

Chapter III

THE BIBLE

- 1 The Bible itself.
- 2 Bible names commonly referred to in American Literature
- 3 Bible phrases commonly used in English language
- 4 Use of the Biblical allusions in the novels

1 The Bible itself

The Bible, the sacred book of all Christians, has in many respects a unique character and position among the books of the world. As an old authority writes : 'Apart altogether from its sacred character, the Bible is the grandest book that the world has ever produced for feeding the intelligence, the conscience, the taste, the imagination of the young. It is all that Homer ever was to the Greek or the Roman, and much more. There is history in it, there is poetry, there is romance, there is philosophy; it is a fountain of wisdom, great, simple, and universal; it is a store house of instruction and illustration for every form of human emotion, for every phase of human character, for every incident of private life, for every kind of social and political institution. There was never a richer or nobler granary out of which to feed the heart and mind of a nation. It is a model of style, or rather of many styles; it speaks in a language at once pure, rich, and strong, at once popular and classical and presents for the formation of our vocabulary an inexhaustible well of English undefied. May the

day never come when the simple facts of the Bible shall cease to be studied in our schools as the foundation of all human knowledge, or its ideas and its literary form to shape the conscience, to develop the taste, and to fire the imagination of our youths.

The influence of the Authorized Version of 1611 on the English language and literature has also been profound. A modern historian of literature writes: "It gave, to all classes alike, an idiom in which the deeper emotions of life could be recalled. It gave grace to the speech of the unlettered, and it entered into the style of the most ambitious writers. Its phrasing coloured the work of poets, and its language has to be embedded itself in our national tradition that if the Bible is forgotten, a precious possession will be lost" ¹

2 Bible names commonly referred to in American Literature :

"Abigail. A wife of king David. The name occurs in

English Literature with the meaning of 'waiting woman'

Abraham. The father and founder of the Jewish nation; Milton, e.g. calls the Jews 'Abraham's race'.

Absalom. Son of king David (2 Samuel XVIII) Adam. The first of the human race

Adullam. The cave of A. (1 Samuel XXII)

Agag 'And Agag came unto him delicately' (1 Samuel XV.32). Hence 'to walk delicately'.

Ananias There are two of this name mentioned in the Acts of the

- Apostles : (1) the high priest (Acts XXIII) and (2) the lying husband of Sapphira (Acts V.)
- Baal or Bel, one of the chief gods of the Canaanites__hence a false god
- Babel The story of the building of the city and tower of Babel and of the confusion of tongues.
- Balaam To whom God spoke through the mouth of the ass on which he was riding.
- Barabbas The robber released instead of Jesus (Matthe w XXvii)
- Beelzebub 'Prince of the Devils'
- Behemoth Possibly the hippopotamus (Job xI.10).
- Belial The Spirit of evil. A man or son of B. is a reprobate
- Benjamin. Brother of Joseph, type of the youngest and favourite son (Genesis XXXV,X;ii!., etc.).
- Beulah. Land of B, the happy land, or heaven (Isaiah ;Xii.4).
- Cherith. The brook beside which Elijah was fed by ravens.
- Cloud. A c. no bigger than a man's hand __ a small omen of great things to follow.
- Dan. From D. to Beersheba, i.e from one end of the land to the other.
- Daniel. The story of D. in the lions' den protected by God, is found in Daniel Vi.
- David. King of Israel, who as a lad slew the giant Goliath. The friendship of David and Jonathan is proverbial
- Delilah. The philistine woman who betrayed Samson by cutting off his hair.

