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The Parallel mysteries of grace and place in Flannery O'Connor's Wise blood

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**The parallel mysteries of grace and place in Flannery
O'Connor's "Wise Blood"**

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San Jose State University, 1990

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THE PARALLEL MYSTERIES OF GRACE AND PLACE
IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Marc Petersen
August 1990

To my wife

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ABSTRACT

THE PARALLEL MYSTERIES OF GRACE AND PLACE
IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S WISE BLOOD

by Marc Petersen

Hazel Motes says early in the novel that if he avoids sin, he can avoid Christ. This means that Christ lives in sin, that the redemptive powers of the crucifixion and the resurrection cannot operate unless the actor has entered into a state of sin. Grace is this redemptive power operating in sin, the restorative love which annuls any moral wrongdoing. Hazel becomes a fornicator and a murderer. Moreover, Hazel sins with *his eyes open*. Therefore, since he sins with his eyes open, Hazel sees clearly, when it comes at the end of the novel, the grace present in sin.

It is as if Hazel makes his trip to the city of the Apocalypse (the damned city is the central theme in the novel) to know Christ. After all Hazel's name means, in Hebrew, he whom God sees. It is as if, in his renunciation of Christ through sin, Hazel uncovers the mystery of grace and place. Christ's mercy cannot enter time, enter place, unless two things occur: There must be an open profession of a hatred of the divine, which compels a radical freedom to sin and to enter into the shackles of sin-bondage; there must be an open renunciation of the existence of Jesus in this world, in this time. Once these two things occur, the actor frees himself from the spirit and immerses himself in the flesh. Hazel takes an entire novel to reach this state of extreme freedom, which he finds to be an inexorable slavery, and which, then, leads him--as it must--to the core of redemption: a tiny pinpoint of light in the festering dark sickness of his flesh-sentenced soul. These are the mysteries of grace and place in Wise Blood.

The Mysteries of Grace and Place
In Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood:

Acknowledgments

Many people influence a project of this kind. Obviously, I cannot acknowledge my debt to all of them. I merely want it known that I did not work alone--though alone I read and wrote. As I was selecting material for my research, for instance, on the neglected shelves of the Wahlgren Library, the titles of old books--by Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, by Teilhard de Chardin--lit tiny lights for me, each of which illumined a fragment of the puzzle I was trying, with their help, to solve: Who is Hazel Motes and why does he preach the message of the Church Without Christ? My boyhood curiosity with grace had brought me to the novel: for I had been raised a strict medieval Catholic, growing up in the Latin Church of the fifties and sixties. The second part of my question was, therefore, what is grace and how do people get it? Because literature is static enough for a critic to hold down, because language cannot squirm away from the eye of the critical mind, because the form and structure of the novel--as metaphor--cannot on a Wednesday elude the scrutiny of an inquiry made on a Tuesday, I wanted not only the Church Fathers and philosophers with me on this project, I wanted my early influences to pose their inquiries as well. I wanted to know about grace. Hazel Motes I wanted to pin down. O'Connor's metaphor for grace, Hazel Motes's indefatigable denial of Jesus Christ as redeemer, would, with close critical scrutiny, give me an answer.

Once I had come up with a tentative thesis, I called Professor Bleckl, my research and methods teacher. We had talked previously of O'Connor, and I had told her that I would be writing my thesis on O'Connor's fiction. I sent her a copy of O'Connor's stories.

We talked once or twice about the project, what it would take, how long I would have to write the paper. Professor Blecki was my principal research guide, helping me focus my research and gather the appropriate number and types of sources.

Professor Engell was a new professor of American Literature. He had taught O'Connor at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I met him one afternoon in his new office. He was an affable man, wearing comfortable, wrinkled clothes. I asked him to direct my thesis; he wanted to see a tentative draft of the project.

Professor Engell provided a list of newer sources; took me to lunch when the project started to slow; gave me insights into the language of metaphor, into the patristic oral tradition of the word as thing-in-itself. Professor Engell encouraged me during the year it took to write the numerous drafts of the project. Now, during the first month of summer, Professor Engell encourages me still, tightening the draft, leaning it, making its purpose more concise.

Professor Keesey was my guide in critical studies last spring. Under his tutelage, I studied literary theory. Since my thesis was and is a critical study of a novel, I asked Professor Keesey to read a near-finished draft and to offer the kind of direction I would not have been able to give the project on my own. Professor Keesey's insights led the project in its final stage, in its last rewrite.

In the end, the project is much smaller than I had intended. Ironically, both Professors Engell and Keesey told me it would be. I wanted to develop a critical study not only of Wise Blood but of six other of O'Connor's stories as well. I stopped with Wise Blood, though, because it is O'Connor keystone work, the one from which all the others derive. I shall have to wait until I get to doctoral school to finish this project.

It is not the world but the idea which is holy.

The Parallel Mysteries of Grace and Place in

Flannery O'Connor's Wise Blood:

Introduction

My chief aim in writing this thesis is to give a faithful interpretation of Flannery O'Connor's strange and often misunderstood novel, Wise Blood. I begin my discussion with a brief exploration of the concept of the novel as metaphor, and move, within this context, into the age-old theological debate between the paradoxical issues of free will and grace, two states which, it has been said, cannot operate simultaneously within man. But lest we stray too far, I ask the elementary question: What do we mean by metaphor? Susan Sontag writes, in her book Illness as Metaphor, that, among other things, illness describes a kind of spiritual ennui in modern man. Illness is, therefore, both itself--a cancer, say--and a poetic promise, perhaps indicating a kind of moral fatigue or sloth, which, now, has reached metastasis. Sontag is saying, in other words, in figurative language, that man's moral torpor might, in some sense, kill him. A metaphor must, therefore, to work, be grounded solidly in something we agree is there, *some* thing we can all palpably experience as the *same* thing: An apple makes a good metaphor. Water makes another. Illness, too, covers a great many things more properly named as metaphor than as anything else. Cancer is real; the spiritual lethargy of modern man is not. And so it goes.

But a novel is not a banana or a disease. You *read* a novel. As you do a movie starts in your mind. What is this movie and what does it mean? Moreover, if the reader develops critical reading skills--that is, an ability to see poetic promise in the things which comprise the movie--the novel's narrative becomes more complex: Meaning shimmers coolly beneath the surface; the text begins, somehow, to let go of itself, and

things are both what they are and what they might be; which brings up the problem of verisimilitude, an issue every astute reader must deal with. What does the language mean? Is it all a representation of some aspect of knowable, that is, phenomenological, life? Is it perhaps a mirror, through which a reader might see some part of himself? Does the text become, as St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, a glass through which we see the world darkly? Like the ocean, a novel is both surface and depth, that which it is and that which it is not. It is, in other words, St. Paul's dark glass. And we as readers must, therefore, know what to look for; why we are looking. Like Ishmael, in Herman Melville's Moby Dick (Ishmael is, in this sense, both a character in a novel and a reader of the narrative action in that novel), we come to the dark surface of the metaphoric sea, prepared to see something we have not before seen. With critical skills, we may try to *understand* what it is we have seen.

In Moby Dick, for example, Ishmael signs on as a deck hand aboard Ahab's Pequod, a three-masted whaler moored in Nantucket harbor. Subsequently, the Pequod's crew sets sail for its harvests; and we tell ourselves, this is a story about whaling. Figuratively, then, when we spread the novel's covers, we board the Pequod to watch men kill whales; we know that, on its text-surface, the novel represents some aspect of real life, that the novel is, as first-level metaphor, nineteenth-century whaling.

Then Ahab appears on deck, his ivory leg marking time above the hold. Ishmael hears Ahab's knock-on-wood, wonders why the brooding captain has waited until mid-sea to find the deck boards. Since we have read the novel, we know that Ahab knows one whale well. Moreover, it is no accident that Ahab has found the deck in the dark; for this night is, metaphorically, Ahab's character and spirit, descending on the voyage like a pall. Ishmael subsequently learns that this is not the ordinary whaling-for-prophet voyage a sailor usually finds on the coast of northern New England. It is a voyage of the soul in

search of meaning. It is, moreover, a challenge to God, to God's angels, to the temporal supremacy of man. And Ishmael sees, at the end of the voyage, that man is, indeed, meaningless; that the universe exists without him. Ishmael listens to a sea-silence which is not the suppression of man's ephemeral noise but is, in fact, that which is. It is the silence which rolls up and back. It is the silence which Ahab has tried to defy. This is Ishmael's news.

But, too, Ishmael sees that, paradoxically, any meaning in man's existence comes only when man challenges his finitude, when he openly raises his fist to God in defiance of his life, which is dust. Man finds meaning in his tiny noise, which tells him that he is, indeed, an orphan, left to himself in a universe which does not echo his rattle or his hum:

The unharming sharks, they glided by as if with
padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks
sailed with sheathed beaks. On the second day,
a sail drew near, nearer, and picked me up at last.
It was the devious-crusing Rachel, that in her re-
tracing search after her missing children, only found
another orphan (724).

The whaling voyage is, thus, more than a cruise after lamp oil. Another kind of lamp is being lit, the lamp of metaphor. Ahab's search for and harpooning of Moby-Dick is, therefore, a figure of speech, used to clarify and to consolidate many philosophical/metaphysical problems which would fall mute outside of this vast nineteenth-century poem. A reconciliation with God eludes metaphysics. Only in the metaphor of fiction are we able to grasp something of the terrible significance of man alone with his God.

In Flannery O'Connor's novel Wise Blood, we, as readers, face the same problem: Like harvesting the sea, reading the surface of the text takes us from someplace to that which is deep within that someplace. In Melville's novel, we ride a sea of language: hissing, it boils up its salt; in its doldrums, we bend in a deep sweat. Into blood and water we sail. At the end of the story, we watch the sea suck both the whale and Captain Ahab into the boiling void. Yet, we hear nothing. For there is nothing to hear.

In O'Connor's story, the action begins on a train. Hazel Motes is sitting on the edge of his seat, facing both the window and the aisle--sort of in and out at the same time. Outside the train, the sun is racing past the line of trees. Inside the train, however, a woman is asking Hazel inane questions, which he sometimes answers, sometimes uses as part of a question he wants to ask her. O'Connor's text directs our attention to that which is, and in seeing this, we know where we are, on board a Taulkinham-bound train.

Subsequently, in Taulkinham, Hazel experiences a whore; a whiny boy named Enoch Emery; a girl named Sabbath and her preacher father, Asa; a zoo; a mummy; and the end of his life at Mrs. Flood's boarding house. The events which shape O'Connor's narrative occur chronologically, in linear fashion, much as they do in Melville's novel. We, therefore, experience no confusion with time or with place.

But, as in Melville's novel, we cannot, without a close and informed reading, know where this is leading, though, at the end, we arrive, with Mrs. Flood, at the end. For, as with Melville's novel, "... and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks," there are problems with formal poetic allusions to God and not-God, to a universe in which God is both present and absent (723). Hazel Motes is continuously arguing ironically against the presence of Christ in the world. His arguments come in the forms of invective and prayer, in the guises of sermon and syllogism, on a street corner and from the hood of his car. He is, like Ahab, and in his own way (without a harpoon per se),

challenging the theological/metaphysical notion that he is dust, and as dust silence. Hazel Motes raises his fist to Christ, challenges the Son of God to redeem him from his dark night of the soul, from his eternal quiet. And in an act as violent as Ahab's final assault on the whale, Hazel comes face-to-face with the terrible infinite. O'Connor's Ishmael, Mrs. Flood, watches, from the horizon of Hazel's burnt-out eyes, the scattering, then the convergence of matter. And we as readers ask: What does it mean? What is the metaphor?

I have said that in Moby-Dick we are facing a universe which does not acknowledge man's attempts to define himself in a way which transcends time, which transcends the physical, the temporal. Man must, therefore, ask the right question, listen carefully to the indifferent quiet which surrounds him. In O'Connor, too, we are facing a universe which does not, of itself, articulate man's meaning, does not describe and define itself, with man in it, beyond time, and cannot, therefore, help us to join it when it pursues its course inexorably beyond our deaths. The universe is, like a work of literature, simply there, an architecture of strains and stresses but of a great, perhaps invisible, symmetry. And like the universe, and in order to understand it, we must bring the necessary critical equipment. Like lucky sailors, we spread our nets or throw our harpoons through the text for meaning, intellectually harvesting the novel's deeper reaches.

On one level, then, O'Connor's novel narrates Hazel Motes's train ride to Taulkinham--where he will establish the Church Without Jesus Christ. On a deeper level, though, O'Connor's narrative sets up a problem similar to the problem set up in Melville's novel: O'Connor's twentieth-century, Southern-Catholic, redemptionist narrative asks the same kind of metaphysical/theological question Melville approaches in his nineteenth-century anti-Puritan whaling story: What happens to man when man

declares himself the final answer to existence? In Moby Dick, the universe is silent. In Wise Blood, Hazel faces the Church, thus the world, Without Christ. In each novel, the mute universe surrenders nothing.

O'Connor's novel is, then, broadly, a metaphor for man in search of a soul. And, ironically, Hazel Motes finds his soul, his Jesus-redeemer, in the violent act of religious abnegation: in his fornication, in his murder of Solace Layfield, in his self-mutilation. Like Ahab before him, Hazel's defiance of God's temporal creation brings God (though, now, in the Son) into time. Hazel's outrageous sins uncover the face of Christ, just as Ahab's blasphemy echoed, ironically, the voice of God: Blasphemy is, therefore, the way to the light. In an ironic way, Wise Blood echoes metaphorically the spiritual resonances found in Melville. O'Connor's novel reveals, metaphorically, the face of God. With Hazel Motes, we are led to presence-in-absence, to the dark and silent night of St. John of the Cross. This is what O'Connor's novel means, what I mean when I invoke the phrase *faithful interpretation*.

Yet, my two most influential critics disagree. In his study of O'Connor's work, Flannery O'Connor and the Language of the Apocalypse, Edward Kessler stops short of the issue of the discovery of God, calling Wise Blood a novel of insoluble apocalyptic mystery, full of numinous images and symbols (Kessler 80-1). Of course, I agree, and I have used Mr. Kessler's ideas extensively in my thesis. But I seem to have made the next step, deciding that the solution to the mystery is the ironic presence of God--or presence in absence. The novel is, in this sense, the Church Without Jesus Christ, who is God. In Risen Sons: Flannery O'Connor's Vision of History, John F. Desmond agrees with Mr. Kessler, saying that many of the images in the novel are symbols for the numinous. But symbols are not things-in-themselves, as metaphors are. For example, the sun is, Mr. Desmond says, a "symbol for the transforming power of divine grace

within the natural order" (Desmond 59). I agree with Mr. Desmond. But I take my argument one step further: I call the sun Christ. Christ is therefore present in metaphor, absent in symbol.

But O'Connor's novel raises another problem as well, one which is consonant with the issue of metaphor and which I shall take up more completely in the body of my thesis: the age-old and apparently insoluble issue of free will and grace. To paraphrase Flannery O'Connor, free will does not mean the operation of one will in one man but of many wills operating at once in one man, and thus each in conflict with or perhaps even contradicting the others (O'Connor 816). In his essay "Divine Grace and Human Freedom," Thomas L. Knoebel sets out to explore and perhaps to reconcile human freedom with divine freedom. Put simply, the question goes like this: If man is indeed free to make choices between, say, good and evil, how can the idea of God's dominance over salvation, over the redemption of the human soul, be tenable? (Knoebel 43). It would seem, from this question, that man, if he has free will, has, too, the concomitant power of mind to decide his own fate (for the conflict of wills implies mind), to resolve, through reason, at least this one conflict. Or, looking at the problem in the context of the age-old heresy set forth in the fifth century by the monk and theologian Pelagius, divine grace merely makes easier the resolution of the conflict between salvation or no salvation, but in no way compels this resolution; for *man*, because he has been given the gift of many wills, has at least one option: Once he becomes cognizant of the conflict, man becomes capable of creating the solution, finding the answer. Or, to paraphrase Aristotle, reason delivers man from evil (Aristotle 11). Reason, or the resolution of wills, must therefore be grace.

