

THE REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION IN THE FICTION  
OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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This study examines the representation of religion in Ernest Hemingway's fiction. Source materials include: Hemingway's short stories and novels and major articles, biographies, and books of criticism dealing with religion in Hemingway's works, including Julianne Isabelle's Hemingway's Religious Experience, the only book dealing exclusively with this subject.

Chapter I examines religious influences in Hemingway's life, the most important being that of his Protestant parents and grandparents in his early years and that of the Catholic Church in his later life, due to his marriage to a Catholic, Pauline Pfeiffer, and to his having lived much of his adult life in Catholic countries.

Chapter II deals with the representation of religion in the Hemingway short stories collected in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway and The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War. Hemingway deals with religion in twenty of the fifty-three stories. In most of the stories, references to the church are adversely critical. No protagonist finds solace in conventional religious faith.

Chapter III deals with religious representation in the novels The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell To Arms, To Have and

Have Not, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Across the River and into the Trees, The Old Man and the Sea, and Islands in the Stream.

While several major characters in these works express a longing for the consolation of religious experience, none is able to find relief from suffering in conventional belief. Instead, each protagonist sets about ordering his private universe according to a personal moral code. At times, this organization results in the ritualization of activities such as fishing, hunting, bullfighting, eating, drinking, and sexual relationships, regarded by Christians as secular activities.

Julanne Isabelle maintains that Hemingway believed strongly in a Christian God and that this belief shaped the development of his major works. The results of this study do not support such an assertion. Religion does figure prominently in much of Hemingway's work, but it is through the rejection of conventional belief that major characters come to construct private moral codes.

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OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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## CHAPTER I

### RELIGION IN HIS LIFE

In Hemingway's Religious Experience, Julianne Isabelle states that she has "probed into the soul of a man and found beauty and courage dedicated to God."<sup>1</sup> Isabelle finds evidence of religious commitment in both Hemingway's life and writings. There is, however, evidence in both to indicate that this position may be untenable.

Hemingway's early life provided sufficient opportunities for him to become acquainted with church doctrine. Oak Park, Illinois, where he was born July 21, 1899, was then a predominantly middle-class Protestant community. It was a twelve-by-twenty-four block area at the western edge of Chicago, but it was never incorporated into the city and was proudly described by residents as "the place where the saloons end and the churches begin."<sup>2</sup> The wide-open streets of nearby Cicero were a sharp contrast to the prosperous

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<sup>1</sup>Julianne Isabelle, Hemingway's Religious Experience (New York, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Leicester Hemingway, My Brother, Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1962), p. 21.

community where social life was centered in school and church activities:

"The wonder to me," said one of his teachers many years after Hemingway's departure, "and to a lot of other Oak Parkers is how a boy brought up in Christian and Puritan nurture should know and write so well of the devil and the underworld."<sup>3</sup>

As late as the 1950's, most residents shared the bewilderment expressed by those who had known Hemingway in earlier days:

"It is a puzzle," another native declared in 1952, "and, too, an amazement to Oak Park that Ernest should have written the kind of books that he did."<sup>4</sup>

Hemingway's mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, was an Episcopalian; his physician father, Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, was a Congregationalist. Both were the products of strong religious upbringing, and they were united in their interest in religious observances. Hemingway's brother, Leicester, recalls that they "aided all sorts of uplift movements, ranging from the establishment of nature-study groups . . . to Protestant missionary societies dedicated to spreading the Word all over the world."<sup>5</sup>

Hemingway was baptized Ernest Miller Hemingway on October 1, 1899, his parents' third wedding anniversary, in the First Congregational Church in Oak Park. After the

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<sup>3</sup>Charles Fenton, The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1954), pp. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 20.

ceremony, his mother recorded that the child had been carried "as an offering unto the Lord, to receive his name and hence forth be counted as one of God's little lambs."<sup>6</sup> He was named Ernest after his maternal grandfather, Ernest Hall, with whom the family lived during their early years in Oak Park and whom the Hemingway children called "Abba" from the Biblical phrase meaning Father.<sup>7</sup>

The Hemingways attended the Congregational Church, but daily religious observances, in which all members of the family participated, were led by Grandfather Hall, a devout Episcopalian. Every morning after breakfast, all the members of the Hemingway household, servants included, gathered in the parlor to hear Abba read a passage from Daily Strength for Daily Needs. Afterward, all present would kneel in front of their chairs while Abba led them in prayer. According to Ernest's sister, Marcelline Hemingway Sanford:

My father and mother and each of us children, as well as Uncle Tyley, sat quietly listening while Abba led us in worship. After Abba had read the lesson for the day, we would all rise, turn, and kneel down on the carpet in front of our chairs, resting our elbows on the black leather seats, while Abba knelt at the center table. But instead of closing his eyes or bowing his head as the rest of us did, he raised his head, his eyes upward, as though he was talking to God, right above him.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York, 1969), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Marcelline Hemingway Sanford, At the Hemingways: A Family Portrait (Boston, 1962), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 15.



There is no reason to believe that Ernest did not take these religious observances seriously. The strict, ritualistic observance of rules of conduct which Hemingway later demanded of his code heroes may well have been rooted in early demands which he was required to make of himself. But it was not long before he rejected the fundamentalist restrictions of conduct and belief which his family observed. The title of Hemingway's second book, the collection of short stories in our time, is extracted from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer from the "Evening Prayer" line, "Give peace in our time, O Lord."<sup>9</sup> But the stories deal with a world of chaos and violence far removed from the peaceful religious sanctuary of those early years.

Ernest's father, Clarence Hemingway, based his faith upon a literal interpretation of the Bible. According to Isabelle, "Clarence E. Hemingway did not approach nature from a naturalist's viewpoint but from the Creator's viewpoint, preserving the Biblical concept of the creation of the world in seven days, carefully explaining that no one had set the length of the day." A stern disciplinarian, he often forced his children to kneel and pray for forgiveness when he believed that they had done wrong. He disapproved of social dancing, card playing, gambling, smoking and drinking.<sup>10</sup> Under the Hemingway code, all of these

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<sup>9</sup>Isabelle, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

activities are acceptable; indeed, the character who refrains from indulging is often indicating his lack of manhood.

The Hemingway code also demands that the hero defend himself when attacked, and Hemingway, even as a youth, took pride in his own boxing skill. Clarence Hemingway, on the other hand, had a horror of physical violence. Leicester Hemingway says that his father, while still a young boy, was once "chased into his own kitchen and brutally beaten by a bully right in front of his mother." Grandmother Hemingway, who held strictly to the Biblical admonition about turning the other cheek, would not let him strike back. During Ernest's high school years, Leicester reports, their father "lost face on at least one occasion . . . by avoiding an honorable stand when physically challenged." The incident is identified by Leicester Hemingway as the source of the short story, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife."<sup>11</sup>

Ernest attended church regularly during his boyhood. His father demanded strict observance of the Lord's Day allowing "no play with friends, no games, no concerts." Attendance at church and Sunday School was mandatory except in times of illness.<sup>12</sup> Yet his father's sternness seems to have relaxed somewhat during the regular summer vacations that the Hemingway family spent at their cottage, Windemere, at Walloon Lake, Michigan. According to Leicester:

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<sup>11</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 9.

In the early years, Sunday target practice was the high point of the week at Windemere. Without transportation there was no chance to get to church during those summers. If a missionary were present, a prayer service with singing was held, which was what the children enjoyed. Otherwise Sunday was observed as a day of rest and entertainment.<sup>13</sup>

During these vacations Ernest was able to establish a closer relationship with his father. If in later years Hemingway was to reject much of his father's training as religious prudery, he retained a sincere admiration for his father as sportsman, and he required a strict observance of the sportsman's code which he had learned from his father.

Clarence Hemingway combined a compassion for animals with "a belief that God had provided wild game for the nurture and enjoyment of mankind."<sup>14</sup> Ernest, too, combined a love and respect for animals with a keen love of the hunt, and he incorporated these attitudes in the Hemingway code.

The Hemingway family combined religion and ceremony with the common events of daily life. Thus in 1906, when the Hemingways began building a new home in Oak Park, it was an occasion for ceremony. One day in April, the family gathered in the shell of the house for a dedication. The Congregational minister was there to say a prayer, and Hemingway's mother led them in singing "Blest Be the Tie that Binds."<sup>15</sup> At the end

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<sup>13</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

of the summer, when the house was completed, another ceremony was held to light the fire on the hearth. Ernest and his sister, Marcelline, sang two songs, the fire was lighted, and the home was "blessed and dedicated to a happy family life."<sup>16</sup>

Ernest's first extended trip was a journey to Nantucket with his mother in 1910. There on Sundays she sang with the choir of the First Congregational Church on Centre Street, "proud of the fact that the building dated from 1711 and that her father and mother had been choristers there in the 1880's."<sup>17</sup>

She returned home and took up the role of choir director and soloist at the Third Congregational Church. There, on Easter Sunday, 1911, Ernest and Marcelline were confirmed. Ernest wrote later of "the feeling you expected to have and did not have when you made your first communion."<sup>18</sup>

Soon after, Ernest's uncle, Will Hemingway, a medical missionary from Shensi Province, China, came home on sabbatical leave. Ernest was evidently fascinated by the opportunity to learn about a foreign land, and filed the details of the visit away in his prodigious memory. Forty years later, when his sister Ursula was visiting Hemingway in Havana, they reminisced

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<sup>16</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

about the visit, and Ernest was able to recall and sing the Chinese version of a hymn he had learned while still in grade school.<sup>19</sup>

At age twelve, Ernest became the boy soprano soloist of the vested children's choir at the Third Congregational Church, which was directed by his mother. She was quite disappointed when his career was soon cut short by his changing voice.<sup>20</sup>

Later, the family returned to the First Church where Ernest became a member of the Plymouth League for young people.<sup>21</sup> Records show that he often directed Sunday afternoon services.<sup>22</sup>

Biblical texts were also given emphasis during Ernest's years at Oak Park High School. Old Testament Narratives was a supplementary text in English I, where Hemingway's section was taught by Department Chairman Frank Platt.<sup>23</sup> Hemingway was subsequently quoted as saying, "'that's how I learned to write--by reading the Bible,' adding that by the Bible he meant particularly the Old Testament."<sup>24</sup> Hemingway, of course, made many statements about his inspiration, but this is not one of the better known. Yet his works reflect a careful reading knowledge of the Bible, and he seems to have learned

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<sup>19</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>21</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Isabelle, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Fenton, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Putnam, Paris Was Our Mistress (Carbondale, Illinois, 1947), pp. 128-129.

constantly from a wide range of personal experience. It seems unlikely that anything which occupied a good deal of his time would fail to contribute to the shaping of his work.

The summer after Ernest's sophomore year in high school, Clarence Hemingway sent him a birthday message which read, "I am so pleased and proud . . . you have grown to be such a fine big manly fellow and will trust your development will continue symmetrical and in harmony with our highest Christian ideals."<sup>25</sup>

One of his first acts after graduation from high school was to address a group of younger boys in Lloyd Harter's Boys' Department at the First Congregational Church. Harter had requested that Ernest and four other boys:

Tell them in an intimate personal way some of the deeper things about your high school experiences and especially what the Church and our Sunday School class has meant to you.<sup>26</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that Hemingway's life until graduation from high school was lived in close contact with guardians of those virtues then espoused by his Oak Park home, church, and school. Yet, despite the restrictiveness of his upbringing, Hemingway could hardly have been classified as a particularly pious youngster. His religious activities occupied only a part of a boyhood which included participation in a wide range of sporting activities, editorship of the

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<sup>25</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

school newspaper, many early attempts at story writing, a healthy interest in the opposite sex, and enough pranks to keep both parents in a fair state of exasperation much of the time. His early childhood showed a normal child's irritation with religious form, and, by the time he graduated from high school, he had published some pieces in the school newspaper which revealed a critical amusement directed at many forms of middle-class morality.

