

Salvation for Temple Drake: A Study of William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun**

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In William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun*, which was begun in 1933 and published on 27 September 1951, the author took up again the character of Temple Drake, which he had first introduced in *Sanctuary* nineteen years earlier. Faulkner explained, "I began to think what would be the future of that girl? And then I thought, What could a marriage come to that was founded on the vanity of a weak man? . . . And suddenly that seemed to me dramatic and worthwhile" (FU 96).

With Temple, the obvious problem is whether she is saved or not for the extraordinary self-sacrifice of Nancy. One of the most distinguished Faulkner scholars, Noel Polk, in his critical study, *Faulkner's Requiem for a Nun* (1981), says *Requiem for a Nun* is, "a powerful and complex novel, perhaps the darkest and least hopeful of all of Faulkner's work."¹⁾ Denying the former rigidified critical response to the novel that "*Requiem* was Faulkner's 'solution' to the outrage of his earlier, more powerful books: Nancy Mannigoe was his martyred saint; Gavin Stevens was his 'voice'; Temple Stevens was damned lucky,"²⁾ Polk argues in his book that Nancy's sacrifice is totally meaningless:

Nancy's murder of Temple's baby is the most savage and reprehensible act of violence in all of William Faulkner's fiction; that it is totally without justification; that it is the act of a madwoman and not of a saint; that Nancy's and Stevens's stated motives are not necessarily their real ones; that Stevens is not at all out to 'save' Temple but rather to crucify her; and that Temple rather than Nancy is at the moral center of the novel.³⁾

However, in studying Faulkner's concept of faith, Polk's argument does not seem to be accepted. Though, as far as I know, no one has mentioned this, Faulkner's concept of faith and sacrifice owes much to Jeremy Taylor, a seventeenth-century Anglican bishop and writer, whose *Holy Living and Dying* is one of Faulkner's favorite books. Faulkner went so far as to take it along when he was hospitalized.⁴⁾ Hence, with my reference to Jeremy

*Key words : Jeremy Taylor, sacrifice, faith

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1) Noel Polk, *Faulkner's Requiem for a Nun: A Critical Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. xiii.

2) *Ibid.*, p. xi.

3) *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

4) According to Joseph L. Blotner in *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York, 1974), Faulkner was never an active member of a church community, except for reading the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and Jeremy Taylor:

On some evenings after dinner Faulkner would take down a volume from the shelf—perhaps Dickens or Cervantes—and read aloud to Tommy and Estelle and Dot, like a Victorian paterfamilias. The books were always old favorites. "I suppose I have about fifty that I read," he said. "I go in and out like you go into a room to meet old friends, to open the book in the middle and read for a little while. . . ." He would enlist Erskine's help as well as Tullos' in building up a second library. He asked him for a baker's dozen of Modern Library "Giants," including a complete *Homer* and *Don Quixote*, a three-volume Gibbon, Boswell's *Johnson*, and the poems of Keats, Shelley, and Donne. He also asked for *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*, *Les Misérable* and *Moby-Dick*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. When the books came, he was disappointed

Taylor, the aim of this paper is to study the transformation of Temple Drake in consideration of Faulkner's concept of faith, and thus offer a refutation of Polk's view of Nancy's sacrifice.

Sanctuary, the novel preceding *Requiem for a Nun*, seems to be Faulkner's equivalent of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In the wasteland the thunder does not connote rain, and the protagonists find not even fragments to shore against their ruins, but it is set in "only a gaunt weather-stained ruin in a sombre grove" (S 27). The title, "Sanctuary," is ironic, since the world presented in *Sanctuary* offers no place of refuge for anyone. The people suffer from a failure to find their own sanctuary to rest from their actuality. Faulkner seems to be suggesting that such utter waste exists because the disasters in *Sanctuary* are a result of amorality, rather than immorality. In fact without any awareness of guilt there seems to be no sin in a positive sense, which would imply the possibility of salvation, but sin only in a negative sense. The most glaring example is Temple Drake.

We learn from *Sanctuary* that Temple Drake, a woman student at the University of Mississippi then, is the only daughter of Judge Drake. She leaves the school one morning on a special train for students to attend a baseball game at another college, and disappeared from the train somewhere during its run. Through a misadventure with her intoxicated boyfriend Gowan Stevens, she finds herself at the hideaway of a bootlegger named Lee Goodwin. There she is involved with the bootleggers and comes to be indirectly responsible for the death of feeble-minded Tommy. After being violently raped by Popeye, a Memphis gangster with a corn crib, Temple accompanies him to a Memphis bordello, where she is forced to take a lover named Red and is kept under Popeye's supervision. Craving for Red in her lust, she attempts to run away with him and thus gets him killed by Popeye. Though Temple convinces Horace Benbow to think that she will testify against Popeye, she gives false evidence against Lee Goodwin instead. She tells the court that it was Goodwin that raped her and killed Tommy, which leads to Goodwin's conviction and he is subsequently lynched. To our astonishment, at the last scene we find her sojourning in Europe with her father, utterly detached from the tragedy she caused.