Yet, this statement apparently contradicts some of Christ's most important teachings. In John, for example, Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:16).

And, again in John, Jesus announces, "No man can come to Me unless the Father, who has sent Me, draws him" (John 6:44). How then, if man has at least enough perspicacity to know there is, within him, a conflict of wills, enough good old Aristotelian critical insight to distinguish between and then to choose right from wrong, does God call man to Christ? God, it would seem, need not intervene more than once; for he made man in his image, meaning, I suppose, that man carries within the potential for perfection. From events, for instance, man can deduce his role in good works; he can thus become a doctor, a nurse, or a priest. He can, in this way, because he knows the difference between not doing good works and doing good works, *earn* his place in heaven. Grace is, in this way, like any work ethic: Hard labor gets results.

Yet this, too, contradicts the Jesus-message in the New Testament: "If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:6). Therefore, if man cannot earn grace by the exercise of one will over many, grace must be available through prayer. The prayerful man must have some innate power to invoke grace, and thus, again, divine intervention is unnecessary. If not through reason, man can perfect himself through prayer. St. Paul disagrees, however: "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift" (Romans 3:23-24).

If grace is then given freely, i.e., not contingent on or conditioned by any assertion of will, what, then, is this dream of free will, and why is free will held to be of ultimate theological importance, at least by one of the Church's most influential fathers. St. Augustine says, for example, that free will conditions evil because without a will man is incapable of knowing how to turn away from God. The will, or wills, turns away *of its own volition* from God, from the good. This does not mean that man chooses a *thing* which is evil--sensual pleasure--for instance, to the exclusion of everything else. On

the contrary, Augustine says the will itself becomes evil, because it seeks its own corruption, and this, he asserts, contradicts nature, or God's wisdom. "And I know likewise, that the will could not become evil were it unwilling to become so; and therefore its failings are justly punished, being not necessary, *but voluntary*" (Hick 23). In other words, if man has the power to choose corruption over good, and thereby to *damn himself* (as Augustine insists), then I can make little sense of the New Testament's language of grace. God, it would seem, chooses randomly those who shall receive his grace. But, does he not as well choose those who shall receive his wrath? "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:28-29). Why is Pelagius's theory of free will considered, in the Church, a heresy? After all it was Augustine who raised the controversy over free will. It was Augustine who fought Pelagius's doctrine of free will. It was he who brought the Church fathers to bear on Pelagius. Did Augustine contradict himself? Is man in fact free--by virtue of a mind Augustine acknowledges, albeit condemns in the Pelagian doctrine? Why, finally, in the face of these questions, does Aristotle's thinking in the "Metaphysics" begin to sound ludicrous in relation to the Jesus-Message: "By grace you have been saved by faith; and this is *not your doing*, it is the *gift* of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

It would seem, now, at least according to our above-cited Scriptural passages, that, in matters of his soul, man does not possess, because he was not given as part of his machinery, any inherent power to invoke grace, though he seems to carry enough spark to invoke evil. It follows, therefore, that man cannot invoke his own salvation. Grace is a gift which comes at odd moments, during those times when it is least expected. Add to this notion the idea that Jesus Christ seems to have his own agenda, inscrutable except to

those to whom he chooses to give this grace, and we face a frightening, or at least unsettling contradiction; because, in the Jesus context (Augustine's contradiction of Pelagius and of himself aside), free will does not exist; it is a chimera: "It is he who has saved us and has called us to a life of holiness, not on the ground of any work of ours, but because of *his own purpose and his own grace*" (II Timothy 1:9). Complicate this further with Christ's exhortation to prayer, and confusion exacerbates fear: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Good works, Jesus implies, are public deeds, or prayers carried out for the spiritual (out of a Scriptural context) gratification of the doer, or for the necessary benefit of the one for whom the act has been done, or for the witnesses of the act. Good works are, thus, imbued with their own temporal rewards: We pray; we get results. (We have returned to the initial problem.) Grace does not inspire *this* kind of prayer/act; a social context compels and rewards this process and thus leads to the deduction of an inevitable and knowable result. (I give an ill-clothed, sick, drunken man on the street five dollars and I feel better about myself. Pity has not moved me, and whether the derelict man derives any benefit from my donation is quite beside the point, though it may well be that the five dollars has afforded the man another pair of wool socks.) And so it would seem that all humankind is stuck, held, in other words, within a moral gravity of good works compelled by social exigencies, which we, in our socially-inspired delusions, call free will, or an ability to *choose* to help or not to help a beggar buy another pair of wool socks or a quart of Tokay. It follows, then, that man is, without God, blind, because he cannot see that which shall save him, or, if not blind, at least myopic; for he sees, or can see within the conflict of his wills, only that which orders itself according to certain socially-structured perceptual constraints, which he can choose to ignore or to embrace. Outside man's

organized perception, or that which compels the conflict of wills, i.e., his highly rigid, talismanic system of belief--his ontology, or that which identifies and defines within that identity the real--everything is dark, non-existent, incomprehensible. And so we have made grace a mystery, given by a God who chooses randomly who shall get it, decides, of his own free will, who shall be saved and who shall be damned. Free will, or the conflict of many wills, has little to do with finding God. God, it would seem, finds you. And blinds you.

"But when they be converted to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (II Corinthians 3:16). When "they" are converted, when grace descends, "they" shall be infused with divine strength, more in the eyes than in any other capacity, much as the cowardly disciple Peter suddenly *finds himself* infused with divine strength and sight--after having denied Christ three times to potential Sanhedrin spies--and sets out, after Christ's resurrection, as an apostle, without any of the old natural fears of reprisal or death, to preach the Gospel to both the Jews and the Gentiles. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied" (I Peter 1:2). Grace has delivered Peter from the gravity of his cowardice, from his *free will to say no* to and thus to resolve the conflict of any knowledge of Jesus: "... But he denied before them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest" (Matthew 26:70); from the inconsequence of his humanness, his given weakness and his blindness, "Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration" (I Peter 1:17). Grace suffuses Peter with divine light, leads him up from his darkness.

In this same way, grace *liberates man from the exigencies of the flesh*, from mortal

concerns, delivering him into the realm of the spirit: "You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit" (Romans 6:22). It calls him from death: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (I Corinthians 15:21). It liberates him from the Law: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Galatians 5:18).

Still, though, there is a question of mystery: how do we get grace? Apparently, it is not through our own doing. We cannot pray for it, nor can we perform charitable acts. We cannot invoke it at all. And if we cannot invoke our own grace, if we do not, in this context, have a truly divine free will after all--even if we enlighten our powers of choice by reading Scripture--then who is saved and who is not? Was Calvin's theory of predestination correct, that before any of us are born, some of us have already been herded into the salvation corral, while others have been prodded into joining the line to hell? Moreover, grace, or salvation, when it comes, seems to come to those who least deserve it. It seems to visit cowards and reprobates, like St. Peter and Christ's crucified thief/partner on Calvary; or violent men, like Saul of Tarsus, the architect of the stoning death of St. Stephen; or crazy men, like St. Francis of Assisi, a man who was born into good connections, into security and wealth, but who threw off the mink of prosperity to heal, of all things, lepers, i.e., those who were, in a spiritual sense, diseased.

And, too, grace seems to be a *violent rending of a personal reality*, of a system of beliefs, of a natural free will, thus provoking a radical ontological shift, destroying that which has seemed, or is in fact, real. Grace is, to use the metaphor of St. John of the Cross, a dark night of the soul, another kind of blindness, a seeing into a glass darkly:

The Divine assails the soul in order to renew it and thus
to make it Divine; and, stripping it of the habitual affections

and attachments of the old man, to which it is very closely united, knit together and confirmed, *destroys and consumes* its spiritual substance, and absorbs it in deep and profound darkness. As a result of this, the soul feels itself to be perishing and melting away, in the presence and sight of its miseries, in a cruel spiritual death, even as if it had been swallowed by a beast and felt itself being devoured in the darkness of its belly, suffering such anguish as was endured by Jonas in the belly of that beast of the sea. For in this sepulchre of dark death it must needs abide until the spiritual resurrection which it hopes for (St. John of the Cross 104).

I do not intend to argue whether souls come with built-in orders for heaven or hell or whether they do not; though it would seem that, in the New Testament, enough evidence exists partially to refute the argument that man's lot was cast before the beginning of time, although grace seems still to be unmerited. Though his Sermon on the Mount is at times fairly hard-bitten, Christ's teachings are exhortations founded on an undeniable love for each man who *chooses* to listen:

And Jesus went about all the cities, and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing every disease, and every infirmity*. And seeing the multitudes, he had *compassion* on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then he saith to his disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth

labourers into his harvest (Matthew 9:35-38).

And therefore it would follow that the issue of free will might be distilled into a notion of whether we want to face, say, the Sermon on the Mount without flinching: "Do not think that I came to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace but the sword" (Matthew 10:34). Moreover, if Christ's unconditional love demands that we submit ourselves to the idea that free will exists only in submitting to a life of faith, "And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake: but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved," then we might, like Peter, *find ourselves* suffering the blindness of Christ's *violent* love and grace. (This does not assume a foreknowledge of the timetable of Christ's gifts.) "And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:22 & 38).

In this essay, I examine the workings of grace in Flannery O'Connor's novel Wise Blood. I present my idea of the workings of grace, to see how Hazel Motes, O'Connor's victim of conflicting wills, does with it, how this theory holds up. My idea is this: To receive grace, one must have the kind of faith identified in The Sermon on The Mount. This carries with it a paradox, which I will not, in this paper, try theologically or philosophically to unravel. Nevertheless, to have the kind of faith Jesus announces to his listeners in Matthew, the faithful must, I think, *already* be in a state of grace. This grace does not, however, come when invoked; the faithful cannot pray to get grace.

In this essay, I study a metaphoric man who finds himself, suddenly, though in a state of grievous sin, created by grace. I study a man who, like the cowardly Peter, denies Christ and goes on, like Saul of Tarsus, to persecute him. I study a man who, despite his apparent hatred of Jesus (he does not hate Jesus; he hates the idea that Jesus does not exist), finds himself redeemed, immersed in Christ's dark light, suffering the new Stigmata. I study Hazel Motes in the narrow, but intense, light of hagiographic

literature, because I think Wise Blood follows the path this literature follows. I demonstrate the consequence of free will in a metaphoric/hagiographic context, and explore the arrogance of free will in a face-to-face confrontation with Christ's humble though violently consuming love. The issues here are gravity, or man attempting, on his own, to quell the riot in his soul, and grace, or that which comes from Christ as a gift intended to save man from his damning arrogance. In this case, O'Connor's fictional hero, Hazel Motes, has nothing whatsoever to do with the saving.

Hazel Motes can, moreover, once the process starts, do nothing to shrug grace from his immortal shoulders. O'Connor's novel is, therefore, the narrative of mystery, of things which are but are not, of a lowly, inarticulate, sin-ridden creature inexplicably and suddenly transcending his existence, and becoming superhuman (like Peter and Paul), and thus able, somehow, to see clearly, in his new blindness to things of this world, despite himself, things others cannot see; able to endure extra-human, apparently needless suffering; able, finally, to see God.

Chapter One
Launching the Metaphor

And when they had heard this, the disciples wondered
very much, saying: Who then can be saved? And Jesus
beholding, said to them: With men this is impossible: but with
God all things are possible (Matthew 19:25-26).

Hazel Motes takes a train trip from Eastrod to Taulkinham, two very real towns in Tennessee. In this respect, O'Connor's novel imitates reality, or that which we would agree *is there*. Hazel's train ride resembles a real train ride, for there are aisles, berths for sleeping, a black porter, windows, and the narrative of motion, all of which say to the reader: we are in the world of the here-and-now. From there, however, the world changes. It is no accident, for example, that Hazel is between places. Nor is it chance that these places have in them some sort of spiritual valence, beginning with Hazel's attitude *toward* the car he is in, with the way he sits on his seat, with the way in which his traveling partner sees him, with the way Hazel is constantly looking or actually moving *forward*. As Edward Kessler says, O'Connor's narrative soon becomes metaphor, full of promise (Kessler 19). And the clues to this metaphoric promise are given to us by various characters observing, in various places, something which we would miss without their implicit ironic statements about place.

Moreover, there is, again, a definite feeling of locomotion, of something moving toward something. Hazel moves, both in his mind (which is never fully revealed to us) and on his feet, though at first diffidently, toward some ultimate end, i.e., he seems always to be between this place and that, between this time and that, between this revelation and that. The novel implies this feeling through metaphor, which occurs in

its characters' observations of place and in the evident clues manifested by the places themselves. There is, therefore, (and in this I agree with Mr. Kessler) little verisimilitude in O'Connor's novel after the initial introduction of the train ride to Taulkinham (Kessler 7). Put another way, in this novel things are never as they seem. Each place is both what it is and what it is not. Each character is both what he/she seems to be and what he/she is not. For metaphor to work, things, people, must first be what they seem. There must as well be a promise of something more, i.e., Hazel's obsessive, even bizarre, behavior must compel us to search the narrative for clues. We must, with these clues, feel the need to keep searching; for each of these clues, of its own, gives little light. We look, within the context of grace and divine freedom, for an accretion of light; to pile these clues, like red-hot coals, until we feel their truth-heat. Using metaphors to describe metaphors seems the best way to begin this discussion of the promise of place, because O'Connor's novel begins with Hazel Motes about to launch into the promise of being both what he is and what he is not.

Perched on the edge of being--thus becoming (this metaphor applies to the seat on which Hazel sits as well as to the journey Hazel is on)--Hazel is literally as well as figuratively both no place and no one. Yet, somehow, from O'Connor's description of Hazel at the beginning of the novel, we feel Hazel's need to be where he is not, to leap forward into being. Thus the metaphor of motion begins:

Hazel Motes sat at a forward angle on the green plush train seat, *looking one minute at the window as if he might want to jump out of it, and the next down the aisle at the other end of the car*. The train was racing through tree tops that fell away at intervals and showed the sun standing, very red, on the edge of the farthest woods (3, italics mine).

Hazel's agitated position, his itch and his excitement, his apparent ability to intuit two places at once, and thus his apparent compulsion to want to jump out of his seat, or off of his precipice, points toward the promise which is dissolving, or falling away, out the window. Hazel is thus both parallel with that which promises to be what it is not and at the same time racing inexorably toward it, implying the geometrically infinite parallel lines which can never, in this world, meet. Hazel is therefore ostensibly riding through the *tops of trees*, which mysteriously reveal a sun "standing," or, in other words, looming fixedly upright (both figuratively and literally), "on the edge" of that which is farthest away. All of this numinous imagery, this immediate parallelism of that which is and that which is not, is characteristic of everything natural in the novel. Thus what we see, what Hazel sees, must be examined both for what it might be as well as for what it naturally appears to be (Desmond 51-62). Parallel lines between seeing and being are thus to be understood intuitively throughout this novel of place.