According to Carlos Baker, Hemingway as a young child would kneel at his mother's knee while she began to say his prayers. "But after a sentence or two he always leaped up, roaring 'Amen' with great finality."<sup>27</sup>

The Hemingway family regularly used the table grace: "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful, for Jesus sake, Amen." When hungry, the children would say it very quickly. Ernest devised a short form based only on sounds and rhythm which came out "M'rump mi raw, m'ree, ma m'raw, m'raw, m'raw. Amen." It was a joke which neither of his parents appreciated, and, if they caught him at it, they would make him start over.<sup>28</sup>

Leicester Hemingway reports that one of Ernest's earliest attention-getting devices was the use of what their mother called "naughty words."

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Sanford, p. 14.

"Go wash your mouth out with soap" was a common command in the Hemingway family, and the list of words our parents deemed improper was a long one. This punishment emphasized the power of words. Ernest knew the taste of soap from an early age. . . . He once wrote an article for Esquire entitled "In Defense of Dirty Words."<sup>29</sup>

One of Hemingway's classroom exercises consisted of a story based on an Irish detective named O'Hell.<sup>30</sup> A high school literary magazine sketch described God as "having a large, flowing beard and looking remarkably like Tolstoy."<sup>31</sup> In a student newspaper column entitled "Ring Lardner Returns," he took mocking jibes at Oak Park conservatism in paragraphs on smoking and gambling.<sup>32</sup>

School Superintendent M. R. McDaniel frequently chided faculty sponsor John Gehlmann about Hemingway's newspaper work. "'I was always having to fight criticism by the superintendent.'" Gehlmann once said, "'that Ernie was writing like Ring Lardner--and consequently a lost soul.'"<sup>33</sup>

The October following his high school graduation, Hemingway left home to take a reporting job for the Kansas City Star. He later fictionalized his experience of leave-taking in For Whom the Bell Tolls:<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup>Fenton, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 40.

<sup>32</sup>Fenton, p. 24.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Baker, A Life Story, pp. 29-31.



Robert Jordan had not felt this young since he had taken the train at Red Lodge to go down to Billings to get the train there to go away to school for the first time. He had been afraid to go and he did not want anyone to know it and, at the station, just before the conductor picked up the box he would step up on to reach the steps of the day coach, his father had kissed him good-by and said, "May the Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent the one from the other." His father had been a very religious man and he had said it simply and sincerely. But his moustache had been moist and his eyes were damp with emotion and Robert Jordan had been so embarrassed by all of it, the damp religious sound of the prayer, and by his father kissing him good-by, that he had felt suddenly so much older than his father, and sorry for him that he could hardly bear it.<sup>35</sup>

The embarrassed sympathy with which Robert Jordan regards the believer and the sense of maturity that he derives from realizing that he stands apart and alone are true code characteristics which seem to have been drawn directly from personal experience. After leaving for Kansas City, Hemingway never again fit comfortably into the routine of family life so valued by his parents.

When Hemingway arrived in Kansas City, he was greeted by his uncle, Alfred Tyler Hemingway, a prominent Kansas City lumberman, with whom Ernest was to live during his first few days as a Star reporter. His uncle was a slightly built, nervous man who "walked quickly and impatiently, snapping out orders. Of all his uncles, Ernest liked Tyler least."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls (New York, 1940), p. 406.

<sup>36</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 32.

Uncle Tyler could have been counted on to continue the Oak Park traditions of piety and discipline. A member of the Congregational Church, he is described by The National Encyclopedia of American Biography as "one of the leading workers in the Westminster Church of Kansas City," where he was president of the Westminster Men's Club. For the benefit of his own son, he wrote How to "Make Good": A Business Man's Message on Commercial Character-Building, The Only Success Insurance. The last paragraph of the book, which the Cyclopedia cites as "typical of the man who wrote it"<sup>37</sup> reads:

So handle yourself that you may be in that large group of men who are making possible the finest development of individuals and communities through making accessible the comforts of life, the fostering of the arts, the promotion of institutions for physical, intellectual and spiritual training and spreading the propoganda of peace and good will.<sup>38</sup>

But Hemingway was attracted to the new-found freedom of the reporter's life, and soon accepted an offer from his friend Carl Edgars to share a small apartment.<sup>39</sup> This apartment was rather dingy and farther away from the Star building than his Uncle's house. The fact that it "could

<sup>37</sup>The National Encyclopedia of American Biography, XIX (New York, 1926), 238.

<sup>38</sup>Alfred Tyler Hemingway, How to "Make Good": A Business Man's Message on Commercial Character-Building, The Only Success Insurance (Kansas City, 1915), p. 85.

<sup>39</sup>Fenton, p. 36.

be reached only by an interminable ride on the Prospect Avenue trolley cars" resulted in Ernest's decision to spend many a night in the pressroom at the Hotel Muelbach, "sleeping in the bathtub with towels for a mattress" rather than make the long ride home after a late assignment. Nevertheless, Hemingway reveled in his new-found freedoms.<sup>40</sup>

Newspaper assignments gave him contact with a world of excitement and brutality he had never known in Oak Park:

"I covered the short-stop run," Hemingway said in 1952, "which included the 15th Street police station, the Union Station and the General Hospital. . . . At the 15th Street Station you covered crime, usually small, but you never knew when you might hit something larger. Union Station was everybody going in and out of town . . . some shady characters I got to know, and interviews with celebrities going through. . . . The General Hospital was up a long hill from the Union Station and there you got accidents and a double check on crimes of violence."<sup>41</sup>

Carlos Baker states that Ernest's work in Kansas City provided the material for "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" in which "two City Hospital interns argued over the case of a neurotic youth who had emasculated himself from motives of mistaken piety."<sup>42</sup>

Work at the Star also put Hemingway in contact with such colorful characters as the talented, hell-raising reporter

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<sup>40</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 33.

<sup>41</sup>Fenton, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 36.

Lionel Calhoun Moise, whom Hemingway remembered as "a very picturesque, dynamic, big-hearted, hard drinking and hard fighting man," though one who squandered his talent due to lack of discipline.<sup>43</sup>

Hemingway's older sister, Marcelline, then a student at Oberlin college, recalls that her letters, full of details of college activities, seemed childish compared to his because "Ernest's new experiences made him seem so much more a man of the world."<sup>44</sup>

Ernest's taste of freedom added to his already burning desire to go to war. Having been rejected by the American services due to poor eyesight, he was finally accepted as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross.<sup>45</sup> His overseas experiences continued his education in brutality and violence beyond anything he had seen in Kansas City and gave him insights into human nature which shaped much of his future work.

Although his parents were apprehensive about his decision,<sup>46</sup> Ernest was full of enthusiasm when the French Line ship Chicago embarked for Bordeaux May 23, 1918. "I was an awful dope when I went to the last war," Hemingway said in 1942. "I can remember just thinking that we were the home team and the Austrians were the visiting team."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Fenton, pp. 39-40.

<sup>44</sup>Sanford, p. 156.

<sup>45</sup>Baker, A Life Story, pp. 36-37.

<sup>46</sup>Sanford, p. 160.

<sup>47</sup>Baker, A Life Story, pp. 38-39.

Hemingway was sent from Bordeaux to Paris and on to Milan and Schio. From Schio he made ambulance runs evacuating wounded soldiers from Pasubio to dressing stations for treatment. But he wanted to get closer to the action, and volunteered for assignment to an emergency canteen providing comforts for soldiers at the front. He was sent to Fossalta.<sup>48</sup>

As a provisional lieutenant, Hemingway messed with the Italian officers of the Brigata Ancona. One of the chaplains, a young priest called Don Guiseppi Bianchi, "quickly befriended Ernest who treated him with sympathy and respect."<sup>49</sup>

Hemingway's acquaintanceship with the young priest probably provided the model for the Italian priest in A Farewell To Arms.

Still wanting to get closer to the action, Hemingway established the habit of bicycling from the canteen to the front carrying chocolate, cigars, and cigarettes. He began to feel that he was regarded as a man with a charmed life.<sup>50</sup> Then, near midnight July 8, at a forward listening post near Fossalta, he was severely wounded. Afterward, he lay for two hours "waiting and praying" until an ambulance came to take him to a treatment station. There a priest "came along the line of wounded men, murmuring the holy words, anointing each as he passed. He recognized Ernest and did the same for him."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-42.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>50</sup> Fenton, pp. 64-66.

<sup>51</sup> Baker, A Life Story, pp. 44-45.

Hemingway's wound, and the realization that he had been very near death, haunted him for the rest of his life, and is reflected repeatedly in fictional encounters with death. His visions of a charmed life had been cut short by the realization of his own mortality, and the wounded hero appears again and again in Hemingway fiction as the man whose stoic bravery is enhanced by the knowledge that he has everything to lose. His wounding also dealt a crushing blow to his illusions about the romance of war. According to Granville Hicks, "Disillusioned by the war, . . . Hemingway had rejected in toto the conventions and values of contemporary society and all the words that once were sacred meant nothing to him. He held to a simple code in which courage was the major virtue."<sup>52</sup>

In his introduction to Men at War, 1942, Hemingway says of his experience:

When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not to you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday, I had a bad time until I figured it out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Granville Hicks, "A Feeling About Life," Saturday Review, XLIV (July 29, 1951), 30.

<sup>53</sup>Ernest Hemingway, editor, Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time (New York, 1942), pp. xiii-xiv.

In the same introduction, he says, "The last war during the years 1915, 1916, 1917 was the most colossal murderous, mismanaged butchery that has ever taken place on earth."<sup>54</sup>

An earlier comment occurs in a letter to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, December 21, 1926. Speaking of current criticism that his work was "hardboiled," Hemingway wrote, "I have not been at all hardboiled . . . since July 8, 1918-- on the night of which I discovered that that also was vanity." "The literary allusion," as Carlos Baker notes, "is to Ecclesiastes, from which Hemingway took one of the epigraphs for The Sun Also Rises."<sup>55</sup>

Although Hemingway's wounding seems to have led him toward an increasing stoicism and disillusion, it also marked his first significant experience with Catholicism, the religion which was to figure prominently in his major works. Although his major characters consistently reject the comforts of Catholicism, almost all are former Catholics and, on many occasions, are strongly attracted by the simple life in faith.

In contrast to his boyhood days in Oak Park, Hemingway's experiences as a Star reporter and as a soldier in Italy show little evidence of contact with religion. The young Hemingway seems to have been more concerned with exploring

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>55</sup>Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton, New Jersey, 1963), p. 4.

the world beyond the boundaries of Oak Park, and, in so doing, he necessarily rebelled against the conventional restrictions of earlier years.

Ernest Hemingway returned from Italy on January 21, 1919. Despite his recognition as a war hero, he found life in Oak Park lonesome and confining compared to his European adventures. "I think we only half live over here," he told his sister Marcelline. "The Italians live all the way."<sup>56</sup>

Passing time hunting, fishing, and trying to write out some of his war experiences, he worked at a number of odd jobs including a short stint as reporter for the Toronto Star. His apparent lack of purpose worried both his parents. In July, 1920, Grace Hemingway wrote to him in exasperation that he had almost "overdrawn" the account of love and patience she stored for him:

Unless you . . . stop . . . neglecting your  
duties to God and your Savior, Jesus Christ . . .  
there is nothing before you but bankruptcy. . . .  
When you have changed your ideas and aims in life,  
you will find your mother waiting to welcome you,  
whether it be this world or the next . . .  
The Good Lord watch between me and thee, while  
we are absent one from the other.<sup>57</sup>

She signed the letter "Your still hoping and praying  
mother, Grace Hall Hemingway."<sup>58</sup>

About the same time, Grace Hemingway received a letter  
from Clarence Hemingway which read:

<sup>56</sup>Baker, A Life Story, pp. 56-58.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-72.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 72.



I shall continue to pray for Ernest . . . that he will develop a sense of greater responsibility, for if he does not the Great Creator will cause him to suffer a whole lot more than he ever has so far.<sup>59</sup>

Hemingway's great errors, in the eyes of his parents, seem to have been sins of omission; he didn't have a steady job, and he wasn't much help with family chores.<sup>60</sup> The letters indicate a probable neglect of church attendance as well.

