

**BIBLICAL ORIGIN AND ECHOES: MODERN AMERICAN
LITERATURE AND BIBLICAL ARCHETYPES**

by

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ABSTRACT

The Bible has a great influence on western literature, especially American Literature. Besides the historical reason, the rich literary contents in the Bible determine its great influence on American literature. By comparing American literature to the Bible as literature and the Christian thoughts, through examining American literary history and some of its representative works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and William Faulkner, the author observes the explicit Biblical origin and echoes in Modern American literature: the biblical motifs and characters, its narrative structure, the biblical images and symbols became archetypal patterns, and biblical allusions were even used as allegorical tools to satirize the society in many literary works.

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**Biblical Origin and Echoes: Modern American Literature and
Biblical Archetypes**

I. Introduction

Christianity is a leading cultural factor that influences people's material and spiritual life in various ways in the process of Western social history. In Western literature, Christianity and the tradition of biblical literature are common subjects and themes, which is seldom seen in Asian literature. In one of his books entitled The Great Code, the Bible and Literature, Northrop Frye (1912-1991), a Canadian literary theorist, literary and cultural critic, cultivates a new area on the studies of the relationship of the Bible and literature. The importance of such studies in literature is that they bridge the two ideological fields of Christianity and literature. Revealing the spiritual activities, both Christianity and literature conceal various "codes" inside, and possess potentialities of unscrambling the human spiritual activities from inside from different angles.

The rich literary contents in the Bible determine its influence on Western literature, also establishing its unique status in the Western literary tradition. First of all, The Bible reflects the manifold forms of the human customs and experience, as Leland Ryken says in his The Literature of the Bible, "There is no aspect of human experience that is not presented within the pages of biblical literature. It is worthy of note, too, that biblical literature shows a tendency to portray what is elemental and enduring in human

experience—God, nature, love, social relationships, death, evil, guilt, salvation, family life, judgment, and forgiveness”(15). Since the subject of the literature is the human experience, the rich presentation of human experience can be regarded as the basic reason why the Bible has been used by generations of writers as the tool of telling stories, narrating lives and conveying thoughts. In the skills of narration, from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Bible is actually a complete and coherent literary work. From “Genesis” to “Revelation,” the whole Bible is a history of mankind from committing sins to depravity and redemption. Furthermore, the contents of the Old Testament keep on recurring in the New Testament. The New Testament is a response and complement to the Old Testament. Finally, the two testaments constitute special language denotations and literary narrative models.

Such biblical narration with distinct literary characteristics exerted great influence on the literary creations of the latter generations. The Biblical motifs, its narrative structures, as well as Biblical images became patterns or archetypes for many literary works and literary images. According to Leland Ryken, “An archetype is a symbol, character type, or plot motif that has recurred throughout literature. One critic speaks of archetypes as ‘any of the immemorial patterns of response to the human situation in its permanent aspects.’ These archetypes carry the same or very similar meanings for a large portion of mankind and appeal to what is most elemental in human experience”(Ryken, Literature of the Bible 22). In the same book, he pointed out that the archetypal content of the Bible is not only unity but universality as well. “Archetypes express what is most common and elemental in human experience. In Northrop Frye's words, ‘Some symbols are images of things common to all men, and therefore have a communicable power

which is potentially unlimited' (Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 99). Since archetypes belong not only to the Bible but are the basic constituent elements of literature itself, the archetypes of Biblical literature allow us to relate it to other literature. This is true even when biblical literature reverses or inverts the usual meaning of an archetype" (Ryken Literature of the Bible 25). Thus we can see that the existence of these biblical archetypes allows an interconnected relationship between the Bible and the secular literature. Even today, this literary tradition is still playing its special roles and will continue to maintain the trend of strong influence on literature.

Due to the historical tradition of America, such influence of the Bible is particularly remarkable in American literature. From the perspective of traditional Christianity and Christian tradition, American literature maintains the state of being continuously influenced by the tradition of Christianity. Since the earlier period of the American history, "Puritanism contained the seeds of political and social ideas, structures of thought and language, and literary themes which inspired both the content and the forms of much American writing from 1700 to the present"(Elliot xii-xiii). American literature in the 20th century especially reflects the mythic theme of the fall of human beings: disobeying God's will, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden to struggle hard on the earth. The abuse of free will finally leads to the depravity of the human beings. Adam and his descendants lost their perfection, innocence, peace, paradise, and degenerated into a life filled with struggles, labors, pains, sorrows, regrets, pessimism, disappointment and death.

This process is quite similar to the American social process. Throughout the American social development, an Old-Testament-version story can be found floating

from this New Land. The 17th and the 18th century are the periods when the early colonists began to cultivate the desolate land. Americans in the 19th Century are the images of Israelites on the New Land. They lived in the land of “Canaan,” filled with energies and believed that they’re the chosen people of God and this New Land is the Promised Land that God gave to them. From the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century is the period when the United States was transformed from a small, young agricultural ex-colony into a huge, modern, highly industrialized nation. Free competition gradually gave way to monopoly. The once seemingly boundless frontier vanished. Large cities, factories and farms mushroomed all over the country. Railroads, highways and water routes wove the nation into a giant organic shipping system, giving forth much vigor and vitality. The rapid growth of industry and agriculture outstripped all leading European countries, including Britain, France and Germany. With the rapid growth of economy came corresponding problems: the growing polarity between the rich and poor, racial discrimination, environmental pollution, and more important, the so called “Gilded Age,” featuring economic boom and monopoly, had corroded the American society’s moral basis, and the inhuman economic expansion and monopolistic exploitation also breached the tradition of Christian spirits(Xinyun 110). This is the period when Americans lost their “Garden of Eden” because in the process of conquering this land, they also desecrated the “Garden of Eden” in a way that they themselves never noticed. The colonization of America can be regarded as a process of continuously seeking the Garden of Eden westward, but the Garden of Eden has always retreated before the colonists. This process later became a cause of plundering the Garden of Eden while

searching for this wonderland. This issue has echoed from time to time from both American history and American literature.

Therefore, many American writers find an effective way to express their literary ideas by using the Holy Bible. They take biblical archetypes as the best means of conveying their deep and complicated messages. Based on the ideas, contents, language and the narrative structures of the biblical stories, the writers trace the root of human suffering to illustrate humanity's common experience and feelings in the course of survival and development since the ancient times. In their literary works, some writers explicitly exploit the Biblical models of thought and narrative structure; some implicitly adopt the Bible thought as the cultural background of their works; some use figures and stories of the Bible as parables to real life and events. The adoption and the citation of the Biblical stories and thoughts not only expand the scope of the writers' literary creation, but also meet the demand of reading and appreciation. Those who are familiar with the Bible stories will have a great resonance with the writers. To some extent, the succession of the Biblical thoughts and expressions has extended the depth of the imagination of American literature; meanwhile, it also maintains the inherent continuity of American literary traditions.

II. Archetypal Relationship of Modern American Literature and the Bible in Motifs and Themes

In the past 300 years, the social environment and national mentality of Americans have experienced a lot of changes. Naturally, these changes, together with relevant history, are revealed or echoed in American Literature in different degrees. Although the literary creation trends and appreciation tastes varied from age to age, "And yet, if considered in

its entirety, American literature paradoxically seems to have a much greater continuity in themes and moods and techniques of expression than almost any other of the great literatures of the west”(Straumann pxvii). The writings of the different eras have manifested a tradition maintaining inherent continuity: They express the great efforts Americans made to survive, to develop and pursue a perfect society, demonstrating the specific characteristics of American nationality, so as to create a special circumstance of literary psychology. Hence, the contradictions and puzzling complexities from social lives can be presented vividly through the literary imagination.

The above-mentioned continuity in literature is embedded in the Christian cultural background rooted in American national psychology. Because of this, American literature has in many ways showed an interconnected archetypal relationship with Biblical literary tradition; Christian culture has also been echoed in American literature in various phases. Christianity provides a contrast between the world and the heaven, as well as God, symbol of the perfection; and in the admiration of the Promised Land, people can approach the idealized spiritual world through literary creation. Here, we can see something in common between literature and religion: both of them are in search of a kind of final care on humanity: the universal identity and the ultimate destiny of human beings.

In his American Literature in the Twentieth Century, Heinrich Straumann divided the themes of American Literature into three categories:

Viewed the larger context of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century writing, this motif grows into one of the three distinct great themes of American literature, viz. the search for identity based on fundamental

feeling of uncertainty about what the individual essentially is and where he belongs. Closely connected with it as a second distinct theme is the quest for some absolute value, be it in the moral, social, or aesthetic field, and, as a further necessary result, the ever-latent will to experiment in forms (Straumann xviii).

These three major themes in American literature reflect the essential concepts of the Christianity: its awareness of supernatural reality and divine mystery, its conviction that human life in history is ultimately significant, and its vivid consciousness of values. Living and moving in these attitudes, the biblical literature contains a core of themes, which include the character and acts of God, human nature and activity, moral good and evil, law and grace, God's promises and fulfillment (Ryken, How to Read the Bible as Literature 182-187)

Since the ancient times, the themes of literary works have mainly focused on the relations between man and nature, man and society, and interpersonal relationships, as well as some basic issues among these relationships. The literary contrasts between life and death, love and hatred, flesh and soul, emotion and intellect, desire and will power, just reflect human concerns over the religious issues of being, of identity and of eternity. While religions, especially Christianity, contains the inexhaustible and everlasting motifs for literary works. American writers, either intentionally or unintentionally, often borrow or make use of Biblical traditions from different angles and at various rates, and try to explore the eternal contents concerning human development and its ultimate destiny with their works. It is under the sustainment of both the ultimate concern for divinity and the

worldly concern for humanity that Christian Bible and American literature show a deep-rooted archetypal relationship in motifs and themes.