We could say the lynching of Lee Goodwin or Popeye's rape of Temple is the most violent act of physical brutality in the novel. However, Temple's perjuring testimony against Goodwin is the most wicked act. Temple clings to the tokens of her family respectability repeating, "My father's a judge" (S 19); "My father's a judge; my father's a judge" (S 34); "My father's a judge. Judge Drake of Jackson" (S 35) while flaunting herself before the men at Goodwin's place. Obviously she desires to flirt with evil as she later confesses that she just wanted "something to do, be doing, filling the time" (R132). Boldly she says, "Now I can stand anything" (S 60), but when attacked by Popeye, she cries in horror, "Something is happening to me!" (S 68). She feels herself to be a victim, a passive object in the situation in which she has unwillingly found herself. Here Goodwin's mistress is right in accusing her, "But you good women. Cheap sports. Giving nothing, then when you're caught . . . Do you know what you've got into now?" (S 38). Temple is "playing at it [sex]" (S 40). She is a "voluptuous swoon" (S 165) "feeling the desire going over her in wave after wave" (S 164). To Horace's surprise, "she was recounting the experience with actual pride, a sort of naive and impersonal vanity, as though she were making it up" (S 147-8), saying "It just happened. I don't know" (S 147). Temple is trying to avoid any sense of responsibility on her own part in the affair. She absolves herself of any possibility of guilt for what has happened. The truth is that it is she that gets herself involved in the evil deeds as Popeye says, "I gave you your chance back there in town. You took it" (S 160). Thus regardless of what her specific motives are, the evils are issued from her willful commitment of evil and there can be no excuse.

We should notice that Faulkner presents Temple as almost always running. One can collect the examples of abundant evidence that could be quoted. "Temple sprang down and ran for a few steps beside the car" (S 23); "She whirled again and . . . ran right off the porch" (S 28); "She began to run" (S 31); "Without ceasing to run

with the *Homer* because he had wanted Pope's translation. Blotner ordered it for him from Blackwell's in England, along with another staple he wanted: Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*—preferably in seventeenth century editions. (671-2)

[in 1961] When Estelle and Blotner arrived to help him with process of leaving the hospital, he sat in the bedside armchair in what seemed a state of quiet exhaustion. On the night table lay his standard hospital reading: the Bible, Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, and Boccaccio's *Decameron*. (698)

she appeared to pause" (S 31); "She ran into the kitchen" (S 33); "She ran right off the porch, into the weeds, and sped on. She ran to the road and down it for fifty yards in the darkness, then without a break she whirled and ran back to the house and sprang onto the porch and crouched against the door just as someone came up the hill" (S 43); "She entered the house and sped up the hall" (S 59); "Then she began to run, snatching her feet up almost before they touched the earth" (S 61); "Then suddenly she ran upside down in a rushing interval; she could see her legs still running in space, and she struck lightly and solidly on her back and lay still" (S 62). Temple always seen to be running is symbolic of the directionlessness of her life in an empty frenzy. She keeps avoiding making any sort of real human commitment to the world. Temple, whose very name underlines the irony, is herself a desecrated vessel. We may say her sanctuary is a Memphis brothel.

Our chief concern is whether Faulkner suggests any possibility for Temple to be saved. Considering the situation further, one finds the world of *Sanctuary* is the world envisioned by Temple as she lies in her sanctuary, the dark Memphis whore-house, which "was full of sounds. Indistinguishable, remote, they came in to her with a quality of awakening, resurgence, as though the house itself had been asleep, rousing itself with dark . . ." with "spent ghosts of voluptuous gestures and dead lusts" (S 105). There Temple is not happy at all. So often she struggles; "Temple began to struggle" (S 62); "She began to struggle" (S 64) with her tightening expression as if "she were bound to a church steeple. She grinned at him, her mouth warped over the rigid, placative porcelain of her grimace" (S 107-8); "She lay motionless, her palms lifted, her flesh beneath the envelope of her loins cringing rearward in furious disintegration like frightened people in a crowd" (S 108); "Temple entered the dining-room from the kitchen, her face fixed in a cringing, placative expression" (S 42). With the "hopeless expression of a child" (S 95) she identifies herself with Miss Reba's two woolly, shapeless dogs:

She thought of them [the dogs], woolly, shapeless; savage, petulant, spoiled, the flatulent monotony of their sheltered lives snatched up without warning by an incomprehensible moment of terror and fear of bodily annihilation at the very hands which symbolized by ordinary licensed tranquility of their lives. (S 105)

Temple thought of the dogs again, thought of them crouching against the wall under the bed in that rigid fury of terror and despair. (S 107)

Also in the following passage we could see the recognition of her own isolated situation and her loss of identity. "A bell rang faintly and shrilly somewhere" indicates that unconsciously she hears an alarm bell against her crucial situation:

She thought about half-past-ten-oclock in the morning. Sunday morning, and the couples strolling toward church. She remembered it was still Sunday, the same Sunday, looking at the fading peaceful gesture of the clock. Maybe it was half-past-ten this morning, that half-past-ten-oclock. Then I'm not here, she thought. This is not me. . . .