His romanticization of his experiences in Italy may have included some interest in Catholicism, for Carlos Baker records that, "One day in the Catholic Church at Charlevoix, he and Katy [Smith] burnt a votive candle while Ernest prayed, as he said, for all the things he wanted and never expected to get."<sup>61</sup>

Finally, in December, 1920, he took a job writing for The Cooperative Commonwealth in Chicago. He was, by then, involved in a steadily deepening romance with an auburn-haired young woman named Elizabeth Hadley Richardson. They were married September 3, 1921<sup>62</sup> in the Methodist Church at Walloon Lake, Michigan. The church was near Windemere,<sup>63</sup> the Hemingway family lake house where Ernest and Hadley spent their honeymoon. This may have determined the choice

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-72.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-81.

<sup>63</sup>Isabelle, p. 22.

of the church, since Hadley had "no special denominational loyalties,"<sup>64</sup> and the Hemingways were not Methodists.

Hadley had a small trust fund, and, with that to fall back on, the couple left the United States in November, 1921, to join other American expatriate artists in Paris.<sup>65</sup>

Hemingway seems to have given little thought to religious loyalties during his marriage to Hadley. Although after their separation (September, 1926) Hemingway claimed to have been a Catholic during that period, Hadley said that Ernest had not, to her knowledge, ever attended Mass while they were living together.<sup>66</sup>

To supplement their income during the early days in Paris, Hemingway wrote occasional dispatches for the Toronto Star. In a 1922 story, he described the recent papal coronation in Rome in a tone that was "completely appropriate for Anglican Toronto":

They crowned the Pope on a plain pine board throne put together just for that. It reminded me of a fraternity initiation when I saw the throne and watched them getting the scenery out the day before.<sup>67</sup>

When their son, John Hadley Nicanor, was born in 1924, he was christened in St. Luke's Episcopal Chapel in the Rue de la Grande Chaumière. The choice of church is supposed to have been made by Gertrude Stein who reasoned that "Since

<sup>64</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 126.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 596.

<sup>67</sup>Fenton, p. 126.

Hadley entertained no special denominational loyalties and Ernest was not prepared to raise his son as a Catholic . . . . Episcopalianism was as sound a sect as any."<sup>68</sup>

Another wedge was driven between Hemingway and his parents with the publication of the collection of short stories in our time in January, 1924. Clarence Hemingway was excited enough to order six copies, but the book was a great shock to him. "Daddy was so incensed," reports Marcelline, "that a son of his would so far forget his Christian training that he could use the subject matter and vulgar expressions this book contained that he wrapped and returned all six copies to the Three Mountains Press in Paris."<sup>69</sup>

Hemingway's first important novel, The Sun Also Rises, written near the end of his marriage to Hadley, contained nothing to mollify those who would have preferred Christian sentiment. The protagonist, Jake Barnes, is a Catholic, but he has reached a stage where he no longer finds his religion a protection from a chaotic world.

Hemingway's own world was, at the time, in a state of chaos. He was torn between his love for Hadley and his growing passion for Pauline Pfeiffer, a devout Catholic. Hadley offered to give him a divorce if Pauline and Ernest continued to love one another after a separation of one

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<sup>68</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 126.

<sup>69</sup>Sanford, p. 219.

hundred days. Ernest and Hadley set up separate residences, and Pauline left for the United States. From her parents' home in Piggott, Arkansas, she wrote to him that her nightly prayer was, "Dear Saint Joseph, send me a good, kind, attractive Catholic husband."<sup>70</sup>

It was probably for Pauline's sake that Ernest tried to convince the Catholic Church that he had considered himself a Catholic ever since he had been "baptised in the faith by a priest who had walked between aisles of wounded men in an Italian dressing station nine years earlier."<sup>71</sup> His marriage to Hadley, which would not have been considered valid by the Catholic Church, and the fact that he did not attend mass during their married life seem sufficient evidence that he did not then consider himself to be a Catholic. In conversation with Gary Cooper in 1958, Cooper told Hemingway that he had adopted the Catholic faith because of his wife's persuasion. Hemingway remarked sympathetically that he had done the same thing thirty years ago.<sup>72</sup>

In October, Pauline was "struck by a 'madhouse' fit of depression." She wrote to Ernest that she did not know what caused it "except perhaps God." According to Baker:

She had suddenly been overcome by the realization that they hadn't given Hadley a chance, had indeed locked her cruelly out of their lives.

<sup>70</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 175.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 543.

In a fit of contrition, she sent her a note, offering to extend the period of separation, and promising not even to communicate with Ernest if that would help to keep the bargain.<sup>73</sup>

It was the kind of letter that would have distressed a less troubled man than Hemingway. Baker records that in his lengthy, and somewhat melodramatic, reply he told her:

. . . that he had even thought seriously of suicide. In perfect calm and without bluffing he had resolved in the fall of 1925 that if the love affair were not settled by Christmas, he would kill himself. It would save Hadley the necessity of divorce and remove the sin from Pauline's life. Later he had promised himself to delay the suicide until Pauline's return. But now everything was getting out of control again. He was not a saint. He would much rather die now while there was still something left of the world. . . . After death he was perfectly willing to go to Hell. What he could not endure was the hell that lay around him now. . . . He prayed for her each night for hours and every morning on awakening.<sup>74</sup>

While he was waiting for Pauline's return, Hemingway received a critical letter from his mother regarding The Sun Also Rises. "I could not," she wrote, "keep silence any longer if any word from me might help you to find yourself." It was necessary, she said, that he "throw off his shackles and rise up to be the man and writer that God had intended."<sup>75</sup>

Pauline returned in January, and Ernest's divorce from Hadley became final later that month. By the middle of

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-176.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 176-177.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

March, things seemed settled enough for Ernest to escape on a bachelor tour of Italy with his friend Guy Hickok. In Rapallo, Ernest met Don Guiseppi Bianchi, the priest who had anointed him after his wounding in 1918. The meeting reawakened his religious sensibilities and stirred his memories of his recent marital difficulties. At a roadside shrine outside Spezia, he "knelt and prayed for what seemed a long time, returning to the car with tears on his cheeks."<sup>76</sup> The remainder of the trip was sporadically broken by periods of praying and weeping.<sup>77</sup>

Ernest and Pauline were married May 10, 1927, under Catholic auspices in the Paris Church of Passy.<sup>78</sup> During the early days of his second marriage, Hemingway evidently considered himself "at least a nominal Catholic." In response to an enquiry from a Dominican father, he replied that:

For many years . . . he had been a Catholic, although he had fallen away badly in the period 1919-27, during which time he did not attend communion. But he had gone regularly to Mass, he said, during 1926 and 1927, and had definitely set his house in order . . . in 1927. He felt obliged to admit that he had always had more faith than intelligence or knowledge--he was, in short, a "very dumb Catholic." He had "so much faith" that he "hated to examine into it," but he was trying to lead a good life in the Church and was very happy. He had never publicized his beliefs because he did not wish to be known

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 181-183.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

as a Catholic writer. He knew the importance of setting an example--yet he had never set a good example. His fundamental program was simplicity itself: to try to lead a good life and to try to write well and truly. It was easier to do the first than the second.<sup>79</sup>

It seems a clear indication of Hemingway's personality, and of his system of values, that even in this period of professed faith he placed his writing on a higher level of attainment than the practicing of his religion.

In June, 1928, Pauline gave birth to their first child, a son, Patrick. Both Patrick and their second child, Gregory Hancock, born November 12, 1931,<sup>80</sup> were brought up strictly within the tenets of the Catholic Church.<sup>81</sup>

Strangely enough, Hemingway's professed Catholicism helped to bridge the gap between him and his family at the time of his father's suicide. He took charge of the funeral arrangements and comforted Marcelline, telling her that he had had a Mass said for their father and leading the family in the Lord's Prayer before services in the First Congregational Church.<sup>82</sup> He made the typical Hemingway demand for grace under pressure, cautioning Leicester to uphold the family honor by not crying at the funeral. Then, according to Leicester, he said:

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 195, 223.

<sup>81</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 207.

<sup>82</sup>Sanford, p. 233.

. . . if you will, really pray as hard as you can, to help get his soul out of purgatory. There are plenty of heathens around here who should be ashamed of themselves. They think it's all over, and what they don't seem able to understand is that things go right on from here.<sup>83</sup>

In May of 1929, Ernest and Pauline were living in Paris.

Ernest's old friend Morley Callaghan and his wife Loretto had just arrived in the city, and Ernest took them to drink beer at the Ille de la Cité. They thought he "seemed to be pleased at having become a Catholic convert."<sup>84</sup> That September, before the Callaghans left for London, he drove them down for a visit to Chartres. Morley, who was interested in the stained glass, forgot to genuflect before the high altar, and Ernest was highly critical of his oversight.<sup>85</sup> Ernest's Sundays during this period "combined duty and pleasure--Mass at St. Sulpice with Pauline, followed by the six-day bicycle races at the Velodrome d'Hiver."<sup>86</sup>

Concurrent with these conscious acts of piety, however, there were indications that Hemingway's emotional state during this period was much more complex. In the Spring of 1927, shortly before his marriage to Pauline, Hemingway's "Neothomist Poem" appeared in Ezra Pound's Exile:

<sup>83</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 111.

<sup>84</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 201.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 204-205.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 205.



The Lord is my shepherd,  
I shall not want him for long.<sup>87</sup>

The poem, Ernest said, was based upon the "temporary embracing of church by literary gents."<sup>88</sup>

More important was the publication in 1929 of A Farewell to Arms, a highly autobiographical novel in which the hero, Frederic Henry, learns to rely on his own code of bravery in a godless, even hostile, universe. Henry is a traditional hero in the sense that he has a keener perception of truth than other characters, and Hemingway's concept of truth in fiction was diametrically opposed to the presentation of a world which he did not actually experience.

There are few references to religion in records of Hemingway's life from 1929 until the beginning of his involvement in the Spanish Civil War in 1937.

When his friend Chub Weaver secured an embalmer's license in Montana in 1931, Hemingway jokingly suggested that Weaver go to Spain and practice, asserting that, "Next to bullfighting, it's the highest paid profession in Spain." When Weaver protested that this was impossible because he was not a Catholic, Ernest replied that "any man could become a Catholic for a million seeds."<sup>89</sup>

In 1932, he cautioned John Dos Passos against placing too much faith in Communism, reminding him that all great

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 596.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

humanitarian movements are run by fallible human beings. "Even the founder of Christianity," he said, had "yellowed out on the cross," and was "only successful because they killed him."<sup>90</sup>

In 1931, Hemingway did make a four-hundred-mile round-trip drive from the Nordquist ranch to Powell, Wyoming, so that Pauline could attend the First-Friday Mass for August, although he joked about it, saying that, "If she were canonized . . . this feat should be recorded in the supporting documents."<sup>91</sup>

In 1935, in response to criticism that his writings did not show enough sympathy for the Communist cause, Ernest replied that, "They (the nameless generic enemy) had now replaced religion with economics as the 'opium' of the people."<sup>92</sup>

Hemingway's greatest disillusionment with the Catholic Church came during the Spanish Civil War, during the same period as his break-up with Pauline. It was the position of the Church during the war, rather than the failure of his marriage, however, which seems to have been the major factor in his disillusionment. Hemingway made three trips to Spain in the period from March, 1937 to May, 1938, working on the documentary film The Spanish Earth and serving as correspondent for the North American Newspaper

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 226.    <sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 231.    <sup>92</sup>Ibid., pp. 277-278.

Alliance. He also worked hard to raise funds for the struggle of the Spanish Republic against the fascist rebels under Franco. Martha Gellhorn, who was to become his third wife, was with him most of the time, also working on news dispatches and sharing his hatred of the Franco regime.<sup>93</sup>

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, stood behind Franco. Pauline, who had both her Catholicism and her fear of losing her husband to dampen her enthusiasm, had little reason to encourage Ernest in his endeavors.

