

Louise Cowan

Jerusalem's Claim on Us

What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Greek quest for excellence and order and beauty to do with the Hebrew quest for the living God? This is the question the Church Fathers asked themselves, a query that we still must raise from time to time. And in our day in particular, it is the question that Christian educators in the West should make their primary concern. For the liberal arts are indisputably Greek in their orientation: and yet those bright gods on Mt. Olympus, who mingled with men (and women!), jealously coveted sacrifices, and accepted official commemoration in marble temples and olive groves, have little to do with the hidden presence who spoke from a burning bush and forbade David to build him a temple. And the center of our faith—that lonely one who hung on the cross at Golgotha and redefined the purposes of life—took as his earthly ancestry the *Hebrew* tradition, with its pervasive tendency to regard as idolatry any representation such as we in the West have called art. Writing a poem or painting a picture is a little like fashioning a golden calf. Hence, at first glance, nothing seems further from the concerns of art and human culture than the Scriptural heritage with

which Jesus Christ aligned himself. And yet the Western intellectual tradition contains a Hebrew strain even more surely than a Hellenic one. Perhaps, then, educators need to take a look at the peculiar contradictions and the wide inclusiveness of this much maligned and greatly misunderstood “master narrative,” as its detractors have called the Western tradition.

More than a century ago, in his essay “Hebraism and Hellenism,” Matthew Arnold addressed the contradictions the West has faced in inheriting two such diverse strains, attributing much of our cultural difficulties to these conflicting ideas of the good. The object of the Greek way of thought, as he said, is to *know* rightly; the object of the Hebrew is to *do* rightly. Perhaps we could rephrase his statements to

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say that the highest calling of the Greeks is to pass by appearances and “hit the mark” of intellectual truth, whereas the supreme obligation of the Hebrews is to walk in the way of the Lord and on his law to meditate day and night. It has been the complicated task of Christian culture to bring these two imperatives together, and in these changing times it is dangerous to allow either tradition to be lost or to be narrowed into private concerns. No doubt one of the great strengths of Western civilization has been its ability to draw on these two heritages and produce artists and thinkers of sometimes outrageous paradox—witness such thinkers and artists as Augustine, Dante, El Greco, Donne, Milton, Goya, Beethoven, Goethe, Melville, Kierkegaard, Hopkins, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Mahler, Rouault, and Faulkner, among others. All of these manifest a Greek sense of form combined with a Hebraic sense of restlessness and a haunting sense of that darkness we call sin.

The Greek mode of thought gave rise not only to philosophy, but to the quest for harmony and beauty. It invented philosophy and provided the models for epic, tragedy, and comedy. In their art the Greeks discovered myth and symbol as modes of human imagination that arise from the earth like a cloudy veil wafting up toward the sky, rather than coming down like manna from heaven. The Coleridgean symbol, in particular, proves to be a Greek mode of thought, with its ability to reveal the transcendent in the phenomenal.

The Israelites had no such figure: for them the numinous was not to be found in indirection. The glory of the heavens and the wide stretch of the firmament of which the psalmist sang were not mere symbols of something else: they were creations of God, awesome realities which He had made. And Yahweh himself, speaking from the whirlwind to Job, brings home the realization that the creature cannot rival the creator:

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Can you draw Leviathan with a hook? Could you make the mighty nostrils of the horse? And confronted with this *mysterium tremendum*, Job is abashed, as well he might be. He had heard of Yahweh, he says, but now that he sees him he repents in dust and ashes. He does not actually see God, of course; he is made to “see” only his creation. But in the more intimate mode of Hebraic thought, he hears his word. He knows the artist from the artwork—and is forcibly made aware that God, not he, is the maker. And as a matter of fact, hardly any Old Testament figure is allowed to create, except of course in some of the most gorgeous poetry of praise the world has known. David, who is a man after God’s own heart, is a musician and a singer and—at least one time—a dancer. Deborah and Miriam raise songs of praise. The prophets utter powerful poetry inspired directly by Yahweh. The psalms are ecstatic love poems to a God who is both dominating and reticent—and essentially unknowable. But on the whole, the Israelite was not portrayed as *homo faber*. For the ancient Hebrews it is not the things one makes that count; rather, it is one’s relation to the God that made all things. How different the Promethean view, which may be taken to represent the Greek attitude toward the status of humankind. According to Aeschylus, after Prometheus taught mortals “all the arts,” they were expected to use their skills to create and to advance civilization. But the Israelites, as the noted Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber comments, made no real contributions to painting or sculpture or architecture. Their task, as he points out, was to work with a more recalcitrant medium: human hearts and wills. And the end of their work was not a monument, but a community.

But the Israelites gave us the concept of the book and in Exodus the unforgettable

liberation epic of the world. They set the pattern for narrative and bequeathed to us a sense of the desert experience and a divine discontent with the things of civilization. They established the norms for lyric poetry. And they passed down to us something radically new: not myth but history, a movement forward in time, and therefore, the sense of an ending. Further, their dominant paradigm was not the lonely masculine hero, as in classical culture, but marriage, man and woman standing side by side as partners—Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel. These are the ancestors: two people working together and, amazingly in the Abraham story, journeying together in Odyssean fashion, surviving by their wits across the many miles that lead from Ur to the land of Canaan. Marriage is the figure the prophets

use for Yahweh's love for his people. A passionate marriage lyric, "The Song of Songs," with its frank eroticism, can be interpreted by the rabbis as fitting to describe the love of God for humankind, just as it can later be taken by Christian mystics to delineate Christ's love for his bride, the Church. The awesome God of the Hebrews loves his chosen people passionately, is jealous of them, hurt by them, reproachful of them, sometimes even petulant, but always faithful to them.