Because the novel begins in parallel lines between places, *in medias res*, we must assume, from a close scrutiny of the numinous imagery, that Hazel's identity, as we see it, is unknown (apart from the obvious); that this is, therefore, a story of reaching a metaphysical convergence of these infinitely parallel lines. We must assume, moreover, that the place through which Hazel is racing signifies some sort of latent identity, and that, in the future, Hazel will, of an unknown volition, get up from the metaphoric edge-of-his-seat, and walk *out* to meet that looming red sun, which glares, violently, from, as Northrop Frye would imply, *someplace* beyond the real (Frye 104-05).

But the journey begins innocently enough. Though she too is between places, and thus should be riding on parallel lines of becoming, of here and not here, Mrs. Hitchcock, the first of the characters to identify for us the numinous in Hazel, to see, without seeing, the convergence in Hazel of these infinite lines of place and no place, knows she is going

home, or to someplace she calls home; and therefore, as the first character grounded in place, Mrs. Hitchcock is capable of delivering the novel's first metaphoric irony, thus concretely begging the question of what it is the novel is doing thus far: Mrs. Hitchcock *places*, or identifies, Hazel Motes, thus drawing for us another solid line of verisimilitude. Constrained, however, within the immediate social mechanisms of family, age, appearance, and sex, Mrs. Hitchcock has no choice but to adjust these contextual lenses until they focus their disparate fields on anything that acts as evidence of Hazel's place. Mrs. Hitchcock wants a clear picture, a clear show of evidence, of where society has arranged Haze. This, Mrs. Hitchcock is compelled to believe, will define who Hazel is, and will for us ask ironically who Hazel is not: "She felt irked and wrenched her attention loose and squinted at the price tag [on Hazel's new suit]. The suit had cost him \$11.98. She felt that that *placed* him and looked at his face again as if she were *fortified against it now*" (3). For Mrs. Hitchcock has come face-to-face with where Hazel is not, or, rather, with Hazel's no one. Hazel has, after all, nothing to place him but the tag on his new suit; and everything which surrounds Hazel, or promises Mrs. Hitchcock a solution to the riddle of where Hazel might be, merely distances Hazel further from Mrs. Hitchcock, thus offering Mrs. Hitchcock herself no sense of place to grab on to and to hold on to, vis-a-vis Hazel Motes. "The sack at his feet was an army duffel bag and she decided that he had been in the army and had been released and that now he was going home" (3). Compound his inscrutability with the strange, almost revivalist language Hazel urges forth and Mrs. Hitchcock might wish to jump out the window, to meet the sun at the edge of the forest. "'I reckon you think you been redeemed,' he said." Mrs. Hitchcock snatched at her collar" (6). Thus, in this opening dialogue, the parallel lines of that which is and that which may be are clearly, though ironically, drawn.

Though Hazel's strange presence and sudden epithet mildly threaten her, this woman's complacency does not rattle. Mrs. Hitchcock adds up the evidence at Hazel's feet, getting the inevitable sum: home. And home is the operative word, the crucial context here, the analogy which broadens our sense of meaning. Because Hazel's inscrutable eyes have alarmed her, have compelled her to see, reflexively, what it was she was looking at, or for (this "inscrutable eye" motif will repeat during and at the end of the novel)-- "... *she found herself* squinting instead at his eyes, trying almost to look into them. They were the color of pecan shells and set in deep sockets . . .--" Mrs. Hitchcock faces, subliminally, and for us explicitly, the wells in Hazel's face, his eyes; and they reveal nothing; they do not reach, as eyes sometimes do, across the chasm with something approaching human familiarity. Mrs. Hitchcock has, thus, embraced the only "place" concept readily at hand: Home (3). "'Well,' Mrs. Hitchcock said, 'there's no place like home'" (3). Home is for Mrs. Hitchcock, for us, the place of refuge; and, in Hazel's distant hazel eyes, she sees, without an articulate awareness, Hazel's refugee-distance and aloneness, which terrifies but does not shake her. Both literally and figuratively, then, Mrs. Hitchcock's platitude--the way it comes about--informs the profound significance of the place we call, and hold on to, and know as, home: Home is where we get to be who we are. Home is the place where all meaning converges:

Mrs. Hitchcock said well that time flies. She said she hadn't seen her sister's children in five years and she didn't know if she'd know them if she saw them. There were three of them, Roy, Bubber, and John Wesley. John Wesley was six-years old and he had written her a letter, dear Mammadoll.

They called her Mammadoll and her husband Papadoll . . . (6).

The new suit, the duffle bag, the price tag, the passage on the train are all, for Mrs.

Hitchcock, evanescent grains of the mortar upon which the idea of home, or place, can be, must be, built. For Hazel's eyes have, in the above passage, sent Mrs. Hitchcock into temporary place-blindness (even the second she spends looking into Hazel's impassive eyes alienates Mrs. Hitchcock from her complacency), into a kind of well, where names like John Wesley become dead echoes, muted by a palpable darkness. Without knowing it, Mrs. Hitchcock has, for us, identified Hazel's orphanhood, his no-oneness. Thus, she supports herself on Hazel's props, using these facades to restore a textured, layered image of complacent home. For us, though, Hazel has become an orphan, a refugee from something or someone.

And as a refugee, Hazel's idea of home must, we assume, be obscure, as distant and elliptical as the memory of an old dream. And indeed, later that night, in his berth, Hazel dreams his recurring dream of home, beginning with the portentous metaphor of the coffin. "In his half-sleep he thought where he was lying was like a coffin" (9). With the coffin, we notice an elementary accretion of salient signs or clues. According to Mr. Kessler, Hazel seems, for instance, to be rushing through a land in which things are more than they seem (Kessler 37). Mrs. Hitchcock has, in her ironic way, tipped us off to that. (There *is no place like home*. Without an analogy, how can we articulate the meaning of home?) Hazel's eyes are deep-set, the color of his name. Their startling blankness startles Mrs. Hitchcock into the reflexive, though brief, meditation of these ineffable eyes. Somehow finding herself in them, Mrs. Hitchcock leans closer to get a better look. Thus, according to Northrop Frye's theory of metaphor, Hazel's eyes become, by an accretion of meaning, pools, or mirrors; and like mirrors, they reveal nothing but what the seer is capable of seeing (Frye 105). Hazel then utters his first opaque, though highly allusive, language, his first signal of redemption. What does it mean? What are we looking at? What is Hazel really seeing? Later, Hazel, in his half-

sleep, witnesses the coffin--a motif which, like the eye and seer motifs recurs and deepens as the novel's signs deepen--and O'Connor's metaphors of place and no place begin to reveal their promises:

... The coffin he had seen with someone in it was his grandfather's. They had left it propped open with a stick of kindling the night it had sat in the house with the old man in it, and Haze had watched from a distance, thinking: he ain't going to let them shut it on him; when the time comes, his elbow is going to shoot into the crack. His grandfather had been a circuit preacher, a waspish old man who had ridden over three counties *with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger*. When it was time to bury him, they shut the top of his box down and he didn't make a move (10).

According to Frye, that which has come before in highly valenced symbols clarifies the meaning of the coffin image (Frye 102). The story inside Hazel's head (a dream with a stinger, as it were) has, now, transformed the coffin into a portal. Had the young Haze not wanted his grandfather to *get up and walk away* (italics this time to emphasize this repeating motif of leaving), the box would have remained single-dimensional, i.e., a box for burying and leaving. But because Hazel has invested the box with the wishes implied by the stick and by the expressive redemptive language at the end; because, moreover, his grandfather, the old, preaching menace, did not get up and walk away from the grave, the dead man must have gone, at least to Hazel (and this is implied redemptive theology) *someplace* else. The narrative clearly illustrates young Hazel's surprise that, literally, he could not see the old man's leaving: "... When it was time to bury him, they shut the top of his box down and he didn't make a move." We must, from this, infer that the

grandfather's previous stings were venomous messages of Jesus and of a Jesus-inspired personal, literal redemption. Why else would the boy seem so surprised that the grandfather does not, in the fundamentalist sense, rise? No: the grandfather's immutable deadness transforms the coffin into another of these metaphors of parallelism, of some other kind of leaving; into a metaphor which the novel will develop into the portal through which Hazel sees the other side of that which is. As Teilhard would imply in The Phenomenon of Man, this, again, skews the interpretation of where the locus of reality is (Teilhard de Chardin 58). Signs will continue to accrete, and as they do, to develop meaning, taking us from that which is (Mrs. Hitchcock's ironic place-constrained blindness); to that which might be; to what Desmond would call a numinous vision of, say, the barn-red sun as something wholly other (Desmond 51-62).

Indeed, this accretion continues immediately after Hazel falls asleep:

He was asleep now and he dreamed he was at his father's burying again. He saw him humped over on his hands and knees in his coffin, being carried that way to the graveyard. "If I keep my can in the air," he heard the old man say, "nobody can shut nothing on me," but when they got his box to the hole, they let it drop down with a thud and his father flattened out like anybody else. *The train jolted and stirred him half awake again . . . [and he saw, t]urning in the road . . . in the dark the store boarded and the barn leaning and the smaller house half carted away, the porch gone and no floor in the hall* (10, italics mine).

As if they were themselves boxes, the buildings become portable, suitable for burying. The train shakes as if it were a box being carried to the hole. Hazel sleeps in a berth, in a kind of sleeping-coffin, closed, and dark, and shut off from the living. Everything both inside and outside Hazel Motes is leaving, going to someplace which, as yet, remains mysterious.

Yet, one thing is clear: Two men have died and have been buried and have not, at least to Hazel, been resurrected. Two men, Hazel's father and grandfather, have been nailed shut in their boxes and dropped into their respective supine acquiescences and have thus contradicted the grandfather's implied Jesus-inspired message of a literal, or that which theologian Karl Barth would call a fundamentalist, resurrection and eternal life (Barth 164). Otherwise we should not see this through Hazel's uninitiated eyes. Otherwise we should not have both men, in death, vehemently protesting their interment. Again, the parallel lines of reality and of the numinous run together without converging.

We are told, moreover, that Hazel had meant to emulate his grandfather, had meant to stand on the hood of a car, and to preach, from county to county, the word of Jesus Christ: "He was going to be a preacher like his grandfather . . . His grandfather had traveled three counties in a Ford automobile" (10). Inspired, Hazel's grandfather apparently started shouting "before he had the car door open," *daring* people to listen (10). "He would climb up on the nose of it and preach from there and sometimes he would climb onto the top of it and shout down at them. They were like stones! he would shout. But Jesus had died to redeem them" (10-11). The last line of the old man's exhortations implies a specific relationship between sin and grace, i.e., that sin conditions grace, or, put another way, that Christ's love defies the gravity of sin. Therefore, it would seem that a prolific sinner is close to Christ. But is a prolific sinner one who sins with foreknowledge? Or are we talking about an innate, or Original Sin, one descended from

Adam? For the purposes of this paper, I shall assume, since the grandfather is, after all, a fundamentalist, that we are talking about a sin passed down from Adam, one all mankind inherits. Therefore, if he is to take up this car-hood preaching tradition, Hazel must know, first-hand, as his grandfather seemed to, the nature of the sin that compelled the old man *forward*. And Hazel is after all the old man's apprentice, a smaller and less complex imitation of his grandfather. Thus, early-on Hazel *finds himself* immured in this fundamentalist rhetoric of redemption, *placed*, in other words, inside a black box; sent, finally, in this metaphoric box, after his discharge from the army, to Taulkinham, to "do some things" he has never done before, to ask Mrs. Hitchcock, on his way, whether she has been redeemed, an inchoate question first formed reflexively in young Haze's mind during one of the old man's pronouncements:

... (The old man would point to his grandson, Haze.

He had a particular disrespect for him because his own face was repeated almost exactly in the child's and seemed to mock him.) Did they know that even for that boy there, for that mean sinful unthinking boy standing there with his dirty hands clenching and unclenching at his sides, Jesus would die ten million deaths before He would let him lose his soul? He would chase him over the waters of sin! That boy had been redeemed and Jesus wasn't going to leave him ever. Jesus would never let him forget he was redeemed. What did the sinner think there was to be gained? Jesus would have him in the end! (11).

Thus the meaning of Haze's bizarre question to Mrs. Hitchcock becomes clear: "I reckon *you* think *you* been redeemed." Hazel has seen, in Mrs. Hitchcock, that which Hazel's

grandfather saw in him, in the people who comprised the crowds: an innate human mockery of Christ's love and grace. For, as she is human, Mrs. Hitchcock carries the spark of evil, the potential to ignite sin and suffering. As the novel's first prophet, Hazel's grandfather thus invokes the universal tenet of the meaning of Christ's crucifixion; and, in this tradition Hazel will follow. Jesus died on the cross so that each would be redeemed: "That boy had been redeemed and Jesus wasn't going to leave him ever. Jesus would never let him forget he was redeemed. . . Jesus would have him in the end" (11).

This inchoate realization humiliates Hazel (the novel's second prophet) and he turns away for the first time. (Hazel will turn away twice more, as Peter turned from Jesus in the Gospels.) By turning, he denies, in the sinner, the infusion of Christ's grace. Ironically, the narrative tells us: "The boy didn't *need* to hear it. There was already a deep black wordless conviction in him that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin" (11). As St. Augustine would have it, this again implies both an obvious and inextricable relationship between sin and redemption as well as Hazel's mysterious, intuitive foreknowledge of Christ's love entering into and annulling the destructive power of sin (Augustine 22):

Dust and ashes, human life amounts to nothing; a mockery of his very existence. Into this duration, this corrupted finitude, comes the blood of Christ, shed on the cross for all sinners, living and dead. This redemptive blood infuses the sinner with eternal life, and does it without regard to sin (Augustine 9).

The passage's operative word, mercy, speaks Christ's mind: "Yet suffer me to speak unto Thy mercy," Augustine writes, "me, dust and ashes. Yet suffer me to speak, since I

speak to Thy mercy, and not to scornful man. Thou too, perhaps, despisest me, yet wilt Thou return and have compassion upon me" (Augustine 9). Hazel's grandfather follows this Augustinian tradition, shouting mercy from the hood of his Ford, drawing, over the crowd, over the sin-mocking boy, the shadow of the Cross, which becomes, in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, a bird of light, the Holy Spirit. In death, Haze's grandfather implies, in sin, is eternal life. Therefore, it follows that Hazel, to avoid Christ's love and grace, must avoid sin. This avoidance motif turns upon itself ironically as the narrative goes on to demonstrate Hazel's antithetical intentions.

But, as the novel's first prophet, Hazel's dead grandfather nevertheless bears into the narrative Hazel's own potential for prophesy, a potential which, like all potential, lies beneath the surface of that which the portential compels into actuality. In this way, Hazel's earlier challenge to Mrs. Hitchcock, "I reckon you think you been redeemed," initiates a new understanding of Hazel's mission and purpose: Hazel is looking for evidence of the Holy Spirit, of that which will save a damned soul from eternal night. There can, however, be no evidence of redemption from inherent human sin for Hazel because Hazel continues to search for literal, and not metaphoric, resurrections; and this compulsion fuels his strange dreams of relatives rising from their eternal deaths. Jesus does not appear at funerals; does not walk up to graves and introduce himself and reach in by the hand to pull out the dead, as he pulled Lazarus from the grave. That was Lazarus. According to Kessler, that was metaphor (Kessler 37). Yet, thinking, even in his sleep, that Jesus will, in fact, walk in and introduce himself to that which is, in the dream, a literal death, Hazel sees his mother, walking dead through the dead countryside, waiting to fly up and to meet this new, this flesh-and-blood Jesus:

He wondered if she walked at night . . . She
would come with that look on her face, unrested

and looking; the same look he had seen through the crack
 in her coffin. He had seen her face through the crack
 when they were *shutting the top on her*. . . He had seen the
 shadow that came down over her face and pulled her mouth
 down as if she wasn't any more satisfied dead than alive,
 as if she were going to *spring up and shove the lid back and
 fly out and satisfy herself*: but they shut it. She *might* have
 been going to fly out of there, she *might* have been going
 to spring (14).