- Dives. Latin for the 'rich man' in the parable of Lazarus.
- Dorcas. A 'Dorcas Society' is a group of Church ladies who meet and make clothes for the poor.
- Eden. The Garden of Eden., where dwelt Adam and Eve, Supposed to have been in Mesopotamia.
- Elijah. The prophet who was fed by ravens, and was finally translated to heaven.
- Elisha. He succeeded Elijah as prophet, and whose 'mantle' he inherited. He cured Naaman the Syrian of leprosy.
- Endor. The witch of Endor. Consulted by Saul.
- Esau. Son of Isaac and Rebecca, a hunter sold his birthright to his brother for a mess of pottage.
- Eve. The name given by Adam to his wife.
- Exodus. The 'way out' of the Israelites from Egypt, and the name of the second book of the Bible.
- Gadarene Swine. The miracle is told in Mark V
- Gallio. He 'cared for none of these things'__see Acts XViii
- Gamallel. The apostle sat at the feet of G.
- Genesis. Meaning 'beginning' or 'origin' the name of the first book of the Bible.
- Goliath. The giant that David slew in his very young age.
- Herod. H., the great, king of Judaea, ordered the 'slaughter of the innocents.
- Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water. The story of Joshua's dealings with the wily Gibeonites, who were spared death

to become slaves to the Israelites, is told in Joshua ix.

Holofernes. H. was Nebuchadnezzar's general, killed by Judith.

Ichabod The word means 'the glory has departed'.

Ishmael. I. was a son of Abraham, but the word has come to mean 'an outcast'

Jacob and Esau. These were twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca. Esau, a hunter sold his birthright to his brother for a mess of pottage.

Jacob's Ladder. Set up on earth but reaching to heaven, seen by Jacob in a dream.

Jehu. A furious river.

Jeremiad A complaining, alluding to the book called The Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Jezebel. Type of a wicked woman.

Job. The book of Job describes his downfall, which brings to him 'Job's comforters'. These tell him in effect that his ruin has been caused by his own sin. Job himself is a type of patience.

Jonah The man of misfortune.

Jonathan The friendship of David and Jonathan is proverbial.

Joseph The unknown shepherd of Palestine, carried to Egypt as a slave, but who ultimately became chief minister to Pharaoh.

Laodiceans. The people of the Church of L. were 'lukewarm, neither 'cold nor hot'. Hence a 'Laodicean policy' is a

feeble and unenthusiastic one.

Lucifer. The morning Star. The application of the name to Satan (the rebel archangel) arises from a mistaken interpretation of Isaiah Xiv. 12 — "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning."

Mammon. Stands for 'riches' or 'Covetousness'.

Medes and Persians. The laws of the Medes and Persians have become proverbially unchangeable.

Nimrod. 'The mighty hunter before the Lord.

Passover. This is the Jewish feast which celebrates the 'passing over' of the houses of the Israelites when the Egyptians lost all their first born.

Pharisees. An old Jewish sect, now applied to sanctimonious and hypocritical people.

Pilate. P. was Roman Governor in Judaea when Jesus Christ was crucified.

Rechabite. An abstainer from intoxicants .

Rimmon. 'I bow myself in the house of Rimmon' i.e. 'I am prepared occasionally to accommodate my principles to my material convenience.'

Samaritan. The parable of the Good Samaritan is given in Luke X. 30-7.

Saul. 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' Frequently quoted to express astonishment at finding a man most unexpectedly occupying some distinguished position.

Sennacherib. The story on which Byron's poem 'The Destruction of Sennacherib' is based is found in 2 Chronicles XXXii.

Solomon. King of Israel after David, and renowned for wealth and wisdom

Talent. The parable of the talents is told in Matthew XXV. 14-30. Here the word means 'money'; only the familiarity of the story has given rise to its ordinary meaning of 'ability' of mind.'

Tubal Cain 'Instructor of every artifice in brass and iron'.

Valley of the Shadow of Death. This is described in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It is mentioned in Psalm XXIII. 4

Virgins The parable of the virgins, the wise, who came to meet the bridegroom with their lamps prepared, and the foolish, whose lamps had no oil, is found in Matthew XXV. 1-13.

Weighed In The Balance And Found Wanting. See the account of Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream (Daniel V.).