What Greek myth implies is somewhat different: that the gods are children of earth (Gaia) and sky (Uranos), and though mortals are thoroughly second-rate, they are called upon to be as like the gods as they can. Though gods sometimes mix with

mortals (Zeus has an indefatigable attraction to beautiful maidens), nonetheless, an "iron sky," in Pindar's phrase, divides the two realms. In the very nature of things, humanity is limited by certain natural ties that bind individuals to different orders of being: to the earth, the family, the city, the dead, the divine. They are assigned their *moira*, their portion, their fate—though they are free to react to it as they will. In the



The Angel appears to Abraham and Sarah.

face of their mortality, they endure by what Prometheus calls "blind hopes." Magnanimity (great-souledness) is the highest virtue; a noble humanism pervades Hellenic art and thought. In striking contrast to the Greek, Hebrew literature assigns immense significance to humankind, made in the image of God, though it enjoins a necessary humility in the face of the creator's majesty and power. It affirms that mortals are not simply

offspring of nature or of Mother Earth but children of the God beyond gods—and obligated through the very fact of their existence. In creating humankind and promising to be present to his people, God has made a covenant with the human race through those who will hear his voice. Thus, in the Hebraic tradition God is to be found by means not so much of human *eros* as God's *agape*, his overwhelming *hesed*, to use the Hebrew word. And his first act of covenant was creation: all of creation was undertaken from an outpouring generosity, issuing in a creature like himself, in his own image, one that could know and understand and love.

The glory and the benevolence of this creation story are unmatched in the entire

literature of the world:

In the beginning God created the heaven and
the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void;
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of
the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and there was
light.
And God saw the light, that it was good.

The rest of these magnificent verses continue an account of such majesty, in such poetic terms, that even for moderns, across the centuries, wise in the ways of black holes and the possibility of parallel universes, the Genesis story remains an account of truth, not mere fable or primitive superstition. And the lofty lines that tell of the creation of life on earth, and finally of man, are of breathtaking grandeur:

And God said, Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness: and let them have dominion
over the fish of the sea,
and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle,
and over all the earth,
and over every creeping thing that creepeth
upon the earth.
So God created man *in his own image*,
in the image of God created he him; male and
female created he them.
And God blessed them, and God said unto
them,
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it:
and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and
over the fowl of the air,
and over every living thing that moveth upon
the earth.

It is significant that the “word” of God, this command to be fruitful and multiply, was implanted in the very core of human living material—in the secret code of the human

genome, we would say now.

And God saw everything that he had made,
and, behold, it was very good.

In none other of the numerous cosmic creation myths that have been discovered (at least so I am told) is there anything like this account—a deity who fashions a cosmos out of love, possessing the majesty and benevolence of this creator God. He makes things by the power of his effective word and calls his creation good, in the way that an artist matches the idea to the form, knowing beforehand what he is doing and yet surprised at its realized beauty. Creation is a work of art, brought into existence by the spoken Word—God’s thought, his design, his gathering together in an imaginative act, his electrifying creation *ex nihilo*. Thus human persons, made in the image of God, though not called to be ingenious or aesthetic, are by their very nature intended to bring things into being, as their creator did, poetically.

We need not be reminded of the matchless second account of creation, in which man is made from the earth, inspirited with God’s own breath, and woman is taken from his side. This is material for long study concerning the “original unity of man and woman,” as Karol Wotyla, Pope John Paul II, designates it. He explicates Adam’s deep sleep in which a being who was one becomes two in order to enable the dynamic of love to take place, which, as Wotyla says, regenerates the cosmos. He makes the comment that this deep sleep resembles the profound creative slumber of the artist before he begins his creation. In the human maker, it portends a loss of the solitary self and a merging with the life God sets in motion. The creative spirit in the ancient Hebrew, then, unlike Plato’s *eros* for the beautiful or Aristotle’s *mimesis*, is portrayed as an openness to the gift of God’s burning love.

But Yahweh's blazing furnace of love is a terror to the Israelites and to those who take his revelation seriously. Martin Buber writes: "The fear of God is the creaturely knowledge of the darkness to which none of our spiritual powers can reach, and out of which God reveals himself.... It is the dark gate through which man must pass if he is to enter into the love of God." The burning coal placed on Isaiah's lips is the gift of love and of poetry: it is a terrifying ability to suffer the eternal in the midst of the temporal. Artists and thinkers in the West, under the Biblical influence, have known that their work must include a recognition of this dark gate; and they themselves must endure at least an analogue of the burning coal.

The Bible thus provides a different and seemingly antithetical model from that given in Greek literature. It demands one's whole heart and one's whole viscera. Nonetheless, without in the least giving up a faith in Scripture, Westerners still find within themselves qualities that only the classical vision can express. The Hellenic cosmos of intellect and heroism, competition and perfection, is a fine model, never to be forgotten by anyone who has encountered Athens. It reveals the unchanging nature of things and the nobility of the human spirit. But the Hebrew cosmos—God's revelation to his chosen ones—has been a more intimate if sometimes invisible paradigm for thinkers in the West. It offers a covenantal model—a bond, a contract, a mutual promise—to be made freely by the will and requiring the offering of one's word. One's relation with God depends not on virtue or achievement but on a covenant to be his and to acknowledge him as one's own. The seventeenth-century metaphysical poet George Herbert has captured (in "Love III," the lyric so greatly praised by Simone Weil) the absurd but splendid generosity of such a donor, offering a love that creates,

prepares a feast, makes a covenant, suffers the indignity of refusal, gives his own substance as nourishment:

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
guilty of dust and sin
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in
Drew nearer to me sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything
A guest, I answered, worthy to be here
Love said You shall be he
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand and smiling did reply
Who made the eyes but I?
Truth, lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve
And know you not says Love who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat
So I did sit and eat.

Herbert's poem expresses an intimacy, an "appetite for God," in C. S. Lewis's phrase, that could have come about only through the influence of Scripture. The tonality of the poem recalls the Old Testament psalms; its content, however, derives from the New Testament *kenosis*, the divine abasement and sacrifice. Images of feasting, of sexual union, of seeing, of the Eucharist—these are used to express the immediacy and generosity of Christ's love and the necessity of its mutuality. All this is to indicate the intimacy of God's love for man; and all this would be, in St. Paul's words, "a scandal to the Greeks."