Hazel's dead mother does not, indeed cannot, spring in the literal sense of springing, in the sense Hazel has of a waking-up-and-walking-away kind of resurrection, in a literal Lazarine defeat of death. Though the image of the dead mother plays the lead in this new dream, she is, like the two dead men before her, the image of the unresurrected soul in Hazel Motes; and thus his mind's eye sees this apparition as a bat, which is blind, and which, in its blindness, "darts" from a darkness--its own, because it is inside its eyes, its motes--to another darkness, remaining closed off from the light. And the narrative repeats its previous imagery of the coffin, of the box, which keeps Hazel inside, yet through which he can make out a thin blade of light, which manifests itself, in the interstice between dreaming and waking (Hazel's constant state), as a white shape, surrounded by darkness, representing an amorphous Jesus:

. . . in his sleep, terrible, like a huge bat, dart
 from the closing, fly out of there, but it was falling dark
 on top of her, closing down all the time. From *inside* he
 saw it closing, coming closer closer down and cutting off
 the light and the room. He opened his eyes and saw it closing

and he sprang *between the crack and wedged* his head and shoulders through it and hung there [again, between that which is and that which may be] dizzy, with the dim light of the train slowly showing the rug below. He hung there *over the top* [alluding to the metaphor of place at the novel's outset] of the berth curtain and saw the porter at the other end of the car, *a white shape in the darkness*, standing there watching him and not moving (14).

As if to resurrect him from his nightmare, Hazel sees, in his half-sleep, two parallel realities, the porter, which he cannot as yet discern, and the image of Jesus, both "standing there watching him and not moving." He sees again what the old man told him he would see, that Jesus would never let him forget he was saved, though as yet no evidence, no palpable proof of this salvation has been forthcoming. Hazel is, in other words, and in an ironic way, Jesus-obsessed. From this point *forward*, Hazel will be addressing, in various ways, mostly ironic, two universes: One which is in fact the world (the train ride), the other which is not. The obvious world is fallen, having been corrupted by Original Sin. The other stands at the edge of this corrupted world, waiting to be let in; thus waiting to let Hazel out. Thus, to the white wraith, Hazel shouts:

"I'm sick!" he called. "I can't be closed up in this thing. Get me out!" [alluding to the three previous dreams]

The porter stood watching him and didn't move.

"*Jesus*," Haze said, "*Jesus*."

The porter didn't move. "*Jesus been a long time gone*," he said in a sour triumphant voice (14).

As Barth would say, the novel now shifts its ontological perspectives as the first

chapter reaches its powerful climax (Barth 39). In his half-dream, we see the porter through Haze's eyes; we see, in other words, Jesus Christ standing inert, as if he were the sun, *disappearing* over the treetops at the novel's outset. As Hazel's prophet-grandfather portended, the sun (usually a white shape surrounded by darkness), has come to the edge of this dark and fallen world (now the sleeping car) and has, to Hazel, who can, though he does not know it, see him, made his divine presence known *in metaphor*. Suddenly, however, and at the same time, the narrative moves us outside Hazel's berth, and we of course see the porter. We are asked to consider that which is not there, to consider the whiteness of the porter's jacket as the Son of God. With Jesus-obsessed Hazel, we stand on one plane of reality, looking at a parallel plane. Furthermore, we are taken back to the beginning of the novel and asked to reconsider the image of the sun above the trees, to think of *that* sun as metaphor; to consider, moreover, the physical reality of light as signifying spirituality. We see the porter standing inert, but we feel, because of what has come before in the dreams of the funeral and of the preacher, Hazel's dark vision amplified, extended beyond that which is merely there. Beyond three-dimensional reality is the thing, the metaphor, the silently powerful yet vulnerable mercy and love of God. If Hazel sees the world as metaphor, might Hazel's metaphor be Christ?

To reinforce this vision-as-metaphor motif, let us examine more carefully one of Hazel's antecedents. Its parallel images of deepness, blackness, and wordlessness reinforce this sense of seeing blindly, as a darting bat, flying without the cognitive ability to articulate the space through which Hazel is flying or through which Hazel is compelled forward. This antecedent begs the question of the significance of the reality *held in* Hazel's so-called dream eyes, in Hazel's *motes*. Again, with closer scrutiny, here is O'Connor's passage:

There was already a deep black wordless conviction in him that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin. He knew by the time he was twelve years old that he was going to be a preacher. Later he saw Jesus move *from tree to tree* in the *back of his mind*, a wild ragged figure motioning him to *turn around and come off into the dark where he was not sure of his footing, where he might be walking on the water and not know it and then suddenly know it and drown* (11).

In the context of presupposing a divine reality beyond that which is held to be real, the black porter's cynical remark becomes as well an ironic promise. To say to Hazel, for instance, that Jesus is a long time gone is tantamount to acknowledging the presence of Christ, of a real Christ of faith, even of grace. Without meaning to, the porter becomes, as Maritain would insist, another of this story's ironic prophets (the third): Jesus did *in fact*, may still, exist (Maritain 186-87). Therefore, death, burial, life-everlasting arise again and move forward, albeit ironically, and thus compel Hazel to look within himself. Moreover, the obscurity of the locus of redemption is implied in the porter's final smugness--in his "... sour triumphant voice." The "wild, ragged" figure Hazel saw in the "back of his mind" he sees again in the wild, ragged obscurity of this white shape surrounded by darkness.

In the novel's first chapter we have enough metaphor and irony to launch into the rest of the novel's action. The tone is set. With Hazel, we are on a journey to the inside of that which is outside; we are looking at but not seeing what is there. Instead, we see strange, allusive, often complexly ambiguous metaphors, representing some ultimate being, some final reality, beyond which we cannot go, because words cannot describe except in metaphor. Redemption from darkness abounds. Hazel must get out. Before

that, however, Hazel must immerse himself in sin. For, as I have already said or implied, Hazel has the knowledge of a prophet: On sin is the face of Jesus.

But in the second and subsequent chapters we move away from the idea of an inherited, or Original, sin, and into depravity, which will take us on a bizarre, apocalyptic experiment. We go to the land of the beast and watch the beast himself, who is man. And we see what happens when man loses his soul.

Chapter Two
The Apocalypse

1

Hazel comes to a city. According to Giannone, cities are, to O'Connor, places where people cannot be (Giannone 312-13). Cities are, in a spiritual sense, no place to be someone, because the someone you *might* be is not a redeemed someone. This is because, in its complex size and alluring adornment, the city competes with God. It is, thus, an idol, a Babylon or a Rome. Moreover, in thinking of the city as the place of the unredeemed, we are, inevitably, taken into the Book of the Apocalypse, as was O'Connor, which describes the city as "... Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth" (The Apocalypse 17:5). The final book of John says, moreover, that "The beast, which thou sawest, *was, and is not*, and shall come up out of the bottomless pit, and go into destruction: and the inhabitants on the earth... shall wonder, seeing the beast that was, and is not" (17:8).

Isaias as well invokes the city as the locus of evil: "And of the children, that shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, they shall take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of Babylon" (Isaias 39:7). And of the people in the city, Isaias warns, "Behold they are all in the wrong, and their works are vain: their idols are wind and vanity" (41:29). And, "Depart, depart, go out thence!" (52:11).

These biblical pronouncements come to bear on Hazel's arrival in Taulkinham, in how Hazel witnesses that which he sees. The image of an apocalyptic Babylon looms as soon as Hazel leaves his berth on the train. By the way things look, we know in whose mind these strange signs and figures loom and why:

When he got to Taulkinham, as soon as he stepped off

the train, he began to see signs and lights. PEANUTS, WESTERN UNION, AJAX, TAXI, MOTEL, CANDY. Most of them were electric and moved up and down or blinked frantically. He walked very slowly, carrying his duffle bag by the neck. His head turned to one side and then the other, first toward one sign and then another. He walked the length of the station and then he walked back as if he might be going to get on the train again (15).

The signs stun Hazel, for they blink idiotically, turn and wink chaotically, grind malevolently, as if they were themselves ersatz gods, carrying an implied promise of the loss of the self, or of the soul. This opening scene parodies the last book of John, mocking not its tone but relating that tone ironically, even comically. In Taulkinham, for instance, nothing so obvious as a bottomless pit will occur. For that would not be fiction. And the Testament has already been written. With the beginning of the novel's second chapter, and on into every subsequent chapter, the narrative wants not to defy the seriousness of The Apocalypse but to bring this seriousness to the reader as if it were being seen through the eyes of an inarticulate young fundamentalist prophet, through the eyes of an evangelist who has transformed into words and images he can comprehend the complex, inscrutable metaphors of destruction set forth in the final book of the Bible. For, Hazel has read and, I suspect, reread this book, and has assimilated it in a strange way. "He had gone to a country school where he had learned to read and write but that it was wiser not to; the Bible was the only book he read" (12). Thus, because we see through Hazel's apocalyptic eyes the first lighted signs of Taulkinham, we see Taulkinham from the remove of that which is and that which is not. Hazel stands on one line of reality, looking off into another parallel line.

According to Kessler, O'Connor moves us into this way of seeing with her use of the metaphoric phrase "as if" (Kesler 51-62). The narrative begins to include this way of seeing with more frequency than before. Hazel walks back and forth *as if* he cannot make up his mind what to do. Recall, at the novel's outset, Hazel sat in a forward position, *as if* he were going to jump from the train, which, now, he does. We may assume, from all this talk of being always between two places--as if--that Hazel feels drawn forward, since "forward" is used to describe Hazel's attitude (albeit, here, the forward direction is implied in Hazel's not getting back on the train). Hazel is moving toward some kind of confrontation with meaning in this Babylon. It is as if Hazel has walked into the blazing lights of the reification of sin, as if Hazel knows where he is. It is as if Hazel were testing his grandfather's warning, as if, in the idiot city, Satanic lights, which do not have enough power to sustain themselves because they borrow their power from another source and thus cannot comprehend the darkness which surrounds them, Hazel has come to face, in the source-darkness of the corrupted human soul, a tiny pinpoint of light, which is the source of all light, but which cannot be seen in the eclipse of all this false light. This tiny pinpoint of light remains despite the festering darkness which threatens to devour it.

Hazel is following the apocalyptic map in his *stinging* head; for he finds, on the restroom wall, the name, address, telephone number, and promise of the "fornications" he has, it seems, been looking for: "I'm going to do some things I never have done before . . ." (5):

Mrs. Leora Watts!

60 Buckley Road

The friendliest bed in town!

Brother!

After a while he took a pencil out of his pocket
and wrote down the address on the back of an envelope (16).

Hazel is thus beginning his immersion in sin. He is constructing a test of faith he has in Jesus. Will the tiny pinpoint of light remain? On the restroom wall is, for example, not the name of a mere woman, but the name of a *married* woman. Adultery therefore becomes associated with fornication. The scrawl, moreover, connotes an alliance in the word at the end: Brother. The exclamation points serve to emphasize the nature of the act: This is an invitation to commit what Catholic doctrine calls a mortal sin, an invitation to give up the soul, to lose the self that God has created, the self that Hazel's grandfather warned him, as a boy, Jesus would have. Hazel is willing to go to the edge to test the certainty of Jesus's death or everlasting life.

Again, is Christ present? Listen, now, to another ironic character:

Outside he got in a yellow taxi and told the driver
where he wanted to go. The driver was a small man with
a big leather cap on his head and the tip of a cigar coming
out from the center of his mouth. They had driven a few blocks
before Haze noticed him *squinting* at him through the
rear-view mirror. "You ain't no friend of hers, are you?"
the driver asked (16).

Like Mrs. Hitchcock, the cab driver sees something in Hazel. For he, too, squints at Hazel *as if* he were trying better to focus on an apparition. And the cab driver's question at the end of the ride ironically implies the issue of the existence of actual sin, which exists when, in the conflict of wills, the actor embraces the resolution of darkness instead of light, i.e., when the creature turns away from the creator. We are again facing the numinous in Hazel. The cab driver knows, without knowing, that Hazel is some kind

of prophet, one in whom sin and redemption exist simultaneously and paradoxically:

"I never saw her before," Haze said.

"Where'd you hear about her? She don't usually have no *preachers* for company." He did not disturb the position of the cigar when he spoke; he was able to speak on either side of it.

"I ain't *any* preacher," Haze said, frowning. "I only seen her name in the toilet."

"You look like a preacher," the driver said. "That hat looks like a preacher's hat."

"It ain't," Haze said, and *leaned forward* and gripped the back of the front seat. "It's just a hat" (16).

But the driver goes on, "'It ain't just the hat,' the driver said. 'It's a look in your face *somewheres*'" (16). Without knowing it, the cab driver has identified for us in Hazel two parallel realities, the first of which contradicts the second. Hazel's journey to the whorehouse contradicts Hazel's life journey, which, to the cabbie, follows the road to Christ. Thus, the cabbie has, like Mrs. Hitchcock before him, forced Hazel into another ironic statement about where he is going, who he is.

Indeed, Hazel is not *any preacher*; *he is this* preacher, this prophet, his grandfather's grandson, the one whom Jesus has chosen (Hazel's name, Ha zah el, means, in Hebrew, he whom God sees). As Mrs. Hitchcock before him, the cab driver deduces from the evidence both the profane and the sacred in Hazel. And Hazel again leans *forward*, toward the sacred, itching to get out of yet another box.

The driver's subsequent remarks sound ironically shrewd, as if he were other than a mere cabbie, as if he were capable of his own prophesy. The cabbie's remarks portend,

in this way, Hazel's mission into sin, into the tiny pinpoint of light, which is Christ:

"Listen," Haze said, tilting the hat over one eye,

"I'm not a preacher."

"I understand," the driver said. "It ain't anybody on this green earth of God's, preachers nor nobody else. And you can tell people better how terrible sin is if you know from your own experience" (16).

In the denial of his vocation, Hazel tersely paraphrases the fundamental tenet of Augustinian redemptive theology, and the driver seems somehow to intuit Hazel's kernel of meaning: Dust and ashes, human life amounts to nothing. Corrupt this nothing with actual sin and human life falls to less-than-nothing. Less than nothing is evil. By coming to Taulkinham, Hazel has turned away from Christ, as humanity is wont to do, has thus, of his natural will, made the leap from Original to Actual Sin, from the sin of being to the sin of freedom. Hazel has thus resolved the conflict of his wills in an entirely human manner. This is freedom. Without this freedom, Christ's death cannot mean. Thus in this second turning away from the light of salvation, Hazel has affirmed (the cab driver senses) the redemptive power of Christ. He has thus, paradoxically, by denying his role as preacher, invited redemptive meaning, invited in his amorphous white shape.

To Hazel's brusque obliqueness, the driver responds not ironically but with patent, though implied, forthrightness: To preach the seriousness of sin, the preacher must enter into the radical freedom of sin. The preacher must understand how sin tricks the will into believing it is free, free enough to sin when it wants to. The preacher must understand that the will is not free in sin, but that sin shackles the will, compelling it into the excruciating slavery of sin. Sin usurps. But to preach the gravity of sin, the

preacher must know, with not only his mind but with his flesh and heart, the weight of his own sin. Hazel must first know the terrible paradox of the freedom of sin before Christ can intervene--if, indeed, Christ is to intervene at all. Thus, Hazel's subsequent radical denial of any meaning in existence affirms his solipsistic resolution to embrace this freedom. Like Peter and Saul before him, Hazel must first commend himself into sin:

Haze put his head in at the window, knocking the hat accidentally straight again. He seemed to have knocked his face straight too for it became completely expressionless.