She rose and crossed the room quietly. She watched the clock face, but although she could see a warped turmoil of faint light and shadow in geometric miniature swinging across it, she could not see herself. . . .

There was still a light in the room. She found that she was hearing her watch; had been hearing it for some time. She discovered that the house was full of noise, seeping into the room muffled and indistinguishable, as though from a distance. A bell rang faintly and shrilly somewhere; someone mounted the stairs in a swishing garment. The feet went on past the door and moured another stair and ceased. She listened to the watch. A car started beneath the window with a grind of gears; again the faint bell rang, shrill and prolonged. She found that the faint light yet in the room was from a street lamp. Then she realised that it was night and that the darkness beyond was full of the sound of the city. (S 103)

Religiously the first step toward salvation is taken when a man becomes aware of the disorder of his own existence. Then the total depravity is no more, for such awareness is not sin itself but a turning from it. The passages above suggest her dim craving for salvation deep in her soul.

And it is this craving that connects *Sanctuary* with *Requiem for a Nun*. *Requiem for a Nun*'s religious tone takes the place of *Sanctuary*'s dark negation. The novel is dealing with Temple Drake's struggle for salvation. In *Requiem* Temple is married to Gowan in order to nullify her past and she has now two children—a four-year-old boy and an infant. She has hired as a maid Nancy Mannigoe, who will not be shocked by sordid details of Temple's past. According to Temple's confession "it wasn't the Gowan Stevens but Temple Drake who had chosen the ex-dope-fiend nigger whore for the reason that an ex-dope-fiend nigger whore was the only animal in Jefferson that spoke Temple's Drake's language—... Somebody to talk to, as we all seem to need, want, have to have, not to converse with you nor even agree with you, but just keep quiet and listen" (R 141). Temple's relationship with Gowan is far from being satisfactory, since she feels that she must be grateful to him for marrying her, and also because Gowan has come to doubt his paternity of the boy. She thus becomes an easy prey to a blackmailer, the brother of her former lover Red. When Temple prepares to elope with Red, taking her boy with her, Nancy strangles the infant so that little children shall not suffer. In the Courthouse at Jefferson, Mississippi, Nancy is sentenced to be hanged for murdering Temple's infant child. Only the defendant's lawyer, Gavin Stevens, suspects where the real guilt lies. The rest of the drama focuses on the gradual disclosure of Temple's sin.

Sanctuary concluded with the courtroom scene, which is echoed at the beginning of *Requiem for a Nun*. Here again Temple is legally absolved of any guilt and she once again prepares to escape by travel. Gavin Stevens tries to examine her past and appeals to her conscience. Since Temple avoids facing the truth and rushes into every shelter provided by her self-delusions, Stevens's examination is a long and troublesome one. To protect herself, she utilizes every possible trick. In *Sanctuary* Temple evades any responsibility by assuming the role of victim, and now again in *Requiem* she does the same by playing "the bereaved mother" (R 63, R 76), "the mother whose child she [Nancy] murdered" (R 108) as well as "the victim" (R 111). Stevens, however, refuses to treat Temple, who has been tearless, as such and he offers her a handkerchief, uttering decisively "It's all right. It's dry too" (R 56).

Temple cannot use her social position any more because Nancy's crime has been judged and her punishment was determined. Past has been irrevocably settled as Stevens says: "We're not concerned with death. That's nothing: any handful of pretty facts and sworn documents can cope with that. That's all finished now; we can forget it" (R 82).

Her last ineffectual but persistent defense is to describe Temple Drake from the point of view of Mrs. Gowan Stevens, hoping that such detachment will preserve her from further moral responsibility:

TEMPLE

Mrs. Gowan Stevens did [invented the coincidence].

STEVENS

Temple Drake did. Gowan Stevens is not even fighting in this class. This is Temple Drake's.

TEMPLE

Temple Drake is dead.