But the corollary to this generosity is sobering. If we can turn away from such a personal and insistent love, we must indeed be in bad faith. And there is the frightening possibility that God might harden our hearts, as he hardened Pharaoh's. Yahweh has a terrifying potentiality for what the Jews called "the evil urge," a power within

God that can scourge and destroy. The Old Testament authors saw into the abyss as even the Greek tragedians were unable to do. They looked on God's majesty and on human violence and depravity with unaverted gaze. Part of their legacy to Western writers and artists, then, has been a sense of darkness and sin that cannot be erased from the imagination.

Christian art and thought are heir to these two strains which, in having been lived out among two great and gifted peoples, have informed the Western imagination. By taking the Hebrew *Tanach* as its "Old Testament" and considering it as part of its own revelation, Christianity followed and extended the Hebraic vision of life, challenging the classical view not only of time but also of matter. Socrates, in response to one of his students' questions about whether it was not inspiring to look up at the stars, replied that whether he lay on his back and looked at the stars or on his belly and looked at the mud, he was seeing with his physical eye and hence viewing not truth but appearance. For Greek thinkers, matter represented change and illusion. But for Christians, when God himself took on human flesh, matter was given dignity and potentiality. It is not only the doctrine of Christ's incarnation, however, that testifies to the worth and eternal significance of the body; this belief is borne out even further in the Christian teaching of resurrection, centering on and emerging from Christ's crucifixion—a scandal, too, as St. Paul indicated. So also with the ideas of grace, forgiveness, and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, that revolutionary document that proclaims the ultimate triumph of the meek, the poor in spirit, the mourners, the persecuted. This deliberate countersaying to the noble and reasonable classical ethic has enormous implications for Western culture. Within it, phenomena take on a here-

tofore undreamed of significance.

However, rather than resting with Arnold's verdict that we in the West are somewhat schizoid (though of course he did not use that twentieth-century word), I might venture to say that it is in this very tension, this doubleness of vision, this intolerable contradiction, that the genius of Western art and thought resides. We say, in effect: the good is impossible and we must undertake it; images are idolatrous and we must find the divine order through them; the human is confined within nature and we must go through the finite toward something transcendent; human suffering is a punishment for sin and they that mourn and are persecuted will inherit the kingdom. This scandal of contradiction has produced in the West far more than the obviously "Christ-haunted" poets and philosophers. It is at the base of all our thought. As a matter of fact, the personal beliefs of our writers and artists have less to do with this paradox than does their imaginative heritage. William Faulkner, when he was asked point blank if he were Christian, gave one of his evasive but always provocative replies: he had grown up surrounded by that story, he said, and considered it the best story he had ever heard. And of course he has hit upon the important thing. The question is not whether artists themselves are Christian in their personal belief, but what it is that they reflect in their art. We know nothing of Shakespeare's religion, for instance; yet his plays are thoroughly Christian in outlook, with Greek and Roman influences—and very little of the Old Testament. In contrast, we know Milton's religious commitments very well indeed. A short fifty years after Shakespeare, Milton drew all his convictions from the Protestant Reformers, yet his major poems transcend any doctrinal bias. *Paradise Lost* is filled with classical references from beginning to end, though an emphasis on the Old

Testament is revealed in Milton's very choice of subjects for his epic: the origin of sin in the world. In dramatizing and extending the *Book of Genesis*, Milton's treatment of his subject reflects the Hebraic influence: talkative, thorny, authoritarian, with very little visual imagery. It is this charge that T. S. Eliot leveled against Milton in the 1930s, almost dethroning him. The literary imagination of most Western critics has always been indisputably Greek, whereas a good part of the Western artists' imagination is Hebraic. From the Scriptures, the Western soul has been given a yearning for eternity, a hunger for sacrifice, a thirst for suffering; and the artist has been drawn irresistibly to the source from which these longings spring.

It is one of the most serious flaws in our systems of higher education, therefore, for the Bible to be relegated solely to departments of theology, its study in colleges and universities limited to the technical and professional. Holy Scripture should be part of the liberal arts core, which is damaged considerably by its omission. The Biblical narratives need to be placed beside other great narratives if their depth is to be revealed. For the individual student, there is always the danger that Biblical knowledge will be destined to seem either esoteric or childish—the first, if studied only in highly specialized courses; the second, if omitted from the general courses that purport to give an overall view of the intellectual landscape. Either of these approaches severely hampers students' full understanding of their culture. But if American educational leaders have failed at their task of representing the whole Western intellectual tradition in their curricula, nothing has been able to keep the best writers of Europe and America from absorbing, on their own, the stunning beauty of the Scriptures.

To see the way in which the Hebraic and Hellenic threads interweave in a work—and to discern the form given the two by the

Christian resolution—we might turn to a twentieth-century novel, one of Faulkner's most noted and most accomplished, the tragedy *Absalom, Absalom!* This novel, Faulkner's ninth, published in 1936, focuses on a heroic figure, Thomas Sutpen, a poor white who as a boy comes down from the hills into Virginia in the 1820s and is turned away by a black servant from the front door of one of the rich mansions. From this time on, the boy is transfixed. He has had no inkling before of his inferiority. He meditates: what could he do? "*I can shoot him,*" he says to himself. "*No. That wouldn't do no good. What shall we do then? I don't know.*" Finally he makes a firm resolution: to get himself a mansion and found a dynasty so that his own son, his name, his own bloodline can live as these people live, in dignity and luxury. He vows to best such a society at its own game and more: the visionary part of his design is to see to it that no child like himself is turned away from doors, that no child is excluded. But to have such a noble dream come true, Sutpen has to be ruthless. He must destroy lives wherever they interfere with his dream. He determines to make a fortune, come back to Jefferson, build a fine house, and attain respectability—to insert himself into the society that has rejected him with grim finality. He goes to the West Indies, marries the daughter of the owner of a sugar plantation, has a child by her, becomes wealthy. But he discovers that his wife is part black; recognizing that this detail will interfere with his design, he pays her off and abandons her, thinking there will be no hard feelings. "His trouble was innocence," General Compson comments in telling the tale to his son, who in turn repeats what he knows of the scandal to his own son, Quentin Compson. Quentin, the scion of this aristocratic though decaying Jefferson family, on his way to Harvard in 1909 for his freshman year, has been called to Miss Rosa Coldfield's

house and told her side of the story about Thomas Sutpen, the man that she characterizes as “man-horse-demon”:

Then hearing would reconcile and he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins now—the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about old ghost-times; and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South the same as she was; the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in not language....