Wisdom of Solomon. This is one of the books of the Apocrypha."2

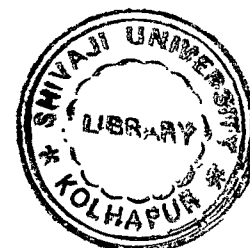
3 Bible phrases commonly used in English language:

"Allthings. All things to all men. 1 Corinthians ix 22.

Alone. It is not good that the man should be alone. Genesis ii.18.

Balm in Gilead. Is there is no balm in Gilead ? Jeremiah Viii 22.

Bones. Can these bones live ? Ezekiel xxxvii.3.



- Bread. Cast thy bread upon the water : for thou shalt find it after many days. Ecclesiasters xi 1.
- Burden and Heat. The burden and heat of the day. Matthew xx 12.
- Chapter and Verse. Chapter and verse now means 'exact authority for statement,' but derives from the habit of quoting 'chapter and vers' of a Bible text.
- Cheerful Giver. God loveth a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians ix. 7.
- Clothed. Clothed, and in his right mind. mark V. 15.
- Coals of fire. Heap coals of fire upon his head. Proverbs xxv. 22.
- Corn. There was corn in Egypt. Genesis Xlii. I.
- Crumbs. The crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Luke xvi 21.
- Darkness. Darkness which may be felt Exodus x 21.
- Decently and in order. Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians xiv. 40.
- Discharge. There is no discharge in that war Ecclesiastes viii. 8.
- Dreamer. A dreamer of dreams Deuteronomy Xlii. I.
- Enemy. An enemy hath done this Matthew xiii. 28. /
- Ethopian. Can the Ethopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Jeremich xiii 23.
- Ewe lamb. The poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb. 2 Samuel Xii. 3.
- Faint, Yet pursuing. Faint, yet pursuing. Judges viii. 4.
- Fall. And great was the fall of it. Matthew vii. 27.

Fallen From Grace. Fallen from grace Galatians V.4.
 Fatted Calf. Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it. (Luke
 xv.23)___to celebrate the return of the Prodigal Son.
 Flesh is Weak. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is
 weak. Matthew XXVI. 41.
 Fool. Answer a fool according to his folly. Proverbs xxvi. 5.
 Friend, Go up Higher. Friend, go up higher. Luke xiii. 10.
 Gasp. At the last gasp. 2 Maccabees vii. 9.
 Giants. There were giants in the earth in those days. Genesis
 vi 4.
 God and Mammon. Ye can not serve God and mammon. Matthew vi. 24.
 Good works. Full of good works. Acts ix. 36.
 Grey hairs. Bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave
 Genesis xlii. 38.
 Grind. Grind the faces of the poor Isaish iii. 15.
 Heart. A man after his own heart. 1 Samuel xiii. 14.
 Hip and thigh. He Smote them hip and thigh. Judges xv. 8.
 Hospitality. Given to hospitality. Romans xii. 13.
 House in order. Set thine house in order. Isaiah xxxviii. I.
 Keeper. Am I my brother's keeper ? Genesis iv. 9.
 Labour of Love. Labour of love 1 Thessaloniansi. 3.
 Leopard. See Ethiopian above.
 Locust. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust
 eaten. Joel 1. 4.
 Loins. Gird up now thy loins like a man. Job xxxviii. 3.

Lord, How Long ? Then said I, Lord, how long? Isaiah vi.11.

Lordly Dish. She brought forth butter in a lordly dish. Judges
v. 25.

Milk and honey. A land flowing with milk and honey. Exodus iii. 8.

Multitude of Sins. Charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 1
Peter iv. 8.

Peace. Saying, peace, peace; when there is no peace. Jere,ish
vi. 14.

Pearl of Great Price. A pearl of great price. Matthew xiii. 46.

Pearls before Swine. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine.
Matthew vii. 6.

Played the fool. I have played the fool 1 samuel xxvi 21. /

Prodigal Son. Type of the repentant sinner or returned wanderer.

Quietness and Confidence. In quietness and confidence shall be
your strength. Isaish xxx. 15.