The theme of good and evil is a good example. In his work Finnegans Wake, James Joyce (1882-1942) portrays Earwickers' family of four, which can be regarded as an Adam's family in the modern days. By moulding the Earwickers family, Joyce tried to show that the human history is a mixture of love and hatred, good and evil. The pattern of good and evil actually derives from a biblical archetypal theme pattern of God versus Satan. As a representative writer and developer of the stream-of-consciousness technique, Joyce connected the opening and closing words together into a sentence, symbolizing that history repeats itself in an endless cycle and mankind can never jump out of such a "cycle."

In American literature, the tradition of using the techniques of revealing reality through ancient religious themes and content inheres over generations. The Bible was, for a large section of the nineteenth-century American population, a privileged text, and was placed as sources having the greatest resonance for a general American audience. The concept of literary creation in the 19th century embodies an interconnection with the thoughts of the Bible. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville are the two greatly influenced by Christianity and the Bible. Both of them are very much interested in the destiny of man. In the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville, the use and criticism of the Christian thoughts have become an important part of their literary imaginations. Nathaniel Hawthorne is one influenced greatly by Christianity and the Bible. Although Nathaniel Hawthorne's works ostensibly depict dark themes and focus mostly on man's sins and natural impulses, his works essentially show the spirit of

optimism. In The Scarlet Letter, when Hester prompts Dimmesdale fervently resolved to buoy him up, “Meddle no more with it! Begin all anew! Hast thou exhausted possibility in the failure of this one trial? Not so! The future is yet full of trial and success. There is happiness to be enjoyed! There is good to be done! Exchange this false life of thine for a true one.”(The Scarlet Letter, XVII. 50) The image of Hester can be regarded as the image of new Adam. Nathaniel Hawthorne seems to try to demonstrate here that as long as one does not conceal his sins, and has the courage to confront and bring out to the public his sins, he will have a bright future. Hester is such an image with honest, forthright, sincere and virtuous character. She bravely wears the scarlet letter which symbolizes ignominious sins, demonstrating the sin in the sunshine and lives in an optimistic and active life. It is without doubt that Hawthorne’s creation of the image of Hester aims at molding the new Adam for the Americans.

Herman Melville paid particular attention to the relations of man, nature, universe and God. Influenced by Deism, which was popular in the 19th century, Melville’s Moby-Dick(1857) expresses Job-type doubts of God’s justice, as well as Calvinism’s concepts on sin, commitment, and salvation. Melville named the dramatic narrator “Ishmael,” which comes from the Old Testament, “Genesis.” “Ishmael” actually symbolizes the tragedy of mankind being deserted by their creators. In Moby-Dick, he illustrates man’s frantic and lonely quest for the unknowable can only end in disaster. As one of the most solitary writers of the age, Melville presents forcefully the theme of human loneliness in both his Bartleby and Billy Budd.

American literature in the 19th century has shown a kind of archetypal relationship with Christian concepts, while American literature in the 20th century usually directly

participated in the restructuring of Christian spirit. Literary creation in the 20th century mirrored the essential connotation of the Christian cultural spirit. For instance, Ernest Hemingway presents his story, For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), in the setting of the Spanish civil war in the 1930s. The name of the novel is a quote from British divine, metaphysical poet John Donne's sermon in the 17th century, "No man is an island itself; every man is a part of continent, a part of the main...Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Featuring solicitude for the human destinies on the basis of humanism, the novel shows Hemingway's understanding of the mutual relationship between individuals and the community, as well as his sense of responsibility resulting from this knowledge. This somehow originates from the teachings of Christianity: love and care.

In the 20th century, many American literary works drew references from Biblical stories to satirize the "atavism" of mankind in the modern times, and warned the degenerated mankind through the ancient records and ancient myths. Featuring themes of sins, confessions and salvations, literary works of this period express the conflicts between soul and body and swell of sin and evilness, meanwhile, God's divinity, God's glories and mercies are also demonstrated in the works.

As an important representative of the Southern Literature in America, Faulkner tries to reveal human lives and destinies through the Southern society as the mirror. Although most of his works focus on reflecting the social realities of the period of American Civil War and the after-war rebuilding in a small Southern county named Yoknapatawpha in northern Mississippi, his thinking is far beyond this period of times. In his creations,

Faulkner borrows and adopts thinking traditions and literary expressions of the Holy Bible. From his novels, the major themes of the ancient Bible, such as sin, depravity and salvation of human, can be found frequently; they are also major concerns of his novels revealing the contradictions and conflicts of the good nature and wicked nature of mankind. Faulkner uses the negative images like failure, decline, betrayal and death to deeply reveal tragic human life. Meanwhile, his novels also demonstrate hopes of human existence by introducing an external supernatural salvation from the outside of the world. In Faulkner's works, this is actually the affirmation to the beautiful and good nature of mankind brought from the religious belief.

From the angle of religion, the Puritan Thought of Christianity has played a very important role in Faulkner's literary creations. Many of the themes of his works mainly focus on the mode of fall (original sin)—retribution (punishment)—confession (salvation). This has an archetypal relationship with the Bible's narrative sequence from Genesis to the Apocalypse. From Genesis, the Old Testament tells the stories of God creating the earth, humankind degenerating and being expelled from the Garden of Eden. The fall has eternally chained human kind with original sin. Humankind lost his former perfection of the original creation, and was inclined to sin. Free will provides man ability to sin, and God often punishes sins of humankind with floods, fire and death.

From the angle of Christianity, the Four Gospels really bring good news and Messiah, as well as new hope of being saved, to humankind. And humankind's salvation from sin is affected through Jesus' sacrifice. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha setting novels and short stories mostly reflect this manner of Christian thinking. The citation, borrowing and transformation of the texts of the Bible at various degrees are characteristic features in

Faulkner's literary creation. Faulkner artistically puts the Bible's narrative structure and Christian creeds into his imaginative world of literature. Hyatt H. Waggoner thinks, "The meanings of Faulkner's fiction are for the most part basically consistent with the broad outlines of the classic Christian view of man and the world" (Waggoner 247). Waggoner also explains, "Beginning with "The Bear," Faulkner's work is characterized by its repeated attempts to restate for modern man what Faulkner takes to be the essential meaning for Christian myth...The fundamental assumption that shapes many of Faulkner's works of the forties and fifties is that the dogmas of the Christian creeds are at once figurative and profoundly true"(Waggoner 246). It is estimated that from Faulkner's 19 novels, 344 places are cited or referred to from the Bible. Among these novels, the Sound and Fury (1929) quotes the most from the Bible—55 places and the Rivers (1962) cites the least—only one place (Coffee 129-130).

In the Sound and Fury, the structure of the story is perfectly balanced and symbolically paired with the Passion of Christ (the three days are Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday). And the Passion of Christ is used to allude to the real life. Caddy's sexual abandon symbolizes the ruin of the Compson family and the corruption of the Southern society. And the three brothers' attitudes and opinions towards Caddy also allude to the hopeless and helpless salvations in different ways. The idiot Benjy plays the role as Caddy's moral guardian and reminder. From him, the shadow of the divine characteristics of Jesus Christ flickers. And Faulkner seems to remind his readers that Benjy is a Christ-like character: Holy Saturday is Benjy's birthday and Benjy is castrated at the age of 33. In the chapter, "April Eighth, 1928," Benjy and Dilsey are intentionally arranged by the writer to be seated in the local black church and listen to the

sermons given by the visiting preacher Reverend Shegog, who delivers a powerful sermon on describing the “recollection and the blood of the Lamb,” as well as the major events of Jesus’ life, the Passion and His resurrection.

The structure of Absalom, Absalom!(1936) is a copy of the original sin—retribution mode of the Old Testament. This novel retells the story of David the king and his son Absalom (2Samuel, Old Testament). According to the Bible, God demands payment of sins committed by humankind, and the descendents pay heavily for their forefathers’ sins. Thomas Sutpen is a planter in Yoknapatawpha County in Absalom, Absalom!. Born of poor white stock, he moved with his family to the Tidewater region of Virginia and for the first time saw wealthy planters. A formative experience at the age of fourteen led him to realize the social caste system of the antebellum South, and this experience led him to conceive his “design”: to create a dynasty of wealth and power. He first went to the West Indies, working for a Haitian sugar planter, and eventually married the planter’s daughter, but when he discovered she was part Negro, he repudiated her and his young son, Charles. In 1833, he purchased a hundred square miles of fertile bottomland in Jefferson, Mississippi; this area was later known as Sutpen’s Hundred. There he began building his house and planting his first crop. Five years after first arriving in town, he married Ellen Coldfield, the daughter of a pious merchant in Jefferson. They had two children, Henry and Judith. When Henry brought Sutpen’s son home to meet Judith, Sutpen told Henry that Judith could not marry Charles; as a result, Henry repudiated his birthright and departed. When Sutpen returned home in January 1866 after the Civil War, he found that his wife had been dead for three years and that Henry had killed Charles. Lacking a male heir, he proposed to his wife’s sister, Rosa, and insulted her by suggesting they have a

child first and then if it were a boy they would marry. Rosa broke off the engagement. A final effort to produce a male heir, with Milly, the granddaughter of poor white squatter Wash Jones, resulted in his murder by Wash Jones when Sutpen repudiated the girl born to Milly.

In Absalom, Absalom!, the Southern America which once fascinated Faulkner has become either a blamed hotbed of sins or hopeful Canaan land. The uses of the original character of the Bible can also be traced in Miss Rosa Codfield and Mr. Quentin Compson's narratives from place to place. For example, Miss Rosa often mentions about the Bible, she never calls Sutpen by his name; instead, she calls him "devil," and relates Sutpen to the concept of sins and punishment from the Bible.