For Sutpen had indeed come to Jefferson, bought his land, disappeared, and several months later come back with a band of wild blacks and a captured French architect to build his house, torn violently out of the wilderness, as Miss Rosa says. Quentin, troubled about the decline of his own family, is caught at that moment of almost escaping the South until called back by Miss Rosa to accompany her on an urgent mission to investigate the old Sutpen mansion. What they find there is catastrophic. Thomas Sutpen's son Henry has immured himself in the Sutpen mansion after forty years earlier killing his black half-brother Charles Bon, the issue of Sutpen's marriage with the West Indian woman, to prevent his marrying their sister Judith.

To fill in the violent story, Quentin has a few letters in addition to the oral accounts given him by Miss Rosa and his father and, after the visit with Rosa, the aid of his room-

mate Shreve at Harvard. As the two young men puzzle over the story in a cold Cambridge dormitory, wishing they could be rid of it but unable to abandon it, they discover together the missing pieces of the tragic drama.

What they find is a story of incest, miscegenation, and fratricide. It ends with the devastation characteristic of Greek tragedy, the Sutpen mansion burned to the

ground, all the main characters dead. Quentin and his roommate, who have put this Civil War story together in 1910 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, ponder over the mystery and turbulence of human affections. “Why do you hate the South?” Shreve, the Canadian, asks. “I dont hate it,” Quentin answers in a violent response born of love. “I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!”

Absalom, Absalom! is in many senses like a Greek tragedy, with its horrors to be disclosed behind closed doors, its singleminded hero larger than life, its chorus-like utterances, its bloodshed within a family, its victimization of the feminine. There are overtones of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, that originary tragedy of dynasty: the black servant Clytemnestra's name, the hidden secrets of a great house, the ironic return of the hero from war, the bloodshed of family members spilled by each other, the “curse” on a dynasty, the murder of the returned war hero. But, from another perspective, the novel is of course like the Old Testament in its language, its lyric overtones, its references to Abraham and to David and Absalom, its deep longing for a son, its threat of incest, its lamentations over a country devastated by conquest. Unmis-



William Faulkner

Courtesy of the William Faulkner Society

takable Christian elements that would have been found neither in Greek tragedy nor in Jewish scripture are the emphasis on Charles Bon's love, not his pride or desire for revenge; Judith's meekness, forgiveness, and sacrifice; Clytie's patient care of Henry; and Henry's long endurance in penance and love. These color the entire story and bind it into a unity, as does the final insight by the two shivering young men in their Harvard dorm, where Quentin and Shreve re-enact symbolically the drama of the ancient mariner: "O shrive me, holy man," the mariner cries to the hermit, as he tells a horrifying tale of guilt and penance—and, finally, universal love.

Two tragic protagonists dominate the novel, one doing, the other knowing, Thomas Sutpen and Quentin Compson—the one a Hebraic tragic hero of mammoth proportions, like Saul, with a blind spot that makes him oblivious to the consequences of his actions; the other an Aeschylean figure, an Orestes torn unbearably between conflicting pieties: toward justice and toward his native region.

From another angle we can discern that the novel is concerned with the definition of "house" (Faulkner's first name for it was "Dark House"). The Greeks thought of the house as a great palace, giving place to a dynasty and an *oikos*, a household. The Old Testament conceived of house primarily as family—as descendants. Psalm 127 begins, "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it..." and ends "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of his youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." The house is not safe without divine blessing or without descendants. Sutpen wants both: mansion and dynasty. The title of the novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*, is a reference of course to David's lament for his son Absalom and to Sutpen's unspoken cry for lost sons, Henry and Bon, and his dream of a noble

line. In contrast to both these views, the Christian sees that it is in neither house nor family that one becomes part of the "included ones," the Body of Christ. Inclusion is determined by the grace through which one comes to love the unlovable; through which one suffers long and endures. Judith's kindness to Charles Bon's octoroon mistress and her son (whom Judith nurses in his illness, contracting his fever and dying herself) is the Christian fulfillment of Sutpen's dream of a house open to the homeless, from which no child will be excluded.

Absalom, Absalom! gets at yearnings perennial in the human heart: the longing for an heir, the desire to establish something of beauty and permanence that will outlive oneself, the quest for justice. Yet it goes on, in the Scriptural tradition, to deconstruct all these human urges by showing the vanity of human aspiration, the frailty of the strong, the enduring power of the weak, and the long patience of love.

Faulkner's novel was published more than sixty years ago, and yet it still seems "modern" and obscure to ordinary readers. Many members of the literary profession have difficulty accepting Faulkner's art, particularly those who privilege either the great story tellers like Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy, Dreiser, and Cather, or the "well-made novel," a construct that emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and America with such writers as Flaubert, Turgenev, Conrad, James, Woolf, Forster, and Joyce. In contrast, Faulkner, along with Melville and Dostoevsky, Flannery O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and now Toni Morrison, among others, gather up in memory the relevant aspects of the Greek genius but produce work that is primarily Scriptural—primarily even, I would say, Christian—not necessarily overtly, but nonetheless organically. For they have absorbed the life of a Christian people.

Faulkner came to view life sacramentally, with an endurance and a hope and an ironic love and compassion that enabled him to portray the world and human beings in the light of redemption. The artist's task, as he said in his 1950 Nobel Prize speech, is "to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity which have been the glory of his past."

Faulkner's work engendered a sequel to modernism out of which writers in Latin America, Japan, and other emerging coun-

tries have constructed a virtual renaissance in the novel. But his insights, like all great works, apply to an entire epoch of art and thought. When we read Faulkner, we can see that the age dominated by empiricism and rationalism is over. His work heralds a new era, but it will be one that still must contend with the ambivalent if splendid heritage that expresses our psyches. For poets and thinkers are called to memory; and memory, in the West, having received the stamp of the Biblical revelation, can only with peril let us forget Jerusalem.