At the Hollywood showing of The Spanish Earth, following Hemingway's first trip to Spain, his enthusiasm for the Republic was at fever pitch. Scott Fitzgerald, who was present, wrote editor Max Perkins that Hemingway's attitude had "something almost religious about it."<sup>94</sup>

None of his family wanted Ernest to make a second trip. In reply to a letter from Pauline's mother, urging him not to go, he wrote that "he had promised the Spaniards that he would come back. . . . His first visit to wartime Spain had destroyed his belief in an afterlife, but it had also eliminated his fear of death or indeed of anything else."<sup>95</sup>

He returned from his second visit, having covered the taking of Teruel, and was furious about some Time magazine stories indicating that Herbert Matthews, with whom he had co-authored some copy, had been the only newsman present.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-300.    <sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 316.    <sup>95</sup>Ibid.

His frustration with the Church boiled over in a letter to Hadley in which he claimed:

. . . he had scored a ten-hour newsbeat over Matthews, only to suffer from the enmity of the Catholics who manned the night desk at The New York Times. They had not only thrown away all his stuff, he said, but had even deleted his name from Matthews' dispatches.<sup>96</sup>

On Easter Sunday, during his third trip, Ernest met a seventy-six-year-old man who had been obliged to abandon his domestic animals in his flight from San Carlos. This encounter was probably the source of the story "The Old Man at the Bridge" in which Hemingway makes the old man "a moving symbol of all those others whom the war had uprooted."<sup>97</sup> The old man outcast on Easter Sunday by the Fascist army which the church supported probably made quite an impression on Hemingway.

Soon afterward, Hemingway worked up an article for Ken magazine attacking Cardinal Hayes for having told a press conference in New York that he was praying for Franco's victory over the "radicals and Communists" on the Republican side.<sup>98</sup>

On his return home to Key West, he wrote another article for Ken in which he attacked alleged Fascists in the American State Department for having done "their level, crooked, Roman,

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 327-328.

<sup>98</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "The Cardinal Picks a Winner," Ken (May 5, 1938), p. 138.

British-aping best" to end the Spanish War by "denying the Spanish government the right to buy arms to defend itself against the German and Italian aggression."<sup>99</sup>

He was again living with Pauline, but, according to his brother, Leicester, "He was having difficulty with his own personal code of ethics. He had finally decided to make a clean break with Pauline, and with the Catholic Church."<sup>100</sup>

In August, Ernest, Pauline, and their sons traveled to Wyoming. There Ernest wrote to Pauline's mother that he had been going through a period in which he had been "intolerant, self-righteous, ruthless, and cruel." He knew that:

The only way he could run his life decently was to accept the discipline of the Church. But the problem in Spain was that the Church had sided with the enemy. This fact bothered him so much that he had even quit praying: it seemed somehow "crooked" to have anything to do with a religious institution so closely allied to Fascism.<sup>101</sup>

Hemingway's divorce from Pauline did not become final until November 4, 1940, although he had begun living with Martha in April, 1939.<sup>102</sup> The Church did not recognize his divorce, and he was excommunicated, that is, denied privileges of the Mass, although he was not formally separated from the Church.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup>Ernest Hemingway, "H.M.'s Loyal State Department," Ken (June 16, 1938), p. 36.

<sup>100</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 200.

<sup>101</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 333.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., pp. 341, 354.

<sup>103</sup>Isabelle, p. 53.

He later attributed the failure of his marriage to "sexual maladjustment growing out of Pauline's ardent Catholicism and the fact that she could not safely bear more children."<sup>104</sup>

His third marriage, to Martha Gellhorn, November 21, 1940, was performed by a justice of the peace in Cheyenne, Wyoming. There was no religious ceremony.<sup>105</sup>

This was also the year of the publication of his Spanish Civil War novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls. The novel makes clear the separation between the church and the people during the war years, and in it faith is transferred to the community of heroic individuals fighting for an ideal.

Hemingway's disillusionment with the Catholic Church during the Spanish Civil War ended his second important period of religious influence. The period of his marriage to Martha Gellhorn, extending at least nominally, through World War II, shows little evidence of religious experience.

In December, 1940, Hemingway purchased the Finca Vigia,<sup>106</sup> and most of the happier days of his third marriage were spent at this home in Cuba. It became a natural gathering place for Civil War refugees, and among the more frequent visitors was a Catholic priest, Don Andres Untzain, known as the black priest. But Don Andres' major attraction

<sup>104</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 355.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

was his work on behalf of the Spanish Republic in direct defiance of church policy.<sup>107</sup> At the outbreak of the war, he was said to have "climbed into the pulpit and exhorted all the parishioners to go get their guns and fill the streets and shoot what they could and the hell with spending their time in church."<sup>108</sup> He had served as a machine gunner in the Republican army and was, consequently, out of favor with the church.<sup>109</sup>

Hemingway's Spanish war experiences even influenced his early World War II efforts to aid the Allies by organizing a counter-intelligence service in Cuba. When the time came to relinquish control of his organization to the FBI, he resented the sense of superiority with which the FBI agents regarded his amateur set-up. He referred to them as Franco's Iron Cavalry "on his personal theory that since some of them came of Irish Catholic ancestry they were therefore susceptible to Fascist influence." When he discovered that one of the men had served in Spain as a newspaper man assigned to the Rebel side, he was responsible for having the man recalled to Washington.<sup>110</sup>

During 1944 and 1945, he covered the war in England and on the continent as a correspondent for Collier's

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>108</sup> A. E. Hotchner, Papa Hemingway (New York, 1955), p. 19.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Baker, A Life Story, pp. 380-381.

magazine.<sup>111</sup> Much of his time was spent with Buck Lanham's 22nd Regiment, where he built a reputation for cynicism on the topics of war and religion:

The Division Chaplain was a small and deeply sincere man, so fascinated by Ernest's opinions that he kept coming back for more. Ernest once asked him if he believed the widely quoted statement from Bataan that there were no atheists in foxholes. "No sir, Mr. Hemingway," the chaplain said, "not since I met you and Colonel Lanham." The reply delighted Ernest, who added it to his growing collection of martial anecdotes.<sup>112</sup>

Hemingway and several friends were having a breakfast of pancakes and bourbon in Ernest's room at the Dorchester in London on the Sunday morning that the famous Chapel of the Horse Guards near Westminster Abbey was bombed, killing many worshipers. Hemingway's guests saw the explosion from the window, and two of them, Henry North and Michael Burke, raced off to join the rescue of survivors. The rest, Hemingway included, returned to breakfast.<sup>113</sup>

His only recorded visit to a church in England, for purposes other than sightseeing, seems to have been a stop in Salisbury Cathedral "to pray for the souls of his English ancestors."<sup>114</sup>

At Rodenbourg, near the end of his tour in Europe, Hemingway, who was ill, accepted Colonel Lanham's invitation to stay in his command post until he recuperated. The house

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 384.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.



belonged to a priest who was supposed to have collaborated with the Germans, and Ernest discovered a supply of sacramental wine. According to Carlos Baker, "He took an almost maniacal delight in drinking the contents and then carefully urinating the bottles full again."<sup>115</sup> A further embellishment of the story is that "he labeled the bottles 'Schloss Hemingstein, 1944' and made the mistake of sampling one in the dark, thus proving the contention of the Biblical preacher that 'all is vanity.'"<sup>116</sup>

During the war years, Hemingway concentrated his energies on living the role of the Hemingway hero. If he sometimes bragged and swaggered, he also acted, in times of emergency, with a controlled bravery and calm intelligence that impressed seasoned military men. He enjoyed the role immensely, but, even then, he remained aware of the dichotomy between professed Christian belief in the value of human life and the realities of warfare. He loved combat, although he believed "it was a 'rotten' admission to make."<sup>117</sup> Writing of Spanish matadors in Death in the Afternoon, he had said that:

Once you accept the rule of death thou shalt not kill is an easily and a naturally obeyed commandment. But when a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the Godlike attributes;

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., pp. 439-440.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

that of giving it. This is one of the most profound feelings in those men who enjoy killing. These things are done in pride and pride, of course, is a Christian sin, and a pagan virtue.<sup>118</sup>

Pride was also a virtue of the Hemingway code, but it was a pride restrained by recognition of the value of human life, and this was an idea strongly associated with the Christian concept of sin. He remained troubled by the conflict between what he felt and what he believed he should feel. Years later, he told Bernard Berenson that "to love killing was doubtless a sin, even when his victims were Germans. . . . Yet he had hated the Nazis and the Fascists so much that he had actually enjoyed killing them."<sup>119</sup> How much killing Hemingway actually did is open to question as, although he often acted outside his role as correspondent, he also enjoyed telling wild tales of his experiences. The important consideration is that, even when he seemed to have little use for formal religion, he felt compelled to censure his actions in accord with such a belief.

Hemingway left Europe March 6, 1945. During the war years, his marriage with Martha, which had always been threatened by her strong ambitions for a writing career of her own, collapsed completely. In London, he had become

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<sup>118</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon (New York, 1960), p. 233.

<sup>119</sup> Baker, A Life Story, p. 408.

acquainted with Mary Welsh, an attractive Time correspondent, and their relationship had quickly developed into love. He left for Cuba with the understanding that she would soon join him.<sup>120</sup> His divorce from Martha became final December 21.<sup>121</sup>

When Mary told her parents of her approaching marriage, her father, T. J. Welsh, sent Ernest three religious books as a first gift. Hemingway responded with what seems to have been his most comprehensive recorded statement of his religious experiences:

In 1918 . . . he had been very frightened after his wounding, and therefore very devout. He feared death, believed in personal salvation, and thought that prayers to the Virgin and various saints might produce results. These views changed markedly during the Spanish Civil War, owing to the alliance between the Church and the Fascists. He then decided that it was selfish to pray for his own benefit, though he missed the "ghostly comfort" as a man might miss a drink when he was cold and wet. In 1944, he had got through some very rough times without praying once. He felt that he had forfeited the right to any divine intercession in his personal affairs, and that it would be crooked to ask for help, no matter how frightened he might be. For him . . . the Spanish Civil War had been the turning point. Deprived of the ghostly comforts of the Church, yet unable to accept as gospel the secular substitutes which Marxism offered, he had abandoned his simplistic faith in the benefits of personal petition and turned, like his hero Robert Jordan, to embrace a doctrine of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 445.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

Some months later, he congratulated Mary and himself for having bypassed her parents' faith, Christian Science, and his own Congregationalist deity, "God and his beard." He proposed a substitute creed based upon the things that made them happy in their love. They were married in a lawyer's office in Havana March 14, 1946.<sup>123</sup>

Isabelle maintains that Hemingway "remained attached to the Catholic church through the years after his marriage to Mary Welsh and continued a Catholic until his death on July 2, 1961."<sup>124</sup> This seems to be in opposition to Hemingway's own testimony.

Isabelle admits that "Hemingway questioned the varied meanings of the term [justice] and at times seemed to question whether God was just," but she concludes that:

Such questioning must culminate in a spiritual position. If Hemingway believed, as the rebels do, that God is murderous, he could not see any justice. If, on the other hand, he believed as a Christian that God is the ultimate ruling force in the universe, bringing good out of all the evil which He allows to afflict men, he could understand justice.<sup>125</sup>

She does not explain why she believes that Hemingway saw forces of justice at work in the universe, nor does she explain why a concept of justice must be predicated upon a belief in a Christian God. The idea that religious questioning must end in a spiritual position is a purely

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp. 450, 454.

<sup>124</sup> Isabelle, pp. 53-54.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

subjective judgment akin to saying that Hemingway must have believed because it would have been impossible not to.

Hemingway's religious skepticism seems to have continued from the time of this fourth marriage until his death in 1961.

In a 1950 interview with Lillian Ross in New York, he affirmed his desire to live intensely while it was still possible, telling her that:

Only suckers worry about saving their souls. Who the hell should care about saving his soul when it's a man's duty to lose it intelligently, the way you would sell a position you were defending, if you could not hold it, as expensively as possible, trying to make it the most expensive position that was ever sold.<sup>126</sup>

When The Old Man and the Sea was published in 1952, rabbis and ministers began using the text as a basis for sermons, but Hemingway wrote to Berenson, whom he admired, that "The secret about the novel . . . was that there wasn't any symbolism. Sea equaled sea, old man was old man, the boy was a boy, the marlin was itself, and the sharks were no better and no worse than other sharks."<sup>127</sup>

In conversation with Ava Gardner in 1954, he repeated his remarks about death from Death in the Afternoon adding, to the phrase "when a man is in rebellion against death"

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<sup>126</sup>Lillian Ross, Portrait of Hemingway (New York, 1961), p. 48.