Reap the Whirlwind. They have sown the wind, and they shall reap
the whirlwind. Hosea viii. 7.

Root of the Matter. Seeing the root of the matter is found in me.
Job xlx. 28.

Salt of the Earth. You are the salt of the earth. Matthew. V. 13. /

Salvation. Work out your own salvation philippians ii. 12. /

Scapegoat. Let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness
Leviticus xvi. 10.

Servant a Dog. Is thy servant a dog 2 kings viii. 13.

Signs of the Times. The signs of the times. Matthew xvi. 3.

Sin. Be sure your sin will find you out. numbers xxxii. 23.

Skin of One's teeth. 'I am escaped with the skin of my teeth' (Job xix. 20), i.e. excepted with loss of every thing but life.

Small Things. For who hath despised the day of small things? zechariah iv. 10.

Solomon. Solomon in all his glory Matthew vi. 28.

Sown the wind. they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirl wind. Hosea viii. 7.

Spoiled the Egyptians. They spoiled the Egyptians. Exodusxii. 36.

Stars in their courses. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera Judges V. 20.

Stolen. Stolen waters are sweet Proverbs ix. 17.

Thieves. Fell among thieves. Mark x 30.

Throne of Grace. God is seated on a throne dispensing grace or gifts of mercy to those who seek Him by prayer.

Trouble. Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. Job V. 7.

Wars. Wars and rumours of wars Matthew xxiv. 6.

Wasted his substance. Wasted his substance with riotous living Luke xv. 13.

Wife of thy Bosom. The wife of thy bosom. Deuteronomy xiii.6.

Wine. Wine is a mocker. Proverbs xx. I.

Words. He multiplieth words without knowledge. Job xxxv. 16.

Years. I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten Joel II. 25."³

4 Use of the Biblical allusions in the novels :

The Bible is one of the important sources of his imagery. "Not only has the style of the Old Testament influenced his writing a great deal, but he constantly uses names, phrases, and other bits from both the Old and New testaments "4 The moral standards from which Faulkner is judging Yoknapatawpha County are those of the Bible, especially, the Old Testament. Two of his novels, where this religious imagery is most easily recognizable, are The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!

The Sound and the Fury has four sections. Three of its four sections are set on Easter Sunday and the two days preceding it, and that the dates of these three days appear as the section headings. Part one is Holy Saturday, April 7, 1928. "Robert M. Adams correctly says that tradition holds that Christ spent Holy Saturday in Hell redeeming such pre-Christian worthies as Adam, and that in this monologue we are sunk in the mind of the idiot Benjy."5 "But his opinion that Benjy is Adam and that the young attendant of Benjy is Christ seems to be in error. Instead, Benjy, like his brothers in the other two monologues, is going through the events Christ went through on a particular day of His Passion. Benjy's birthday candles are reminiscent of the paschal candle which is a large feature of Church ritual on Holy Saturday. Fire fascinates Benjy on this day of ritualistic lightning of the new fire. On this traditional day of Christening there is considerable ado about the naming of Benjy. And Benjy's

tormenting young attendant is certainly as agent of Hell".⁶ While speaking on the world of William Faulkner, particularly the impact of the Bible, Ward L. Miner states that "a carnival is playing in Jefferson and Luster wants to go but has no money. More important is that it is April, the season of spring and all that spring implies".⁷ Ward L. Miner further goes to state that "the character of Benjy adds much to these religious implications. On the day the story opens Benjy has his thirty-third birthday, making him the same age as Christ was when crucified. Instead of being crucified, Benjy was castrated. Caddy makes Benjy's relationship to the Bible specific by saying, "Benjamin came out of the Bible". She says this apropos of the change in his name from Maury to Benjamin at the request of Mrs. Compson. Benjy is helpless to do anything about curing himself and is dependent upon the care of others. As Benjamin in the Bible is taken by the brothers to Egypt as a hostage for grain, so Benjy has a pasture belonging to him sold by the family so that his brother Quentin can go to Harvard and his father will not be deprived of his whiskey."⁸ The second part goes back to June 2, 1910, the day before Quentin commits suicide in Cambridge, Massachusetts. June is the month of marriages; here it is the month in which Quentin thinks of his unconsummated incest and plans his suicide. Quentin's monologue, bearing this Thursday date, contains the elements of Christ's experience on Holy Thursday. The parallel with the Bible and liturgy is rich in

detail. Carvel Collins points out a number of similarities :

