

## An Assertion That Faulkner Is Not a Pelagian by Reference to Jeremy Taylor

Yayoi OKADA\*

In spite of many arguments regarding Faulkner's religious consciousness, that his work is Christian is easily apprehended in view of his texts and his remarks.<sup>1)</sup> However, considering his strong emphasis on man's free will, Faulkner can be accused of being a Pelagian who holds that man can take the initial and fundamental steps towards salvation by his own efforts, apart from Divine grace, or a Semipelagian who while not denying the necessity of grace for salvation, maintains that the first step towards salvation is taken by the human will and that grace supervenes only later.<sup>2)</sup> The aim of this paper is to denounce Faulkner's not being a Pelagian or a Semipelagian by introducing the influence of Jeremy Taylor, a seventeenth-century Anglican theologian, an approach that has not, to date, been fully explored.

Faulkner claims that he has "tremendous faith in man, in spite of all his faults and limitations."<sup>3)</sup> When asked at Nagano, "Do you consider human life basically a tragedy?" he replied, "Actually, yes. But man's immortality is that he is faced with a tragedy which he can't beat and he still tries to do something with it."<sup>4)</sup> Faulkner's strong belief in man is most intensely expressed by the sentence, "he [man] will prevail" in his "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature":

---

\* Professor, Doctor of Philosophy in Literature, Kwansei Gakuin University.

- 1 ) Cf. Randall Stewart, *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1958), pp.141–42; Amos Wilder, *Theology and Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958), p.130; C. Hugh Holman, "The Unity of Faulkner's *Light in August*," *PMLA* LXXIII March, 1958, p.166; Cleanth Brooks, *The Hidden God* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963), pp.22–23.
- 2 ) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974), pp.1058, 1258.
- 3 ) James B Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926–1962* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp.70–71. Subsequent references to the book will be identified by the abbreviation *LG*, followed by the page number.
- 4 ) Robert A. Jelliffe, ed., *Faulkner at Nagano* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956), p.4. Subsequent references to the book will be identified by the abbreviation *FN*, followed by the page number.

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.<sup>5)</sup>

In the Bible, the word “prevail” generally occurs in contexts where a victory is won with God’s help:

Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have *prevailed*” (Ge. 30:8); “Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have *prevailed*” (Ge. 32:28), etc. (emphases added).<sup>6)</sup>

Hence, in spite of his strong belief in man, Faulkner understands that man cannot do without God’s help.

The problem of free will—the view that humanity has the capacity to choose between good and evil—has been one of the crucial issues debated among Christian theologians. According to Protestant theology, man is innately evil and he can do nothing to save himself—only the grace of God redeems him.

Though Faulkner highly values the concept of free will, the only problems that he despairs of man solving are “the problems which he is doomed forever to, simply because he is flesh and blood” (*FN* 27). Faulkner recognizes that man cannot achieve his ideals in spite of his aspirations since man is made of “flesh and blood” and needs a redeemer to atone for his sinful situation.

Faulkner presents the doctrine that sin demands a sacrifice, as when he puts the words “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22) into the mouth of Rev. Shegog in *The Sound and the Fury*, and he describes Christ-like sacrificial characters who become innocent victims or scapegoats for others and thus serve as their expiation.

In fact, a Christ figure appears in Faulkner’s major works from the time of *Soldiers’ Pay* (1926), in which Donald Mahon, a badly wounded pilot in the Royal Air Force, becomes a symbol of the helpless suffering of war, right through to his last novel, *The Reivers* (1962), in which Ned McCaslin becomes a Christ figure and a redeemer through his self-sacrificial deeds.

Some of the other such characters in Faulkner’s oeuvre are Benjamin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Joe Christmas in *Light in August* (1932),

---

5 ) James B. Meriwether, ed., *Essays Speeches & Public Letters* (New York: Random House, 1965), p.120. Subsequent references to the book will be identified by the abbreviation *ES*, followed by the page number.

6 ) *Cruden’s Concordance to the Holy Scripture* (Phil.: American Pub. 1890), pp.192–93.

Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Ike McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses* (1942), Nancy Mannigoe in *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), the corporal in *A Fable* (1954), and Mink Snopes in *The Mansion* (1959).<sup>7)</sup> A pressing question, then, is how Faulkner can possibly reconcile these two characteristics—the emphasis on free will and the pursuit of a Christ figure.