Here Stevens interrupts her with "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (R 85). Though she insisted that "Nancy must be saved. So you send for me, or you and Bucky between you, or anyway here you are and here I am" (R 75), she knows from the very beginning that it is her own salvation she must be concerned with: "All right. I'm sorry. I know better. So maybe it's just my own stinking after all that I find impossible to doubt" (R 63). Thematically the emphasis in the narrative sections, "The Courthouse," "The Golden Dome" and "The

Jail," which precede each of the three sections is on the law and legal justice. And legally Temple has not committed any crime. However, she cannot appease her uneasy conscience as there is no denying the existential necessity to recognize the actuality of one's own moral deed and of living with the consequences. Thus at the desperate attempts' end, her play acting collapses and she begins to admit the fault of "Temple Drake, the foolish virgin." (R 117)

Because Temple Drake liked evil. She only went to the ball game because she would have to get on a train to do it, so that she could slip off the train the first time it stopped, and get into the car to drive a hundred miles with a man—. (R 122)

Also she admits that it was she that chose to stay there in the whorehouse: "Because I still have two arms and legs and eyes; I could have climbed down the rainspout at any time, the only difference being that I didn't" (R 128). Her crucial fault which she admits was "I didn't want to efface the stink really—" (R 138).

Up to the end of Scene II, although Temple has begun to tell the truth, her redemption seems far from certain. In fact the problem of Faulkner's treatments of salvation brought by *Requiem for a Nun* is so much related to a variety of his crucial themes: suffering, sacrifice, freedom because there is no easy way to tackle the problem of salvation. Faulkner's manuscripts tell that there had been many revisions, especially on Scene II before it was published. Thus if we consult the manuscript of the novel, we know the difference in the treatment of Temple. In Scene III Act II of the first version of manuscript, in the scene Temple is unable to understand why one of her children should have to be sacrificed in order to keep the other child intact, we could see Temple's recognition of her own guilt in the conversation that accuses Governor.

GOVERNOR

Nancy. ———said, you fought back, not for yourself, but for that little boy; not to show the father that he was wrong, nor even to prove to the little boy that the father was wrong, but to let the little boy learn with his own eyes that nothing, not even that, which could enter that house could ever harm him.

Temple

But I quit. Nancy told you that, too.

Governor

And answered it too. Or will, forever, the day after tomorrow morning.

(to Stevens)

That's right, isn't it? Friday?

Stevens

Yes. Friday morning.

Governor (to Temple)

Yet you ask me to save her. I cant. Who am I, to have the brazen temerity and hardihood to hope to cope with that, risk the puny appanage of my office in the balance with that simple undeniable aim? Who am I, to render null and abrogate the purchase she made with that poor crazed lost and worthless life?

Temple

Yes. You cant save her. I can see that. Why should you trust me, when I have already proved I cant even trust myself? So there's only one thing left. You can see that too, of course.

Governor
Can I?

Temple
Confess. This. Publicly. Do all this over to the judge, the court, the newspapers, that I did to you here tonight. Become an accessory, in other words, in the cell next to hers. And who knows? maybe in her cell, and she will have the second one as the mere accessory, since I am the murderess, committed the deed six years ago when I got off that baseball special train—

Governor
Not to mention your husband and your child.
(Temple stops, looks at him)
Dont you see, you will be doing the very thing that

Stevens
Nancy.

Governor
Nancy is facing Friday morning that it must not, shall not, happen?
No, your job is harder; Nancy has only to die.

Temple
Tomorrow and tomorrow, day after day, month after month, and year after year. But cant you see?
That's just suffering.

Governor
Yes. Now go home and— (MS 260-1)

In this manuscript Temple admits her sin completely and sees suffering as a penance for her evil deeds. In fact Temple's recognition of life is a constant, purgatorial expiation for her sins, which culminates in her remark: "So you really do have to suffer just to keep on being alive. You really do—" (MS 262). Then she is described to exit resolutely:

She turns, a little clumsily, like a blind person. She starts toward the steps, stumbles. Stevens catches her elbow to steady her, but she frees her arm, walking on. (MS 262)

Here we can see her independence from Stevens, which suggests that she has at last become a morally responsible woman. She is now fully Mrs. Gowan Stevens who has begun walking on her way to salvation.

In contrast with the manuscript, the situation in the published version is more tragic. Up to the end of Scene II Temple has not admitted her sin completely, still accusing Nancy as "the murderess, the nigger, the dope-fiend whore" (R 182). She thinks that she has to suffer for no purpose, saying, "That's just suffering. Not for anything: just suffering" (R 185). For Temple there seems to be no salvation either in the past or in the future, since she knows how dreadful her own past was, and she foresees a future with a meaningless succession of tomorrows. Thus unlike Nancy she must live in time, suspending between an awful past and a hopeless future in that insoluble tension Faulkner described in "The jail" as a "vast and terrible burden beneath which [man] tries to stand erect and lift his battered and indomitable head—the very substance in which he lives and, lacking which, he would vanish in a matter of seconds . . ." (R 218). Though Temple says, "To save my soul—if I have a soul. If there is a God to save it—a God who wants it—" (R 186), it is never certain that Temple is serious about her salvation. Has she already missed her cue forever? (R 171). Only at the end of the

novel we find her convinced in the description that “She walks steadily toward the door” (R 249). Why did Faulkner prolong the period of Temple’s uncertainty in the published version? The answer can be found in studying the nature of Faulkner’s concept of faith itself.