<sup>127</sup>Baker, A Life Story, p. 505.

the words "as I am in rebellion against death."<sup>128</sup> Similar sentiments marked his Nobel Prize acceptance message in which he wrote of the loneliness of an author's life, adding that "if he is a good enough writer, he must face eternity or the lack of it each day."<sup>129</sup>

When he learned that Harvey Breit wanted him to write an introduction to The Writer Observed, Ernest wrote satirically that his "senior colleague" William Faulkner should have the honor and that he "would personally pay Faulkner \$350 to write an introduction while he, for no financial consideration at all, would write a rival introduction based on an interview with the Deity." This he was almost certain he could obtain, "once he explained the circumstances and the high honor being afforded Him of appearing in there with Dr. Faulkner."<sup>130</sup>

When Hemingway was first admitted to the Mayo Clinic in November, 1960, he sought to avoid publicity by using the name of his physician, Vernon Lord. As the clinic had no hospital facilities, he was given a room at nearby St. Mary's Hospital. According to A. E. Hotchner, he received Hemingway's first call out by way of the hospital operator who addressed him as Mr. Lord. "Hell of a thing," Ernest said, "having a name like [ Lord ] in a Catholic hospital--and me a failed

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<sup>128</sup>Hotchner, p. 139.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 145-146.

<sup>130</sup>Leicester Hemingway, p. 277.

Catholic."<sup>131</sup> Although Hotchner seems to have reported many of the tall tales which Hemingway told in his later years without checking them for accuracy, the accounts of his personal experiences with Hemingway seem to be accurate.

Shortly before his death, he again talked with Hotchner, telling him of his fear that he could no longer write well and insisting ". . . if I can't exist on my own terms, then existence is impossible. . . . That is how I've lived, and that is how I must live--or not live."<sup>132</sup>

Yet in this final period there are indications of a revived interest in Catholicism, a haunting undercurrent of an unfulfilled desire for something to ease the burden of stoicism in his later years.

Driving through Spain with Hotchner in 1954, Hemingway stopped at the Cathedral in Burgos. He was ill, and it was necessary for Hotchner to help him out of the car:

Ernest . . . went slowly up the Cathedral steps, bringing both feet together on each step. He touched the holy water and crossed the murky deserted interior, his moccasins barely audible on the stone floor. He stood for a moment at a side altar, looking up at the candles, his gray trench coat, white whiskers and steel-rimmed glasses giving him a monkish quality. Then, holding tightly, he lowered his knees onto a prayer bench and bent his forehead onto his overlapped hands. He stayed that way for several minutes.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Hotchner, p. 276.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-130.

As he left the cathedral, he echoed the comment of Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises, "Sometimes," he said, "I wish I were a better Catholic."<sup>134</sup>

Hotchner also records that among the many magazines that came regularly to the Finca was a subscription to The Southern Jesuit.<sup>135</sup>

When Frazer Drew, a young professor from Buffalo, interviewed him at the Finca on Good Friday, 1955, Drew mentioned that he was a Catholic. "I like to think that I am," Ernest replied, "insofar as I can be. I can still go to Mass, although many things have happened about divorces and remarriages." He spoke of his old friend, the Basque priest, Don Andres, and told Drew that, "He prays for me every day . . . as I do for him. I can't pray for myself any more. Perhaps it is because in some way I have become hardened."<sup>136</sup>

Ernest donated his 1954 Nobel Prize medal to the shrine of the Virgin de Cobre in Cuba.<sup>137</sup> The announcement of his intention to make the presentation was made, however, at a gathering of four hundred and fifty guests at a neighborhood fiesta in San Francisco de Paula. The fiesta was in Hemingway's honor, and the guests included forty-five

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>136</sup> Baker, A Life Story, p. 530.

<sup>137</sup> Leicester Hemingway, p. 275.



fishermen from Cojimar, the little town described in The Old Man and the Sea.<sup>138</sup> It is possible that his gift was made primarily as a compliment to the Cubans rather than as an act of religious devotion.

When he was living in Ketchum, Idaho, in 1958, Hemingway did contribute the cost of a badly needed roof for a Catholic church in nearby Hailey. Father O'Connor, the priest in Hailey, even persuaded him to speak to a group of high school young people meeting at the parish house. But Hemingway's conversation with the students was about writing rather than religion, and generous contributions to people in need were common on Hemingway's part. The transcript of his conversation with the students indicates that writing was still the most important discipline in his life. In response to a question asking if it was difficult to write, Ernest replied:

Not at all. All you need is a perfect ear, absolute pitch, the devotion to your work that a priest of God has for his, the guts of a burglar, no conscience except to writing, and you're in.<sup>139</sup>

Hemingway's final act, his suicide on Sunday morning July 2, 1961,<sup>140</sup> was in direct opposition to Catholic

<sup>138</sup>"Gift to a Shrine," Newsweek, XLVIII (August 27, 1956), 58.

<sup>139</sup>Hotchner, pp. 195-200.

<sup>140</sup>Baker, A Life Story, pp. 563-564.

doctrine and indicates his assumption of complete responsibility for his own fate.

More than one of Hemingway's fictional characters speculate on the possibility of becoming religious shortly before death. None does, and there is little to indicate that Hemingway's funeral rites were anything more than an attempt by his wife and friends to honor a person whom they had loved.

Hemingway was buried, with Catholic services, in the Ketchum village cemetery. Because of his excommunication, the rites were abbreviated.<sup>141</sup> Father Robert J. Waldmann conducted a graveside service in Latin, then, in English, began a meditation on death which was to include Ecclesiastes I, 3-5, the verses which serve as an epigraph to The Sun Also Rises. He began the quotation, "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever." Then the priest paused and passed on to other thoughts, omitting the third verse which includes the line "The sun also riseth," Ave Marias and Pater Nosters were said three times, and the casket was lowered into the grave.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Isabelle, p. 54.

<sup>142</sup> Leicester Hemingway, pp. 17-18.

## CHAPTER II

### RELIGION IN HIS SHORT STORIES

Ernest Hemingway's short stories include a number of variations on two basic themes: the rejection of religion and the formulation of the Hemingway code hero. The two are linked in a cause and effect relationship in several of the stories. Taking the stories in order of publication, it is possible to illustrate the recurrence of these themes throughout his career.

Nick Adams, the protagonist of many of the stories, bears a name symbolic of the initiation of the innocent man into the world of reality. In "Indian Camp," the first story in which he appears, young Nick is introduced to the problem which was to become central to Hemingway's fiction in coming years, the problem of facing death. Although he is witness to a violent scene contrasting the elements of birth and death (the birth of a child by Caesarean section and the corpse of the father dead by suicide), the boy is almost untouched by any immediate relevance to his own life. Once away from the scene and safe in his father's boat, Nick "felt quite sure that he would never die."<sup>1</sup> But the Nick

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Hemingway, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1953), p. 95.

Adams of future stories learns all too well the frailty of human existence, and, in future stories, Hemingway comes to link the problem of facing death to the necessity of facing it in a godless universe.

The first explicit reference to religion is in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," in which the doctor, Nick's father, is portrayed as an angry, fearful man who backs down after challenging a man to a fight and is easily cowed by his domineering wife. The wife is a Christian Scientist who quotes the maxim, "'Remember, that he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city,'"<sup>2</sup> to the man whose spirit she has most certainly broken. The major characters seem to have been patterned after Hemingway's parents and reflect his resentment at seeing religion used to break the pride of a man.

Chapters VII and XV of the short descriptive passages which Hemingway interspersed between some of the longer stories both contain religious references.

Chapter VII deals with the fear-based momentary dedication to religion of a soldier in the midst of a bombardment. "Dear Jesus please get me out. Christ please please please christ. If you'll only keep me from getting killed I'll do anything you say. I believe in you and I'll tell every one in the world that you are the only one that matters,"<sup>3</sup> the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

soldier prays. But his fear subsides, and the next night he is able to go back to the Villa Rossa and find a prostitute. He does not tell her anything about Jesus, and he never tells anybody else.

Chapter XV deals with the attempts of two priests to give courage to a man about to be hanged. Instead of responding to their admonitions to "Be a man,"<sup>4</sup> he becomes so frightened that his knees fail him, and he has to be hanged sitting in a chair.

"Soldier's Home" is a portrait of Harold Krebs, a young man who leaves his Methodist college in Kansas to enlist in World War I and returns home completely unable to relate to his parents or their sense of values. Like "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," the story seems to be highly autobiographical.

Krebs' mother worries because he does not want to settle down and go to work. She warns him that "'God has some work for every one to do. . . . There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom.'" To which, Krebs replies, "'I'm not in His Kingdom.'"<sup>5</sup> His mother cries, and Krebs feels sorry for her, but he cannot help feeling "sick and vaguely nauseated"<sup>6</sup> by her religious platitudes. She asks him to pray with her, but he finds it impossible. He tries to sooth

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

her feelings, but simply is not touched by anything she says. Instead he makes an inward resolve to leave home and get a job in Kansas City. The war has been for him, as it was for Hemingway, a means of moving away from and beyond his religion and his society.

The necessity of facing death bravely, without the comfort of religion, led to Hemingway's idealization of those men who could face it daily. The loss of order and direction in life which had been provided by the church made it necessary to search for an order based on individual values. Such a situation led to the idealization of those brave men who had ordered their own lives. For Hemingway, the bullfighter seems to have exemplified both abilities. According to John Peale Bishop:

Hemingway . . . was seeking to learn from the bullfighters how it is a man confronts death on the sunny sand with skill and beauty and discipline. For in the corrida he saw his own apprehension reduced to a ritual, publicly performed, more violent than any ritual of the Church, and more immediate since it was concerned only with the body, its courage and control. It was because of their tragic sense that the bullfighters were utterly alive.<sup>7</sup>

This seems to be the message of "The Undefeated" in which the old matador, Manuel, triumphs only in his refusal to sacrifice his total dedication to his craft. An old man, seriously wounded, with the crowd turned against him, he

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<sup>7</sup>John Peale Bishop, "The Missing All," Virginia Quarterly, XIII (Summer, 1937), 117.

refuses to leave the ring until he has killed his bull. It is an individual triumph of the most personal kind, and the ritual of the fight seems to have become a personal religion. Much of the imagery is Christian. In describing Manuel's confrontation with the bull, Hemingway says:

. . . he drew the sword out of the muleta, profiled on the splintered left horn, dropped the muleta across his body, so his right hand with the sword on the level with his eye made the sign of the cross, and, rising on his toes, sighted along the dipping blade of the sword at the spot high up between the bull's shoulders.<sup>8</sup>

Manuel's heroism is misunderstood by the crowd, which jeers him and pelts him with cushions which eventually trip him up and cause him to fall. As he falls, he feels the horn pierce his side.

But the transcendence which Manuel achieves when he kills the bull seems a purely pagan image of the battle against death:

He felt the sword go in all the way. Right up to the guard. Four fingers and his thumb into the bull. The blood was hot on his knuckles, and he was on top of the bull.<sup>9</sup>

The story makes only one reference to conventional religion. When Manuel is taken to the hospital after the fight, he believes he is going to live because, "There would be a priest if he was going to die."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, pp. 260-261.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

As secular activities take on religious values, religion itself becomes secularized. John Killinger points out the secularization of religion in "Today is Friday" in which three Roman soldiers discuss their day's experiences on the night following the Crucifixion. Killinger notes that five times the first soldier says of Christ, "'He was pretty good in there today,'"<sup>11</sup> referring to the nobility with which Christ bore suffering on the cross. The story, he says, "is a vivid statement of Hemingway's opinion of our situation today: all the soldiers can do is order another brandy and praise the human side of God."<sup>12</sup>

The tawdriness of much religious observance is paralleled by the cheapness and falseness of the tributes to the matador Manuel Garcia Maera in "Banal Story":

All the papers in Andalucia devoted special supplements to his death. . . . Men and boys bought full-length colored pictures of him to remember him by, and lost the picture they had of him in their memories by looking at the lithographs. . . . One hundred and forty-seven bull-fighters followed him out to the cemetery, where they buried him in the tomb next to [the famous matador] Joselito. After the funeral every one sat in the cafes out of the rain, and many colored pictures of Maera were sold to men who rolled them up and put them away in their pockets.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 357-359.