The key lies in Faulkner's affinities with Jeremy Taylor. Although Taylor's influence has been discussed in previous papers,<sup>7)</sup> there have not been enough opportunities to present the fundamental materials that tie him to Faulkner.

Jeremy Taylor, one of the Caroline Divines,<sup>8)</sup> was born in 1613. Educated at Gonville and Caius College in Cambridge University, he was elected as a Fellow in 1633. Ordained in the same year, he went to London to preach in the place of a friend, where he attracted the notice of Abp. W. Laud, who nominated him to a fellowship at All Souls, Oxford, in 1635. Shortly afterwards he was appointed chaplain to Charles I. Owing to his friendship with the Franciscan, Christopher Davenport, he was suspected of Roman tendencies, of which he cleared himself in a "Gunpowder Sermon" at Oxford in 1638. In the same year, he was made rector of Uppingham, which he left in 1642 to become a chaplain in the Royalist army. After a brief imprisonment, he retired to Wales in 1645, where he served as chaplain to Lord Carbery at Golden Grove—; many of his best works were written there. Taylor's fame today rests almost entirely on his devotional writings regarding Anglican spirituality, on their balanced sobriety and their insistence on a well-ordered piety, especially in *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1651).<sup>9)</sup>

It may seem at first that there is no connection between Faulkner and Taylor. However, enough evidence exists to connect them. First, Taylor's *Holy Living and*

---

7 ) Refer to "Salvation for Temple Drake: A Study of *Requiem for a Nun*," in *Sociology Department Studies* 82 (Kwansei Gakuin University, 1998), pp.59–71; "Faulkner's Ultimate Gospel: A Study of a Christ Figure in William Faulkner's *A Fable*," *Sociology Department Studies* 83, 1999, pp.41–57; "A Study of a Christ Figure in *Pylon*, William Faulkner's Waste Land," *School of Sociology Journal* 89, 2001, pp.135–48; "The World of Love: A Study of *The Wild Palms* in Reference to Henri Bergson," *Sociology Journal* 90, 2001, pp.71–83; "The Access to Life's Flux: A Study of Hightower in *Light in August* in Reference to Henri Bergson and Jeremy Taylor," *Kwansei Gakuin Humanities Review* VI, 2002, pp.79–102; "The Dispute against Faulkner's Direct Influence by Henri Bergson and His Affinities with Jeremy Taylor in his Concept of Time," *Sociology Department Journal* 96, 2004, pp.149–61; "The Source of Faulkner's Essential Image—'Time is Christ' in Reference to Jeremy Taylor," *Sociology Department Journal* 100, pp.85–100; "A Christ Figure in William Faulkner's *Light in August*," *Language and Culture* 11 (Kwansei Gakuin Language Center, 2008), pp.77–89.

8 ) The Caroline Divines were influential theologians and writers who lived during the reigns of King Charles I and, after the Restoration, King Charles II. Cf. H. R. McAdoo, *The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology* (Longman, 1949).

9 ) *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p.1343; *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP, 1955), and other biographies of Jeremy Taylor.

*Dying* is one of Faulkner's favorite books. Faulkner went so far as to take it with him when he was hospitalized. According to Joseph L. Blotner's biography, Faulkner was never an active member of a church community, but he read the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and Jeremy Taylor. There are several references to Jeremy Taylor in Faulkner's biography:

On some evenings after dinner Faulkner would take down a volume from the shelf. . . . The books were always old favorites. . . . He would enlist Erskine's help as well as Tullos' in building up a second library. . . . When the books came, he was disappointed 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.<sup>10)</sup>

When Estelle and Blotner arrived to help him with the process of leaving the hospital [in 1961], 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*.<sup>11)</sup>

In *Faulkner's Library—A Catalogue* there is mention of three of Taylor's works:

TAYLOR, JEREMY. *Holy Living and Dying: With Prayers Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian, and the Parts of Devotion Fitted to All Occasions, Furnished for All Necessities*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1883. C

———. *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying*. London: W. Pickering, 1850. L

———. *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*. Edited with an introduction by Thomas S. Kepler. Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1956. C<sup>12)</sup>

In addition, Faulkner writes in *The Unvanquished* that John Sartoris, an officer in the Civil War, owns Jeremy Taylor's work.<sup>13)</sup> Also, in a passage cut from his early novel called *Flags in the Dust* (the title of which later became *Sartoris*), Faulkner sketched in the "glamorous violence" of Sartoris' ancestors, the Bayard

10) Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1 vol. (New York: Random House, 1984), pp.671–72.