As we have mentioned Faulkner’s concept of faith might have been strongly influenced by Jeremy Taylor. Thus with reference to Taylor, the best way to tackle the problem of Temple’s salvation is to examine closely the moving scene in the jail in Act III during which the troubled Temple at last confronts the composed Nancy on the night before her execution.

Temple tells Nancy that she must face the future and her crucial need of finding the peace that Nancy has. Nancy tries to convince her with the very simple phrase, “Trust in Him” (R 242). With her complete belief in heaven, a complete faith in her own future, Nancy is hardly bothered by the past. Temple, however, doesn’t understand how one who has undergone such hardships can say something like that. Nancy answers, “I don’t know. But you got to trust Him. Maybe that’s your pay for the suffering” (R 242). There follows a short exchange between Nancy and Stevens. Stevens asks, “Whose suffering, and whose pay? Just each one’s for his own?” Nancy replies composedly, “Everybody’s. All suffering. All poor sinning man’s.” When Stevens tries to clarify: “The salvation of the world is in man’s suffering. Is that it?” Nancy affirms that it is. At this point Temple, who has listened in her agony, bursts into questions:

But why must it be suffering? He’s omnipotent, or so they tell us. Why couldn’t He have invented something else? Or, if it’s got to be suffering, why can’t be just your own? Why can’t you buy back your own sins with your own agony? . . . Do you have to suffer everybody else’s anguish just to believe in God? (R 243)

Temple concludes with the question that comes from the deepest reaches of her soul: “What kind of God is it that has to blackmail His customers with the whole world’s grief and ruin?” To Temple the idea that one person can atone for the sins of others is utterly incomprehensible.

Here we should notice that Faulkner presents the doctrine that sin demands a sacrifice. In *The Sound & the Fury*, Preacher Shegog gives a message on the passage that “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). The Hebrews sacrifice animals for the atonement of man’s sins as shown in the story of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22:1–14). When God ordered Abraham, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori’ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you,” Abraham obeyed Him with no doubt. His faith was rewarded. When he had bound the lad and took the knife to slay him, God called to him from heaven and said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And He provided a ram for the offering. The same kind of substitution occurred when the people of Israel were ready to leave their bondage in Egypt. Moses said, “For the Lord will pass through to slay the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to slay you.” The people obeyed him. They sprinkled the blood of a lamb over their doors and they were saved because of the blood of the lamb (EX. 12:21–27).

Taylor, referring to St. Augustine, reminds us that atonement of sin requires sacrifice:

“Here, O Lord, burn and cut my flesh, that thou mayest spare me for ever.” For so said our blessed Savior, “Every sacrifice must be seasoned with salt, and every sacrifice must be burnt with fire;” that is, we must abide in the state of grace; and if we have committed sins, we must expect to be put into the state of affliction; and yet the sacrifice will send up a right and untroubled cloud, and a sweet smell, to join with incense of the altar, where the eternal Priest offers an never-ceasing sacrifice. (HL 377)

Furthermore Taylor contemplates Christ as a holy sacrifice:

... God could not choose but be pleased with delicious accents of martyrs, when in their tortures they cried out nothing but "Holy Jesus" and "Blessed be God;" and they also themselves who, with a hearty resignation to the Divine pleasure, can delight in God's severe dispensation, will have the transportations of cherubim when they enter into the joys of God. (*HL* 374)

Faulkner also follows the Bible in showing Christ as a substitute, a metaphorical lamb: as Preacher Shogog expresses it, "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb." He depicts Christ as a Lamb slain, as says in the Bible: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Thus Christ's redemption by means of his blood is presented most vividly to the congregation:

'I see hit, breddren! I see hit! Sees de blastin, blindin sight! I sees Calvary, wid de sacred trees, sees de thief en de murderer en de least of dese; I hears de boastin en de braggin: Ef you be Jesus, lif up yo tree en walk! I hears de wailin of women en de evenin lamentations; I hears de weepin en de crying en de turnt-away face of God: dey done kilt Jesus; dey done kilt my Son!' (*SF* 255-256)

'... O sinner? I sees de resurrection en de light; sees de meek Jesus saying Dey kilt Me dat ye shall live again; I died dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die. Breddren, O breddren! I sees de doom crack en hears de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!' (*SF* 256)

Some of Faulkner's characters are associated with Biblical allusions that make them sacrificial lambs even though they are not sinless as Christ was. They become expiations for the misdeeds of other persons. Such characters are Ike McCaslin of *Go Down, Moses* and Henry Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Mink Snopes in *The Mansion*, Benjamin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, and Joe Christmas in *Light in August*.