"Listen," he said, "get this: I don't believe in anything."

The driver took the stump of cigar out of his mouth.

"Not in nothing at all?" he asked, leaving his mouth open after the question.

"I don't have to say it but once to nobody," Haze said (17).

As he tells the cabbie of the new freedom, Hazel reaffirms, according to Simone Weil, the porter's denunciation of the presence of Christ (Weil 28). Thus, Hazel ironically affirms this freedom as the locus of Christ's redemption. Though, like St. Augustine, he has sinned, will, in fact, because of this freedom, continue to sin, Hazel implies, in this mysterious nihilism, that Jesus will never leave him (Weil 1). It is with this in mind that we hear Hazel declaring to the whore Mrs. Watts: "What I mean to have you know is: I'm no *goddam* preacher" (18). Hazel thus declares the impossibility of perdition--even in Babylon. Because of Christ's crucifixion, Hazel's free will, his innate resolution to sin, cannot damn him. "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there; and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And Jesus said, *forgive them Father, for they know not what they do*"

(Luke 23: 33-34). It cannot damn him because his inherent humanity, his radical freedom, carries with it the implicit guarantee of eternal life with the Father. "And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And saying this, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 46).

2

From the whorehouse to the streets, Hazel walks; and here, on the streets of Taulkinham, the parallel realities of the sacred and the profane freedom manifest themselves overtly in O'Connor's choices of signs. Moreover, these numinous expressions of divine intervening love follow Hazel *as if* they were waiting for him to turn around, to see, not with the eyes in his head, but with the motes, or pools, in his heart--which run deeper than time--the presence of Christ in sin: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do:"

His second night in Taulkinham, Hazel Motes walked along down town close to the store fronts but not looking in them. The black sky was underpinned with long silver streaks that looked like scaffolding and depth on depth behind it were thousands of stars that all seemed to be moving very slowly *as if* they were about some vast construction work that involved the whole order of the universe and would take all time to complete. No one was paying any attention to the sky (19).

As if this were not enough, Hazel's shadow, itself now the metaphoric shadow of Christ on the soul, begins to follow, begins to draw Hazel, for the first time, toward the mystery of his subsequent prophesy:

... Haze's shadow was now behind him and now before him
and now and then broken by other people's shadows, but
when it was by itself, stretching behind him, it was a thin
nervous shadow walking backwards. His neck was thrust
forward as if he were trying to smell something that was
always being drawn away (19).

Into the narrative comes a starker show of the parallels of false light and real light. Attaching itself, leachlike, to the numinous darkness of night, which represents, metaphorically, the dark light of St. John of the Cross, and which Hazel wears in his cheap dark suit, the apocalyptic, false light from the store windows sucks the natural numinous blue from Hazel's clothes, turning them purple, the color of harlotry. "And the woman was clothed round about with purple ... full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication" (The Apocalypse 17:4). In this way, the seminal evidence of Hazel's prophesy, of his subsequent radical denial of the freedom implied in free will, is itself shown in a false light. Moreover, the entire city is immersed in this false light, which illumines its vanity and squalid wind: "The stores in Taulkinham stayed open on Thursday nights so that people could have an extra opportunity to see what was for sale" (19). The city is so bright that no one pays any "attention to the sky." The city, metaphoric Actual Sin, obscures the metaphor for God, as, in the beginning of the novel, the train, a city on wheels, led by a metaphoric engine of sin, running forward into nowhere, into Babylon, obscured the metaphor for the Son of God (Giannone 317).

Nevertheless, and because he must, Hazel walks forward with unrelenting vigor. And he sees, suddenly, a false altar on which false sacrifices are made, false holocausts offered to a false god, to all false gods--to Baal. On the altar is an idol, a potato peeler, guaranteed to *redeem* its user from the drudgery of life, from the contagion of the strain

of living. Offerings of a dollar-fifty are burned on this altar, and the smoke reaches and pleases Baal, the god who grants ease for lucre. For a buck-and-a-half, the righteous can both satisfy their god and know, tangibly, of their redemption. The potato-peeling priest parodies the theology of redemption and grace. This man is thus a blatant mockery of Christ. Knowing this, at least intuitively, Hazel walks closer:

... A few people gathered around. There were two buckets on the card table, one empty and the other full of potatoes.

Between the two buckets there was a pyramid of green cardboard boxes and, on top of the stack, one peeler was open for demonstration. The man stood in front of this *altar*, pointing over at various people. "How about you?"

he said, pointing at a damp-haired pimpled boy. "You ain't gonna let one of these go by?" He stuck a brown potato in one side of the open machine. The machine was a square tin box with a red handle, and as he turned the handle, the potato went into the box and then in a second, back out the other side, white (19).

More numinous imagery compounds the metaphor, even on the altar of Baal. The priest's tin box is both what it is and what it might be, which is, metaphorically, the box through which the soul is turned and ground around and stripped of its brown skin of sin. The priest's demonstration of culinary ease both portends Hazel's subsequent knowledge of sin and harkens back to the cab driver's wisdom of the experience of freedom. The brown skin signifies sin, because the potato comes out the other side of its tin box *clean* (alluding to previous boxes from which Hazel will inevitably rise). In this way, the potato-peeling priest mocks and portends the subsequent trial of Hazel's soul, as it turns

inside his chest like a vegetable, lifeless because of its sin; is ground down by what the cab driver called experience; is finally spit out the other side, white: This strange scene portends Hazel's journey to the end of the novel, the journey to his dark night of the soul.

Three of the final five key characters enter at this moment: Enoch Emery, Asa and Sabbath Hawks. Enoch suggests the mystery of the ultimate human loss of Christ, of the total freedom of will-less choice. Enoch has gone beyond the freedom to sin and is therefore shackled by that very freedom. He cannot know what it is not to be free of himself. Enoch is, in other words, the damned eunuch (in this sense, will-less, i.e., he who has been derailed from his spiritual engine) of The Apocalypse, who drifts in spiritual incoherence to the end of the world. Asa Hawks articulates for us the real in Hazel Motes, albeit ironically, in his vision of Christ at Hazel's back, which approaches as Hazel's shadow. Sabbath Hawks both parodies Christ's divine mother Mary and, as Maritain would have it, demonstrates for us the final banality of evil (Maritain 5). Converging before the potato-peeling priest, these characters mark, each in his own way, the spiritual character of the prophet, as they establish the obvious architecture of free will:

The boy guffawed and looked at the other
people gathered around. He had *yellow hair* and a *fox-shaped*
face.

"What's yer name?" the peeler man asked.

"Name Enoch Emery," the boy said and snuffled.

"Boy with a pretty name like that ought to have
one of these," the man said, rolling his eyes, trying to warm
up the others. Nobody laughed but the boy. The man
standing *across* from Hazel Motes laughed, not a pleasant

laugh but one that had a sharp edge. He was a tall cadaverous man with a *black suit* and a *black hat* on. He had on dark glasses and his cheeks were streaked with lines that looked *as if* they had been painted on. They gave him the expression of a grinning mandrill. As soon as he laughed, he began to *move forward in a deliberate way*, jiggling a tin cup in one hand and tapping a *white* cane in *front* of him with the other. Just behind him there came a child, handing out leaflets. She had on a *black dress and a black knitted cap pulled down low on her forehead* . . . she had a long face and a short sharp nose. . .

Haze was looking at the blind man and the child (20).

Seeing false images of himself in both Asa and Sabbath Hawks, Hazel stands transfixed. Like Hazel, for example, Asa Hawks wears both a black hat and suit. He moves forward with deliberation, letting a white shaft lead his way through the darkness of Babylon, through the apparent darkness in his eyes, which, incidentally, are blocked by dark glasses. Blocking the eyes precludes anyone from seeing anything in them. Thus Asa Hawks's eyes mock Hazel's motives. Like her father, Sabbath Hawks wears black. Like Hazel, she, too, has pulled her hat low on her head. Hazel is thus stirred by this pair of would-be missionaries. They, too, appear to be in the midst of doing something they have never done before. And indeed they are: They have come to identify Hazel as prophet. They are, in an ironic way, like John the Baptist, like those who portend the arrival of Christ's terrible grace. Grace is all around Hazel.

Hawks's mocking child hands Hazel a tract, which, on its face, says, "Jesus calls You" (21). But Hazel turns away for the third time, destroying the calling, sending the truth through the city's vain wind:

Haze didn't open *his* tract ["I ain't *any* preacher"]. He looked at the outside of it and then tore it *across*. He put these two pieces together and tore them *across* again. He kept re-stacking the pieces and tearing them again until he had a little handful of confetti. He turned his hand over and let the shredded leaflet sprinkle to the ground. Then he looked up and saw the blind man's child not three feet away, watching him. Her mouth was open and her eyes glittered on him like two chips of green bottle glass. She had a *white* gunny sack hung over her shoulder. Hazel scowled and began rubbing his sticky hands on his pants.

"I seen you," she said (22).

Though they shine falsely, profanely, refracting like bottle glass the false light of the city, thus compounding the darkness, Sabbath's eyes witness the dark, direct light in Hazel. Indeed, Sabbath sees, in the way he tears his tract, Hazel's calling, sees on him the mark of Christ's cross. In this way, Sabbath recounts Hazel's grandfather's warning that Jesus would have Hazel in the end. And in the next minute, as Hazel follows, deliberately, his ironic John-the-Baptist counterpart, Enoch innately articulates the inquiry which names Hazel to Christ: "'You go in for a lot of Jesus business?'" (23).

Moreover, as a prophet, Hazel is unaffected by the law: "If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Galatians 5:18). It is no accident, for example, that Hazel ignores the traffic light as well as the cop's banal language. It is no accident that the light, the law, is all Enoch sees. For Enoch's blood (the ironic wise blood) is stirred by animal signals, by, if you will, the meal-color of Pavlov's dog. Enoch knows, in his blood, but not in his head or heart, what the traffic lights mean. Red, green, and yellow

are the signals which stir Enoch, which give Enoch's existence all its meaning and significance. "And of thy children, that shall issue from thee [from Babylon, from, in this case, the Anti-Christ], whom thou shalt beget, they shall take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon [the law]" (Isaias 39:7):

... Enoch yelled, "Don't you see theter light! That means you got to wait!" A cop blew a whistle and a car blasted its horn and stopped short. Haze went across, keeping his eyes on the blind man in the middle of the block. The policeman kept on blowing his whistle. He crossed the street to where Haze was and stopped him. He had a thin face and oval-shaped yellow eyes [eunuch eyes].

"You know what that little thing handing up there is for?" he asked, pointing to the traffic light over the intersection.

"*I didn't see it,*" Haze said.

The policeman looked at him without saying anything. A few people stopped. He rolled his eyes at them. "Maybe you thought the red ones was for white folks and the green ones for niggers," he said.

"Yeah I thought that," Haze said. "Take your hand off me. . ."

"I'll look after him," Enoch Emery said, pushing in by the policeman (24).

But it is Asa Hawks who looks, in an ironic way, after Hazel, to see the divine light surrounding him. Hazel's first confrontation with Hawks occurs outside another of the city's profane temples, or altars, this one guarded by stone beasts. Consonant with his

nature, Enoch, stirred by his animal blood, climbs upon the beast's back, while Hawks prophesies the divine:

"... He followed me," [Hawks tells his daughter]. "Nobody would follow you. I can hear the urge for Jesus in his voice."

"Jesus," Haze muttered. "My Jesus." He sat down by the girl's leg and set his hand on the step next to her foot (27).

Sabbath, like other characters in the novel, mistakes Hazel's invocation of Christ for cursing. "'Listen at him cursing,' she said in a low tone. 'He never followed you, Papa'" (27). But Hawks hears through the irony to the truth: "... "'Listen boy,' he said, 'you can't run away from Jesus. Jesus is a fact'" (28). And, later, during the confrontation, Hawks tells, mystically, before the congregation of the damned leaves its temple, of Hazel's grandfather's prophesy: "'Some preacher has left his mark on you,' the blind man said with a kind of snicker. 'Did you follow for me to take it off or give you another one?'" (28). And with this the child finally sees: "'Listen here, there's nothing for your pain but Jesus,' the child said *suddenly* ... 'My Jesus,' Haze muttered" (28).

As Hawks and his daughter prepare to hand out their tracts to the congregation leaving the temple of the beast, another level of understanding of the narrative surfaces. Hawks calls Hazel to repent and to accept the grace of Christ, which Hazel has inherited through birth. "Haze ducked down a step but the blind man's hand shot out and clamped him around the arm. He said in a fast whisper, 'Repent! Go to the head of the stairs and renounce your sins and distribute these tracts to the people!' and he thrust a stack into Haze's hand" (29). But this contradicts Hazel's previous resolve, and thus Hazel answers Hawks ironically, "'I'm as clean as you are.' 'Fornication and blasphemy and what else?' the blind man said. 'They ain't nothing but words,' Haze said" (29). Here, Hazel finally distinguishes the crucial difference between Original and Actual Sin,

between the sin of being and of the sin which resolves, in the end, to turn away from and thus to face divine light, the pinpoint of light shining in sin:

"... If I was in sin I was in it before I ever committed any. There's no change come in me." He was trying to pry the fingers off from around his arm but the blind man kept wrapping them tighter. "I don't believe in sin," Haze said, "take your hands off me" (29).

Hazel has, according to Weil, affirmed the paradox inherent in redemption, and has implied the Augustine-Pelagius argument first set forth in my introduction (Weil 89). Though Hawks can, in his blindness, see Hazel's light, Hawks is in error in his belief that Hazel can effect his own salvation, i.e., that grace, if it comes, merely helps salvation along. And so, to us, Hazel's answer to Hawks comes as no surprise. The mystery of repentance says that the sinner, who sins because he must, cannot repent unless he is in a state of grace; but to be in a state of grace the sinner must resolve his will in a denial of sin, which, because of inherent sin, is impossible. As Weil has said, Christ's love comes of its own accord (Weil 80). This is, in other words, what Hazel is telling Hawks. Hazel's sin is, like his salvation, not of his doing. Repentance is, therefore, another of the human mockeries of grace, of divine love.

In this sense, Hazel's next remark loses some of its irony: "Nothing matters but that Jesus don't exist," Haze said, pulling his arm free" (29). This is, in fact, the truth. Existence describes being, duration. Repentance, or grace-inspired renunciation of sin, does not, because it cannot, exist in time. True grace enters time mysteriously, in much the same way the sky's unfolding mystery pervades Taulkinham at the beginning of the chapter. Therefore, since grace comes from Christ, and since Christ does not suffer duration but has his being outside time, it follows that Jesus does not exist, that grace

does not exist. Jesus is, therefore, not present in Taulkinham. There is no one, therefore, to whom Hazel can offer up his prayer of salvation. If that salvation is to come at all, it must come from without, from outside existence. Hazel's mission concretizes: Henceforth, he will become the prophet of the Church Without Jesus Christ, the zealot of the temple of the damned. Damned himself and knowing it, Hazel is compelled to go forth to tell the truth, i.e., that Jesus's crucifixion saves damned souls, but that the mystery of how or whose remains insoluble.