"Quentin has a Last Supper not only when he joins Shreve and Gerald and their companions in the picnic with its wine (and blood) but when he "breaks bread" with the little Italian girl in a parallel with the establishment of the Eucharist and its later ritual, even including Holy Thursday's presanctification of the Host. Quentin's tortured conversation with his father is an important part of his memories during this monologue which takes place on the same day of the week as Christ's anguished calling upon His Father. Quentin is captured by a mob as Christ was. And, like Christ, he is taken before a magistrate."⁹ The third part is dated Good Friday, April, 1928. This section shows Jason is "going through events symbolically parallel with those Christ was involved in on the Friday of His Passion. Good Friday is a day on which Christ's mother was closely associated with his suffering : Mrs. Compson ___not the father as in Quentin's section ___appears at length in this monologue, which also has its Magdalen in Jason's Memphis friend Jason's name seems significant, for though it has been said to relate him to the seeker of the Golden Fleece it was also used for "Jesus" by Hellenized Jews. Christ went up the cross at noon of this day and died there at three o'clock: Jason, being commercially crucified, enters cotton speculation at noon and is sold out of the market by his Jewish brokers at three. Christ's soul went to harrow Hell: when Jason tells his niece to go to Hell she replies that she will, and after his

commercial crucifixion is over at three he leaves town chasing her and her circus companion whose red necktie Jason says he will make Hell's latchstring".¹⁰ The fourth and last part is Easter Sunday, April 8, 1928. Quentin iv has run away during the night with Jason's money and a pitch man of the carnival. Instead of the morning finding a Christ resurrected, it finds young Quentin out of the Compson tomb but in a very sordid present. Only Dilsey finds an awareness of traditional values through the Easter services in the Negro Church. Dilsey is acting like a spectator in observing the degeneracy of the Compson family. Dilsey herself says after the church service, "I have seed de first ende last". On being asked what first and last, she replies, "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin".¹¹ The Compsons are in the presence of the same set of traditional values that Dilsey recognizes but Jason is much, too much worried over the loss of his money to ever think about such things. As Jason says to Mrs. Compson on that morning, "You never resurrected Christ, did you?"¹² to which there is no answer, since the Compsons most decidedly have not resurrected Christ." The Compson sons are in parallel with Christ but, significantly, by inversion. For example, Christ pleaded to be released from the next day's torture if such release would not interfere with His Father's plans, but Quentin pleads with his father for punishment—which is refused him. When Benjamin is submerged like Christ on Holy Saturday, he does not, like Christ, dominate Hell; on the contrary, he is a

victim of it. And whereas Holy Saturday is a time of christening, of name giving, an important fact about Benjy which is presented in his monologue on Holy Saturday is that his name has been taken away. In short, God's Son passed through the events of the Passion and rose as a redeemer; the Compson sons pass through parallel events but go down in failure. And they do so because love, which Christ preached as an eleventh commandment, is lacking or frustrated or distorted in their family. The major theme of the novel is not the sociology of a section of the South but the psychology of certain aspects of human life wherever found."¹³

Absalom, Absalom ! takes its title from the Old Testament account of King David and his son Absalom (Second Book of Samuel, Chapters 13-18). When Absalom is killed in the war he is waging against his father, David mourns his death by crying "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!".