<sup>12</sup> John Killinger, Hemingway and the Dead Gods: A Study in Existentialism (Lexington, Kentucky, 1960), p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, pp. 361-362.



Actually, the other matadors are glad that he is dead, for he was a great fighter and showed up their poor work. The meaningless tributes destroy the honor of the brave, suffering individual.

The hollowness of religious ritual is also a theme in "Now I Lay Me." Hemingway takes the title from the traditional child's prayer:

Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.<sup>14</sup>

The protagonist of the story, probably Nick Adams, is recovering mentally from the shock of a severe war wound. The thought of going to sleep in the dark night terrifies him:

I myself did not want to sleep because I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way for a long time, ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and go off and then come back. I tried never to think about it, but it had started to go since, in the nights, just at the moment of going off to sleep, and I could only stop it by a very great effort.<sup>15</sup>

Nick has three activities which occupy his mind while he lies awake: he thinks back to all the trout streams he has fished as a boy and fishes them over again carefully,

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<sup>14</sup>John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, edited by Emily Morison Beck (Boston, 1968), p. 1089.

<sup>15</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 363.

ritualistically, in his mind; he thinks back to the people and places of his childhood, and he tries to pray for everyone he has ever known.

Joseph DeFalco maintains that these activities represent a "purposeful regression into an earlier period where peace and order were possible."<sup>16</sup> As such, the fishing sequences meet with the most success. He enjoys remembering both the streams and the way he fished them, slowly, carefully, methodically. But some nights he cannot fish, and on those nights he lies awake and says his prayers over and over trying to pray for everyone he has ever known. The methodical repetition of "Hail Marys" and "Our Fathers" brings some relief and fills time, but the praying itself is a failure. Some nights, he cannot even remember how to pray, and, when he does remember, he still lies awake, unable to summon enough faith to go to sleep.

It is through praying for others that Nick comes to remember his childhood, and these remembrances, as DeFalco points out, bring him full circle to another image of a god, the father, that failed.<sup>17</sup> His remembrances are chiefly of his father, weakened and crushed in spirit by a domineering wife.

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph DeFalco, The Hero in Hemingway's Short Stories (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1963), pp. 106-107.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

The story as a whole indicts a social and moral order which has failed him from childhood on, culminating in the final chaos of a world at war and imminent death. The only order that remains is the order that a man creates for himself, thus the satisfaction of the fishing sequences. The story ends ironically with a friend's advice that he get his mind off his troubles by finding a good wife, and with the implication that Nick may be so estranged from the "normal" world that he may never be able to do something so simple as marrying and settling down.

Isabelle uses this story as a basis for her contention that Hemingway believed in an afterlife. She assumes that when Hemingway speaks of the soul leaving the body, it must be going "to commune with God."<sup>18</sup> On this basis, she asserts that Hemingway must have believed in the concept of the soul and, therefore, in eternity, for "the very fact that he accepts the concept of the soul is sufficient to verify a belief in eternity."<sup>19</sup> Her arguments seem much too subjective to be credible.

The man estranged from the universe, who equates darkness with chaos, reappears most vividly in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." The story consists primarily of a discussion between two cafe waiters concerning an old man who has attempted

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<sup>18</sup>Julanne Isabelle, Hemingway's Religious Experience (New York, 1964), p. 76.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

suicide the week before and is presently sitting alone in the cafe drinking brandy after brandy. The younger of the two waiters is irritated because the old man stays late when the waiter would rather close for the night and go home to his wife. The older waiter is more sympathetic, for he understands the need of man for a clean, ordered spot of brightness in a dark and threatening universe.<sup>20</sup> He, too, is one of "those who do not want to go to bed," one of "those who need a light for the night."<sup>21</sup>

Alone at the end of the story, the old waiter reflects on the cause of his uneasiness and concludes:

It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it was all nada. . . . Our nada who art in nada . . . Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.<sup>22</sup>

The old waiter is in the acute position of a religious man who cannot accept belief. A man who "must bear at the same time his intense spiritual hunger and the realization of the impossibility of its fulfillment."<sup>23</sup> In his clean,

<sup>20</sup> Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton, New Jersey, 1963), p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 382.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 382-383.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph F. Gabriel, "The Logic of Confusion in Hemingway's 'A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,'" College English, XII (May, 1961), 541.

well-lighted cafe, he must try to build something from nothing, an oasis in a world of chaos.<sup>24</sup>

There is confusion over the attribution of the lines revealing the old man's attempted suicide:

"Last week he tried to commit suicide" one waiter said.

"Why?"

"He was in despair."

"What about?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know it was about nothing?"

"He has plenty of money."<sup>25</sup>

Carlos Baker attributes the one word line "'Nothing'" to the young waiter as an indication of the young man's inability to understand the special significance which the older waiter attaches to the word.<sup>26</sup> Joseph Gabriel contends that the attribution is purposely ambiguous, for the line could also fit the older waiter's conception of the word, the chaos of the universe being a valid reason for a man who has plenty of money to be in despair.<sup>27</sup> In either case, both writers agree that to the older waiter the term means, in Gabriel's words, "not a mere negativity, the absence of something, but a real constituent of the universe--the essence of life and of each life: 'It was all a nothing and man was nothing too.'"<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 379.

<sup>26</sup> Baker, Writer as Artist, p. 124.

<sup>27</sup> Gabriel, p. 542.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 541.

In an alternate reading, Isabelle equates the light in the story with God and concludes that, "In 'A Clean, Well-Lighted Place,' the 'light' or knowledge of God is high and the spotted or 'unclean' bar is low."<sup>29</sup> She does not explain how she arrives at this equation.

Conventional religious repression and zeal become outright forces of evil in "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" in which a young boy is brought into a hospital on Christmas Day after having attempted to castrate himself out of mistaken notions of religious purity.

Isabelle says that in this story Hemingway suggests "that Puritan granite can either strengthen or crush."<sup>30</sup> In the frenzied self-mutilation of the boy, it is difficult to find any evidence of the strengthening power of Puritan concepts.

The opening section of "A Way You'll Never Be" includes a description of Austrian war dead. Around the plundered bodies are scattered mass prayerbooks, group postcards of machine gun units, and pornographic pictures.

In "One Reader Writes" a woman questions, as later on Helen questions in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," what fate caused her husband to become ill. She wishes to Christ that his fate was less terrible, but she does not turn to the

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<sup>29</sup>Isabelle, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

church for advice or comfort. Instead, she seeks the advice of a newspaper gossip columnist.

In "A Natural History of the Dead," Hemingway contrasts the horrors of death on the battlefield with religious illusions about the nobility of the human soul.

He begins with the story of Mungo Park, who, lost in the wilderness of an African desert, was supposedly inspired to travel on toward eventual rescue by the sight of a tiny flower:

"Though the whole plant," says he, "was no larger than one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots, leaves and capsules without admiration. Can that Being who planted, watered and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and suffering of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not."<sup>31</sup>

Hemingway then proceeds to examine the evidence. He describes situations in which he has seen bodies, or fragments of bodies, of men, women, and animals who died at war. He details the process of swelling and decay undergone by bodies that are not buried immediately; notes that the bodies are often plundered, their ultimate position depending upon the location of uniform pockets, and recalls the horrible stench that pervades a battlefield filled with corpses lying in the sun. He points out that, following the Austrian offensive of 1918, there "were always poppies and wheat in

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<sup>31</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 440.

the end of June and July, and the mulberry trees were in full leaf," but he concludes that "few travelers would take a good full breath of that early summer air and have any such thoughts as Mungo Park about those formed in His own image."<sup>32</sup>

John Peale Bishop summarizes Hemingway's attitude in his article "The Missing All":

The most tragic thing about the war was not that it made so many dead men, but that it destroyed the tragedy of death. Not only did the young suffer in the war, but every abstraction that would have sustained and given dignity to their suffering. The war made the traditional morality unacceptable. . . . So that at its end, the survivors were left to face, as they could, a world without values.<sup>33</sup>

The Puritanism of the America to which they returned seemed irrelevant and oppressive.<sup>34</sup>

In "Wine of Wyoming," Madame Fontan, a Catholic, expresses amazement at the number of churches in America, and voices the opinion that religion can be overdone:

"Ici il y a trop de churches. En France il y a seulement les catholiques et les protestants-- et très peu de protestants. Mais ici rien que de churches. Quand j'étais venu ici je disais, oh, my God, what are all the churches?"<sup>35</sup>

The pain of life without illusion is emphasized in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio" in which the author-protagonist

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>33</sup>Bishop, pp. 117-118.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 118-119.

<sup>35</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 456.



Frazer is contrasted with the Catholic nun Sister Cecilia and the gambler Cayetano Ordonez. The three are brought together in a hospital ward where Cayetano and Frazer are under the sister's care.

Both the sister and the gambler are sustained by their illusions. Cayetano is a poor, small-town gambler who has been shot by another card player from whom he won forty dollars. He has never had any good luck and is not likely to have any, but he is sustained by the conviction that his luck is bound to change. He endures his wounds with optimism and courage.

Sister Cecilia is an attractive but simple-minded woman who has prayed earnestly through the World Series and is certain that Notre Dame won a football game because the opposing team "'couldn't beat Our Lady.'"<sup>36</sup> She is sustained by her religion and by the simple conviction that, if she is patient, she may someday be a saint.

Frazer does not believe in anything. He can only listen to the radio, a temporary escape from pain and dull hospital routine, and bear his condition as best he can. He realizes that the others are naive, but he refrains from disillusioning them, for he knows the pain of life without belief, which he compares, at the end of the story, to being "'operated on without an anaesthetic.'"<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 476.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 486.

Some of Frazer's nostalgia is seen again in "Fathers and Sons" when Nick, who has been reminiscing about the hunting skills of his own father, is asked by his son, "'Why do we never go to pray at the tomb of my grandfather?'" Nick stalls a bit, but, when he is reminded that someday he, too, will die, concludes, "'I can see we'll have to go.'"<sup>38</sup>

The frailty of illusion, particularly of religious beliefs, is clear in "The Capital of the World." The plot line is simple. A young man from the provinces of Spain comes to Madrid (the capital of the world) filled with illusions and longing to become a bullfighter. Instead, he is killed in a mock fight at the hotel where he works as a waiter when another waiter ties knives to the legs of a chair and tries to imitate the passes of a bull.

The young boy, Paco, believes in everything: in Catholicism, in the glory of the bullring, in the fantasies of another waiter who is a political revolutionary, and in the glamour of a job which involves clean linen and always having enough to eat. He would like "to be a good catholic, a revolutionary, and have a steady job like this, while, at the same time, being a bullfighter."<sup>39</sup> His illusions are sharply contrasted with the realities of life in the cheap hotel. The bullfighters are second rate, and the priests, who have also come from the provinces, are discouraged. The

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 498-499.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-43.

priests are first seen at a table in the hotel restaurant discussing the difficulties of obtaining an audience with a church official in the city. They conclude that they have little faith in the official, that his program is to make a petitioner "broken and worn out by waiting," that the people in the provinces mean little to the higher church, and that, in fact, "'Madrid kills Spain.'"<sup>40</sup> When the priests have finished eating, Paco takes a napkin from their table and passes it like a fighter's cape. As the action progresses toward the mock fight, the priests are seen in their hotel room, one "in his underwear reading his breviary," the other "wearing a nightshirt and saying the rosary."<sup>41</sup> At the same moment, the woman who owns the hotel is pictured lying alone in her bed, "big, fat, honest, clean, easy-going, very religious and never having ceased to miss or pray daily for her husband, dead, now, twenty years."<sup>42</sup> As the boy dies, the priests finish their devotions and prepare for sleep.

Paco dies without having a chance to lose his illusions, but this adds no romance to his death. Instead, he feels "his life go out of him as dirty water empties from a bathtub when the plug is drawn."<sup>43</sup> He does not even have time to complete an act of contrition. Having illusions does not

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

save him from reality. His first contact with the sophisticated world of the city kills him almost instantly, and that is the end.