When we hear Hazel's first sermon from the top of the stairs, we understand it within this grace context. Hazel's message contradicts the Pelagian Hawks, who stands significantly at the bottom of the stairs, handing out the tracts which assert a self-willed repentance and salvation. Hazel shouts his mysterious, complex truth to the indifferent emerging congregation:

"Sweet Jesus Crucified," he said, "I want to tell you people something. Maybe you think you're not clean because you don't believe. Well you are clean, let me tell you that. Every one of you people are clean and let me tell you why if you think it's because of Jesus Christ Crucified you're wrong. I don't say he wasn't crucified but I say it *wasn't for you*. Listenhere, I'm a preacher myself and I preach the truth." The crowd was moving fast. It was like a large spread *raveling and the separate threads disappearing down the dark streets*. "Don't I know what *exists* and what don't?" he cried. "Don't I have eyes in my head? Am I a blind man?" "Listenhere," he called, "I'm going to preach a new church-- the church of truth without Jesus Christ Crucified. It won't

cost you nothing to join my church. It's not started yet but it's going to be." . . . The blind man was sitting on the bottom step. Enoch Emery was *standing on the lion's head*, trying to balance himself, and the child was standing near him, watching Haze. "I don't need Jesus," Haze said. "What do I need with Jesus? I got Leora Watts" (30-31).

Hazel's message refutes, though illogically, the fundamentalist/Pelagian idea of an individual's need for freedom from sin as the means for effecting repentance and salvation. To Hazel, this kind of willed faith effects nothing. Therefore, in saying he does not need Jesus, Hazel exemplifies himself as he who has been born damned but in whom Jesus's love works--if it works--to restore the divine glory of his soul. Needing Jesus is, in other words, to Hazel, absurd. Jesus does not exist; he simply is. A need implies duration. Grace does not operate within the realm of human knowledge, understanding, or belief.

Chapter Three

Mark of the Beast: Wise Blood

1

Wisdom implies a gaining of knowledge through experience, though experience suffers, here, no qualification. Therefore, the notion of experience must first suffer definition before the notion of wisdom is clear. Two kinds of experience operate in the Wise Blood, that of Enoch Emery and that of Hazel Motes, and each is answered chorically by Asa and Sabbath Hawks, with the issue of grace suffusing the action of experience. Enoch drifts, a victim of the radical freedom of the self. Hazel is also free. Within this dual notion of freedom, we must attempt to qualify, or to define, the two kinds of wisdom operating in the novel. We must, furthermore, attempt to define the metaphor of the blood of wisdom, the blood of experience.

"'I'm going thisaway too,' Enoch said in a sullen voice" (32). We have, in this rejoinder, Enoch's essential direction: it is parallel, but will never converge, with Hazel's direction. For Enoch is guided by lights, by sounds, by smells, by sensory and visceral stimulation. A Skinnerian psychologist would indict Enoch as a victim of afferent behavior, i.e., compelled by that which titillates the nerves. "On the left was a movie house where the electric bill was being changed. 'We hadn't got tied up with them hicks we could have gone to a show,' he muttered. He spoke along at Haze's elbow, talking in a half mumble, half whine. Once he caught at his sleeve to slow him down and Haze jerked it away" (32). Clearly, Hazel is leading; Enoch is following. The essential distinction, here, between the hero and the anti-hero is, however, more subtle than in how each embraces external motion. In his public denial of his need to be saved, for example, Hazel has embraced his humanness, his innate propensity to sin; Hazel has

moved inside himself, taken hold of his core of sin. In sin is salvation. But Enoch has somehow failed to move inwardly and make this denial of need. He has, thus, failed to affirm the paradox of sin and salvation. In not affirming a not-need to have Christ present, Enoch denies the core of sin in himself; he is, therefore, exactly as he seems. Enoch exists wholly within a radical freedom of no-sin and no-salvation, the ironic answer to Hazel's initial wish: to be free from sin is to be free of Christ. "I went to thisyer Rodemill Boys' Bible Academy for four weeks. Thisyer woman that traded me from my daddy she sent me. She was a Welfare woman. Jesus, four weeks and I thought I was going to be sanctified crazy" (23). Neither damned nor saved, Enoch is thus more animal than human. On this single-dimensional level, Enoch has wise blood, the blood of animal instinct.

He even works at the zoo, attending the creatures he seems to understand. "I work at the city zoo. I guard the gate . . ." (32). Movie houses, sales, music, traffic lights all compel Enoch's blood to wisdom, which is an afferent stimulation of the senses. Experience is, to Enoch, behavioral wisdom: the Taulkinham carnival elicits predictable behavior from a sophisticated beast.

Hazel, on the other hand, entirely contradicts this Skinnerian notion. Full of wills, of contradictions, guided by these contradictions, by the spirit which threatens to resolve the contradictions, Hazel sees, in Enoch, in his sudden afferent gloom, the pure beast, bereft of spirit: "Haze looked at him and saw he was crying, his face seamed and wet and *purple-pink* color" (32). Acknowledging the irony of this new parallelism, Enoch says, "You the first familer face I seen in two months. I seen you sommers before. I know I seen you sommers before" (32). The apocaiyptic mark of the beast is, therefore, on Enoch--both in the way he appears to Hazel and in the valence of his name: "Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For

it is the number of a man: and the number of him is six hundred sixty-six" (The Apocalypse 13:18). Hazel's wisdom is, thus, apocalyptic wisdom, and as such, brings to the balance of the narrative the experience got in the mystery of the wisdom of sin:

"Jesus died to redeem you," [Haze's mother said].

"I never ast him," he muttered.

... The next day he took his shoes in secret [for the "nameless unplaced guilt that was in him"] out into the woods [the locus of redemption]. He didn't wear them except for *revivals*, and in the winter. He took them out of the *box* and filled the bottoms of them with stones and small rocks and then he put them on. He laced them up tight and walked in them through the woods for what he knew to be a mile, until he came to a creek, and then he sat down and took them off and eased his feet in the wet sand. He thought, that ought to satisfy Him. *Nothing happened*. If a stone had fallen he would have taken it as a sign. After a while he drew his feet out of the sand and let them dry, and then he put the shoes on again with the rocks still in them and he walked a half-mile back before he took them off (36).

Hazel's wisdom, derived from an experience of the cost of faith, distinguishes itself in another way from Enoch's precariously thin animal experience, which itself never suffers a contradiction. Enoch's wisdom is analogous to a big nerve always throbbing. The above passage splits into two distinct halves, the experience-half and the faith-half. Believing he can invoke redemption through catharsis, Hazel loads his shoes with purgative stones, a fundamental tenet of Hazel's first belief system. But when nothing

enters nature, when no signal is given that this act of will is working, Hazel does not, as he might, deny the presence of Christ; he allows the contradiction to exist. As St. Teresa of Avila would imply, Hazel's faith is thus established in contradiction. (St. Teresa of Avila 72-94). In this context, in this mystery of faith, the second part of the narrative establishes Hazel's wisdom, gives us the reason for his journey to do some "things he has never done before." Despite silence, Hazel puts his shoes back on, *something he has never done before*. Hazel, thus, embraces an unneed, a bizarre humility, which, on its face, in its implied psychological masochism, seems solipsistic. But because we are told of the "nameless unplaced guilt within him," we assume that Hazel embraces his fallen humanity and its concomitant destiny, which, like the inevitable sin of Adam and Eve before him, compels Hazel to acknowledge ineluctable suffering all the days of his life. Nothing for Hazel will ever enter history to ameliorate this suffering. Hazel thus suffers for the sake of suffering; because he must.

Enoch, on the other hand, must, at any cost, avoid suffering, avoid spiritual wisdom. "I heard about where there's a house where we could have us some fun. I could pay you back next week" (32). Enoch's only need is to be tantalized and re-tantalized. "People ain't friendly here. You ain't from here but you ain't friendly neither" (32). In the Babylon of his animal self, Enoch knows what he is doing, because, in his blood, afferent impulses act reflexively to affirm his nature. Hazel, however, does not, cannot, react to these afferent stimuli. In Hazel, the apocalyptic vulgarity of self-made Babylon does not affirm his nature. Wisdom is, for Enoch, a kind of somatic affirmation of existence. For Hazel, wisdom cancels this need. Wise blood is, thus, in Hazel, a metaphor, where, in Enoch, it is a fact. Wise blood is, for Hazel, the blood of Christ, the blood of suffering for its own sake, which does not suffuse its apostle in time but in sin.

It is, therefore, the blood of Christ, the blood of wisdom without wisdom, which

compels Hazel to start his Church Without Christ, and to preach, as did his grandfather before him, from the hood of a car-cathedral. Hazel's formal ordination begins on another numinous day, on an afternoon of parallel realities, under a sky which appears to be both that which is and that which might be. As Hazel decides to buy a cheap car, the sky, now changed, looks on: "It was a wet glary day. The sky was like a piece of tin polished silver with a dark sour-looking sun on one corner of it" (37). This metaphor harkens back to the tin box used in the portentous potato-peeling demonstration, and concretely demonstrates the unity of Hazel's mission, which is to articulate, for himself and others, the distance of man from Christ (portended metaphorically in the cathartic digression above) and therefore to signify the terrible importance of Christ's crucifixion passion in Luke, which is, for Hazel, the keystone of his ironic faith. To Sabbath Hawks, Hazel admits, "I believe in a new kind of Jesus . . . one that can't *waste his blood redeeming people with it, because he's all man and ain't got any God in him*" (69). The fallen world into which Hazel is being ordained as Christ's apostle, begins, now, as it did for Peter and for Saul, to assume its steely coldness.

And once on the used-car lot, Hazel meets a child, who curses. It is not, however, ordinary invective; it is, again, the child's Dantean recognition of a living soul (Hazel, like Virgil, leads the living Dante) entering a dead hell; it is a cry of pain but not of regret for having inherited sin. "'Jesus on the cross,' the boy said, 'Christ nailed'" (38). While Hazel bargains with the boy's father for the car which will become his cathedral, the damned prophet-boy continues shouting his banal invectives from the damned distance of Taulkinham's permanent Stygian darkness: "All the time he kept saying, 'Sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus'" (41). The boy thus mocks the significance of the crucifixion, as, say, in the third circle of Hell, Plutus mocks God's love (Dante 65-69). The Enoch-tradition of denying the relevance of Christ's

crucifixion is addressed again, but this time carried to the extreme of supplanting the crucifixion passion with hooting curses. But unlike Dante's damned, many of whom shout back curses to their damning God, and thus to their damning selves, these iniquitous citizens have no realization of where they are or of who they are. Like Enoch, they operate like animals, though on a still-lower level. A metallic darkness surrounds them, yet, in their bestial minds, they do not see it. There is nothing in darkness to elicit behavior--viscious or benign.

There is, however, in the post-lot darkness, something which Hazel can see, something which lies, like the silver sky earlier in the novel, within that which is apparent:

The highway was ragged with filling stations and trailer camps and roadhouses. After a while there were stretches where red gulleys dropped off on either side of the road and behind them there were patches of field but-toned together with *666 posts*. The sky leaked over all of it and then it began to *leak into the car*. The head of a string of pigs appeared snout-up over the ditch and he had to screech to a stop and watch the rear of the last pig disappear shaking into the ditch on the other side. . . (41).

Like the amorphous white shape in the sleeping berth, like the images of Christ which escape their numinous parallel lines and enter, for Hazel only, into the lines of tangible sight, the sky now enters Hazel's church-car. But as the narrative moves on, this line of tangible sight becomes suffused, for the first time in the novel, with language. This language is, however, like the layers of reality elsewhere in the story, divided between that which is commonly accepted and that which only Hazel can see and understand.

Within the sign on the rock, there is another sign, which, cryptically, becomes Hazel's static Virgil. It is as if only Hazel can read and understand *the lines within the lines*:

The road turned and went down hill and a high
embankment appeared on one side with pines standing
on it, facing a gray boulder that jutted out of the opposite
gully wall. White letters on the boulder said, WOE TO THE
BLASPHEMER AND WHOREMONGER! WILL HELL SWALLOW
YOU UP? . . . Haze's car was stopped and his eyes were
turned toward the two words at the bottom of the sign.

They said in small letters, "Jesus Saves" (42).

To the itinerant soul he meets here, Hazel repeats what he said to Asa Hawks, reiterates his truth of man and sin and grace: "'There's no person a whoremonger, who wasn't something worse first,' Haze said. 'That's not the sin, nor blasphemy. The sin came before them'" (43). Moreover, Hazel tells the man that faith, the kind of faith Asa and Sabbath Hawks hawk on the steps of the Lion temple, is a trick, a ruse designed to order and to predict behavior. Religion is, to Hazel, another of the afferent stimuli built to modify, in some way, undesirable behavior: "'Jesus is a trick on niggers,' Haze said" (43). In his exaggerated final statement, characteristic of the way he addresses the issues at hand, Hazel recalls his first realization of the trick of faith, recalls the afternoon when no-Jesus entered time to cleanse a boy-Hazel of his sins; Hazel remembers implicitly his dreams of no-resurrection. Thus, Hazel recounts his message: The sin of man is man. Man's doing, it is indigenous and cannot, through any act of his will, be erased. Belief cannot do it. Religion cannot do it. Works cannot do it. Fallen and damned, this itinerant soul responds in the tradition of those on the outer circles of this apocalyptic wilderness: "'Will you get your goddam outhouse off the

middle of the road?' he said" (43). Like Enoch, this motorist merely responds, or reacts, to an annoyance, like a buffalo to biting flies. He has neither heard Hazel nor seen the warning painted "in white letters" on the rock.

2

That which Hazel has come to Taulkinham to do begins, ironically, in Enoch's wise blood, in the blood of base instinct. Enoch "knows" in his blood as Hazel knows in his that the Messiah, the Christ, will pass through time a second time: "That morning Enoch Emery knew when he woke up that today the person he could show it to was going to come. He knew by his blood. He had wise blood like his daddy" (44). Hazel, too, senses that, in or around Enoch, this revelatory something resides. "Haze's look was the more distant; another plan was forming in his mind. 'Which direction is the zoo in?' he asked. . . I got to see a boy that works in it. . . ." (43). Hazel must see into Asa Hawks's blindness, the way he sees into Enoch's bestiality. Hazel must know: Is Hawks saved? If he can get Hawks's dark glasses, Hazel will be able to see into and understand something of the mystery of what appears to be a grace-inspired mutilation. (Recall the streaked scars on Hawks's face, those which give Hawks the appearance of a "grinning mandrill.") Two ideas, two parallel realities again coexist: Enoch Emery feels in his wisdom the propinquity of the prophet, the one to whom he will show the Messiah, the one from whom Enoch will learn the meaning of animal grace. Enoch has seen something in the heart of the city, embalmed in some kind of hermetically sealed glass case. Enoch has seen something which, though a typewritten card above it explains the mystery fully to anyone who can read it, remains inscrutable; something which only the blood can understand and which Enoch's unsaved blood cannot articulate. Enoch has established "himself at the *heart* of it," knowing "in his blood . . . a terrible knowledge like a big

nerve growing inside him" (45). Knowing Enoch knows the way to Hawks, thus perhaps to the mystery of salvation, Hazel tracks Enoch to the heart of the city. Again, in r .phor, Enoch and Hazel walk side-by-side, within parallel yet wholly contradicting realities. "King Jesus!" Enoch shouts when Haze arrives in the heart of the city (48).