Faulkner himself says Nancy is a sympathetic character. Although she commits murder, she firmly believes that she is acting in the best interests of Temple and the innocent child. Faulkner's own comment on Nancy is worth noticing:

Well, it was in the—that tragic life of a prostitute which she had had to follow simply because she was compelled by her environment, her circumstances, to be it. Not for profit and any pleasure, she was just doomed and damned by circumstances to that life. And despite that, she was capable within her poor dim lights and reasons of an act which whether it was right or wrong was of complete almost religious abnegation of the world for the sake of an innocent child. That was—it was paradoxical, the use of the word, Nun for her, but I—but to me that added something to her tragedy. (*FU* 196)

In spite of the moral and intellectual limitations of Nancy's "poor dim lights," much of the dynamism of the novel lies precisely in this fact that Nancy does "believe" so strongly in the moral faultlessness of her act. Thus if we understand Nancy dies for the sins of Temple Drake, to sacrifice herself for Temple's salvation, we could say Nancy is a Christ figure.

Back in *Sanctuary* we also have a proliferation of Christ allusions there. One such example is that Faulkner chooses Popeye as a Christ figure. We naturally think of the monstrous qualities of Popeye, who "had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin" (S 1) is far from being a Christ figure, however, there are several ironic suggestions of Popeye's status as such. Witness that "Popeye was born on the Christmas day" (S 209). His lean body and pale complexion with his faintly aquiline nose remind us of those conventional pictures of Jesus. He has "apostles," who are not saints, but members of his gang. As Jesus turned water into wine, Popeye makes whiskey. Also there is a scene which seems overlap with Christ's last supper. On the night before Popeye's hanging, a minister has come into his cell to pray for him:

The minister knelt beside the cot where Popeye lay smoking. After a while the minister heard him rise and cross the floor, then return to the cot. When he rose Popeye was lying on the cot, smoking. The minister looked behind him, where he had heard Popeye moving and saw twelve marks at spaced intervals along the base of the wall, as though marked there with burned matches. Two of the spaces were filled with cigarette stubs laid in neat rows. In the third space were two stubs. Before he departed he watched Popeye rise and go there and crush out two more stubs and lay them carefully beside the others.

Just after five o'clock the minister returned. All the spaces were filled save the twelfth one. It was three quarters complete. (S 217)

We could say here in this scene Faulkner changes the last supper with cigarettes nonchalantly smoked. The twelve marks on the wall may suggest the number of Christ's disciples as well as showing Popeye's abandoned condition. Christ's thorough submissiveness becomes in *Sanctuary* Popeye's complete indifference. But the most distinguished irony of all is the fact that Popeye dies for a crime that he has not committed. In fact although he is a murderer, he is not guilty in that particular murder case. As did Christ, he dies for a guilt which is not his own.

Furthermore, like the following examples, most of the swearing employed by the characters is restricted to "For Christ's sake" or "Jesus Christ:"

Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ he whispered, his body writhing inside his disreputable and bloody clothes in an agony of rage and shame. (S 57)

When Popeye is taken to his cell he looks at it and says, "For Christ's sake" (S 213). When he is left alone in the cell he lies down on the cot, "his feet crossed," and repeats, "For Christ's sake" (S 214). When he is found guilty "... he looked back at them in a slow silence for several moments. 'Wee, for Christ's sake,' he said" (S 215).

Faulkner even provides Temple with a symbolic cross, as Popeye thrusts at her with the corn cob, Temple "lay tossing and thrashing on the rough, sunny boards" (S 122). At another time Temple is depicted as writing "slowly in a cringing movement, cringing upon herself in as complete an isolation as though she were bound to a church steeple" (S 107). Also when Horace Benbow has a vision of Little Belle whom he confuses with Temple, she is depicted in terms which suggest the crucifixion:

Then he knew what the sensation in his stomach meant. . . . her chin depressed like a figure lifted down from a crucifix, she watched something black and furious go roaring out of her pale body. She was bound naked on her back on a flat car moving at speed through a black tunnel, . . . The car shot bodily from the tunnel . . . toward a crescendo like a held breath, . . . furious up-roar of the shucks. (S 153)

By showing Christ even in such fallen characters as Popeye and Temple who are not sacrificial lambs, it is as if Faulkner were deliberately invoking a consciousness of Christ in readers' mind to show that we are part of Him. As Taylor depicts Christ as our supreme example, "Consider the example of the ever blessed Jesus, who suffered all the contradictions of sinners, and received all affronts and reproaches of malicious, rash, and foolish persons, and yet in all of them was as dispassionate and gentle as the morning sun in autumn; and in this also he propounded himself imitable by us" (*HL* 223), Faulkner also sees that Christ is the highest criterion of a moral code of "matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope," because to share being a sacrifice with Jesus is what 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.⁵⁾