Light in August (1932) transmits Faulkner's borrowings of the theme of the New Testament. Joe Christmas, leading character of this novel, is used by Faulkner to allude to Jesus Christ. The writer draws an analogy of Christmas' being executed to Jesus' crucifixion, so as to tell the readers how the weakness of humanity, such as prejudice, ignorance, bigotry and intolerance, produces tragedies. Faulkner does not mean to request readers to sympathize or pity Christmas' destiny. He just intends to make people be aware of the Thespian situation of the humankind. "'Light in August' is Faulkner's most fully documented statement on what he sees as the religious errors and the racist guilt of his region"(Barth 122). The tragedy of Christmas is a tragedy of the society, which results from the crimes that the environment imposes on him. In this meaning, Christmas is also an innocent "scapegoat."

As I Lay Dying (1930) opens out such a frame before us: Addie Buddren lies dying in her bed in her family's farmhouse. Her husband Anse keeps the promise on the request

of Addie, i.e. to bury her after her death in Jefferson, where her “people” were from. This may easily remind us of the stories from Genesis of the Old Testament. When the time drew nigh that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, “bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place”(Gen. 47:29-30). As the family set off on their journey to bury Addie, the plot of the novel proceeds in stop-start fashion through the discrete monologues by the various speakers, more and more information is revealed about the Bundrens, their grief, and their society. On the journey, as the Buddren family march towards Jefferson, each of them has their own thoughts: Dewey Dell wants to get an abortion, Cash wants to buy the phonograph, Anse wants to buy a new set of teeth and marry a new wife. The journey itself is full of hurdles and threats; they encounter flood-swollen Yoknapatawpha River and get fire in the barn of Gillespie’s place. In the process of chance crossing the flood-swollen river, Cash’s leg is broken and their mules are drowned; it is only by sheer strength (or rage) that Jewel is able to keep Addie’s coffin from being swept away as well. This frame is just like a modern version of the Exodus. The writer endows the mourners and the funeral journey with obvious allegorical colorings. This novel’s “Old Testament flavors” are much heavier than any other novels of Faulkner. Philip C. Rules, S.J. says, “in search of the religious values that underlie As I lay Dying, critics have suggested Greek and Roman influences, Calvinism, and the Christian message in general. However, nothing so permeates the tone and texture of the story, as does the spirit of the Old Testament. The themes, the attitudes, and frequently the very words and prose rhythms derive from the written account of the “pre-Christian” experience. Specifically, the story as a whole has strong overtones of the Book of Job.

“Salvation, religiosity, tribal solidarity, the importance of sex as an almost religious act--- these and other Old Testament themes assert themselves”(Barth 107). The evident influence of the Old Testament to the novel of As I Lay Dying can be traced from, from the foreshadowing of the plot to the use of language style. When talking about the ideation of As I Lay Dying, Faulkner himself said the novel was “a simple *tour de force*. I took this family and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer—flood and fire, that’s all. That was simple *tour de force*” (Gwynn 87). In fact, it is these seemingly normal stories that Faulkner has used to reveal the unavoidable destinies of humankind: marriage, family, sex, loneliness, interpersonal relationships, and relationships between man and God.

“Suffering servant” is another theme in Faulkner’s literary works. According to the ideologies of Christianity, those who suffer or even sacrifice for others are the “suffering servants.” “One important theme that emerges from the story of the suffering servant is the idea that human suffering is meaningful. It is meaningful because God uses the evil and suffering of people to bring about a greater good” (Ryken, Literature of the Bible 57). From this meaning, the suffering of servant is beautiful, because it fulfills salvations of the believers as well as the eventual salvations. In Genesis, Joseph was sold by his brothers to Egypt, but later he saved his father and his brothers in Egypt; this is the best footnote of the “suffering servant.” And the Passion of Jesus Christ is the extreme example of the “suffering servant.”

As the only Son of God, Jesus Christ was born on the vicious earth and sacrificed for humanity. As the Savior, He brings to humankind gospels and the real salvations. “Instead of ruling as a political king, Jesus was the suffering servant, and instead of

triumphing over His enemies by military force, He was executed as a criminal” (Ryken, Literature of the Bible 275). The life of Jesus Christ itself is an ironical story. Jesus Christ, the most innocent and righteous on the earth, was crucified on the cross as a criminal; this is a reversed image of the concept of hero in traditional meanings. The image of Jesus Christ contains rich content of both humanity and divinity and has become archetype of the “suffering servant” in numerous novels. Based on the archetype of Jesus Christ, Faulkner had produced many Christ-like characters, and meanwhile, he reversed or converted the image of the “suffering servant” in accordance with the themes of his stories, so as to attain the goal of criticizing dark sides of human nature and the drawbacks of traditional social values restricting humanity. In Light in August, Faulkner draws analogy between the leading character and image of Jesus Christ, such as the hint of age (33) and the abbreviation of the name (J.C., which is also abbreviation for Jesus Christ), as well as the religious ceremonies of Christmas and Easter.

The theme of grief is important in the Old Testament. There are a lot of writings bemoaning life and destiny in the Job, the Prophets and the Lamentations. The Lamentations bemoans the fall of Jerusalem, the ruins of the holy temple, and the doomed destiny of Israel, which reflects the penalties from God and the grief and hope of His elect. Maybe only when the soul of humanity is really touched by grief and pains, can humankind moan in this way. And this grief and loneliness are properly used by Faulkner to express complicated feelings about the Southern society. The title of the novel Absalom, Absalom! itself impresses readers with a sorrowful feeling with weeping as heard from afar, David the king covered his face, and cried with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son! ” (2 Sam.19:4). Such grief can also be found

from Faulkner's other novels. This is the writer's hatred and grief over the depravity and corruption of the Southern society, as well as a chant to the fall of human morals and the tragedies of humankind in artistic forms.

A key theme of the Bible is the severe conflict between Jesus Christ and Satan, which is actually the conflict and contradiction between good and evil. To Jesus Christ, the existence of Satan is a latent and tempting challenge, because it gives humankind another potentiality of choice. The Bible is a story on the struggles and match between the God/Jesus Christ and Satan. In literary creations, the focus and theme of the plots are often composed of the confrontation or conflict between good and evil. In this sense, the concept and "mode" of the Bible make up of an important theme of Western literary creations, because religion and art, in the final analysis, are concerns and judgments of the final morals and destinies of humankind. Faulkner's literary creations are basically centered on this subject. "A very important theme in his early work is the discovery of evil, which is part of man's initiation into the nature of reality"(Tennyson & Ericson 312). To Faulkner, evil breaches humanity, and it is the biggest betrayal of morals, while good/righteousness is the reservation of the bright side of humanity. Faulkner's standard of morals comes from the Christian ideology of humanity. He thinks that Christianity is "everybody's personal standard of behaviors. "

In summary, many important themes of American literary creation are closely related to the Bible and maintain a direct archetypal relationship with Biblical thoughts in the inspiration of writings. Some people even remarked that American literature is religious or Christian literature. In the early ages, many literary works are actually Christian literature containing rich components of Christian tenets. And most of the literary creations

thereafter either directly portray Biblical tenets, or draw the materials from the literary quotations or images of Bible. “Because Bible is a rich source of tales of economic exploitation and bondage, writers often reinforced the slavery theme with typological parallels, comparing the sufferings of the colonists to that of the Israelites” (Elliot 120).

Human history is always repeating itself and literary themes as well express the similar or common care of mankind, which is, retelling the ancient themes in the literary and art world. To modernize and reinterpret Biblical stories has become an excuse of telling the same story in different ways, which might be restricted by political or aesthetic demands in different stages. When drawing from Biblical traditions, writers pay more attention to the present than to the past.

From the 20th century, natural and man-made disasters have brought to mankind unprecedented hurt, and the depravity of mankind had not been a strange topic to Western literature. In a sense, the imaginary and fictional world of literature brings a kind of comfort to the hurt souls. The loss and rebuilding of the Garden of Eden in the spiritual life becomes ideal of American people.

III. Archetypal Relationship of American literature and Bible in Characters and Types

Characters are an essential part of any biblical story. The Bible is full of people, “perfectly ordinary normal heroes and blackguards just like everybody nowadays. It’s people all trying to get something for nothing...”(Gwynn 167). One of the persistent fascinations of the Bible narratives is the memorable characters they often introduce. As a great storehouse of such universal characters and types, the Bible provides an endless fascination for the literary imagination. One need only mention Adam and Eve, Abel and

Cain, Moses and Abraham, Jacob, Saul and David, Jesus to bring to mind Biblical figures who have stirred the imaginations of more than one writers and to suggest further the rich lode of literature that deals with Bible characters. These universal character types, like the character of Chaucer and Dickens, assume a quality of vivid familiarity. As a reader finds these archetypal characters and types in the myths of his culture, he knows their symbolic meanings intuitively. Not surprisingly, many American writers use biblical figures as devices to provide background connotations which will offer additional insight into their literary character development, thus to enhance the portrayal of their characters.

The biblical archetypal characters recur frequently in American Literature in two forms: one is in explicit or undisplaced forms, the other is in considerably hidden or displaced forms. In the previous form, the biblical archetype is transparent and easy to be identified. Compared to that, the archetype in the latter form can only be identified by sensitive critical investigation based on the good understandings of the literary image and its prototype.

Herman Melville's Moby-Dick is a very good case in point. It is significant that about half of the characters in Moby-Dick can be found their prototypes in the Bible. Meanwhile, these characters possess very similar personalities of the prototypes, and some even have names of Biblical origin. Herman Melville's handling of relationship between part of the characters in the novel and the religious connotations shown from these characters are consistent with the literary texts of the Bible, which makes "the allusion to Biblical prototypes" a distinctive feature of this novel.