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Jerusalem's Claim on Us

What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What has the Greek quest for excellence and order and beauty to do with the Hebrew quest for the living God? This is the question the Church Fathers asked themselves, a query that we still must raise from time to time. And in our day in particular, it is the question that Christian educators in the West should make their primary concern. For the liberal arts are indisputably Greek in their orientation: and yet those bright gods on Mt. Olympus, who mingled with men (and women!), jealously coveted sacrifices, and accepted official commemoration in marble temples and olive groves, have little to do with the hidden presence who spoke from a burning bush and forbade David to build him a temple. And the center of our faith—that lonely one who hung on the cross at Golgotha and redefined the purposes of life—took as his earthly ancestry the *Hebrew* tradition, with its pervasive tendency to regard as idolatry any representation such as we in the West have called art. Writing a poem or painting a picture is a little like fashioning a golden calf. Hence, at first glance, nothing seems further from the concerns of art and human culture than the Scriptural heritage with

which Jesus Christ aligned himself. And yet the Western intellectual tradition contains a Hebrew strain even more surely than a Hellenic one. Perhaps, then, educators need to take a look at the peculiar contradictions and the wide inclusiveness of this much maligned and greatly misunderstood “master narrative,” as its detractors have called the Western tradition.

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say that the highest calling of the Greeks is to pass by appearances and "hit the mark" of intellectual truth, whereas the supreme obligation of the Hebrews is to walk in the way of the Lord and on his law to meditate day and night. It has been the complicated task of Christian culture to bring these two imperatives together, and in these changing times it is dangerous to allow either tradition to be lost or to be narrowed into private concerns. No doubt one of the great strengths of Western civilization has been its ability to draw on these two heritages and produce artists and thinkers of sometimes outrageous paradox—witness such thinkers and artists as Augustine, Dante, El Greco, Donne, Milton, Goya, Beethoven, Goethe, Melville, Kierkegaard, Hopkins, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Mahler, Rouault, and Faulkner, among others. All of these manifest a Greek sense of form combined with a Hebraic sense of restlessness and a haunting sense of that darkness we call sin.

The Greek mode of thought gave rise not only to philosophy, but to the quest for harmony and beauty. It invented philosophy and provided the models for epic, tragedy, and comedy. In their art the Greeks discovered myth and symbol as modes of human imagination that arise from the earth like a cloudy veil wafting up toward the sky, rather than coming down like manna from heaven. The Coleridgean symbol, in particular, proves to be a Greek mode of thought, with its ability to reveal the transcendent in the phenomenal.

The Israelites had no such figure: for them the numinous was not to be found in indirection. The glory of the heavens and the wide stretch of the firmament of which the psalmist sang were not mere symbols of something else: they were creations of God, awesome realities which He had made. And Yahweh himself, speaking from the whirlwind to Job, brings home the realization that the creature cannot rival the creator:

Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Can you draw Leviathan with a hook? Could you make the mighty nostrils of the horse? And confronted with this *mysterium tremendum*, Job is abashed, as well he might be. He had heard of Yahweh, he says, but now that he sees him he repents in dust and ashes. He does not actually see God, of course; he is made to "see" only his creation. But in the more intimate mode of Hebraic thought, he hears his word. He knows the artist from the artwork—and is forcibly made aware that God, not he, is the maker. And as a matter of fact, hardly any Old Testament figure is allowed to create, except of course in some of the most gorgeous poetry of praise the world has known. David, who is a man after God's own heart, is a musician and a singer and—at least one time—a dancer. Deborah and Miriam raise songs of praise. The prophets utter powerful poetry inspired directly by Yahweh. The psalms are ecstatic love poems to a God who is both dominating and reticent—and essentially unknowable. But on the whole, the Israelite was not portrayed as *homo faber*. For the ancient Hebrews it is not the things one makes that count; rather, it is one's relation to the God that made all things. How different the Promethean view, which may be taken to represent the Greek attitude toward the status of humankind. According to Aeschylus, after Prometheus taught mortals "all the arts," they were expected to use their skills to create and to advance civilization. But the Israelites, as the noted Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber comments, made no real contributions to painting or sculpture or architecture. Their task, as he points out, was to work with a more recalcitrant medium: human hearts and wills. And the end of their work was not a monument, but a community.

But the Israelites gave us the concept of the book and in Exodus the unforgettable

liberation epic of the world. They set the pattern for narrative and bequeathed to us a sense of the desert experience and a divine discontent with the things of civilization. They established the norms for lyric poetry. And they passed down to us something radically new: not myth but history, a movement forward in time, and therefore, the sense of an ending. Further, their dominant paradigm was not the lonely masculine hero, as in classical culture, but marriage, man and woman standing side by side as partners—Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel. These are the ancestors: two people working together and, amazingly in the Abraham story, journeying together in Odyssean fashion, surviving by their wits across the many miles that lead from Ur to the land of Canaan. Marriage is the figure the prophets

use for Yahweh's love for his people. A passionate marriage lyric, "The Song of Songs," with its frank eroticism, can be interpreted by the rabbis as fitting to describe the love of God for humankind, just as it can later be taken by Christian mystics to delineate Christ's love for his bride, the Church. The awesome God of the Hebrews loves his chosen people passionately, is jealous of them, hurt by them, reproachful of them, sometimes even petulant, but always faithful to them.

What Greek myth implies is somewhat different: that the gods are children of earth (Gaia) and sky (Uranos), and though mortals are thoroughly second-rate, they are called upon to be as like the gods as they can. Though gods sometimes mix with

mortals (Zeus has an indefatigable attraction to beautiful maidens), nonetheless, an "iron sky," in Pindar's phrase, divides the two realms. In the very nature of things, humanity is limited by certain natural ties that bind individuals to different orders of being: to the earth, the family, the city, the dead, the divine. They are assigned their *moira*, their portion, their fate—though they are free to react to it as they will. In the

face of their mortality, they endure by what Prometheus calls "blind hopes." Magnanimity (great-souledness) is the highest virtue; a noble humanism pervades Hellenic art and thought. In striking contrast to the Greek, Hebrew literature assigns immense significance to humankind, made in the image of God, though it enjoins a necessary humility in the face of the creator's majesty and power. It affirms that mortals are not simply

offspring of nature or of Mother Earth but children of the God beyond gods—and obligated through the very fact of their existence. In creating humankind and promising to be present to his people, God has made a covenant with the human race through those who will hear his voice. Thus, in the Hebraic tradition God is to be found by means not so much of human *eros* as God's *agape*, his overwhelming *hesed*, to use the Hebrew word. And his first act of covenant was creation: all of creation was undertaken from an outpouring generosity, issuing in a creature like himself, in his own image, one that could know and understand and love.