Furthermore as Taylor asserts that we are part of Him: "Let us remember that God is in us, and that we are in him: we are his workmanship" (*HL* 25), Faulkner also believes that Christ is part of us, our substance since he 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.⁶⁾

Thus because we are created in the image of God Faulkner asserts that man must try to be good in order to follow our example or substance:

I didn't say in the ultimate goodness of man, I said only that man will prevail and will—and in order to prevail he has got to . . . [try to be good]. As to whether he will stay on the earth long enough to attain ultimate goodness, nobody knows. But he does improve, since the only alternative to progress is death. (*FU* 5)

Faulkner believes that free will is our innate heritage and that free will receives its best and most strenuous exercise in the individual's response to evil on a special courage:

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.⁷⁾

5) Malcolm Cowley, ed., *Writer at Work: The Paris Review Interview* (New York, 1958), p. 132.

6) "Address to the Graduating Class University High School," Oxford, Mississippi, May 28, 1951 in *Essays Speeches & Public Letters by William Faulkner* ed. James B. Meriwether (Random House: New York, 1954), pp. 123-4.

7) "Address to the Graduating Class Pine Manor Junior College," Wellesley, Massachusetts, June 8, 1953 in *Essays Speeches & Public Letters*, pp. 138-9.

The most outstanding example of Faulkner's characters who has that kind of courage to be a free individual is Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*. She "held the whole thing together and would continue to hold the whole thing together for no reward," making a living example "that the will of man to prevail will even take the nether channel of the black man" (FU 5). In the midst of the turmoil of the Compsons; Benjy bellows, Mrs. Compson whines, Jason complains, Quentin commits suicide, Caddy becomes a whore, Miss Quentin runs off with a bigamous pitchman, and the desperate Mr. Compson drinks himself to death, Dilsey never loses her fortitude with her courage of realistic faith. She made the same response to each event, a response of love, self-sacrifice, compassion and pity. The name of the courage to elect the right and the course is called faith. Faith depends upon a special kind of commitment. It demands a certain degree of courage, to step into the adventure of real chance without establishing guarantees. Thus faith and belief in Faulkner, is a kind of courage within the individual, a courage with which one steps in actions, in undertakings which even normal prudence would advise against. As we have already pointed out man can follow Christ even to the degree of sacrificing himself as Faulkner's sacrificial characters show.

Here it is now clear that the reason why Faulkner leaves Temple uncertain is that Faulkner emphasizes the fact that Temple has long lacked the courage to commit herself in the act of faith. She clings to the hope of nullifying her past since the old sin is still too strong for her as Nancy says:

Because that would have been hoping: the hardest thing of all to break, get rid of, let go of, the last thing of all poor sinning man will turn alose. Maybe it's because that's all he's got. Leastways, he holds onto it, hangs onto it. Even with salvation laying right in his hand, and all he's got to do is, choose between it; even with salvation already in his hand and all he needs is just to shut his fingers, old sin is still too strong for him, and sometimes before he knows it, he has throwed salvation away just grabbling back at hoping. (R 239)

It has taken time for Temple to learn the very fact that faith differs from hope. According to Taylor faith differs from hope in the extension of its object and in the intention of degree:

Faith differs from hope in the extension of its object, and in the intention of degree. St. Augustine thus accounts their differences. Faith is of all things revealed, good and bad, rewards and punishments, of things past, present, and to come, of things that concern us, of things that concern us not; but hope hath for its object things only that are good, and fit to be hoped for, future, and concerning ourselves; and because these things are offered to us upon conditions of which we may so fail as we may change our will, therefore our certainty is less than the adherences of faith; which (because faith relies only upon one proposition, that is, the truth of the word of God) cannot be made uncertain in themselves, though the object of our hope may become uncertain to us, and to our possession. For it is infallibly certain that there is heaven for all the godly, and for me amongst them all, if I do my duty. But that I shall enter into heaven is the object of my hope, not of my faith; and is so sure as it is certain I shall persevere in the ways of God. (HL 167)

Hope implies doubt, while belief is doubt overcome, a fixed and unshakable truth that provides assurance of salvation. Thus Nancy has willingly made herself sacrifice for her belief. Nancy makes a living example of the concept of faith. Because faith is a living truth, not just a theory. It is not an object of analysis and calculation such as could be given in psychological or sociological terms. It is not a matter of detached observation but of involved experience. Thus Temple's salvation depends on her pursuit from then on. Peace of mind will be acquired only when she casts off all hope of nullifying her sins and involves herself in the act of faith as Nancy did. Temple says, "If there is a God to save it" (R 186). There is, and she should know that she is in a way part of Him. It is when she strives for doing good following her substance, making Christ the "matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope,"⁹⁸ she is on her way to salvation.