A. Major Biblical Prototypes in Moby-Dick

Ahab is undoubtedly protagonist of the novel. But as narrator and participator of the story, Ishmael's thinking and ideological activities run through the whole story. In this sense, Ishmael should also be regarded as a protagonist of the novel. The prototype of Ishmael comes from Genesis of the Old Testament. Since Sarah, Abraham's wife bore him no children. She took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abraham as a wife. Hagar conceived and bore Abram a son, whom Abraham named Ishmael. Later Sarah also conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. Sarah wanted Isaac to inherit along, so she persuaded Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away (Gen. 16-21). Judging from the figure's standing, circumstance of activities and destiny, Ishmael basically maintains major characteristics of his prototype: Ishmael leaves the safe and comfortable onshore life to get to sea and be a nautical wonderer, this answers for the prototype and his mother Hagar's being driving out and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. Ishmael fights whales on the vast sea, which implies the prototype living in the "wilderness of Paran" as an expert with the bow. The name of Ishmael, which means "God shall hear," is a prophecy. When Hagar and Ishmael were deserted in the wilderness, Hagar, lifting up her voice, wept for Ishmael dying of thirsty. God heard the voice of the boy and prepared a well of water for them (Gen. 21). Correspondingly, when sailors of *Pequod* are buried into the sea, only Ishmael survived for buoying up "the coffin like-buoy." From here we can be told that the borrowing of the prototype of Ishmael is based on two reasons: One is to use the image of "deserted wonderer" to demonstrate how lonely, tough and treacherous the sea life is. In this case,

the prototype founds the basic exterior frame for the gradual formation of the image of Ishmael. The other reason is the requirement of the novel's depictive structure. The prototype prepares the keynote and the developing tendency of the figure's destiny, thus to accomplish its natural transformation from "the survivor" to "the narrator."

Compared to Ishmael, Captain Ahab is a tragic image. His doom and evil prediction are tightly connected with his tragic name bearing miserable final. Ahab's prototype comes from 1 Kings in the Old Testament, the seventh King of Israel in the north after the people of Israel being divided into two parts. King Ahab's destiny actually foredooms Captain Ahab's (King Ahab died on the battlefield while Ahab died on the sea fighting Moby Dick, the Whale). And King Ahab's characters are also "gene" of Captain Ahab's. On one hand, Captain Ahab possesses heads-up, apt and talented characters of his prototype. As the ruler of Israel, King Ahab made a marriage alliance with King Ethbaal of the Sidonians by taking as his wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal (1 Kings 17:31). He resumed peaceful diplomacy with the powerful Kingdom of Judah in the south and set forces in Damascus, Capital of Aram, to guard against Assyrians, and thus the borders of his kingdom was firm. He led Israeli army and pitted few against many, after defeated the Arameans, he released Ben-hadad, king of Aram, as exchange, Ben-hadad agreed that King Ahab might establish bazaars for themselves in Damascus, so as to obtain long-term benefits. With 40 years of whale-hunting experience, Captain Ahab is also a tactful and courageous man who thinks a lot of commercial benefits and is actually a qualified captain. Only when commanding *Pequod* and launching out to hunt Moby Dick, does he fling caution to winds and use his tact and courage in fulfilling the selfish desire of revenge and handling with the intense and subtle relations with his underlings, which

makes tact become blackness, courage become devilishness, advantage become accessory helping a tyrant to do evil (Wright 40-41). On the other hand, and the most important of all, Ahab inherits his prototype's character of profaneness. In the Old Testament, the story of King Ahab has been regarded as a good example of "God's judgment." People pay more attention to Ahab's evil side of profaning God: he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. Ahab also made a sacred pole. Ahab did more to provoke the anger of the Lord, God of Israel, than had all the kings of Israel who were before him (1 King 17:31-33). Ahab let Jezebel killing off the prophets of the Lord, and released Ben-hadad, king of Aram, whom the Lord had devoted to destruction. All these behaviors are against tenets of Judaism. Compared to King Ahab, Captain Ahab goes further. As a Christian, Ahab admires fire and is amazed by the light, the sun and stars, anything that relates to fire, like a Persian Zoroastrians. When the ship of *Pequod* is attacked by storms and thunders on the Japanese Sea and three masts are burnt up, Ahab claims himself to be "real child of God of fire", and pray God of fire to protect him. But meanwhile he clamors that the real worship to God of fire is to disdain him. He disdains all holy spirits and gods and such arrogance obviously runs counter to the Christians' spirit of humility. What embodies Captain Ahab's character is his "devil" personality, which is also the major reason that causes his final destruction. When using the gentiles' blood to give his harpoon "the true death-temper", deliriously howled Ahab, "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!" ("I baptize you not under the name of God, but the Devil.") Uncontrollable crankiness and unscrupulousness blinds himself, which makes him unable to see his own sins (in the beginning, it is Ahab that wants to kill Moby Dick and due to

the instinct, the whale defends itself by attacking Ahab). In order to find his lost so-called proud, Ahab goes his own way and frantically “vengeance on a dumb brute!” (Moby Dick, XXXVI. 139). In order to realize his aim, Captain Ahab leaves his young wife and son, and is even willing to abandon over 30 lives, which he has no right to ignore. Such venomous act is undoubtedly a wanton profaneness and devastation of niceness. To Ahab, he deserves just like what Father Mapple prayed: “Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world, courts not dishonor! Woe to him who would not be true, even though to be false were salvation!” (Moby Dick, IX. 57).

The successful creation of Ahab attributes to Herman Melville’s all-around understanding and profound grasp of the prototype from the Bible (the Old Testament). Such “pre-understanding” is also important to the readers: as soon as we fully understand the symbolic meaning of the prototype that is behind the image of Captain Ahab, its intrinsic evilness is also unveiled.

B. Secondary Biblical Prototypes

Apart from Ishmael and Ahab, Elijah, Bildad and Gabriel acting as distinctive foils to the image of Captain Ahab in the novel also have their Biblical prototypes.

As a prophet of the Lord, Elijah is an important role and is closely related to King Ahab and to Ahab’s death. King Ahab frequently sinned against the Lord. He coveted the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. And in order to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard, Ahab’s wife Jezebel plotted and managed to make use of the elders and nobles who live in Naboth’s city to get rid of Naboth. Obeying the word of the Lord that came to him, Prophet Elijah went down to meet King Ahab and gave him the Lord’s predictions,

“Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin...Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat”(1 King 21:22-24). And “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood.”(1 King 21:19) What happened next brutally fulfilled God’s prophecy, or rather, curse befalling Ahab through Elijah. In Moby Dick, Herman Melville also “placed” such a role of “prophet”, the old sailor Elijah whom Ishmael meets before launching out. No one else likes Elijah who looks through Captain Ahab so thoroughly, although he never confronts Ahab before. The doom of Captain Ahab and sailors of the ship *Pequod* are foreshadowed in his obscure word to Ishmael, “Anything down there (ship *Pequod*) about your souls?” “Oh, perhaps you haven’t got any. No matter though, I know many chaps that haven’t got any, -- good luck to ’em; and they are all the better off for it. A soul’s a sort of a fifth wheel to a wagon.” “He’s got enough, though, to make up for all deficiencies of that sort in other chaps”(Moby Dick, XIX. 89). The appearance of Elijah makes the plot of Moby Dick a story being fulfilled by the prophesy, which henceforth realizes the archetypal relationship of the novel with that of the prophetic story of King Ahab in the 1 King of Old Testament.

To Elijah, Captain Ahab’s activities are ultimate validation of his prediction. While to Captain Bildad, Ahab’s activities compose of wordless ironies. As one of the principle owners of ship *Pequod*, Bildad, whose name comes from Job of the Old Testament

(Bildad the Shuhite, a friend of Job, who urged Job to repent), is a devout Christian compared to his partner Captain Peleg. He has been studying “those scriptures for the last thirty years” and preaches with “something of the salt sea yet lingered in old Bildad’s language, heterogeneously mixed with Scriptural and domestic phrases” (*Moby Dick*, XVIII. 87). But what he practices is not what he preaches. Although he mumbles to himself out of his book, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth--” (Matthew 6:19), meanwhile, Bildad also has the reputation of being an incorrigible old hunk, and in his sea-going days, a bitter, hard taskmaster. “Though refusing, from conscientious scruples, to bear arms against land invaders, yet himself had illimitably invaded the Atlantic and Pacific; and though a sworn foe to human bloodshed, yet had he in his straight-bodied coat, spilled tuns upon tuns of leviathan gore” (*Moby-Dick*, XVI. 76). And when the ship Peguod starts to make sails and leave the harbor, Bildad reminds the sailors not to forget to pray and “Don’t whale it too much a’ Lord’s days...but don’t miss a fair chance either, that’s rejecting Heaven’s good gifts” (*Moby- Dick*, XXII. 98). The combination of religion and commercial purpose is utilitarianism, which is an exaggerated stretch-out of the prototype. Just like what the author wrote in the novel, “How now in the contemplative evening of his days, the pious Bildad reconciled these things in the reminiscence, I do not know; but it did not seem to concern him much, and very probably he had long since come to the sage and sensible conclusion that a man’s religion is one thing, and this practical world quite another.” And “His own person was the exact embodiment of his utilitarian character” (*Moby-Dick*, XVI. 76). In *Job* of the Old Testament, Bildad the Shuhite is the more devotional one among Job’s three friends. He thought that though Job was a blameless and upright man who feared God and turned

away from evil, his children or he himself might have sinned against God, for God never perverts justice and right. So Bildad spoke to Job, “If you will seek God and make supplication to the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore to you your rightful place. Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great”(Job 8:5-7). Bildad the Shuhite speaks to Job for Job’s goodness, while Captain Bildad’s words and activities are for himself. It is interesting that God eventually restored the fortunes of Job and gave him as twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10); while Captain Bildad’s dream ended with the sinking of ship *Pequod*, his commercial purpose is completely overthrown by the insane avenger Captain Ahab. His utilitarian character is satirized by Ahab’s illiberal behaviors.