The glory and the benevolence of this creation story are unmatched in the entire



The Angel appears to Abraham and Sarah.

literature of the world:

In the beginning God created the heaven and
the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void;
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of
the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and there was
light.
And God saw the light, that it was good.

The rest of these magnificent verses continue an account of such majesty, in such poetic terms, that even for moderns, across the centuries, wise in the ways of black holes and the possibility of parallel universes, the Genesis story remains an account of truth, not mere fable or primitive superstition. And the lofty lines that tell of the creation of life on earth, and finally of man, are of breathtaking grandeur:

And God said, Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness: and let them have dominion
over the fish of the sea,
and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle,
and over all the earth,
and over every creeping thing that creepeth
upon the earth.
So God created man *in his own image*,
in the image of God created he him; male and
female created he them.
And God blessed them, and God said unto
them,
Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,
and subdue it:
and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and
over the fowl of the air,
and over every living thing that moveth upon
the earth.

It is significant that the “word” of God, this command to be fruitful and multiply, was implanted in the very core of human living material—in the secret code of the human

genome, we would say now.

And God saw everything that he had made,
and, behold, it was very good.

In none other of the numerous cosmic creation myths that have been discovered (at least so I am told) is there anything like this account—a deity who fashions a cosmos out of love, possessing the majesty and benevolence of this creator God. He makes things by the power of his effective word and calls his creation good, in the way that an artist matches the idea to the form, knowing beforehand what he is doing and yet surprised at its realized beauty. Creation is a work of art, brought into existence by the spoken Word—God’s thought, his design, his gathering together in an imaginative act, his electrifying creation *ex nihilo*. Thus human persons, made in the image of God, though not called to be ingenious or aesthetic, are by their very nature intended to bring things into being, as their creator did, poetically.

We need not be reminded of the matchless second account of creation, in which man is made from the earth, inspirited with God’s own breath, and woman is taken from his side. This is material for long study concerning the “original unity of man and woman,” as Karol Wotyla, Pope John Paul II, designates it. He explicates Adam’s deep sleep in which a being who was one becomes two in order to enable the dynamic of love to take place, which, as Wotyla says, regenerates the cosmos. He makes the comment that this deep sleep resembles the profound creative slumber of the artist before he begins his creation. In the human maker, it portends a loss of the solitary self and a merging with the life God sets in motion. The creative spirit in the ancient Hebrew, then, unlike Plato’s *eros* for the beautiful or Aristotle’s *mimesis*, is portrayed as an openness to the gift of God’s burning love.

But Yahweh's blazing furnace of love is a terror to the Israelites and to those who take his revelation seriously. Martin Buber writes: "The fear of God is the creaturely knowledge of the darkness to which none of our spiritual powers can reach, and out of which God reveals himself.... It is the dark gate through which man must pass if he is to enter into the love of God." The burning coal placed on Isaiah's lips is the gift of love and of poetry: it is a terrifying ability to suffer the eternal in the midst of the temporal. Artists and thinkers in the West, under the Biblical influence, have known that their work must include a recognition of this dark gate; and they themselves must endure at least an analogue of the burning coal.

The Bible thus provides a different and seemingly antithetical model from that given in Greek literature. It demands one's whole heart and one's whole viscera. Nonetheless, without in the least giving up a faith in Scripture, Westerners still find within themselves qualities that only the classical vision can express. The Hellenic cosmos of intellect and heroism, competition and perfection, is a fine model, never to be forgotten by anyone who has encountered Athens. It reveals the unchanging nature of things and the nobility of the human spirit. But the Hebrew cosmos—God's revelation to his chosen ones—has been a more intimate if sometimes invisible paradigm for thinkers in the West. It offers a covenantal model—a bond, a contract, a mutual promise—to be made freely by the will and requiring the offering of one's word. One's relation with God depends not on virtue or achievement but on a covenant to be his and to acknowledge him as one's own. The seventeenth-century metaphysical poet George Herbert has captured (in "Love III," the lyric so greatly praised by Simone Weil) the absurd but splendid generosity of such a donor, offering a love that creates,

prepares a feast, makes a covenant, suffers the indignity of refusal, gives his own substance as nourishment:

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
guilty of dust and sin
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in
Drew nearer to me sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything
A guest, I answered, worthy to be here
Love said You shall be he
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear
I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand and smiling did reply
Who made the eyes but I?
Truth, lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve
And know you not says Love who bore the blame?
My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat
So I did sit and eat.

Herbert's poem expresses an intimacy, an "appetite for God," in C. S. Lewis's phrase, that could have come about only through the influence of Scripture. The tonality of the poem recalls the Old Testament psalms; its content, however, derives from the New Testament *kenosis*, the divine abasement and sacrifice. Images of feasting, of sexual union, of seeing, of the Eucharist—these are used to express the immediacy and generosity of Christ's love and the necessity of its mutuality. All this is to indicate the intimacy of God's love for man; and all this would be, in St. Paul's words, "a scandal to the Greeks."

But the corollary to this generosity is sobering. If we can turn away from such a personal and insistent love, we must indeed be in bad faith. And there is the frightening possibility that God might harden our hearts, as he hardened Pharaoh's. Yahweh has a terrifying potentiality for what the Jews called "the evil urge," a power within

God that can scourge and destroy. The Old Testament authors saw into the abyss as even the Greek tragedians were unable to do. They looked on God's majesty and on human violence and depravity with unaverted gaze. Part of their legacy to Western writers and artists, then, has been a sense of darkness and sin that cannot be erased from the imagination.