11) *Ibid.*, p.698.

12) Joseph Blotner, *William Faulkner's Library—A Catalogue* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1964), pp.73–74.

13) William Faulkner, *The Unvanquished* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p.18.

and John Sartoris who served Charles I (whose chaplain was Jeremy Taylor): “earlier John Sartoris who had followed his young prince to France and there led such a career of penniless and glamorous violence that even Charles Stuart was glad when he died. . .”<sup>14)</sup> Jeremy Taylor is thus a familiar figure in the world of Faulkner.

Another piece of evidence that supports Faulkner’s affinity with Taylor is the fact that nineteenth-century American literature was greatly influenced by seventeenth-century English theology. F. O. Matthiessen was the first to note the “vogue” for seventeenth-century writers among “American Renaissance” authors.<sup>15)</sup> For example, according to Matthiessen, Emerson said, “Herbert and Jeremy Taylor had mastered ‘a beautiful mean,’” that “could produce a richer harvest than any New England has yet enjoyed.”<sup>16)</sup> Several commentators followed Matthiessen.<sup>17)</sup> More recently Robin Grey in *The Complicity of Imagination* (1997) says that the relationship between antebellum nineteenth-century American authors and the writers, culture, and politics of seventeenth-century England is a rich and complex one.<sup>18)</sup>

Like other critics, Evert Duyckinck linked *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* to Jeremy Taylor’s treatise *Ductor Dubitantium* as well as several other seventeenth-century Anglican texts: Browne’s *Religio Medici* and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, and Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Duyckinck even called *Moby-Dick* “a folio *Ductor Dubitantium*.”<sup>19)</sup> Melville thought of Jeremy Taylor as the most accomplished and dazzling of all rhetoricians, in whom “the two opposite forces of eloquent passion and rhetorical fancy” had been brought “into an exquisite equilibrium.”<sup>20)</sup>

Not surprisingly, in *William Faulkner’s Library—A Catalogue*, there is a listing for Melville, Herman: “Moby Dick; or, The Whale. Introduction by Leon

---

14) Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage–Random, 1974), p.5. Subsequent references to the book will be identified by the abbreviation *Blotner*, followed by the page number.

15) F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York: Oxford UP, 1941), pp.100–32.

16) *American Renaissance*, p.104.

17) For example, Sherman Paul, *The Shores of America: Thoreau’s Inward Exploration* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1958); Merton M. Sealts, Jr., “Melville and the Platonic Tradition” (1980), in *Pursuing Melville: 1940–1980* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1981); “Explanatory Notes” in *Herman Melville, Moby-Dick*, ed. Luther S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York: Hendricks House, 1962), pp.25, 137–38.

18) Robin Grey, *The Complicity of Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), p.1.

19) *The Complicity of Imagination*, p.34.

20) *American Renaissance*, p.120; Evert Duyckinck, “Melville’s *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* (‘Second Notice’),” *Literary World* (November 22, 1851), p.404.

Howard. New York: The Modern Library, 1950. C.”<sup>21)</sup> Furthermore, Faulkner writes, “I think that the book which I put down with the unqualified thought ‘I wish I had written that’ is *Moby-Dick*” (*ES* 197).

There are also mentions of Hawthorne’s work in *William Faulkner’s Library—A Catalogue*.<sup>22)</sup> We are able to identify the influence of Jeremy Taylor on Hawthorne. According to Neal F. Doubleday’s “The Theme of Hawthorne’s ‘Fancy’s Show Box’,” Hawthorne borrowed *Ductor Dubitantium* from the Salem Athenaeum in 1834.<sup>23)</sup> Hawthorne also refers to that text in “Egoism; or, the Bosom Serpent (1842).”<sup>24)</sup> In addition, Hawthorne’s son writes about his father, “He was a tolerably diligent reader of sermons, if they were good ones; especially perhaps of Jeremy Taylor, the Shakespeare of divines.”<sup>25)</sup>

In 1958, in his speech “A Word to Young Writers,” Faulkner advised his audience to study the masters, among whom he numbered Hawthorne and Melville (*ES* 163). Indeed, he might have come to know Jeremy Taylor’s work through one of these authors.