8) *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interview*, p. 132.

In the published version we can say Temple has at least recognized her own guilt, saying "I'm stunk" (R 250), "I've got to say 'I forgive your, sister' to the nigger who murdered my baby. No: it's worse: I've even got to transpose it, turn it around. I've got to start off my new life being forgiven again" (R 236). To admit her own faults is the beginning of her salvation. On leaving the jail, Temple says, "I'm all right" and "She walks steadily toward the door" (R 249), which suggests that she is at long last morally responsible. And as for her married life, after hearing Temple's confession, simultaneously Gowan who according to his confession has been a "cowardice" (R 68) is himself made aware of his share of guilt and utters his decision, "this may be the time for me to start saying sorry for the next eight-year term" (R 178). Here both of them admit the other's suffering, which leads them to some sort of mutual communication, though Gowan has not completely forgiven her yet. Thus successive tomorrows are now there for Temple to live with Gowan making reality out of what has too long been a merely a word. The price has already been paid. As we have seen that though we cannot quite approve of Nancy's commitment at the cost of her life, we can at least understand that Faulkner believes it is necessary as a symbol of Christ's redemption for the salvation of Temple Drake. Accepting Nancy's death for the symbol of the redemptive power, successive tomorrows are now for Temple each step to attain her salvation. Though difficult we expect Temple to continue her married life with Gowan and her remaining child. Surely Temple will prevail, too.⁹⁾

- 9) Insisting that values are imposed from within rather than from without, Faulkner seems to suggest man's work should participate in salvation. He was once asked if he thought men worked out their own salvation. He answered, "I do, yes" (FU 73). This remark is derived from Faulkner's firm belief that man will prevail as we hear him say in the speech "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. (*Essays Speeches & Public Letters*, pp. 138-9)

This might be strongly influenced by Taylor who says that we are given an immortal spirit:

... 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 serve 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 life being ended, we may live with him for ever]. (HL 1)

The foundation of Taylor's assertion of our immortality is also based on the fact that we are part of Him:

God is especially present in the hearts of his people, by his Holy Spirit: and indeed the hearts of holy men are temples in the truth of things, and, in type and shadow, they are heaven itself. For God reigns in the hearts of his servants: there is his kingdom. . . . The temple itself is the heart of man; Christ is the High Priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, and joins them to his own intercession, and presents all together to his Father; and the Holy Ghost, by his dwelling there, hath also consecrated it into a temple (1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16);" and God dwells in our hearts by faith, and Christ by his Spirit, and the Spirit by his purities; so that we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity; and what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words? The same state of life it is, but not yet true, representing the beauties of the soul, and the graces of God, and the images of his eternal glory, by the reality of a special presence. (HL 21-2)

Notes

N.B.—The following abbreviations are used:

S for Faulkner, William. *Sanctuary*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1966.

R for Faulkner, William. *Requiem for a Nun*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1970.

SF for Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. London: Everyman's Library, 1992.

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

MS for Joseph L., Blotner, McHaney, Thomas, Millgate, Michael and Polk, Noel, eds. *William Faulkner Manuscripts 19; Volume 1 Requiem for a Nun: Preliminary Holograph and Typescript Materials*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987.

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

ABSTRACT

The problem of Faulkner's treatment of salvation introduced by his *Requiem for a Nun* is so complicated since it is related to a variety of his crucial themes; suffering, sacrifice, freedom and there is no easy way to separate these themes. Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* takes up again the character of Temple Drake whose character he had first introduced in *Sanctuary* nineteen years earlier. With Temple, the obvious problem is whether she is saved or not for the extraordinary sacrifice of Nancy. One of the most distinguished Faulkner scholars, Noel Polk, in his critical study, *Faulkner's Requiem for a Nun*, says, "Nancy's murder of Temple's baby is the most savage and reprehensible act of violence in all of William Faulkner's fiction; that it is totally without justification; that it is the act of a madwoman and not of a saint; that Nancy's and Stevens's stated motives are not necessarily their real ones; that Stevens is not at all out to 'save' Temple but rather to crucify her; and that Temple rather than Nancy is at the moral center of the novel." However in studying Faulkner's concept of faith, Polk's argument does not seem to be substantiated. Though, as far as I know, no one has mentioned this, Faulkner's concept of faith and sacrifice owes much to Jeremy Taylor, a seventeenth-century Anglican bishop and writer, whose *Holy Living and Dying* is one of Faulkner's favorite books. Faulkner even brought it along when he was hospitalized. Hence, with the reference of Jeremy Taylor, the aim of this paper is to study the transformation of Temple Drake in consideration of Faulkner's concept of faith, and ultimately, to refute Polk's view of Nancy's sacrifice.