In certain respects William Faulkner's story is similar to the Biblical account of David and Absalom, for Absalom slays his half-brother Amnon for committing incest with their sister Tamar. But in most respects William Faulkner's novel is altogether different from the Biblical story. The novel is the story of the rise and fall of the house of Thomas Sutpen. The story does not end with the death of Sutpen at the hands of Wash Jones in 1869 but is continued to 1910, when only an idiot

mulatto descendant, Jim Bond, is left with the Sutpen blood. Dominating the entire book is the terrific ambition of Sutpen to found a Sutpen family which shall be respectable and strong. In pursuit of this ambition he is indifferent to the means employed and ruthlessly tramples on the people who might thwart his ambition. The events and people he tries to overcome eventually overcome him and finally destroy the family.

The story is told by Quentin Compson to his roommate at Harvard, Shreve Mc Cannon. He tells it at white heat, because Quentin Compson is conscious of his own incestuous desires towards his sister, Caddy. Talking at great length about the possibility of some one else's incest makes him uncomfortably aware of his own desires. He is both afraid of and fascinated by the story he is telling. "By alluding to the Biblical story, however, William Faulkner enlarged the perspective of his novel, conferring overtones of Biblical solemnity on Thomas Sutpen's tragic loss of his sons. Faulkner himself said that the title occurred to him immediately after he thought of the idea for the story".¹⁴ By the use of Biblical rhetoric, William Faulkner creates for us a legendary hero who seems highly plausible. "The title of the book, with its Biblical allusion, supports the hypothesis of Shreve and Quentin. Sutpen would not say "My son " to Bon as David said it to Absalom even after Absalom's rebellion. And different as he was from his father, Henry acted in the end on the same racist principle, killing Bon

finally to prevent not incest but miscegenation. One meaning of Absalom, then, is that when the Old South was faced with a choice it could not avoid, it chose to destroy itself rather than admit brotherhood across racial line"¹⁵ "In contrast to the The Sound and the Fury this book is almost sectarian, though the emphasis is still on the moral failures of Sutpen which produce the complete destruction of his dreams. In The Sound and the Fury the values of the present are thrown against the values of the Bible and the present is made to look despicable in contrast. In Absalom, Absalom! the emphasis is completely away from the relation of man to God, and is entirely on man's relation to man. And Sutpen's moral failures are almost anthropological problems instead of religious ones. In all these books William Faulkner is a moralist lamenting the moral break down he finds in much the same manner that Jeremiah laments the moral breakdown of Israel."¹⁶

FOOTNOTES

- 1 B.I. for Evans, A short History of English Literature (Aylesbury : Hunt, Barnard and co, 1948), P. 231.
- 2 R.C. Goffin, English Idioms and how to use them (Madras : Oxford University Press, 1966), P. 323.
- 3 Ibid; P.326.
- 4 Ward L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner (New York :Grove Press, Inc; 1952), P.137.
- 5 Robert M. Adams, "Poetry in the novel: Faulkner Esem-
plastic" (Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIX, Summer, 1953), P. 419-434.
- 6 Michael H. Cowan (ed.), Twentieth Century Interpreta-
tions of The Sound and the Fury (New York: Prentice-
Hall, Inc; 1968), P. 72.
- 7 Ward L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner (New York : Grove Press, Inc; 1952), p. 139.
- 8 Ibid; P. 140.
- 9 Michael H. Cowan (ed.), Twentieth Century Interpreta-
tions of The Sound and the Fury (New York: Prentice-
Hall, Inc; 1968), P. 71.
- 10 Ibid; P. 72.
- 11 William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: The
Modern Library, 1951), P. 371.
- 12 Ibid; P. 348.

- 13 Michael H. Cowan (ed.), Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Sound and the Fury (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc; 1968), P. 73.
- 14 William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom ! (New York: Barrister publishing Co, Inc. 1966), P. 9.
- 15 Hyatt Waggoner, "Past as present: Absalom, Absalom!" in Robert Penn Warren, ed; Faulkner: a collection of critical essays(New York : Prentice-Hall, Inc; 1966), P. 182.
- 16 Ward L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner (New York : Grove Press, Inc. 1952), P. 142.