Faulkner’s affinities with Jeremy Taylor can also be investigated in terms of denominations. Faulkner’s wife was an Episcopalian and he also became a member of that denomination, which started out as the Anglican Church in America in 1607. Blotner writes that on a hot July day in 1924, Faulkner, Farley [who was a classmate and the son of the dean of the university law school], and Wills [who wrote a column for the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*], began to drink, and the tenor of the conversation changed and deepened as Faulkner began to discuss philosophies of religion. Asked about his beliefs, Faulkner said he wanted to be a lay reader in the Episcopal Church:

“If you could be anything you want to,” he [Wills] asked Faulkner, “what would you rather be?”

“A lay reader in the Episcopal Church,” Faulkner answered.

---

21) *William Faulkner’s Library—A Catalogue*, p.43.

22) *William Faulkner’s Library—A Catalogue*, p.36.

23) Neal F. Doubleday, “The Theme of Hawthorne’s ‘Fancy’s Show Box: A Morality,’” in Jay B. Hubbell, ed., *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism and Bibliography* X (Durham: Duke UP, 1939), pp.341–43. See also “Books Read by Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1828–1850,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* LXVIII (January, 1932), p.80 and Elisabeth Chandler’s, “A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853,” *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* VII (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, July 1926), p.58.

24) “Egoism; or, the Bosom Serpent,” *The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne* V (Boston and New York: Houghton, 1900), p.52.

25) Julian Hawthorne, *Hawthorne Reading* (Cleveland, 1969), pp.110–11.

“Oh,” Wills said. “You’re a real Christian. You want to go to heaven.”  
 “Certainly,” Faulkner said solemnly. (*Blotner* 357)

And in 1930, Blotner writes that Faulkner and Estelle attended the Episcopal Church regularly:

Their year of probation well over by now, he and Estelle had been regularly attending Reverend William McCready’s Episcopal church. Bill even had a Book of Common Prayer in which Estelle would see him make an occasional notation. He would conscientiously join in the hymns with the rest of the congregation. They went there for Christmas Eve services, a custom they would follow often in later years. The next day they made much of Christmas in the traditional way with a big tree, pine boughs in the hall, and banister decorated with holly and ivy from their own woods. (*Blotner* 678)

In the Calendar of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Jeremy Taylor is commemorated on August 13 as “a man of prayer and a pastor” who was “deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life” and of necessity, therefore, of allowing the “Holy Spirit” to “lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days.”<sup>26)</sup>

Asserting that he is a Highlander, Faulkner seems to be on the Royalists’ side. Faulkner himself told his classmates that he was from Scotland. One of Faulkner’s friends, himself of Highland ancestry, was “surprised by his really quite profound knowledge of the Highlands and their history.” To him there was no question of Faulkner’s lineage: “He was a Highlander and fiercely proud of it” (*Blotner* 7). In fact his great-grandfather William Cuthbert Faulkner (1825–1889) once declared, “My ancestors came from Inverness, Scotland” (*Blotner* 3). Inverness is famous for its Jacobites who fought for the loyalty to the Royalist cause.

Considering the aristocratic and enlightened character of the Episcopalian church, which derived from its eminent position in the eastern United States, Faulkner’s Episcopal connection was not an unusual one for Southern intellectuals. It is worthy of note that Faulkner’s most admirable characters are Episcopalians: Rosa (Granny) Millard, Colonel John Sartoris’ mother-in-law, who during the most trying days of the Civil War, keeps John’s house going, looking on herself as a sinner with the sins of others on her conscience;<sup>27)</sup> and Charles Mallison and Gavin

---

26) *The Prayer for the Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, (3rd ed. New York: The Church Hymnal Corp., 1980), pp.292–93.

27) *The Unvanquished*, pp.155–56, 167–68.

Stevens who say, “and ours, the Episcopal.”<sup>28)</sup>

The final piece of evidence linking Faulkner and Taylor is the fact that the two share antipathy toward Calvinistic Puritans. In the South, apart from the shame of slavery, there arose an intense desire for self-justification against Puritanic Northern criticism after the Civil War.<sup>29)</sup> The South had had the disastrous experience of defeat. Their Old South had been destroyed by the Civil War.