But Enoch and Hazel take the long way around. And on this trip to Enoch's mysterious Messiah, we learn more of Hazel's light, of Enoch's bestial darkness, and of the pervasive darkness of the apocalyptic city. A waitress distinguishes for us, again, the essential difference between Hazel and Enoch. We listen; we hear the cabbie's warning: "'What you come in here with a son of a bitch like that for?' she shouted. . . A nice quiet boy like you to come in here with a *son of a bitch*'" (51). For corroboration of the literalness of the waitress's declaration, we need only listen again to what Enoch calls himself when he sees Hazel earlier in the novel. "'Well, I'll be dog,' Enoch said. 'Well, I'll be dog'" (46). And "Enoch was thinking about the animals" (51). Enoch cannot keep his mind from these creatures, who both frighten and inspire him: "They had to go next to see the animals. He hated them; just thinking about them made his face turn a chocolate *purple* . . ." (51). But the waitress continues her diatribe:

"Yes sir," she said, "there ain't anything sweeter than a clean boy. God for my witness. And I know a clean one when I see him and I know a son of a bitch when I see him and there's a heap of difference and that pus-marked *bastard* zlurping through that straw is a *goddamned son of a bitch* and you a clean boy had better mind how you keep him company. I know a clean boy when I see one" (51).

Hazel responds with characteristic irony: "'I AM clean,' he said again, without any expression on his face or in his voice, just looking at the woman as if he were looking at

a *wall*. 'If Jesus existed, I wouldn't be clean,' he said" (52). Enoch, of course, misses this dialogue, wants Hazel to come with him to the blood-center of the damned city.

However, the zoo is first. And, to the cages of birds, they go. For, birds are, here, a metaphor for flight, and thus connote trees, and therefore, to Hazel, recall the two key images of flight so far raised: The sun racing over the trees at the beginning of the novel; the shabby figure racing past the trees in Hazel's dream. Hazel stops at a cage, transfixed, staring at an image of Jesus. Enoch reacts by cursing: "'Oh Jesus,' Enoch groaned. He stood and waved his arms wildly [mocking flight] and shouted, 'Come on!' but Haze didn't move from where he was looking into the cage" (54). Concerned that Hazel will not see his Messiah, Enoch runs back, stares through the bars, sees nothing. "'It's empty!' he shouted . . ." He stood there, sweating and *purple* " (54). But in the darkness in a place not within Enoch's capacity to see, Hazel sees the image of redemptive wisdom, a metaphor for the wisdom of Christ's salvific blood: "And then he saw it wasn't empty. Over in one corner on the floor of the cage, there was an eye. The eye was in the middle of something that looked like a piece of mop sitting on an old rag. . . It was looking directly at Hazel Motes. . . 'I AM clean,' Haze said to the eye. . ." The eye shut softly and the owl turned its face to the *wall*" (54). The eye, the owl, the metaphoric redeemptor, beckons Hazel to follow into darkness, into that which lies beyond time, beyond reason, beyond religion. The metaphor of the wall now takes hold, speaks to Hazel in silent mystery of that which lies within.

But because this is a novel of parallel realities, of one ironically explaining the significance of the other, Hazel must first see, with the eyes in his head, Enoch's messiah-under-glass. To a large, gray building, which resembles in many ways the Lion temple earlier in the novel, a terrified Enoch leads Hazel to the find. Hazel will serve as Enoch's prophet of the profane:

"... Muvseevum," he said. The strange word made him shiver. That was the first time he had ever said it aloud. A piece of gray building was showing where he pointed. It grew larger as they went down the hill, then as they came to the end of the *wood* and stepped out on the gravel driveway, it seemed to shrink suddenly. It was round and soot-colored. There were columns at the front of it and in between each column there was an *eyeless* stone woman holding a pot on her head. A concrete band was over the columns and the letters, MVSEVM, were cut into it. Enoch was afraid to pronounce the word again" (55).

We should know where Enoch and Hazel are headed, where this will end. A museum is a kind of temple in which artifacts demonstrate, tangibly, past glories. A visitor need not have faith in history to visit this kind of temple: evidence abounds; in the temple of the museum, the visitor can find three-dimensional proof for whatever he or she has come to examine and to corroborate. In this case, Enoch is leading Hazel to the some kind of Christ, or to a figure he thinks, in his blood, is the Savior of Mankind. And because the evidence holds only three dimensions, Enoch knows that Hazel will see what *he* sees. It is analogous to looking at a bird, a being existing in time, occupying space. As we have seen, though, Hazel has eyes which go beyond the dimensions of time and space, which see past that which merely is.

In this sense, the museum, a place of corroborating evidence, is analogous to a fundamentalist reading of Scripture, whose museum-artifact language gives up the history of Jesus. We might say, in other words, that the tiny sign on the damning rock above would, to a fundamentalist, say, Jesus Lives! The scriptural fundamentalist

believes, because he can hold the evidence in his/her hand, that Scripture is tangible proof of the history of Christ's *existence* ; and, therefore believes that, since physical proof exists, salvation must exist. Enoch sees the museum in much the same way the fundamentalist sees the New Testament, as hands-on proof of redemption. Seeing is believing. It is, however, how the believer sees, i.e., with which eyes, that is important. And so Hazel and Enoch see the same thing differently:

All he could tell was that Hazel Mote's eyes were on the shrunken man. *He was bent forward so that his face was reflected on the glass top of the case. The reflection was pale and the eyes were like two clean bullet holes.* Enoch waited, rigid. . . Then he knew that whatever was expected of him was only just beginning (56-7).

On his own, Haze finds Hawks. Yet before their crucial conversation in Hawks's room, and compelled by the previous image of his own eyes (harkening back to the train ride with Mrs. Hitchcock), which see nothing but his own wounded reflection, Hazel sets out to deliver his message, to establish his mission. To a crowd, Hazel shouts, "'Where has the blood you think you been redeemed by touched you?'" (58). A rhetorical question, Hazel answers it himself: "'I'm going to preach there was no Fall because there was nothing to fall from and no Redemption because there was no Fall and no Judgment because there wasn't the first two. Nothing matters but that Jesus don't exist'" (59). Because no evidence exists, Hazel's logic is, here, irrefutable. By his created nature, man simply cannot not sin, and thus cannot fall. If man cannot fall, then man cannot, by his own will, compel his own salvation. (The Fall is, of course, based upon the myth that Eve acted on her own volition, that Adam, seeing Eve's sin of disobedience, acted as well on his). The sin came with the man. Therefore, the kind of religious wisdom that

teaches a self-inspired personal redemption is a "trick on niggers," or on anyone else who believes that corroborative evidence exists to prove Pelagius was right, i.e., that Hawks's repentance theology affirms the nature of grace. Hazel is, thus, again, answering Hawks's fundamentalist materialism, calling into radical question the idea that by joining a church--a place in which artifacts reveal a tangible promise--man can cause Christ to come: "My church is the Church Without Christ, lady," he said. "If there's no Christ, there's no reason to have a set place to do it in" (59).

Sabbath Hawks reenters, now, chorically, to offer her reflection on that which she sees in Hazel's eyes, and thus to give cause for the reader's reflection on the crucial scene in which Hazel saw his blank-dark reflection in the mummy's case: "I like his eyes," she observed. "They don't look like they see what he's looking at but they keep on looking" (61). The girl is reminding us not to forget Hazel's wounded reflection, which, now, manifests itself, ironically, in the pseudo-blindness of Asa Hawks, in the spiritual dark-night blindness which, at the end of the novel, Hazel finally acquires, and in which Hazel can finally see, clearly, that which he has before seen obscurely.

Chapter Four

Revelation

1

Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye
your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them
under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you. Ask,
and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock, and
it shall be opened for you (Matthew 6:7).

Hazel has driven his car-cathedral in search of Asa Hawks and has found him living with his daughter in a bottom-floor room in an old boarding house on the edge of the city. To discover that which lies inside and behind the facade of dark glasses, to know, finally, why he has come to Taulkinham, Hazel rents a room above the two evangelists. The rooming house, with Hawks in it, will establish the novel's two final parallels: The issue of seeing will culminate in Hazel's mutilation; Hazel's spiritual sister, the landlady, Mrs. Flood, will descry for us the convergence, or in Teilhard's words, the omega point, of the two parallel pinpoints of light within Hazel's blank darkness (Teilhard de Chardin 22). Enoch Emery, Sabbath and Asa Hawks will, in their own ways, lead Hazel to the truth he has been following throughout the novel. Onnie Jay Holy will introduce Hazel's consumptive, completely corrupted double, whom Hazel will murder as a blasphemer, but in whom Hazel will find, without knowing he has found it, the last language, which is the mercy of Christ.

Still, on his way to oblivion, things are not working the way Hazel thought they might: "Nothing was working the way Haze had expected it to. He had spent every evening preaching, but the membership of the Church Without Christ was still only one

person: himself" (83). Ironically, Haze wants to impress Hawks with a no-church that works, with unapostles; for Hazel still has not lifted the false veil of faith, Hawks's glasses, and therefore has not seen this part of the final truth. "He had wanted to have a large following quickly to impress the blind man with his powers, but no one had followed him" (83). Because he does not believe in a faith that preaches prayer as a medium of salvation, Hazel does not pray for so-called miracles: "If Haze had believed in praying, he would have prayed for a disciple, but as it was all he could do was worry about it a lot" (83). Finally, the unapostle appears:

... The man was plumpish, and he had curly blond hair that was cut with showy sideburns. He wore a black suit with a silver stripe in it and a wide-brimmed white hat pushed onto the back of his head, and he had on tight-fitting black pointed shoes and no socks. He looked like an ex-preacher turned cowboy, or an ex-cowboy turned mortician. He was not handsome, but under his smile, there was an honest look that fitted into his face like a set of false teeth (83).

We have, here, in all its garrish falseness, the penultimate parody of Hazel's attitude, Onnie Jay Holy, the man who will, literally, lead Hazel to the edge of revelation, or to an epiphany which precipitates the novel's final irony. Ostensibly, Holy has come to bottle and sell Hazel's irrefutable no-redemption theology. And his marketing position is simple: by preaching an elaborate Enoch-Emery wisdom, thus appealing to the wise-creature blood in the citizens of Taulkinham, Holy hopes to create a new body of a new Christ out of the amorphous body of Taulkinham citizens. This new-Jesus body could be called, for marketing purposes, the Friendship Body. In friendship is salvation:

"Why, friends," Onnie Jay Holy said, "not to have a

friend in the world is just about the most miserable and lonesome thing that can happen to a man or woman! And that's the way it was with me. [Recall that Enoch sees in Hazel the comfort of a friend.] I was ready to hang myself or to despair completely. Not even my own dear mother loved me, and it wasn't because I wasn't sweet inside, it was because I never known how to make the natural sweetness inside me show" (85).

The complete despair to which Holy alludes is the radical despair one faces in one's inherited potential for evil. Holy implies that in drinking the Lethean water of forgetfulness, in losing the memory of the human penchant for evil and thus for salvation, salvation of a kind can occur. It is the salvation of the loss of the self in the tepid waters of the crowd. Holy thus mocks Hazel's radical redemption theology, which is founded upon the resolution of wills when the self faces, alone and in despair, that which alienates that self from Christ, from sin, and which is the despair engendered by the inevitable blasphemy of being human and of denying God through Christ:

"'Blasphemy is the way to the truth,' [Haze] said, 'and there's no other way whether you understand it or not!'" (86). Like Hawks, in the typically banal way of evil, Holy is selling a new brand of bottled water--from the river Lethe:

"Why yonder is a little babe," he said, "a little bundle of helpless sweetness. Why I know you people aren't going to let that little thing grow up and have all his sweetness pushed inside him when it could be on the outside to win friends and make him loved. That's why I want ever' one of you people to join the Holy Church of Christ Without Christ.

It'll cost you each a dollar but what is a dollar? A few dimes.
Not too much to pay to unlock that little rose of sweetness
inside you!"

"Listen!" Haze shouted. "It don't cost you any money
to know the truth! You can't know it for money!" (87).

Haze and Holy subsequently part in violent disagreement, and Haze abuses Holy, who turns out to be Hoover Shoats, a man with the last name of a young pig, a nothing-beast from nowhere: "Haze opened the door enough to be able to slam it. Hoover Shoats got his head out the way but not his thumb. A howl arose that would have rended almost any heart. Haze opened the door and released the thumb and then slammed the door again" (91). Haze drives back to Mrs. Flood's boarding house, where he will lift the veil of Asa Hawks's spiritual miracles, of what repentance means:

After a while when he had tried the wire five or
six different ways, there was a slight click in the lock.
He stood up, trembling, and opened the door. His breath
came short and his heart was palpitating as if he had
run all the way here from a great distance. He stood just
inside the room until his eyes got accustomed to the dark-
ness and then he moved slowly over to the iron bed and
stood there. Hawks was lying across it. His *head was
hanging over the edge*. Haze squatted down by him and
struck a match close to the face and he opened his eyes.
*The two sets of eyes looked at each other as long as the
match lasted; Haze's expression seemed to open onto a
deeper blankness and reflect something and then close*

again.

"Now you can get out," Hawks said in a short thick voice, "now you can leave me alone," and he made a jab at the face over him without touching it. It moved back expressionless under the white hat, and was gone in a second (92).

In Hawks's unblindness, Hazel sees the truth of Hawks's mission: The world abhors truth: Therefore, to survive on the parallels of Jesus and unJesus, Hawks has been preaching the cynical lie of redemption. Hazel realizes, though, without articulation, that to stay with and to survive on Jesus, the Jesus message must be tailored to fit. It must promise not salvation, but that which Holy has promised, that which the potato-peeling priest has promised, that which all the lights on the streets of the damned city have promised: Forgetfulness of the self, of the soul. This pandering, Hazel knows, contradicts Christ's message, which, paraphrased, says: A man cannot serve two masters, cannot serve both man and God. Stunned, and on the heels of the Onnie Jay Holy fiasco, Hazel quietly realizes the magnitude and the immutability of the truth he faces: People want to abjure their contradictory selves, their freedom to sin, for bread and for movies and for talk of friends, for a Lethean forgetfulness. Hazel now knows what the ultimate Christian cynic, Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor, knows:

Is human nature such that it can reject a miracle when confronted with the most frightening choices, the most heartbreaking dilemmas, and remain facing them with nothing but freedom of choice? . . . Look around and judge for yourself. Fifteen centuries have passed. Examine them. Whom have you raised up to Yourself? I swear that

man is weaker and viler than you thought! How could he possibly do what you did? By paying him such respect, you acted as if you lacked compassion for him, because you demanded too much of him--and that from you, who love him more than yourself! . . . Man is weak and despicable. . . . You of his own free will, fascinated and captivated by you. In place of the clear and rigid ancient law, you made man decide about good and evil for himself, with no other guidance than your example (Dostoevski 307-08).

For a few seconds, in the surrounding darkness, Hazel sees, in the fragile light, this truth, this lambent reality, which then, because it must, returns to darkness. In Hawks's lie, Hazel has found the truth, has affirmed the contradiction inherent in man, that in blasphemy lies truth. Like the owl's soft wink earlier in the novel, Hawks's cynical and ironic truth flickers in the darkness then goes out. Hazel understands the meaning of the wall he has faced. And now he is upon it.

Back on the street, Hazel faces the blasphemer, an itinerant cowboy working for Holy, a sad man whose ineffectuality cannot contradict, cannot mock, Hazel Motes. Nevertheless, Hazel sees in this man a lie which must be extinguished like the weak flame of the match in Hawks's room. Hazel is again preaching another of his irrefutable arguments:

"Nothing outside you can give you any place," he said. "You needn't to look at the sky because it's not going to open up and show no place behind it. You needn't to search for any hole in the ground to look through into somewhere else. You can't go neither forwards nor

backwards into your daddy's time nor your children's
if you have them. *In yourself right now is all the place
you've got.* If there was any Fall, look there, if there was any
Redemption, look there, and if there was any Judgment, look there,
because they all three will have to be in your time and
your body and where in your time and your body can
they be?

"Where in your time and your body has Jesus
redeemed you?" he cried. "Show me where because I
don't see the place. If there was a place where Jesus
had redeemed you that would be the place for you to
be, but which of you can find it?" (93).