DeFalco sees Paco as a secular Christ figure. He points out that Hemingway opens the story with the remark that the name Paco is a diminutive for Francisco, a name which suggests to him St. Francis of Assisi, "another imitatio Christi."<sup>44</sup> But Hemingway also says that Madrid is full of boys by this name.<sup>45</sup> An alternate reading might suggest that Paco is a type of "everyman" representing the young idealist.

DeFalco also points to the fact that Paco "had no father, nor anything for the father to forgive." He connects this description with the fact that Paco did not complete his act of contrition and concludes that Paco, in his total innocence, needed no forgiveness.<sup>46</sup> Read in this context, the line might also suggest that there was no heavenly father who could forgive him, and, thus, contrition was an unnecessary act.

DeFalco also notes that Paco comes from an obscure village, that he is poor, that he stands alone amidst the evil and corruption of society, and that he is destroyed by it.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>DeFalco, pp. 93-94.

<sup>45</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 38.

<sup>46</sup>DeFalco, pp. 93, 98.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 94-95.

Whether or not this is sufficient evidence to establish Paco as a Christ figure, it is important that DeFalco arrives at a similar conclusion about his death:

Taken in such a context, the death of Paco without any hint of the possibility of redemption implicit in the crucifixion of Christ is suggestive of the inability of an individual to achieve a reconciliation with the chthonic forces operating in the universe.<sup>48</sup>

The imagery is more complex in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," in which a dying author must come to grips with both the idea of his approaching death and the fact that he will die without having written what he feels would have been his best work. This is, in a sense, the challenge of both physical and spiritual death to the extent that an author's spirit is embodied in his work. Baker says that in 1933 Hemingway said that:

He was always conscious . . . of living not one life but two. One was that of a writer who got his reward after his death, and to hell with what he got now. The other was that of a man who got his everything now, and to hell with what came to him after death. Fame was anyway a strange phenomenon. A man might become immortal with ten lines of poetry or a hundred pages of prose. Or not, no matter how much he wrote, if he never had what it took. In his lifetime, a writer was judged by the sum total and average of<sup>49</sup> his work. After he died, only the best mattered.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York, 1969), pp. 238-239.

Killinger says that, in this story, "the repudiation of a personal God is complete." He points out the mechanistic way in which Harry, the author, describes his wound, which began with only a thorn scratch.<sup>50</sup> His wife, Helen, says, "'I don't see why that had to happen to your leg. What have we done to have that happen to us?'" Harry replies, "'I suppose what I did was to forget to put iodine on it when I first scratched it.'"<sup>51</sup>

There are other examples to support Harry's determination to face death as a natural fact. When Helen tries to encourage him by saying, "'You can't die if you don't give up,'" Harry replies, "'Where did you read that? You're such a bloody fool.'"<sup>52</sup>

His thoughts of death lead him to remember the death of Williamson, a brave bombing officer, who had been so horribly wounded that he had begged Harry to shoot him. He remembers that:

They had had an argument one time about our Lord never sending you anything you could not bear and some one's theory had been that at a certain time the pain passed you out automatically. But he had always remembered Williamson, that night. Nothing passed out Williamson until he gave him all his morphine tablets that he had always saved to use himself and then they did not work right away.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Killinger, p. 60.

<sup>51</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 55.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

The story is saved from total pessimism only by a sort of negative affirmation linking Harry's death at the end of the story with the epigraph at the beginning<sup>54</sup> which reads:

Kilimanjaro is a snow covered mountain 19,710 feet high, and is said to be the highest mountain in Africa. Its western summit is called the Masai "Ngàje Ngài," the House of God. Close to the western summit there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude.<sup>55</sup>

In Harry's death dream, he is in a plane flying toward Kilimanjaro. Despite his failure as a writer, Harry has had the courage to acknowledge his failure and make a good death. In so doing, he achieves a kind of transcendence at the end, identifying him with the leopard.<sup>56</sup> Both Harry and the leopard die trying to attain something that is beyond the range of average human comprehension. In their failure to attain their goals, they still manage to go farther out than is expected of most of their species.

Hemingway's disillusionment with the church in Spain seems to have influenced "The Old Man at the Bridge," in which an old peasant laments having had to leave his animals, two goats, a cat and some pigeons, behind as he fled before the advancing Fascists. The animals were the only family he had, and, although he felt sure that the cat could manage for itself, he feared for the others. "It was Easter Sunday,"

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<sup>54</sup>DeFalco, p. 210.

<sup>55</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 52.

<sup>56</sup>DeFalco, p. 210.

Hemingway says, "and the Fascists were advancing toward the Ebro. It was a gray overcast day with a low ceiling so their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was all the good luck that old man would ever have."<sup>57</sup>

Two of the Spanish Civil War stories also contain brief references to religion.

In "The Denunciation," the narrator recalls buying three party tracts from an old woman. "They were ten centavos a piece," he says, "and I told her to keep the change from a peseta. She said God would bless me. I doubted this but read the three leaflets and drank . . . [a] gin and tonic."<sup>58</sup>

In "Night Before Battle," an old waiter boasts proudly of his Communist son, but, soon after, in bidding goodbye to the narrator and his companion, both Republican soldiers, he says, "'God bless you . . . God guard you and keep you.'"<sup>59</sup> Like so many Hemingway characters, he represents the passage from an old world of order to the chaos of the modern world. Intellectually, he has accepted the transition; spiritually, he longs for the past.

<sup>57</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories, p. 80.

<sup>58</sup>Ernest Hemingway, "The Fifth Column" and Four Unpublished Stories of the Spanish Civil War (New York, 1969), p. 91.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 121.



Hemingway characters in conflict with organized religion appear throughout the short stories beginning with the early Nick Adams stories and continuing through the more mature works. In no Hemingway short story is there evidence of a benevolent power at work in the universe. Instead, the importance of organizing a private world becomes a major Hemingway theme.

## CHAPTER III

### RELIGION IN HIS NOVELS

[The need for religious faith, the rejection of belief, and the consequent building of a personal moral code is as important a feature of Ernest Hemingway's novels] as it is of his short stories. In the process, Christian imagery is sometimes converted to symbolize the struggle of an individual hero to find a personal moral order. ✓

[The problem of facing death courageously is central to most Hemingway fiction. It is essentially linked with the rejection of religion, for the Hemingway hero, having rejected conventional concepts of an afterlife, must learn to face death on his own terms.] This calls for great courage, for to live in fear of death is no life at all. Hemingway explores the problem of life without faith in The Sun Also Rises (1926), A Farewell To Arms (1929), To Have and Have Not (1937), For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), Across the River and into the Trees (1950), The Old Man and the Sea (1952), and Islands in the Stream, published posthumously in 1970. While the essential problem remains that of how to live courageously in terms of an individual code of conduct, Hemingway explores

a number of alternative experiences on which to establish a meaningful existence. Religion, represented by the Catholic church in each of the novels, remains a seductive, but impotent, escape from reality. At their best, the stories are essentially tragic and beautiful, calling forth the noblest qualities of the hero, while the death of all the characters is predetermined from the start.

In The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway's first important novel, the author establishes these themes by illustrating the predicament of an alienated post-World War I generation.

The book takes its title from the Ecclesiastes quotation which appeared as an epigraph to the first edition of the novel:

Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity . . . One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever . . . The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose . . . The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. . . . All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.<sup>1</sup>

In the contrast between the short life of an individual and the perpetual cycling of nature, Hemingway establishes the predicament of mankind. Man is frail and life is brief, but

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<sup>1</sup> Holy Bible, King James Version, Ecclesiastes, 1:2, 4-7.

the earth is good and the world can be a good place if a person can just learn how to live in it.

The specific problem of the narrator, Jake Barnes, is his emasculation due to a war wound. He is capable of feeling passion for Brett Ashley, the woman he loves, but he is incapable of consummating their relationship. Jake's wound stands as a symbol for the condition of a war-weary generation. Having rejected conventional concepts of war, glory, honor, and religion, Jake and his friends are left with a passionate desire for something to give order and meaning to life. They are denied the consummation of a spiritual passion as Jake is denied the fulfillment of a physical one. Jake links his physical wound with his spiritual dissatisfaction when thinking of the poor solace offered him by religion: "The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that. Good advice, anyway. Not to think about it. Oh, it was swell advice. Try and take it sometime. Try and take it."<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Brett, Jake, and their friends have established various methods of escape from their loneliness. Brett has entered into a series of loveless affairs. Robert Cohn has buried himself in a romantic, idealized love for Brett and refuses to admit that

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<sup>2</sup>Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York, 1954), p. 31.

his make-believe romance is only a product of his imagination. Brett's fiancé, Mike Campbell, is on the road to alcoholism, and Jake has established himself as a cynical, and somewhat morally superior, observer of their trials. Despite his outward cynicism, however, Jake is inwardly tormented by his unfulfilled love for Brett.

Both Jake and Brett are aware of the spiritual darkness that they face, and both would like to find solace in religion. When they attend the religious festival of San Fermin in Pamplona, both attempt, without success, to pray. Jake, who considers himself a "technical Catholic," first goes alone to the Cathedral. He begins to pray for himself and his friends, but soon finds himself getting sleepy. His mind wanders, and, finally, he realizes that he isn't praying at all. He feels ashamed and regrets that he is "such a rotten Catholic," but realizes that there is nothing he can do about it, "at least for a while, and maybe never." He leaves the church, wishing that he "felt religious" and hoping that, maybe, he will the next time.<sup>3</sup>

Later, Jake goes with Brett to the church, but the religious atmosphere makes her nervous, and she confesses that it "'Never does me any good.'"<sup>4</sup>

Jake does find two successful substitutes for religion in the course of the novel. One is the earth itself. The

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 96-97.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 208-209.

other is the ritualistic bullfighting at the festival. The scenes of the novel alternate between periods of intense social contact and periods of retirement to the country. During his first period of withdrawal from civilization, Jake and his friend, Bill Gorton, go on a fishing trip to Burgete. In the Spanish mountains, they find spiritual peace and refreshment. They meet an Englishman by the name of Harris, and they all go for a walk through the monastery at Roncesvalles. At the end of their walk, Harris concludes that the monastery is a remarkable place. "'It isn't the same as fishing, though, is it?'" Bill asks him. Harris agrees.<sup>5</sup> The ritualistic performance of a simple sport in the mountains is more spiritually refreshing than contact with religion. The establishment of peace through contact with nature is a consistent Hemingway theme.

The second substitute for religion, the bullfight, is also used frequently by Hemingway as a means of establishing confrontation with death and a renewed appreciation of life. According to Melvin Backman:

Running through Ernest Hemingway's work . . . .  
are two dominant motifs--the matador and the  
crucified. The matador represents a great force  
held in check, releasing itself proudly in a  
controlled yet violent administering of death.  
The crucified stands for the taking of pain, even

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

unto death, with all of one's courage and endurance so that it becomes a thing of poignancy and nobility.<sup>6</sup>

The ritual sacrifice of the bullfight makes it a particularly fitting substitute for the Catholic faith with its elaborate celebration of Mass. Backman maintains that Pedro Romero, the young bullfighter in the novel, is free of the spiritual lethargy which plagues the others because "his fighting with the bulls brought him into a fundamental relationship with life, which involved the pitting of his maleness against that of the bull."<sup>7</sup>

Romero's purity also provides a means of saving Brett from total self-debasement. After she has seduced the young bullfighter, Brett realizes that, by staying with him, she will corrupt him. She forces him to leave her, concluding that she is "'not going to be one of these bitches that ruins children.'" Despite the pain of her sacrifice, she feels good about it and tells Jake: "'You know it makes one feel rather good deciding not to be a bitch. . . . It's sort of what we have instead of God.'" Jake reminds her that "'Some people have God. . . . Quite a lot.'"<sup>8</sup> But Brett knows that He doesn't work for them, and she has

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<sup>6</sup>Melvin Backman, "Hemingway: The Matador and the Crucified," Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, edited by Carlos Baker (New York, 1962), p. 135.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>8</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Sun, pp. 243-245.

expressed a very important tenet of the Hemingway code which Jake also understands: individuals must establish their own morality based on personal experience.