Faulkner, whose farm outside of Oxford is a large one, part of which is cultivated by three Negro families whom he trusts, says, “Reason for the vital Southern one re the War and no Northern one is, the Northern had nothing to write about regarding it. He won it. The only clean thing about War is losing it.”<sup>30)</sup> He points out the prejudice of the Northern people towards the South, saying, “The Northerner, the outsider, had a queer and erroneous idea of what Southern people were.”<sup>31)</sup> Though he admits that if he were a Northerner, he would blame the South for the fact that the problem of the Negro is still unsolved, he argues that the Negro is not yet capable of the responsibility of equality. Therefore he expresses very ambiguous feelings, insisting that it is the job of the South, not the North, to teach the Negro this responsibility since they know the Negro:

But I do know what we in the South, having grown up with and lived among Negroes for generations, are capable in individual cases of liking and trusting individual Negroes, which the North can never do because the Northerner only fears him. So we alone can teach the Negro the responsibility of personal morality and rectitude. . . (FU 211)

Here we see some negative feelings of Faulkner’s toward the Puritan North.

As Lillian Smith writes, “Guilt was then and is today the biggest crop raised in Dixie”;<sup>32)</sup> deterministic Calvinism (or what Faulkner usually calls Puritanism) was powerful among the Southerners. And because the Southern conscience was uneasy over slavery, not only the Presbyterian Church but also the other denominations are, to some extent, under the influence of “the Calvinized Jehovah.”<sup>33)</sup> In Faulkner we

---

28) William Faulkner, *The Town* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p.342.

29) Richard Gray, *The Life of William Faulkner* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.30.

30) Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories 1944–1962* (New York: Viking, 1966), p.79.

31) Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957–1958* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1957), p.136. Subsequent references to the book will be identified in the text by the abbreviation FU, followed by the page number.

32) Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York: Norton, 1961), p.103.

33) W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1960), p.135.



find this corrupted “Calvinism” in the fatalism of McEachern in *Light in August*.

Incidentally, unlike other denominations such as Baptist, or Methodist, the Episcopalian church was divided only during the brief space of the war, and the question of slavery was not involved; even the question of secession remained in the background. The presiding bishop of the Northern church published his conviction that secession was a constitutional right of the states and that slavery was sanctioned by the Bible. Though others in the church took an opposite attitude, the division in the church never became passionate and ecclesiastical unity was restored almost as soon as political integrity was re-established.<sup>34)</sup>

As for Jeremy Taylor, as has been mentioned, he was appointed as chaplain to Charles I shortly after being nominated to a fellowship at All Souls, Oxford in 1635, and in 1642 he became a chaplain in the Royalist army. Taylor’s loyalty and the obligations of a royal chaplain led him to join the King at Oxford as well as in imprisonment at Cardigan Castle. Evelyn’s Diary tells that in the letter he wrote to her on June 4, 1659, Taylor complains of the Puritans:

“I fear my peace in Ireland is likely to be short; for a Presbyterian and a madman [Puritans] have informed against me as a dangerous man to their religion; and for using the sign of the cross in baptism. The worst event of the information which I fear is my return into England; which although I am not desirous it should be upon these terms yet if it can be without much violence, I should not be troubled.”<sup>35)</sup>

Surprising though it may be, Faulkner’s biographical facts, as well as his works thus provide sufficient materials to enable us to connect him with Jeremy Taylor.

So emphatically did Taylor stress the importance of practical piety with man’s free will and his desire to perfect man in holiness that he became one of the most notable moral theologians produced by the Church of England in the field of ethics and ethical questions in light of Christian self-understanding. Taylor himself defines moral theology as a practical wisdom:

. . . moral theology is a collective body of all wisdom, whereof some things are demonstrable and many are probable, and other things are better than their contraries; and they are to be proved accordingly, every thing in its proportion

---

34) Charles C. Tiffany, *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: Christian Literature, c. 1895), pp.500–03.

35) *Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. W. Bray, with Life of the Author and Preface, by H. B. Wheatley III (London, 1906), p.256.

and capacity.<sup>36)</sup>

Taylor's understanding of man and his fall is completely biblical, though some critics denounced the sixth chapter of *Unum Necessarium*, which emphasizes man's moral responsibilities and capabilities, as being Pelagian in tone and inspiration and as evidence that Taylor objects to the doctrine of original sin. In response to this censure, Taylor's concern for practical piety reaches a climax when he asserts that "Every man is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling" (*Works* III 210). He goes on to define a right or sure conscience as "nothing but right reason reduced to practice, and conducting moral actions" (*Works* IX 50).

