason, . . . so does the love of God; it makes a man chaste without the laborious arts of fasting and exterior disciplines, temperate in the midst of feasts, and is active enough to choose it without any intermedial appetites, and reaches at glory through the very heart of grace, without any other arms but those of love. It is a grace that loves God for himself, and our neighbours for God. The consideration of God's goodness and bounty, the experience of those profitable and excellent emanations from him, may be, and most commonly are, the first motive of our love; but when we are once entered, and have tasted the goodness of God, we love the spring for its own excellency, passing from passion to reason, from thanking to adoring, from sense to spring, from considering ourselves to an union with God: and this is the image and little representation of heaven; it is beatitude in picture, or rather the infancy and beginnings of glory. (*HL* 174-5)

Though at the end of the novel, the whole world seems not to have changed, surely the Runner makes his testimony of the boundless hopes and aspirations of man's soul: Man will prevail because of his deathless spirit, "a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance" (*ARN* 119). The corporal is executed, as if the three-day truce had never happened, the war has not completely ceased, and the assumed question, if the Messiah were to come now, might be answered in the affirmative that Christ would be crucified twice. Yet as in life, the corporal strove toward the brotherhood of the people, so does he in death by making his entombment as France's Unknown Soldier, symbolic of the brotherhood of all the nameless dead soldiers. Also the corporal's mission has been succeeded by the Runner who, though when he first learns of the efforts of the corporal, didn't believe in "that sort of masturbation about the human race people call hoping" (*F* 51), has come out of himself, and made desperate protest against the evil power, claiming to the coffin of the old general, "You too helped carry the torch of man into that twilight where he shall be no more; these are his epitaphs: They shall not pass. My country right or wrong. Here is a spot which is forever England" (*F* 369).

A *Fable*, then, is about the trilogy of man's conscience, the restoration of the image of God within himself by following Christ, our substance. One knows his weakness and limitations, but then, by a conscious effort of the will, he fights against his self-interest. As Reverend Tobe Sutterfield, the Negro groom who claims to witness to man (*F* 152) says, "Evil is a part of man" (*F* 171), we are always in tension. Faulkner's concept of man is not an optimistic one at all. He well knows that there is "the problem which he is doomed forever to, simply because he is flesh and blood" (*FN* 27). However, though man is evil enough to crucify Jesus again and again, as a creature made in the image of God the proof of man's immortality, Faulkner believes, lies in man's ability to change his ways of living to avoid perishing (*FN* 41) and in the fact that "he will always think that he can do better than he does:"

The proof of his immortality is the fact that he has lasted this long in spite of all the anguishes and the griefs which he himself has invented and seems to continue to invent. He still lasts, and still there is always some voice, some essay saying, "This is wrong, you must do better than this." And there is always somewhere someone that says: "Yes, that's right, I will do better than this," even though he himself knows that he might fail when the crisis, the moment comes when he has to sacrifice, that the weak shall be protected, that man shall not be inhuman to man. He tries, I think, to use all sorts of shabby and shoddy means and methods to assuage himself, to say that, "Well, maybe I don't have to work at this," but he himself doubts now and the crises arise in which he can and does do better than he ever believed he would and they will continue, that he will always think, will know, that he can do better than he does and hope that he will do better than he

does. (FN 28-9)

In such writing one surmises that Faulkner recommends us to go out of ourselves in order to make sacrifice in love, as Taylor believes making sacrifice is in accord with our substance:

As Christ is pleased to represent to his Father that great sacrifice as a means of atonement and expiation for all mankind, and with special purposes and intendment for all the elect, all that serve him in holiness; so he hath appointed that the same ministry shall be done upon earth too, in our manner, and according to our proportion . . . (HL 244)

In going out of ourselves, Taylor writes that a good man is united unto God:

There is a sort of God's dear servants who walk in perfectness; . . . and they have a degree of clarity and divine knowledge more than we can discover of, and more certain than the demonstration of geometry, brighter than the sun, and indeficient as the light of heaven. . . . This is called by the apostle the *apaugasma tou theou*. Christ is the "brightness of God," manifested in the hearts of His dearest servants. . . . But I shall say no more of this at this time, for this is to be felt and not be talked of; and they that never touched it with their finger, may secretly perhaps laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I shall now say of it is, that a good man is united unto God, as a flame touches a flame, and combines into splendour and to glory: so is the spirit of man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God, and they best know God's mind, and they only that are so know how much such men do know. They have a special unction from above so that now you are come to the top of all; this is the highest round of the ladder, and the angels stand upon it: they dwell in love and contemplation, they worship and obey, but dispute not: and our quarrels and impertinent wranglings about religion are nothing else but the want of the measures of this state. Our light is like a candle, every wind of vain doctrine blows it out, or spends the wax, and makes the light tremulous; but the lights of heaven are fixed and bright, and shine for ever.¹⁵⁾

Then Christ does not merely remain the supreme example, but He becomes part of us as our substance. And Christ is the substance of the whole world as the Bible says, "for in him [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" [Col 1 : 16]. Thus we can live in accord with the God created world "enclosed in his circle, wrapped up in the lap of his infinite nature" (HL 20) of love. The Runner's epitomizing of the corporal, a Christ figure means much more than we can first understand as the corporal. Anyone can be a Christ by following His supreme example. Surely if we respond to the love of God which is omnipresent sincerely with unpreoccupied mind, Christ the Redeemer and the supreme example will manifest himself in the midst of our life and make us an active agent of the good. That is Faulkner's ultimate gospel that we pluck out in reading Faulkner's masterpiece, *A Fable*.

Notes

N.B.—The following abbreviations are used followed by the page number:

F for Faulkner, William. *A Fable*. New York: Vintage Books, 1954.

FU for Gwynn, Frederick L., and Joseph L. Blotner, eds. *Faulkner in the University*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1957.

FN for Robert A. Jelliffe, ed. *Faulkner at Nagano*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956.

ARN for Faulkner, William. "Address upon Receiving the Noble Prize for Literature," in James B. Meriwether, ed. *Es-*

says Speeches & Public Letters. New York: Random House, 1965.

AGP for Faulkner, William. "Address to the Graduating Class, Pine Manor Junior College," in *Essays Speeches & Public Letters*.

AGC for Faulkner, William. "Address to the Graduating Class University High School," in *Essays Speeches & Public Letters*.

HL for Taylor, Jeremy. *Holy Living and Dying: with Prayers*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1878.

SW for Carroll, Thomas, ed. *Jeremy Taylor: Selected Works*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Works for Heber, Reginald and Eden, Charles, eds. *The Whole Works of the Right Reverend Jeremy Taylor, D. D. with a Life of the Author*. 10 vols. London: Longman, Green, Longmans, Roberts and Greed, 1847-52.

ABSTRACT

In my previous paper on *Requiem for a Nun*, I have vindicated Faulkner's theology, which is not Pelagianism, because Faulkner's strong belief in man's efficacy is formed through an influence of Jeremy Taylor's practical piety which considers Christ as Great Exemplar. Nevertheless, in *Requiem* the emphasis is on the state or attitude of belief; what is being affirmed as contents of belief remains vague to the end. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to pluck out Faulkner's ultimate gospel by studying *A Fable* where he dramatizes for the first time his religious problem, the problem of man's free will in terms of the Christ figure. Looking into the Runner's epitomizing of the corporal, a Christ figure, we can get Faulkner's message: if we respond sincerely with an unpreoccupied mind to the love of God which is omnipresent, we will know that we are enclosed by God's circle bound by love and Christ, the Redeemer and supreme example, will manifest himself in the midst of our life and make us an active agent of the good.