Among the images of the novel, Gabriel’s appearance has the most religious meanings. His being on the scene is a radical judgment to Captain Ahab and the whole whaling activity. Gabriel has been originally nurtured among the crazy society of Neskyeuna Shakers¹, where he has been a great prophet. “A strange, apostolic whim having seized him”, Gabriel leaves Neskyeuna for Nantucket, where he assumes “a steady, common sense exterior” and offers himself as a green-hand candidate for the *Jeroboam*’s whaling voyage. He announces himself as the archangel Gabriel, publishes his manifesto, whereby he sets himself forth as the deliverer of the isles of the sea and vicar-general of all Oceanica. He also carried in his vest-pocket “the speedy opening of the seventh vial” (vial here seems to allude to “seven golden bowls” in the Revelation of the New Testament, which refers to the wrath of God). When the existence of Moby Dick is reliably apprised of to the men of the ship *Jeroboam* of Nantucket, Gabriel solemnly warned the captain against attacking the white whale, “pronouncing the White Whale to

be no less a being than the Shaker God incarnated”(Moby-Dick, LXXI, 251). Later, when Macey, the chief mate, insists to encounter Moby Dick, despite all Gabriel’s denunciations and forewarnings, and is eventually killed by the Whale, Gabriel shrieks piercingly “The vial! The vial!”, which hints that Macey has angered God. When Captain Ahab speaks to Captain Mayhew about Moby Dick, Gabriel talks to Ahab out of his crazy plan of hunting and killing Moby Dick. But Ahab closes his ears and refuses to listen to Gabriel’s warnings. When Captain Ahab hands to Captian Mayhew a letter written by Macey’s wife to her husband who has died, Gabriel throws “fatal missive” back to Ahab, crying to Ahab that he should keep the letter because he is “soon going that way” and by then Ahab himself will hand the letter of Macey. The creation of the image of Gabriel is undoubtedly important. He claims that Moby Dick is the embodiment of the Shaker God, endowing the whale a divine and symbolic sense. And thus the relationship between Ahab and Moby Dick is raised to the relationship between humankind and the god. In the name of “masculine”, Gabriel makes the judgment that to hunt Moby Dick is to offend the god, the result is that the offenders will be “stark dead” and sunken in the seam, that is the evidence of God’s punishments. It is apparent that Herman Melville was influenced greatly by the Bible in creating the image of Gabriel. “Punishment” and “judgment” are two important concepts in “The Revelation” in the New Testament and Herman Melville intentionally used the image of Gabriel to symbolize the two concepts. Although Gabriel the Masculine did not show himself in “The Revelation”, as a symbolized image, the seven angels, who poured out on the earth the seven bowls of God’s wrath, could absolutely be replaced by Gabriel, the Masculine; and it is very possible that Gabriel was among the seven angels.

C. “Hidden” Biblical Prototypes

Since “the explicit prototypes” and “the hidden prototypes” co-exist in Moby Dick, when studying the “the explicit prototypes”, we can also find the “hidden prototypes” simultaneously.

In the ship *Pequod*, Starbuck, the chief mate, is the only one who dares to oppose Captain Ahab. Due to either the character of being pragmatic and careful or being “superstitious,” Starbuck is not for Ahab at the very start. But his opposition is weak and of little use. He has attempted for several times to persuade Captain Ahab and arouse him with far-away domestic memories and affections of his family, his young wife and child, but fail. He is clearly aware that submitting to Ahab dooms to the ruins of all the crews of ship *Pequod*, the only way of retrieval is to embar or to get rid of Ahab. He has the chance, capability and idea to do so, but he is lack of adequate courage. “And brave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man”(Moby Dick or the Whale, XXVI. 104). It is the wicked and grand will of Ahab that brings to him deep spiritual horrors and that prevent him from taking action, which leads to the hopeless falling of ship *Pequod* to the darkest abysm.

The relationship of the unity of opposites between Captain Ahab and Chief Mate Starbuck echoes the relationship between King Ahab and Obadiah, the controller of the king’s house. “Obadiah revered the LORD greatly” (1King 18:3), but due to his comparatively low position, he had to stilly endure King Ahab’s behaviors of

profaneness. But “when Jezebel was killing off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them by fifty to a cave, and provided them with bread and water (1 King 18:3). He was respectful and friendly to Elijah, but not to his king Ahab. Such humanistic image of “good man” is also a portrayal true to Starbuck, who makes a strong contrast to the atrocious image of Captain Ahab.

Unlike Starbuck, the implicit prototype of Fedallah is not a single image, but a type of images, which can also be called “type prototype.” In “1 King” of the Old Testament, a direct reason that caused King Ahab’s death on the battlefield was that Ahab believed what the false prophets had prophesied. Before dispatching troops to get Ramothgilead back from the hands of the king of Aram, King Ahab gathered four hundred prophets together to ask if he should go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall he forbear. They “declare good unto the king with one mouth.” “And they said, Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king” (1 King 22:6). But when Ahab turned to Micaiah, a prophet of the LORD, and asked for his prophecy, Micaiah claimed that Ahab would “go up and fall at Ramothgilead” (1King 22:20). Since King Ahab profaned God and had committed a lot of evildoings, God put “a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets” (1King 22:22) so as to persuade Ahab to attack the king of Aram and die at Ramothgilead. King Ahab ignored Micaiah’s words and as a result, he was smitten by an enemy’s arrow and died at Ramothgilead. On the journey of death of Captain Ahab, Fedallah also plays a role as “false prophet.” The Parsee (Fedallah) tells Ahab “that neither hearse nor coffin can be thine.” But “that ere thou couldst die on this voyage, two hearses must verily be seen by thee on the sea; the first not made by mortal hands; and the visible wood of the last one must be grown in America”(Moby Dick, CXVII 378).

Fedallah takes the pledge that “Hemp (the bowstring) only can kill thee (Ahab).” And Fedallah also says to Ahab that he himself “shall still go before thee thy pilot.” As to Ahab, all these words are good ones that guarantee his final victory, because it is common sense that there are on hearses and hemp (bowstring) on the sea. But in the end, all these seemingly illusive prophecies come true. The first hearse is Moby Dick, the Parsee is found dead reeled on the back of the White Whale. The second hearse is ship *Pequod*, “its wood could only be American”, and after being attacked by the White Whale, all the seamen are sunk into the sea with the ship. Only when seeing all those happen before him, does Captain Ahab begin to realize that the real meaning of Fedallah’s words. Later, the flying turn of the line “caught him (Ahab) round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone.” False prophet Fedallah opens the door of the hell for Ahab with his words.

Herman Melville was very familiar with the Bible, that’s why he could successfully quote prototypes of the Bibles. The study of the images of Biblical prototypes and the meanings on them have taken an important portion in his creation of the literary images, which ensures the literary images of the novel inherit the characteristics of their Biblical prototypes, and furthermore, be more colorful and meaningful than their prototypes. So we can safely say that Moby-Dick continued and developed the religious sense of the Bible. In Moby-Dick, Captain Ahab is the representative of the evil of the human, or the embodiment of wicked humanity; while the other images are created to restrain evil or to assist evil, they are setoffs to Ahab. As a mysterious and supernatural being, the White Whale, foe of Ahab, can be regarded as God’s emissary to punish the evils. The battle

between the White Whale and Ahab is a conflict between obedience of God's will and contravention of God's will, good and evil, appetency and restriction.

IV. Archetypal Relationship of American literature and the Bible in Narrative Structures

The recurrence of literary theme cannot but relate to the narrative structure of the archetype that carries the theme. Sometimes, narrative structure even becomes the decisive element of the thinking expressions. The Bible stories are characterized by the U-shaped narrative structure in which events begin in prosperity or tranquility, descend into calamity or tragedy, and finally rise again to a happy conclusion. In The Great Code: the Bible and Literature, Frye declares that the narrative structure of the whole Bible "is roughly U-shaped, the apostasy being followed by a descent into a disaster and bondage, which in turn is followed by repentance, then by a rise through deliverance to a point more or less on the level from which the descent began. This U-shaped pattern, approximate as it is, recurs in literature as the standard shape of comedy...The entire Bible, viewed as a 'divine comedy', is contained within a U-shaped story of this sort, one in which man, as explained, loses the tree and water of life at the beginning of Genesis and gets them back at the end of Revelation. In between, the story of Israel is told as a series of declines into the power of heathen kingdoms, Egypt, Philistia, Babylon, Syria, Rome, each followed by a rise into a brief moment of relative independence"(169). The plots of the stories become very complicated under the U-shaped narrating structure. This is also one of the important reasons why the Bible stories are so dramatic and attractive.