Christian art and thought are heir to these two strains which, in having been lived out among two great and gifted peoples, have informed the Western imagination. By taking the Hebrew *Tanach* as its "Old Testament" and considering it as part of its own revelation, Christianity followed and extended the Hebraic vision of life, challenging the classical view not only of time but also of matter. Socrates, in response to one of his students' questions about whether it was not inspiring to look up at the stars, replied that whether he lay on his back and looked at the stars or on his belly and looked at the mud, he was seeing with his physical eye and hence viewing not truth but appearance. For Greek thinkers, matter represented change and illusion. But for Christians, when God himself took on human flesh, matter was given dignity and potentiality. It is not only the doctrine of Christ's incarnation, however, that testifies to the worth and eternal significance of the body; this belief is borne out even further in the Christian teaching of resurrection, centering on and emerging from Christ's crucifixion—a scandal, too, as St. Paul indicated. So also with the ideas of grace, forgiveness, and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, that revolutionary document that proclaims the ultimate triumph of the meek, the poor in spirit, the mourners, the persecuted. This deliberate countersaying to the noble and reasonable classical ethic has enormous implications for Western culture. Within it, phenomena take on a here-

tofore undreamed of significance.

However, rather than resting with Arnold's verdict that we in the West are somewhat schizoid (though of course he did not use that twentieth-century word), I might venture to say that it is in this very tension, this doubleness of vision, this intolerable contradiction, that the genius of Western art and thought resides. We say, in effect: the good is impossible and we must undertake it; images are idolatrous and we must find the divine order through them; the human is confined within nature and we must go through the finite toward something transcendent; human suffering is a punishment for sin and they that mourn and are persecuted will inherit the kingdom. This scandal of contradiction has produced in the West far more than the obviously "Christ-haunted" poets and philosophers. It is at the base of all our thought. As a matter of fact, the personal beliefs of our writers and artists have less to do with this paradox than does their imaginative heritage. William Faulkner, when he was asked point blank if he were Christian, gave one of his evasive but always provocative replies: he had grown up surrounded by that story, he said, and considered it the best story he had ever heard. And of course he has hit upon the important thing. The question is not whether artists themselves are Christian in their personal belief, but what it is that they reflect in their art. We know nothing of Shakespeare's religion, for instance; yet his plays are thoroughly Christian in outlook, with Greek and Roman influences—and very little of the Old Testament. In contrast, we know Milton's religious commitments very well indeed. A short fifty years after Shakespeare, Milton drew all his convictions from the Protestant Reformers, yet his major poems transcend any doctrinal bias. *Paradise Lost* is filled with classical references from beginning to end, though an emphasis on the Old

Testament is revealed in Milton's very choice of subjects for his epic: the origin of sin in the world. In dramatizing and extending the *Book of Genesis*, Milton's treatment of his subject reflects the Hebraic influence: talkative, thorny, authoritarian, with very little visual imagery. It is this charge that T. S. Eliot leveled against Milton in the 1930s, almost dethroning him. The literary imagination of most Western critics has always been indisputably Greek, whereas a good part of the Western artists' imagination is Hebraic. From the Scriptures, the Western soul has been given a yearning for eternity, a hunger for sacrifice, a thirst for suffering; and the artist has been drawn irresistibly to the source from which these longings spring.

It is one of the most serious flaws in our systems of higher education, therefore, for the Bible to be relegated solely to departments of theology, its study in colleges and universities limited to the technical and professional. Holy Scripture should be part of the liberal arts core, which is damaged considerably by its omission. The Biblical narratives need to be placed beside other great narratives if their depth is to be revealed. For the individual student, there is always the danger that Biblical knowledge will be destined to seem either esoteric or childish—the first, if studied only in highly specialized courses; the second, if omitted from the general courses that purport to give an overall view of the intellectual landscape. Either of these approaches severely hampers students' full understanding of their culture. But if American educational leaders have failed at their task of representing the whole Western intellectual tradition in their curricula, nothing has been able to keep the best writers of Europe and America from absorbing, on their own, the stunning beauty of the Scriptures.

To see the way in which the Hebraic and Hellenic threads interweave in a work—and to discern the form given the two by the

Christian resolution—we might turn to a twentieth-century novel, one of Faulkner's most noted and most accomplished, the tragedy *Absalom, Absalom!* This novel, Faulkner's ninth, published in 1936, focuses on a heroic figure, Thomas Sutpen, a poor white who as a boy comes down from the hills into Virginia in the 1820s and is turned away by a black servant from the front door of one of the rich mansions. From this time on, the boy is transfixed. He has had no inkling before of his inferiority. He meditates: what could he do? "*I can shoot him,*" he says to himself. "*No. That wouldn't do no good. What shall we do then? I don't know.*" Finally he makes a firm resolution: to get himself a mansion and found a dynasty so that his own son, his name, his own bloodline can live as these people live, in dignity and luxury. He vows to best such a society at its own game and more: the visionary part of his design is to see to it that no child like himself is turned away from doors, that no child is excluded. But to have such a noble dream come true, Sutpen has to be ruthless. He must destroy lives wherever they interfere with his dream. He determines to make a fortune, come back to Jefferson, build a fine house, and attain respectability—to insert himself into the society that has rejected him with grim finality. He goes to the West Indies, marries the daughter of the owner of a sugar plantation, has a child by her, becomes wealthy. But he discovers that his wife is part black; recognizing that this detail will interfere with his design, he pays her off and abandons her, thinking there will be no hard feelings. "His trouble was innocence," General Compson comments in telling the tale to his son, who in turn repeats what he knows of the scandal to his own son, Quentin Compson. Quentin, the scion of this aristocratic though decaying Jefferson family, on his way to Harvard in 1909 for his freshman year, has been called to Miss Rosa Coldfield's

house and told her side of the story about Thomas Sutpen, the man that she characterizes as “man-horse-demon”:

Then hearing would reconcile and he would seem to listen to two separate Quentins now—the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had, telling him about old ghost-times; and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost, but nevertheless having to be one for all that, since he was born and bred in the deep South the same as she was; the two separate Quentins now talking to one another in the long silence of notpeople, in not language....