Down the street from Hazel's church, Hoover Shoats introduces the blasphemer, his
True Prophet, this thin and stammering parrot named Solace Layfield, who cannot, as
Hawks did before him, distinguish truth from lies and would not care to if he could. The
poor man reaches a pitch of enthusiasm and spits out a white fluid at the end:

... "Help yourself to salvation in the Holy Church of
Christ Without Christ!" He called it over again in exactly
the same tone of voice, but faster. Then he began to
cough. He had a loud consumptive cough that started
somewhere deep in him and finished with a long wheeze.

He expectorated a white fluid at the end of it (94).

Layfield's sickness indicates a complete corruption, a consumptive annihilation of any and
all human contradictions of will. In this way, Layfield is, to Hazel, the ultimate
blasphemer. But it is with Layfield's last language that Hazel finds fault: Layfield uses

Christ's name in vain, to establish the Church Without Christ. Hazel hears this as blasphemy because of its final contradiction: "Help yourself..." Layfield's statement is like Layfield himself: festering in a metaphoric consumptive mucous, bereft of anything human. A blight, Hazel must stamp him out.

By murdering Solace Layfield, Hazel will commit before Christ the ultimate blasphemy. Hazel, who has been a whoremonger, will now become a murderer:

You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt
love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you,
Love your enemies: do good to them that persecute you
and calumniate you: That you may be the children of
your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise
upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the
unjust (Matthew 5:43-45).

We harken back to the warning on the rock, and we wait to see if Hazel's unneed will save him, whether Hazel will be saved by a grace which contradicts even the above-passage from Matthew, contradicts it in Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sin.

For, Hazel kills in hatred, the high heresy of this absolute divine love:

The Prophet began to run in earnest [from Hazel's church-car]. He tore off his shirt and unbuckled his belt and ran out of his trousers. He began grabbing for his feet as if he would take off his shoes too, but before he could get at them, the Essex knocked him flat and ran over him. Haze drove about twenty feet and stopped the car and then began to back it. He backed it over the body and then stopped and got out.

The Essex stood half over the other Prophet *as if* it were pleased to guard what it had finally brought down. The man didn't look so much like Haze, lying on the ground on his face without his hat or suit on. A lot of blood was coming out of him and forming a puddle around his head. . . "Two things I can't stand," Haze said, "--a man that ain't true and one that mocks what is. You shouldn't ever have tampered with me if you didn't want what you got. . .

"... Jesus. . ." the man said.

"Shut up like I told you to now," Haze said.

"Jesus hep me," the man wheezed.

Haze gave him a hard slap on the back and he was quiet (115).

In the violence of Hazel's murder of Solace Layfield, Jesus enters time: "For where there are two or three gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Reading the final four lines of dialogue, we sense that Layfield's prayer is mysteriously answered. It is Hazel who answers, in this place of death and corruption, the last language of mercy. In killing Layfield, in his blasphemy of hatred, Hazel has found mercy, or that which contradicts, even quells, his hate. Through the divine mystery of place, Hazel ends Layfield's suffering. Ironically, Hazel has answered Christ in Matthew, has found divine love in death.

But Enoch and Sabbath Hawks have not fully played out their roles. Enoch returns to the museum, steals the steely little man, wraps him in swaddling clothes, and delivers

him to Sabbath Hawks, who cherishes the mock Christchild *as if* he were her own:

By the time he reached Sabbath Hawks's house, he was soaked through and so was his bundle. He held it in a fierce grip but all he wanted was to get rid of it and never see it again. Haze's landlady was out on the porch, looking distrustfully into the storm. . .

"This is for him, it ain't for you," Enoch said, handing her the wet bundle. "A friend of his give it to me to give to him. I don't know what's in it."

. . . Two days out of the glass had not improved the new Jesus's condition. One side of his face had been partly mashed in and on the other side, his eyelid had split and pale dust was seeping out of it. . . She might have sat there for ten minutes, without a thought, held by whatever it was that was familiar about him. She had never known anyone who looked like him before, *but there was something in him of everyone she had ever known, as if they had all been rolled into one person and killed and shrunk and dried* (104).

The shrunken man, a metaphor for the mysterious resurrection of the universally-damned in Taulkinham, comes to Sabbath not as a result of copulation but as some kind of profanely divine gift, a perverse and ironic exaggeration of the immaculate conception. "'Who's your momma and daddy?' she asked." The question is rhetorical, for Sabbath knows in her blood who the new Jesus is, what he represents: "An answer came into her mind [blood] at once and she let out a short little *bark* and sat grinning, with a pleased expression in her eyes" (104-05).

Returning to the room, she shows Hazel, who destroys the mummy by smashing him to a pulp against the wall. "The hand that had been arrested in the air moved forward and plucked at the squinting face but without touching it; it reached again, slowly, and plucked at nothing and then it lunged and snatched the shriveled body and threw it against the wall. The head popped and the trash inside sprayed out in a little cloud of dust" (106). To Hazel, the mummy personifies the truth of Hawks's mission; he therefore hesitates in mid-air, between distances, standing on one line and watching the reality unfold on a parallel line across the chasm of this lie. He could not destroy Hawks, who knew the terrible truth. But this shriveled mockery of the human spirit, of human freedom, of truth, Hazel must obliterate.

Here, Hazel's final outward violence will begin reaching back inside. Subsequently, Haze will stop committing violence to that which is without, will stop preaching his violent syllogisms, will commit no more murders, will cease fornication. In the final mystery of his revelation, Hazel will commit violence upon himself. This passage marks Hazel's final journey home, to the place he has never been before:

He turned and raised his arm in a viscious gesture, almost losing his balance in the door. Drops of rain water were splattered over . . . on his red face and here and there they hung in sparkling from the brim of his hat. "I don't want nothing but the truth!" he shouted, "and what you see is the truth and I've seen it" (107).

In his Essex Cathedral, Hazel leaves Taulkinham, drives on to the highway, where, again, the numinous crowds him, compels his attention. For in killing Solace Layfield,

Hazel has finally let Jesus in: "Shacks and filling stations and road camps and 666 signs passed him, and deserted barns with CCC snuff ads peeling across them, and even a sign that said, 'Jesus Died for YOU,' which he saw and deliberately did not read" (117). Though he has mysteriously shown a dying Solace Layfield the mercy of Christ, has preached what has so far seemed to be the Augustinian truth of divine grace, has destroyed all remnants of the heresy of divine birth, Hazel has not yet faced that which has compelled him forward since the train ride at the beginning of the novel. Now, again, Hazel turns away.

The novel's last irony occurs when a patrolman stops Hazel on the empty highway. Outside the law, Hazel answers the patrolman with characteristic truculence and impatience. This patrolman calls Hazel to accountability, to that which lies just beyond the ridge. The patrolman is the ironic angel who pushes Hazel into his final darkness:

"I wasn't speeding," Haze said.

"No," the patrolman agreed, "you wasn't."

"I was on the right side of the road."

"Yes you was, that's right," the cop said.

"What you want with me?"

"I just don't like your face," the patrolman said.

"Where's your license?"

"I don't like your face either," Haze said, "and I don't have a license."

"Well," the patrolman said in a kindly voice, "I don't reckon *you* need one.

... "would you mind driving your car up to the top of the next hill? I want you to see the view from there,

puttiest view you ever did see."

... Haze turned it *facing the embankment*.

... Haze got out and glanced at the view.

... The patrolman got behind the Essex and pushed
it over the embankment. . .

Haze stood for a few minutes, looking over at the scene.

*His face seemed to reflect the entire distance across the
clearing and on beyond, the entire distance that extended
from his eyes to the blank gray sky that went on, depth after
depth, into space* (118).

On the train, Hazel's face reflected the distance between the sun and the track, reflected, inarticulately, the parallel lines of the here-and-now and the eternal then. We watched Mrs. Hitchcock awkwardly reveal this to us. Hazel turned away from the metaphor of Jesus; went to bed.

In bed, Hazel faced the metaphor again in a dream. He faced it again in the whiteness of the porter's jacket. In Taulkinham, Hazel renounced Jesus entirely, declaring Christ's non-existence, which is essentially, though ironically, true. The metaphor exists only for those who see it, for those who have the gift to translate it from what it is, in the here-and-now, to what it is in the eternal then. From violence to violence, from fornication to murder, Hazel built his argument against the existence of Christ, an argument of irrefutable truth. Now, however, and with Christ in time, he whom God sees faces his god, his Christ. The line of the eternal then extends from "his eyes," as it always has, to the "blank gray sky that went on, depth after depth, into space." The motes in Hazel's head reflect the anti-reality of the existence of Christ, of the existence of God. The son and the father have entered time through the murder of Solace Layfield.

In facing them in the metaphor of the sky, Hazel faces his self-loathing, his sin, in humanness.

With a sack of quicklime, Hazel returns to Mrs. Flood's. "His landlady was sitting on the porch, rocking a cat. 'What you going to do with that, Mr. Motes?' she asked. 'Blind myself,' he said and went on in the house" (119). A curious creature, Mrs. Flood follows Hazel's declaration with some curious remarks. In these remarks, she establishes the significance of Hazel's self-mutilation:

The landlady sat there for a while longer. She was not a woman who felt more violence in one word than in another; she took every word at its face value but all the faces were the same. Still, instead of blinding herself, if she had felt that bad, she would have killed herself and she wondered why anybody wouldn't do that. . . Perhaps Mr. Motes was only being ugly, for what possible reason could a person have for wanting to destroy their sight? A woman like her, who was so clear-sighted, could never stand to be blind. If she had to be blind she would rather be dead. It occurred to her suddenly that when she was dead she would be blind too. She stared in front of her intensely, facing this for the first time. She recalled the phrase, "eternal death," that preachers used, but she cleared it out of her mind immediately. . . She was not religious or morbid, for which every day she thanked her stars. She would credit a person who had that *streak* with anything, though, and Mr. Motes had it or he wouldn't be a preacher.

He might put lime in his eyes and she wouldn't doubt it a bit,
because they were all, if the truth was only known, a little bit
off in their heads. What possible reason could a sane person
have for wanting to not enjoy himself anymore? (119).

Mrs. Flood's internal monologue seems to bring truth to this point in the narrative. Mrs. Flood's thoughts are as tight, logically, as Hazel's arguments on the streets of Taulkinham. First, she remarks on the insignificance of language. Yet, she contradicts this in her use of the word "violence." Instead of dismissing, vacuously, Hazel's mysterious remarks, as we think she might, Mrs. Flood hears, with clear mental sight, the violence foreshadowed in Hazel's declaration. In her subsequent internal logic, Mrs. Flood discusses thoroughly the meaning of the violence of taking one's sight. Death, she says, would be more expedient than blindness. Yet, even here, Mrs. Flood returns to the central issue of sight. Death is eternal night, infinite blindness. And beyond this, Mrs. Flood asks the crucial question: "What possible reason could a person have for wanting to destroy their sight?" Mrs. Flood connects this question to the notion of "eternal death," which the narrative tells us she faces squarely and "intensely," as intensely as Haze himself faced in the numinous darkness at the edge of the ridge. No immediate language will articulate the meaning of eternal death, infinite night, of self-inflicted blindness. And so Mrs. Flood reverts to a half-babble, to asking the partially irrelevant question: "What possible reason could a sane person have for wanting to not enjoy himself any more?"

"She certainly could not say" (119).

Subsequently, Hazel adorns his body with the thorns and barbs of humiliation. Into his shoes, he loads crushed glass and rock. He fits around his bare chest a shirt made of spiked fence wire. And he burns out his eyes with quicklime and water. When he has

finished, Hazel returns to the porch, where Mrs. Flood, his spiritual sister, can watch him, can articulate, for us, the mystery of Hazel's mutilation:

To her, the blind man had the look of seeing something. His face had a peculiar pushing look, as if it were going forward after something it could just distinguish in the distance. Even when he was sitting motionless in a chair, his face had the look of straining toward something. . . She had hung around pestering him for a few days and then she had gone on off; she said she hadn't counted on no *honest -to- Jesus* blind man . . . (121).

In his mortification, Hazel breaks silence only once, to tell Mrs. Flood the reason for his penance. "Mr. Motes," she said that day, when he was in her kitchen eating his dinner, 'what do you walk on rocks for?' 'To pay,' he said in a harsh voice. 'Pay for what?' 'It don't make any difference for what,' he said. 'I'm paying'" (125). And then Hazel tells her, "'Mind your business . . . You can't see'" (125). But Mrs. Flood has fixed her attention on Hazel and has come to understand the purpose of his mission. Of his behavior, she says, "'Well, it's not normal. It's like one of them gory stories, it's something that people have quit doing--like *boiling in oil or being a saint* or walling up cats. . . There's no reason for it. People have quit doing it.' 'They ain't quit doing it as long as I'm doing it,' he said" (127). Mrs. Flood has flushed out Hazel's reason. Hazel has been infused with Christ's terrible grace, with Christ's mercy and love, which has called for mortification and for purification, and which still is not enough to satisfy this divine love working in Hazel. For Hazel is not suffering for himself, but for the sake of others, for the Hawkses, and the Layfields, and the Emerys, and for the Leora Wattses. Hazel has been infused with the new Stigmata, has, like Christ, that the prophesy might be fulfilled, assumed the world's infirmities. Hazel is not Jesus but is like Jesus in his

new love for the damned. It is, however, a hard love to bear.

Mrs. Flood says, "You must believe in Jesus or you wouldn't do these foolish things. *You must have been lying to me when you named your fine church. I wouldn't be surprised if you weren't some kind of agent of the pope or got some connection with something funny*" (127). Christ's grace is, in fact, killing Hazel: "He was so weak from influenza that he tottered when he walked; winter had already begun and the wind slashed at the house at every angle, making a sound like sharp knives swirling in the air" (127-28). But Hazel leaves the safety of the house for the storm without. In his suffering, Hazel walks blindly into the storm, to find, in the raging darkness, the place he is going: "'That's not where I'm going,' he said. 'There's no other house nor no other city'" (129). Hazel thus takes up the Cross, and contradicts even the grand cynicism of the Grand Inquisitor, of Hawks, of Onnie Jay Holy. There is one worthy of Christ's death and resurrection, worthy of the burden of sin. It is he whom God sees. It is Hazel Motes:

The cross. The tree of sin was a real tree, the tree of life was a wooden beam. Something which does not give fruit, but only vertical movement. 'The Son of Man must be lifted up and he will draw all men unto himself.' We can kill the vital energy in ourselves while keeping only the vertical movement. Leaves and fruit are a waste of energy if our only wise is to rise (Weil 80).

In the end, Mrs. Flood describes for us the merging of the sacred and the profane in Hazel Motes. For she has been concentrating on Hazel throughout his ordeal with grace and is thus prepared to look beyond the evidence of suffering to the source itself, which is Christ. Within Hazel, who has now died and received God's ultimate gift, Mrs. Flood sees the two parallel light points converging in some distant place. The mystery of place

culminates in this convergence of divine light and sacred death. The sun at the beginning of the novel has entered and has consumed in merciful love Hazel Motes:

She had never observed his face more composed and she grabbed his hand and held it to her heart. It was resistless and dry. The outline of a skull was plain under his skin and the deep burned out eye sockets seemed to lead into a dark tunnel where he had disappeared. She leaned closer and closer to his face, looking deep into them . . . but she couldn't see anything. She shut her eyes and saw the pin point of light but so far away that she could not hold it steady in her mind. She felt as if she were blocked at the entrance of something. She sat staring with her eyes shut, into his eyes, and felt *as if* she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn't begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until *he* was the pin point of light (131).

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