John Booty writes, "Taylor's practical piety cannot be fully understood without taking into account his sacramental theology. Grace is from above." Yet he also writes, "Taylor time and again stressed the importance of practical piety and seemingly objected to the doctrine of original sin, in part because he believed such doctrine tended to undermine piety and was used as a defense by habitually sinful men."<sup>37)</sup>

In fact, Taylor does not believe that man with his free will is able unaided to fulfill the higher demands of the gospel. Taylor admits fiercely how difficult it is to choose good over evil in our moral actions:

Liberty of choice in moral actions, that is, in all that can be good or bad, is agreeable to the whole method and purpose, the economy and design of human nature and being. For we are a creature between angel and beast, and we understand something, and are ignorant of much, and the things that are before us are mixed of good and evil, and our duty hath much good and some evil, and sin hath some good and much evil, and therefore these things are and they are not to be pursued. (*Works* X 550)

Hence, he sincerely asks mercy of God and expresses his crucial need for Christ and His redemption:

In the days of my youth I was frightened by the warnings of damnation, but there is confidence for me to pursue my own way in the religious books I read. I cannot help sinning, and I am told that I may be saved by grace. I am told I

---

36) *The Whole Works of the Right Reverend Jeremy Taylor, D. D. with a Life of the Author*, ed. Reginald Heber and Charles Eden (London: Longmans, 1847–1852), IX xiv. Subsequent references to this will be identified by the abbreviation *Works*, followed by the volume number and the page number.

37) Thomas K. Carroll, ed., *Jeremy Taylor: Selected Works* (New York: Paulist, 1990), p.53.

have liberty only to sin, and that though it is a sign of regeneration to struggle against it, I cannot hope to prevail. Yet God is merciful and though my righteousness is as a filthy rag, Christ's righteousness is what I shall be justified by, I am one of those for whom Christ died.<sup>38)</sup>

No fewer than forty of these concluding prayers praising Christ are found in the single volume of *The Great Exemplar* (1649):

He that was born was the Prince of peace, and came to reconcile God with man, and man with his brother; and to make by the sweetness of His example and the influence of a holy doctrine, such happy atonements between disagreeing natures, such confederations and societies between enemies. (*Works* II 82)

Taylor focuses on Christ's marvelous atonement for man:

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 them, was as dispassionate and gentle as the morning sun in autumn. . . . (*Works* III 197)

Impressed by the extraordinary nature of Christ's atonement, Taylor goes on to advise men who are saved by the grace of God to follow Christ's piety:

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. . . . (*Works* III 214)

Taylor emphasizes that to follow Christ, we need repentance, the change of direction of free will since it is repentance that makes the great change:

Repentance of all things in the world, makes the greatest change: it changes things in heaven and earth; for it changes the whole man from sin to grace, from vicious habits to holy customs, from unchaste bodies to angelical souls, from swine to philosophers, from drunkenness to sober counsels. . . . (*Works*

---

38) This is a summary of a long passage of Taylor's *Works* VII, p.10 ff.

## III 205–6)

Since man is made after God's own image with a renewed free will, Taylor instructs "the general instruments and means to serve to a holy life" in response to God's great love:

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, even all the days of our life; that this life being ended, we may live with Him for ever. (*Works* III 7)

Thus overwhelmed by the grace of God, and in response to His magnificent offer, Taylor takes very seriously man's moral responsibilities that are necessary in order to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God to be with Him.

Influenced in this way by Taylor, Faulkner also seems to take for granted that man's salvation is completely due to the grace of God, as he finds the grounds for his assertion that man must try to be good in the fact that man is created in the image of God:

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. . . (*ES* 123).