The entire structure of the Old Testament is a typical "U-shaped" plot. The harmonious state in the Garden of Eden falls because of the human depravity, God's

punishment of flood follows the redemption of the ark and the Exodus, the split of Israel and Kingdoms of Judah, the falls of Jerusalem, and finally the Jews in Babylon were permitted to go up to Jerusalem and build the house of the God which is in Jerusalem. The twists and turns of Jews confirm again and again the motif of sin—confession—redemption. In Genesis, the story of Joseph is the typical one with such structure. After suffering from great misfortune and then success a lot in Egypt, Joseph finally had a reunion and renewal with his family. The Book of Job is one of the three books in the Old Testament that have the most carefully and artistically structured literary plots (the other two are the Book of Ruth and the Book of Esther). The plot is full of unexpected suspense and its structure forms the “U” shape. Although much of the story of Job is devoted to the tragic life of Job, the whole story in general forms a comic, U-shaped plot, i.e. in the beginning, it is the peaceful and flourishing life, and all of sudden tragedies befall; in the end, there comes a happy resolution (Ryken, How to Read Bible as Literature 109).

The story of Jesus Christ in the New Testament also conformed to this plot. The climax of the Four Gospels is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the last act of the U-shaped structure of the Four Gospels, which symbolizes that Jesus finally conquers evil. And this also sets up the comic tone of the Four Gospels. Actually, the story of Jesus’ resurrection is not only the climax of the Four Gospels, but also the climax of the whole Bible. It is the nucleus of the Bible as literature. It realizes the laws and prophecies of the Old Testament. In Leland Ryken’s words, “The passion story of Jesus is the climax not only of the individual gospels but of the whole story of the Bible. It is the center toward which the rest of Biblical literature points either forward or backward. It is the fulfillment of the

Old Testament ceremonial laws and prophecies, of Old Testament types (foreshadowings), and of Biblical archetype of the suffering servant. The substitutional atonement represented by Jesus' death on the cross is also the basis of the "good news" that pervades the New Testament and is the foundation for the whole edifice of New Testament theology" (Ryken, Literature of the Bible 290). In the end of the New Testament, the hour of His judgement, the new Jerusalem, new heaven and new earth, and Jesus Christ's coming again, all these mentioned in the Revelation symbolize humanity's regaining the once-lost paradise. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Bible as a whole is humanity's history from paradise lost to paradise regained.

The way of Biblical narration, which emphasizes the endless fighting between good and evil, is especially fit for literary writing. The Bible stories repeatedly emphasize God's value and glories; while in more secular literature, such thought is often restricted to human. Like any literature that demonstrates human experience, American literature also caters to this ancient narrative tradition. The complication of the plots enables writers to deeply cultivate the psychology of figures so as to realize intensified art effects.

In the 20th century, the citations of Biblical plots became an important narrative technique in American literature. The name of the last saga novel of Nathanael West (1903-1940), which is entitled The Day of the Locust (1939), comes from "the Exodus" in the Old Testament. And the story also directly adopts its material from the story of "the Exodus." The "Locust plague," as an embodiment of misfortune and disaster, is a metaphor to the American culture and art, with Hollywood as the emblem. It is also used by Nathanael West to satirize the mediocre and earthy life in modern times.

The “U-shaped” narration influenced the literary creations greatly, especially the comedies: after overcoming a series of obstacles, the happy ending comes. The overall progression is from problem to solution, from bondage to freedom. Comedies also contain many calamitous elements, which compose key contents of what make a comedy. Cut-ins of the most of William Faulkner’s literary works are based on such calamitous elements. The figures of Faulkner’s novels are filled with tragic sense and destinies, while the depicted ways of the calamitous elements are essential to the narrations of his novels. Based on the structure of Biblical narrations, Faulkner adjusts or transposes this Biblical narrative structure in accordance with his intentions of creation, so as to adapt the development of the plots of his novels.

Faulkner’s use of Biblical narrative structure is so frequent that the relevant contents or structure could be found in almost all of his novels. In The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!, biblical-style narration is incarnated adequately with the structures of sin—depravity—salvation and depravity—extermination. Generally speaking, Faulkner is inspired and adopts more contents from the New Testament, especially from the stories of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ’s life before his baptism (Ike McCaslin in The Bear), the Passion and the resurrection of Jesus (The Sound and the Fury), Christ figures (Light in August, A Fable), depiction of redemptions (Requiem for a Nun, the novel’s narrative structure is an echo of Christians’ spiritual course of sin—redemption—salvation, which expresses the theme of realizing salvations with forgiveness and redemptions.) As to the Old Testament, Faulkner adopts more narrative structures from it, such as As I Lay Dying (which adopts the structure of the Exodus) and Absalom, Absalom!(which adopts the stories of the family of David the King).

The narrative structures of the Old Testament stories are mainly used by Faulkner to emphasize the tragic low ebb stages of the novels. The rise of redemptions in his novels is generally shortened, weakened and sometimes even ignored, such as in the Absalom, Absalom! which focuses on the content of sins, retributions and punishments. Even the positive characters he created are converted and reversed to engender strong tragic effects. “The inverted U is the typical shape of tragedy, as its opposite is of comedy: it rises to a point of ‘peripety’ or reversal of action, then plunges downward to a ‘catastrophe’, a word which contains the figure of “turning down.” The Bible does not, however, think of this movement as tragic but simply as ironic: it concentrates on the final collapse and minimizes or ignores the heroic element in the historical achievements that preceded it”(Frye, Great Code 176). Frye’s conclusion corresponds to Faulkner’s literary creations. The most typical example is the image of Sutpen from Absalom, Absalom! The “great elements” in Sutpen, the courageous spirit and the stalwart will are the reasons why this “God” or rather “Demon” could realize his grand design and ambitions. The establishment of Sutpen’s Hundred is really an outstanding work and Sutpen seems to succeed. But the plot takes a sudden turn and develops in an unexpected way. The appearance of Charles Bon is the turning point of the whole story, and the Sutpen family begins to fall from the climax. Charles Bon and Sutpen are killed, and Sutpen’s Hundred is burnt down to ashes by fire. The narration of this story comes to the lowest ebb of the “U” shape.

It is true that religious intention in Faulkner’s narrations is not clear. However, it is concealed in words and sentences of the novels. Faulkner actually adopted the structures and plots of the Bible to retell modern stories. And the process of the development of

humanity also verifies a fact as well as a principle: history repeats itself in the following procedure: prosperity—descent—prosperity. It is an inexorable trend for literature and the arts to pay more attention to the narrative structures of the Bible.

V. Archetypal Relationship of American Literature and the Bible in Images and Symbols

Images and symbols are two important parts in literary imagery. The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery is an encyclopedia dictionary for literary studies of the Bible. It discusses in-depth the images, symbols, analogies, comparisons and other means of literary rhetoric. It defines “an image” as “any word that names a concrete thing (such as tree or house) or action (such as running or threshing). Any object or action that we can picture is an image,” while “a symbol” is defined as “an image that stands for something in addition to its literal meaning. It is more laden with meaning than simply the connotations of the straight image. In the overwhelming majority of cases, symbolism emerges as a shared language in a culture.” According to these definitions, the difference between images and symbols lie in that “Images require two activities from us as readers of the Bible. The first is to experience the images as literally and in as fully a sensory way as possible. The second is to be sensitive to the connotations or overtones of the image.” While “the most elementary form of connotation is simply whether an image is positive or negative in association in the context in which it appears” (Ryken, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery xiv).

Images and symbols are commonly used, especially, in the Gospels of the New Testament. Jesus’ sermons are filled with parables and emblems, as well as a lot of vivid

images, like Living Water (John, 4:10), the Bread of Life (John, 8:12), and the Good Shepherd (John, 10:11), etc. “The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”(Matt. 7:22-23) “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest o fall shrubs, and puts froth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shades”(Mark 4:30-32). In the Bible stories, the kingdom of God is compared to a mustard seed, yeast, a pearl, a vineyard, a great dinner and a wedding banquet. Jesus Christ described himself as “the gate for the sheep,” using the “shepherd” to symbolize his image of being crucified for the atonement of our sins. “Very truly, I tell you. I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture” (John 10:7-9). “A good shepherd” has become a revelatory figure of perfect things, which are commonly used in literary works. The seemingly simple words and vivid parables contain rich meanings. The purpose of using images and symbols are also explained in Gospels: “With many such parables he (Jesus Christ) spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it, he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples” (Mark 4:33-34). Meanwhile, literally speaking, parables in the Four Gospels also produce strong aesthetic effects, bringing about artistic treats to the readers. Using vivid language emblems to

open up the rich content of human lives, images and symbols of the Bible have become an inexhaustible resource for the writers to use in their literary creation.

In the 19th century, American writers paid more attention to the biblical images and symbols, and very often use them in the basic techniques of literary expressions. Take Nathaniel Hawthorne's novels as an example, many of them allude to the biblical images and emblems, and intentionally annotate Christian tenets on evilness and the human nature. When creating The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne was not only influenced deeply by Christianity, but also skillfully and artistically used the images and symbols from the Bible. The Scarlet Letter, the title itself is the key parable throughout the book, which introjects Hawthorne's comments and judgment on moral values. It comes from the Bible, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). Reviewing Nathaniel Hawthorne's intension of literary creations, we may easily find that sin and goodness are consistently related and inseparable in his works. Natural passion and ardor should be abstained, but they are also beautiful and deserve recognition. The parable of "the Scarlet Letter" contains two meanings: first, it symbolizes ardor and sin of "Adultery"; on the other side, it also represents "Able." These two meanings are interlinked with the brand of Cain. After killing his brother Abel, the Lord put a brand on Cain's forehead, "so that no one came upon him would kill him"(Gene, 4:15). It is said that Cain's brand might be a kind of symbol, illustrating that the man is either a sinner or a protected. To Hester, "Her breast, with its badge of shame, was but the softer pillow for the head that needed one. She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy; or, we may rather say, the world's heavy hand had so ordained her, when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was

found in her, —so much power to do, and power to sympathize, —that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength”(Hawthorne 117). In the story, Hester sharply feels that the world “had set a mark upon her, more intolerable to a woman's heart than that which branded the brow of Cain”(Hawthorne 64). But meanwhile she also feels that “It may be that it was the talisman of a stern and severe, but yet a guardian spirit, who now forsook her...” (Hawthorne, XV. 130). It is evident that Hawthorne intended to express the two varied meanings of the image of “the scarlet letter.” On the one hand, it serves as a token of sin, “the red pot with infernal fire”(Hawthorne, V. 67). But on the other hand, if we associate it with its Biblical source, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa. 1:18), it will not be difficult for us to figure out that it also suggests the divine protection and compassion in dealing with the unforgiving Puritan society.