For Sutpen had indeed come to Jefferson, bought his land, disappeared, and several months later come back with a band of wild blacks and a captured French architect to build his house, torn violently out of the wilderness, as Miss Rosa says. Quentin, troubled about the decline of his own family, is caught at that moment of almost escaping the South until called back by Miss Rosa to accompany her on an urgent mission to investigate the old Sutpen mansion. What they find there is catastrophic. Thomas Sutpen's son Henry has immured himself in the Sutpen mansion after forty years earlier killing his black half-brother Charles Bon, the issue of Sutpen's marriage with the West Indian woman, to prevent his marrying their sister Judith.

To fill in the violent story, Quentin has a few letters in addition to the oral accounts given him by Miss Rosa and his father and, after the visit with Rosa, the aid of his room-

mate Shreve at Harvard. As the two young men puzzle over the story in a cold Cambridge dormitory, wishing they could be rid of it but unable to abandon it, they discover together the missing pieces of the tragic drama.

What they find is a story of incest, miscegenation, and fratricide. It ends with the devastation characteristic of Greek tragedy, the Sutpen mansion burned to the

ground, all the main characters dead. Quentin and his roommate, who have put this Civil War story together in 1910 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, ponder over the mystery and turbulence of human affections. “Why do you hate the South?” Shreve, the Canadian, asks. “I dont hate it,” Quentin answers in a violent response born of love. “I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!”

Absalom, Absalom! is in

many senses like a Greek tragedy, with its horrors to be disclosed behind closed doors, its singleminded hero larger than life, its chorus-like utterances, its bloodshed within a family, its victimization of the feminine. There are overtones of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, that originary tragedy of dynasty: the black servant Clytemnestra's name, the hidden secrets of a great house, the ironic return of the hero from war, the bloodshed of family members spilled by each other, the “curse” on a dynasty, the murder of the returned war hero. But, from another perspective, the novel is of course like the Old Testament in its language, its lyric overtones, its references to Abraham and to David and Absalom, its deep longing for a son, its threat of incest, its lamentations over a country devastated by conquest. Unmis-



Courtesy of the William Faulkner Society

William Faulkner

takable Christian elements that would have been found neither in Greek tragedy nor in Jewish scripture are the emphasis on Charles Bon's love, not his pride or desire for revenge; Judith's meekness, forgiveness, and sacrifice; Clytie's patient care of Henry; and Henry's long endurance in penance and love. These color the entire story and bind it into a unity, as does the final insight by the two shivering young men in their Harvard dorm, where Quentin and Shreve re-enact symbolically the drama of the ancient mariner: "O shrive me, holy man," the mariner cries to the hermit, as he tells a horrifying tale of guilt and penance—and, finally, universal love.

Two tragic protagonists dominate the novel, one doing, the other knowing, Thomas Sutpen and Quentin Compson—the one a Hebraic tragic hero of mammoth proportions, like Saul, with a blind spot that makes him oblivious to the consequences of his actions; the other an Aeschylean figure, an Orestes torn unbearably between conflicting pieties: toward justice and toward his native region.

From another angle we can discern that the novel is concerned with the definition of "house" (Faulkner's first name for it was "Dark House"). The Greeks thought of the house as a great palace, giving place to a dynasty and an *oikos*, a household. The Old Testament conceived of house primarily as family—as descendants. Psalm 127 begins, "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it..." and ends "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of his youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." The house is not safe without divine blessing or without descendants. Sutpen wants both: mansion and dynasty. The title of the novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*, is a reference of course to David's lament for his son Absalom and to Sutpen's unspoken cry for lost sons, Henry and Bon, and his dream of a noble

line. In contrast to both these views, the Christian sees that it is in neither house nor family that one becomes part of the "included ones," the Body of Christ. Inclusion is determined by the grace through which one comes to love the unlovable; through which one suffers long and endures. Judith's kindness to Charles Bon's octoroon mistress and her son (whom Judith nurses in his illness, contracting his fever and dying herself) is the Christian fulfillment of Sutpen's dream of a house open to the homeless, from which no child will be excluded.

Absalom, Absalom! gets at yearnings perennial in the human heart: the longing for an heir, the desire to establish something of beauty and permanence that will outlive oneself, the quest for justice. Yet it goes on, in the Scriptural tradition, to deconstruct all these human urges by showing the vanity of human aspiration, the frailty of the strong, the enduring power of the weak, and the long patience of love.

Faulkner's novel was published more than sixty years ago, and yet it still seems "modern" and obscure to ordinary readers. Many members of the literary profession have difficulty accepting Faulkner's art, particularly those who privilege either the great story tellers like Balzac, George Eliot, Tolstoy, Dreiser, and Cather, or the "well-made novel," a construct that emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and America with such writers as Flaubert, Turgenev, Conrad, James, Woolf, Forster, and Joyce. In contrast, Faulkner, along with Melville and Dostoevsky, Flannery O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and now Toni Morrison, among others, gather up in memory the relevant aspects of the Greek genius but produce work that is primarily Scriptural—primarily even, I would say, Christian—not necessarily overtly, but nonetheless organically. For they have absorbed the life of a Christian people.

Faulkner came to view life sacramentally, with an endurance and a hope and an ironic love and compassion that enabled him to portray the world and human beings in the light of redemption. The artist's task, as he said in his 1950 Nobel Prize speech, is "to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity which have been the glory of his past."

Faulkner's work engendered a sequel to modernism out of which writers in Latin America, Japan, and other emerging coun-

tries have constructed a virtual renaissance in the novel. But his insights, like all great works, apply to an entire epoch of art and thought. When we read Faulkner, we can see that the age dominated by empiricism and rationalism is over. His work heralds a new era, but it will be one that still must contend with the ambivalent if splendid heritage that expresses our psyches. For poets and thinkers are called to memory; and memory, in the West, having received the stamp of the Biblical revelation, can only with peril let us forget Jerusalem.