On the same basis—that God created man as a precious creature to respond to His love out of free will—Faulkner asserts that freedom is a right and a responsibility:

. . . man's hope is in man's freedom. The basis of the universal truth which the writer speaks is freedom in which to hope and believe, since only in liberty can hope exist—liberty and freedom not given man as a free gift but as a right and a responsibility to be earned if he deserves it, is worthy of it, is willing to work for it by means of courage and sacrifice, and then to defend it always. (*FN*

187)

However, at the same time, Faulkner knows well the extreme difficulty of the pursuit of moral action because of the problem of “flesh and blood.” His Christ figure is the culmination of his critical need for some redemptive power. Faulkner’s concept of Christ can be understood, if we refer to Taylor, by noting that it is through “His[Christ’s] grace of the atonement” that He becomes our great Exemplar in piety. By following Christ’s example—in going out of oneself and into the intention to sacrifice oneself—“the man will prevail against destroying himself” (*FU* 6):

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 understands that he cannot do without Christ because of his recognition of “flesh and blood” and of the idea that atonement is God’s free gift to man. And, indeed, one of Faulkner’s characters, Mink Snopes in *The Mansion*, who previously believed in inhuman justice, at his desperate end comes to confess that a Divine power will care for him and that he should accept such unconditional grace from God:

“You dont need to write God a letter. He has done already seen inside you long before He would even need to bother to read it. Because a man will learn a little sense in time even outside. But he learns it quick in here. That when a Judgment powerful enough to help you, will help you if all you got to do is jest take back and accept it, you are a fool not to.”<sup>39)</sup>

It is understandable that Faulkner learns about Christian moral responsibility from Jeremy Taylor, who was so overwhelmed by the grace of God revealed in Christ’s atonement for man’s sins that he offered his own will to God through his own decision: thus the divine grace worked in and through him and, with his renewed will, he was diligent and careful to be worthy of the grace he received in order to be with God.

It is possible to exaggerate Taylor’s influence on Faulkner. However, as has

---

39) William Faulkner, *The Mansion* (New York: Vintage, 1965), p.100.

been mentioned, we can at least show that Faulkner is not Pelagian or Semipelagian by asserting that he owes his religious thinking in great part to Jeremy Taylor's concept of the Great Exemplar, in so far as he believes that God's redemptive grace expressed by a Christ figure takes initiative in every phase of man's existence, and that in spite of his weaknesses, man should decide to follow His example with God's assistance and try to live righteously in order to prevail.

### Content of the *Works*:

I. *Clerus domini*; Discourse of Friendship; Rules and Advices to the Clergy & c. & c.—II. The Great Exemplar—III. The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and of Holy Dying—IV. A Course of Sermons—V. Episcopacy Asserted, and other works on Church Discipline—VI. The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and Five Letters—VII. *Unum Necessarium, Deus Justificatus*; Letters to Warner and Jeanes; The Golden Grove, and Festival Hymns—VIII. The Worthy Communicant and A Collection of Offices—IX. *Ductor Dubitantium*, part I—X. *Ductor Dubitantium*, part II.

### Selected bibliography on Jeremy Taylor

- Goss, Edmond. *Jeremy Taylor*. London: Macmillan, 1904.
- Heber, Reginald. *The Life of Jeremy Taylor*, 2 Vols. London: Duncan & Priestley, 1824.
- Henson, H. H. *Jeremy Taylor: 1613–1667*. London: S. P. C. K. (Typical English Churchman series), 1902.
- Hughes, H. Trevor. *The Piety of Jeremy Taylor*. London: Macmillan, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Jeremy Taylor and John Wesley." *London Quarterly*, Oct. 1949.
- Huntley, Fran L. *Jeremy Taylor and the Great Rebellion: A Study of His Mind and Temper in Controversy*. Ann Arbor. MI: University of Michigan Press, 1970.
- King, James Roy. "Jeremy Taylor: Theology and Aesthetics." *Studies in Six 17<sup>th</sup> Century Writers*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1966.
- May, E. H. *A Dissertation on the Life, Theology, and Times of Dr. Jeremy Taylor*. London: Bemrose & Sons, 1892.
- Nossen, Robert. "Jeremy Taylor: Seventeenth-Century Theologian." *Anglican Theological Review*, 42 (1960): 28–39.
- Stranks, Charles J. *The Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor*. London: S. P. C. K., 1952.
- Williamson, Ross. *Jeremy Taylor*. London: Dobson, 1952.
- Wood, Thomas. *English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century, with Special Reference to Jeremy Taylor*. London: S. P. C. K., 1952.
- Worley, G. *Jeremy Taylor: A Sketch of His Life and Times*. London: Longman, 1904.