To give another example, in The Scarlet Letter, Hester named her infant daughter, Pearl, to which, Hawthorne was outspoken in his remarks: “But she (Hester) named the infant ‘Pearl’, as being of great price, —purchased with all she had, —her mother's only treasure!”(Hawthorne, VI. 67). We cannot help associating her with the parable of Jesus in Matthew 13:45-46, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” This illustrates that in order to obtain a pearl of great price, one would lose all the valuable things that one has owned, such as family, fortune and fame. Obviously like the merchant, Hester sacrifices everything, especially her reputation, for her daughter Pearl, her only possession. Moreover, Pearl is so beautiful

that she is “worthy to have been brought forth in Eden; worthy to have been left there, to be the plaything of the angels” (Hawthorne, VI, cf. Rev.21:21)². Pure and white as snow, Pearl is a precious gift from God to comfort Hester. It not only demonstrates God’s forgiveness, but also reminds the reader and the stern Puritans that since Hester is atoning for her sins, she deserves a better treatment. From here, readers can see that the purpose that Hawthorne named Hester’s daughter “Pearl” is to deepen the ideological content and connotation of the novel with Biblical images.

Apart from The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne’s other literary works also possess such characteristics: enormously use or borrow images and symbols of the Bible to intentionally depict Christianity’s concepts of sin and humanity. As the first real great writer in American history, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s literary achievements are mostly attributed to the influence of Christianity and the Christian Bible to him.

The biblical images and symbols can also be commonly seen in William Faulkner’s novels and contribute significantly to the writer’s literary imaginations. The most often used images are natural phenomena such as water, fire and tree.

Throughout the whole Bible, “water” is endowed with special meaning and special position. In Genesis, it is recorded that “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). “And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life...” (Gen. 1:20). Waters not only “bring forth” the living creature, but also possess powerful and punitive executions. Many literary works borrow the flood stories that proclaim the destructive power of water, as well as its functions of washing away the evil and cleansing the world. The Four Gospels emphasized the cleansing functions of water, in the Matthew, “Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees;

every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I baptized you water for repentance...”(Matt. 3:10-11). Water, fire and trees, the three mostly often-used images in the Bible, are connected here. John, the Baptist, baptized Jesus Christ at the river of Jordan. And Jesus Christ also used water as parables. He said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water’”(John 7:37-38). The Revelation also said, “...Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift”(Rev. 22:17).

The Old Testament emphasizes the material meanings of “water,” which contains the images of “cleansing,” “bringing forth” and “being endowed with a life.” While the New Testament endows “water” with symbolic meanings: “In any case the theme of redemption out of water follows in the sequence that includes the story of Noah’s ark, the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, the symbolism of baptism in which the person baptized is separated into a mortal part that symbolically drowns and an immortal part that escapes, and such occasional uses of the images as the cry to God from the depths of waters in Psalm 69” (Frye, Great Code 192). The importance of “water” in the religious ceremonies is especially emphasized in the New Testament. “Baptism” symbolizes new birth and rise, as well as the source of life God prepares for humanity and the ultimate redemption.

In The Sound and Fury, there are many details related to “water.” The symbolism of “water” in this novel has the moral power of cleansing the human beings. Benjy’s crying stops only when Caddy washes herself after each of her dates with her boyfriend. In a summer night of 1909, the year when Benjy is 14 years’ of age, Caddy loses her virginity

and washes herself in the bathroom. These narrations have religious meaning, marking a key effect of “water” in the development of the plot. Although Benjy is an idiot without any normal sense, he plays the role as Caddy’s moral guardian and reminder. Every time Caddy soils herself and slides to the edge of the fall, Benjy’s crying always brings her with guilty feeling, and meanwhile the depictions of “water” will appear. “Overly concerned with questions of honor, justice, and love, and obsessed with his sister's increasing sexuality, Quentin resolved his tormenting demons by drowning himself in the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during his freshman year at Harvard.”³ Quentin’s drowning himself also ironically verifies the symbolism of the image of “water.” “The number of times that the shadow images are fused with images of water indicates that death by water is Quentin’s way of reconciling his two worlds, of merging shadow and reality and tempering their conflict. Whatever suggestion of purification may be present, water is primarily a symbol of oblivion for Quentin.” “It is in the hope of making this peace eternal that Quentin surrenders his body to the water where the hard knots of circumstance will be untangled and the roof of wind will stand forever between him and the loud world”(Vickery, 48). In Quentin’s imagination, water gives him a feeling of peace and eternity, symbolizes his final extrication from the struggles between two conflicting worlds.

“Trees” are another kind of image in the records of the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, “Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). Tricked by the serpent (Satan), Adam and Eve breached God prohibition, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not

eat” (Gen. 2:17). They took of the fruits and ate. That came the first fall and the original sin of the human beings. On eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, “the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves” (Gen. 3:7). In the rest part of the Old Testament, many images of trees are also recorded, such as fig, grapevine and cedar, etc. The booming and prosperous leaves are also used to refer to God’s chosen ones, while the withered trees are used to refer to God’s punishment befalling the rebellious Israelite people. Such vivid parables, which bear strong symbolic meanings, usually bring about impressive art effects. The image of “tree” itself signifies the fruit of life and wisdom to humanity and it also implies the potentiality of temptation and death.

The central image in The Sound and Fury is of a little girl who climbs up a pear tree with muddy drawers, around which William Faulkner said he structured the novel, “It began with a mental picture. I didn’t realize at the time it was symbolical. The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl’s drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a window where her grandmother’s funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground blow”(Stein 16). Faulkner repeatedly referred to this image, the beautiful and tragic little girl who in climbing the tree disobeyed her father’s command. Its import as a symbol is to foreshadow Caddy’s moral fall and consequent alienation, which is at the heart of the story. Just like Eve in the Old Testament, Caddy rebels against the restrictions of tradition at the very start. Disregarding Quentin’s oppositions, she takes off the coat, and the result is that her drawers are soiled with mud by the branches. The section ends with Caddy’s drawers and behind still muddy, because Dilsey does not have time to bathe her. Therefore, Caddy’s

future action of losing her virginity (symbolized by the muddy drawers) is foreshadowed here. Melvin Backman thinks that “as if William Faulkner were associating Caddy’s stained bottom with Satan and the forbidden tree in Eden, as if he were associating her stain with original sin. Paradoxically, Caddy was the tree of life for Benjy, but for Quentin she would prove the fatal tree of knowledge” (Backman 19). Throughout the section of Benjy Compton, Caddy is always associated with the smells of trees. Like an animal, Benjy can “smell” when Caddy has changed; when she wears perfume, he states that she no longer smells “like trees,” so when Caddy tries to hug him, Benjy cries and pushes her away. Only when Caddy washes the perfume off, does Benjy think that she smells like “trees” again. And Benjy’s dread of perfume gradually disappears after Caddy gives it to Dilsey. In this sense, the trees in The Sound and Fury symbolize best part of humanity. And when the smell of “trees” fades out and eventually disappears, the nice morals represented by Caddy keep on being invaded and eroded. With the threats felt by Benjy and with Benjy’s cries, Caddy walks towards moral depravity step by step, and this course also symbolizes the unavoidable falls and ruins of the morals in the Southern society.

In the Old Testament, “fire” usually accompanies God’s anger and punishment, and is mostly relevant to God’s glories and angers. When God punished human beings, he usually used fire to show his power. A distinct plot in William Faulkner’s novels is that all those that represent evilness, sins or ruins will be burnt down by a fire. In Absalom, Absalom!, the “Hundred” established by Sutpen is burnt out by fires; in Light of August, Joe Christmas burns away Joanna’s house; in As I Lay Dying, the barn where Addie’s coffin was being stored catches fire, and it was saved only by the ferocity of Jewel’s

efforts. In The Sound and Fury, William Faulkner also intentionally depicts the image of “fire.” Caddy often brings Benjy to his favorite oven in the kitchen, where Dilsey opens the Oven door so that Benjy can watch. Since Benjy has no idea that fire could also hurt, he is burnt when he tries to touch the fire. To William Faulkner, “fire” has the power to punish and is the most destructive tool to destroy the sins on the earth. The writer used the image of “fire” to deliver himself from the hatreds towards the ruins and falls of the Southern society.

By using the images and symbols of water, trees and fire, William Faulkner vividly and deeply revealed his critical theme to the traditions of the Southern society. From these meaningful depictions, we can also peer through complicated “Southern complex” which is hidden in the depth of the Southerners’ psychology. And the artistry of William Faulkner’s novels is also fully demonstrated through these religious images and literary symbols.

VI. Archetypal Relationship of Modern American Literature’s Allegory to Biblical Allusions and Archetypes

Allegory is a major technique of the literary narration. In most modern American literature, the links provided by archetypes with the Bible are more or less hidden or displaced. As we move from the early periods to the modern periods of American literature, it is commonly observed that the transparent archetypes of the Bible gets increasingly opaque, and complex ironic overtones begin to show up in modern American literary works. The ironic displacement of one-dimensional biblical archetypes is a recurring phenomenon in modern American literature. Through the ironic

displacement of the biblical themes, structures, images, and character types, literary writers criticize the corruption of the human nature and the social morality profoundly.

Nathanael West's Miss Lonelyhearts (1933) is the typical one that is filled with satire. The birth of Miss Lonelyhearts was during the time when the United States fell into the Great Depression and was in a state of chaos and darkness. The novel satirizes the turbulent times, morbid society and abnormal humanity with images. Life of that time is just like what the writer said, "The gray sky...held no angels, flaming crosses, olive-bearing doves, wheels within wheels." Miss Lonelyhearts is a priest in the 20th century. His name has a special meaning. In the novel, Miss Lonely Hearts is a parable to Jesus Christ, he has strong "Christ complex," and wishes to resolve the practical problems and cast off worldly annoyance with the universal fraternity of Christianity. He dreams of the fantastic moment when the kingdom of heaven befalls, but eventually, he loses his life because of his love. The symbolic ending of the novel reflects the writer's understanding and cognition about the destiny of Christianity's universal love in modern Western society. The keynote of this novel is bitter and astringent.

In order to reveal the profound intention of the novels, many American writers also quoted Biblical allusions to name their novels. The name of Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1927) comes from "Ecclesiastes" of the Old Testament, "A generation goes, and a generation comes: but the earth remains for ever. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises"(Ecclesiastes 1:4-5). William Faulkner's novel Go Down, Moses was directly drawn its name from "Exodus" of the Old Testament. The name of Edith Wharton's (1862-1937) last book in the United States, The House of Mirth, came from "Ecclesiastes," which says, "The heart of the wise is in the house of

mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth” (Ecclesiastes, 7:4). The novel is a satire on the “elegance” of the American upper-class society. Joseph Heller’s (1923-1999) God Knows (1984) is a humorous retelling and analysis of Biblical account of King David and King Solomon, which actually alludes to the depressed souls and spiritual crisis of the modern humankind and portrays a view of cultural and spiritual desert. In the novel Absalom, Absalom!, William Faulkner uses fictitious skills to satirize the corrupted and degenerated social morals.

As to the name of Hemingway’s In Our Time (1925), it is probably quoted ironically from the commonly used prayers, “Lord, grant us peace in our time.” But throughout the novel, we can only find “no peace at all.” Each story of this novel has a metaphorical title, and the scenes of normal life are often spiced with war, bullfight and execution ground. Filled with flames of war, smoke of gunpowder, violence, blood and death, no feeling of peace can be found in the novel.

Louis Sinclair’s Elmer Gantry (1927) is an attack on the hypocritical ministers, the hypocritical and commercialized religion and religious revivalism, written with angry, sparkling style. The novel depicts a morally corrupt evangelist, Elmer Gantry, whose actions contradict everything he says. The opening and closing lines of the novel say it all: "Elmer Gantry was drunk... And we shall yet make these United States a moral nation."

The book contains irony that is sustained throughout the narrative. While leading others to believe in God, Elmer is himself an unbeliever. His best sermon, one that he repeats time after time, is based on the theme of love, but deep in his heart, Elmer actually can love nobody except himself. The church provides Elmer with everything

except what it should provide: decency; and instead, leads him to be an unbeliever. What is most ironic about the book, however, is the irony of structure based on various retellings of biblical parables and stories. The struggle over Elmer's soul during his college days and his eventual yielding to conversion suggests the parable of the shepherd and the lost sheep (and there is more rejoicing at Terwillinger College over the saving of Elmer than there is over all the other saved souls in that institution). Elmer's relationship with his mother suggests the parable of the prodigal son. His ability to make use of his voice and good looks is reminiscent of the parable of the talents. And his role of the just-man-accused when the newspapers learn that his secretary's husband plans to sue him for his alienation of affections is suggestive of Job. Throughout the novel, Lewis maintains irony of this sort to emphasize how Elmer and much of contemporary Protestantism are an inversion of Christian values and tradition.

Flowering Judas (1930), a novel of Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980), criticizes the treachery of revolutionary ideals, religion and love in metaphorical way, and meanwhile, the novel manifests the theme that the value of human existence and development exists in the possessing of the real belief and love. The character of Laura, the story's protagonist, is set against that of Braggioni, a corrupt revolutionary leader who is courting her. The story takes place during an evening they spend together, as Braggioni's singing and conversation mirrors Laura's growing disenchantment with the revolutionary ideal that brought her to Mexico. Laura, a former Catholic, rejects the hypocrisy of the socialist revolutionaries who have come to power and she rejects the advances of Braggioni and several other ardent suitors, which leads to a crisis of faith and a sense of acute isolation. The theme of lost faith is amplified through the story's

Christian imagery, central to which is the complex figure of the flowering Judas, named for Christ's betrayer.

In the concluding part of the story, Laura clung to the branch of the Judas tree. The tree's name originated from the belief that Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ, hanged himself on one of them. Laura ate the warm bleeding flowers, which symbolizes her betrayal of her own spirit and of humanity. She has not possessed either feeling or trust for the people around her, the most "unpardonable sin." She denies everything and everyone. Lacking religious faith and reverence for humanity, Laura will not partake of the body and blood of Christ, symbolizing atonement and salvation. She understands the frightening realization. Porter explicitly used the elaborate system religious allusions to express her moral judgment. And the literary thoughts and religious tenets therefore realize their harmonious co-existence.

William Faulkner used Christianity as an allegorical tool in telling a lot of his stories. To William Faulkner, the mortals are poor sinners created by God, and they should have been born with them certain kinds of limitations or weakness, which also make up of living base for the ironical style in literary creations. In The Sound and Fury, the Compsons are selfish, they have no love in their lives, they keep on suffering from frustrations and failures, all these make brilliant contrast with Jesus Christ's words to his disciples, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 16:12). The ruins and falls of the Compson family compose a brilliant contrast with the spirit of Christian philanthropy, which is somehow another form of metaphor. In the novel As I Lay Dying, the Bundrens bears their "heavy burden" (Addie's coffin) and experience the crucifixions of flood, fire and heats on the way to bury Addie. From

appearance, the journey is to fulfill Addie Bundren's last wishes, but in fact, each of the Bundren Family has his/her own plan.

A lot of ironical depictions can be found in William Faulker's the "Snopes" trilogy. In The Town (1957), Flem Snopes begins an ambitious attempt in Jefferson to take over the town, securing a job as superintendent at the power plant and a position as vice president and later president of the Sartoris Bank, as well as possessing Manfred de Spain's ancestral home (the mansion). But meanwhile, his wife Eula Snopes has eighteen-year sex with Manfred de Spain, major of Jefferson and president of the Sartoris Bank. Eula is worthy of the name of "treason." But after her suicide, there is engraved on her tombstone by Flem "A Virtuous Wife is a Crown to Her Husband. Her Children Rise and Call Her Blessed." The epitaph is a typical irony to the Proverbs in the Old Testament. The original words are as follows "A good wife is the crown of her husband"(Proverbs12: 4), and "Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all'"(Proverbs 31:28). William Faulkner intentionally put the two sentences together to make a revised epitaph for Eula, his purpose is clear here: to make strong artistry effect of irony. As we know, "rise" and "blessed" are two key words of the Christianity. "Rise" refers to Jesus Christ's Resurrection after being crucified. This process of resurrection "blessed" signifies the benediction of Jesus Christ and reward. From the story of The Mansion, the second sentence of Eula's epitaph seemingly answers for the plot. The major reason of Eula's commitment of suicide is to prevent her daughter Linda Snopes from knowing her mother's sexual affair with Manfred de Spain. Finally, her wishes are realized because Linda eventually forgives and respects her mother; besides, she accepts

the fact that her father was killed (for the reason of betrayed family and clan ties) by his cousin Mink Snopes, who comes to kill Flem to fulfill a deep and heartfelt desire for revenge.

Thus it can be seen that using Biblical myths to satirize the social reality, “acting in a diametrically opposite meaning” is an important part of modern American writers’ literary imagination. Satirical novels play an important role in American literature to expose the reality profoundly. On the whole, American literature in the 20th century shows an archetypal relationship of allegorical technique embedded in Biblical background.

VII. Conclusion

On the whole, we can see that American literature has an undeniable relationship with Christian concepts. The rich and rewarding experience of an imaginative and aesthetic vision is the Bible’s most important legacy for American literature. As a vast system of recurring themes, images, character types and structural motifs, the Bible provides abundant archetypes for American literature. Throughout the history of American Literature, the themes, characters, imagery, and very structure of the Bible stories persist in the works of American writers as diverse as Herman Melville, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner and as seemingly anti-religious as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ernest Hemingway, and Nathanael West. No literary achievements of the above American novelists can be separated from their techniques of Biblical allusions. In addition, literary concepts have traditional continuity and interconnected relationship with Biblical stories and theological thoughts. American literature can find out its essential content from the Bible, because the examination and exposure of human destiny and future in

literature usually finalizes to the concern for humanity, and this serves the same goal as that of Christianity.

Endnotes

¹ In 1776, Mother Anne Lee established the first settlement of American "Shakers" (the Millennial Church or United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing) at Niskayuna, a village in New York, on the Hudson River near Schenectady. The shakers observed celibacy, held all property in common, and believed that Mother Lee was Christ reincarnated. Their nickname, Shakers, was derived from their peculiar bodily movements during religious meetings. Also see "Editor's Note" in Moby-Dick, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr., MacMillan, 1985, p.409.

² The numbers in parentheses refer to chapters in the novel and the chapters of the books of the Bible.

³ Please see "A Faulkner Glossary." in William Faulkner Resources: A compendium of scholarly information.

<http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/faulkner/glossaryc.html>, 19 Nov. 2005.

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