Earlier in the book, Jake defines immorality as "things that made you disgusted afterward."<sup>9</sup> In Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway gives his personal definition:

So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after and judged by these moral standards, which I do not defend, the bullfight is very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality and immortality, and after it is over I feel very sad but very fine.<sup>10</sup>

By the concluding chapter of the novel, Jake, like Brett, realizes the need for the self-control and personal sacrifice which make life both painful and bearable. As Brett has relinquished her claim on Pedro Romero, Jake must relinquish any romantic fantasies about his relationship to her. In response to her anguished "'Oh, Jake . . . We could have had such a damned good time together,'" he replies, "'Yes . . . isn't it pretty to think so?'"<sup>11</sup> His remark indicates an acceptance of his situation and a realization of the limits against which it is futile for him to struggle or complain.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>10</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon (New York, 1960), p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Sun, p. 247.



Isabelle says of The Sun Also Rises that:

Hemingway is wrestling with the riddle of life: man's true happiness must not be looked for on earth, not in human wisdom, not in luxury, and not in royal splendor. Many afflictions await everybody as a consequence of their own passions. Brett is ruled and ruined by her passions. Yet God does not deny a person a small measure of happiness if he does not seek beyond or above that intended for mankind.<sup>12</sup>

This interpretation is not supported by evidence from the novel. Isabelle appears to have assumed that Hemingway held the same convictions as she and to have interpreted the novel accordingly.

With The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway established many themes which recur throughout his later works. Most had already been anticipated in short stories. His next novel, A Farewell To Arms, contains an increasingly sophisticated development of the Hemingway code and a bitter rejection of religion. The theme remains the rejection of traditional values, but, in this case, the void is filled, for a time, by the love of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley.

The lovers are bonded together by a mutual disillusionment. Catherine, who had joined a World War I nurses corps because of the romantic idea of being near her childhood sweetheart, had been shocked into awareness by his death. She refuses, however, to take refuge in religious

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<sup>12</sup>Julianne Isabelle, Hemingway's Religious Experience (New York, 1964), p. 39.

promises of life after death. When she meets Henry, and tells him of her experience, she assures him that she knows there is no afterlife.

Henry, an American serving in the Italian army, begins thinking seriously about the war after being badly wounded. His leg injuries, similar to those Hemingway received in Italy, mark the first serious encroachment of the war on his personal pleasure. Out of his personal pain, Henry draws an identification with all those who risk their lives in the name of "sacred" causes which they can not understand. His conclusion forces him to distinguish between myth and reality. He says:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it.<sup>13</sup>

Both Catherine and Henry state frankly that they have no religion, although Henry admits that he sometimes fears God at night. Catherine retains a firm rejection until her death; she tells the nurse at the hospital that she has no religion, and, on her deathbed, she would rather see Henry

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<sup>13</sup>Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell To Arms (New York, 1957), pp. 184-185.

than a priest. Henry does break down and pray for her before she dies, but his prayers go unanswered. Henry's desperate prayers and Catherine's firm atheism make it very clear that her death is final and that Henry is fully initiated into the ranks of those who must learn to bear their sorrows alone.

This outcome is foreshadowed earlier in the novel when Catherine gives Henry a St. Anthony medal for good luck. That night, he is severely wounded, and the medal disappears. Henry thinks that, "Some one probably got it at one of the dressing stations."<sup>14</sup>

The only hints that there might be a supernatural force in the universe indicate that it is a vindictive one. Henry, telling the story after Catherine's death, describes the wonder of their love and then says bitterly:

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterwards many are strong at the broken places. But these that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.<sup>15</sup>

Of the night in the hospital, he remembers thinking:

That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. . . . You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

He makes a direct comparison between man and some ants he once observed trapped on a burning log. He had had the opportunity to play God and save them, but he was busy mixing a drink. In the process, he threw a cup of water on the fire which, he thought, probably "only steamed the ants."<sup>17</sup>

What Catherine and Henry do have, instead of religion, is their love for one another. Hemingway makes this explicit. Catherine tells Henry, "'You're my religion. You're all I've got.'"<sup>18</sup> Henry's old friend, Count Greffi, confesses that, although he always expected to become religious as he grew older, he has not been able to experience any religious feeling. Henry replies, "'My own comes only at night.'" The count answers, "'Then too you are in love. Do not forget that is a religious feeling.'"<sup>19</sup>

Even the Italian priest who visits Henry when he is wounded recognizes the close relationship between religious feeling and love. He tells Henry that when you love "'you will be happy.'"<sup>20</sup> The priest is speaking of the love of God, which Henry cannot experience, but Henry can, by transferring that love to Catherine, be happy also, if only until her death. Thus love in A Farewell To Arms, like bullfighting in The Sun Also Rises, provides a substitute for spiritual passion.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 327-328.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

Isabelle says that the love affair between Lt. Henry and Catherine represents Hemingway's condemnation of the moral laxity of the post World War I generation. Catherine's death, she says, is a just punishment visited upon her for having been involved in an illicit love affair.<sup>21</sup>

She does not account for Hemingway's idealization of the romance or for the fact that Catherine's death is treated as something tragic and unjust.

Most of the allusions to religion in Hemingway's next novel, To Have and Have Not, do not concern the main character. Harry Morgan, a rum-runner who is fatally wounded while smuggling Cuban revolutionaries to Havana, never makes a direct statement about his religious views. Nevertheless he, like Frederic Henry, lives in a hostile universe. Thinking of the desperate chances he must take to keep himself and his family alive, he reasons, "I don't want to fool with it but what choice have I got? They don't give you any choice now. I can let it go; but what will the next thing be? I didn't ask for any of this and if you've got to do it you've got to do it."<sup>22</sup> Like the characters in A Farewell To Arms, he can not afford to be caught off base. While planning his last smuggling venture, he tells himself, "Sooner or later they will figure on us. But in

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<sup>21</sup> Isabelle, pp. 20, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Hemingway, To Have and Have Not (New York, 1937), p. 105.

the Gulf you got time. And I'm figuring all the time. I've got to think right all the time. I can't make a mistake. Not a mistake. Not once."<sup>23</sup>

When Harry's daughters find out that their father is seriously wounded, they begin praying for him, but, while they sit praying in the hospital receiving room, Harry dies. The scene parallels, although it is given less emphasis, Henry's anguished prayer at Catherine's death.

Afterward, like Henry, Harry's wife, Marie, is left to face life alone. Her age and poverty make it particularly difficult, and her thoughts center on the dirty trick life has played her:

Now I got to get started on something. I know I got to. But when you got a man like that and some lousy Cuban shoots him you can't just start right out; because everything inside of you is gone. . . . And I'm big now and ugly and old and he ain't here to tell me that I ain't.

How do you get through nights if you can't sleep? I guess you find out all right. I guess you find out everything in this goddamned life.<sup>24</sup>

The love bond between Harry and his wife is, until his death, the one unchanging good thing in both their lives. In contrast to this relationship, Hemingway presents a subplot dealing with a loveless marriage between an affected writer and his wife. Theirs is a marriage without the comforts of conventional religion or the spiritually

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-107.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-261.

satisfying love that exists between Harry and Marie. The writer's wife, a former Catholic, upbraids him bitterly for marrying her outside the church, destroying her faith, and, then, giving her nothing satisfying in return. In the Hemingway canon, it is never enough just to destroy old gods. Unless a viable code is found to replace conventional creeds, the characters must be truly lost.

In the early stages of the novel, Harry seems obsessed with the idea of self-reliance. When he realizes that he must have someone to help him in a smuggling venture, he thinks, "I got to have somebody I can depend on. If we make it I'll see he gets a share. . . . It would be better alone, anything is better alone but I don't think I can handle it alone. It would be much better alone."<sup>25</sup> This isolation of the initiated characters is present in both The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell To Arms. To Catherine and Henry and the initiates at Pamplona, the uninitiated present a threat to their highly codified existence.

At the end of To Have and Have Not, however, Harry realizes that "'a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance.'" It is an important lesson. It had, Hemingway says, "taken him all of his life to learn it."<sup>26</sup> Harry's death marks a subtle shift in the relationship of Hemingway's heroes to the world.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 225.

Isabelle says that Harry Morgan's death is just payment for a sinful life and speculates that his statement "'A man has no chance alone [sic]" could be "interpreted to mean that a man has no chance . . . without the help of God."<sup>27</sup> It seems more likely that Harry, a victim of a hostile universe, begins to realize the importance of his relationship to other men.

In his next novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls, the hero Robert Jordan's sense of social responsibility makes it necessary for him to relate to characters outside the Hemingway code. Unlike Jake Barnes and Frederic Henry, Jordan chooses to fight and die for a political concept he believes in. Jordan's commitment to the Spanish Civil War does not, however, indicate a sentimental retreat to the glorification of traditional ideals. Jordan is fully aware of the brutality of war and the inadequacy of traditional social institutions. He makes his commitment to a social system which he thinks will provide a better life for the Spanish working class, but he knows that many of the people who fight with him fight only to satisfy a lust to kill. He is also aware that the Catholic church, the traditional arbiter of moral standards, has sided with the enemy. In this novel, social commitment and love for other human beings replace religion in Jordan's value system.

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<sup>27</sup> Isabelle, p. 48.



Early in the story, Pilar, a woman leader in the rebel band with which Jordan is working asks him: "'In what do you believe?'" Jordan replies, "'In my work.'"<sup>28</sup> Later, she remarks that Jordan is "very religious" about his politics.<sup>29</sup> In describing his commitment to the war, Jordan says:

You felt, in spite of all the bureaucracy and inefficiency and party strife something that was like the feeling you expected to have and did not have when you made your first communion. . . . It gave you a part in something that you could believe in wholly and completely and in which you felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it. It was something that you had never known before but that you had experienced now and you gave such importance to it and the reasons for it that your own death seemed of complete unimportance; only a thing to be avoided because it would interfere with the performance of your duty.<sup>30</sup>

In "Hemingway and the Problem of Belief," Leo J. Hertzell says:

It would seem that Jake has moved through Jordan to an awareness of the futility of the search for the enthusiastic response in religion and rather than change his norms for evaluating experience he has changed the object from which he expects the experience. In other words, he has substituted social good for spiritual good and seems to find in his identification with the social movement the excitement and satisfaction he vainly sought in religion.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls (New York, 1940), p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> Leo J. Hertzell, "Hemingway and the Problem of Belief," Catholic World, CLXXXIV (October, 1956), 33.

Other heroic characters in the novel hold similar beliefs. Pilar says, "'I put great illusion in the Republic. I believe firmly in the Republic and I have faith. I believe in it with fervor as those who have religious faith believe in the mysteries.'"<sup>32</sup>

Pilar is one of the few code initiates in the novel with an instinctive understanding of Jordan. Another, the old man Anselmo, is something of a father figure to Jordan. Anselmo, once a devout Catholic, is both very kind and very wise. Although he is determined to give up his religion in order to be loyal to the revolution, he embodies all of the Christian principles which are incorporated into the Hemingway creed. He is a man of great courage, willing to kill when he believes it necessary, but he deprecates those revolutionaries who, in rejecting traditional institutions such as the church, assume that they have the right to kill indiscriminately. He cannot reject the idea that killing men, whatever the reason, is a great evil, and he longs for the day when he can expiate his sins by doing some sort of work for the Republic.

Anselmo's dilemma is a forceful presentation of the need for self-control in a godless universe. He tells Jordan that he misses his faith, but that he realizes that ". . . now a man must be responsible to himself.'" Jordan replies,

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<sup>32</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Bell Tolls, p. 90.

"Then it is thyself who will forgive thee for killing."  
 Anselmo answers, "I believe so . . . . Since you put  
 it clearly in that way I believe that must be it. But with  
 or without God, I think it is a sin to kill. To take the life  
 of another is to me very grave!"<sup>33</sup>

The only way that Anselmo can conceive of expiating the  
 sin of which he condemns himself is through social commitment.  
 Thus, he decides:

I think that after the war there will have to be  
 some great penance done for the killing. If we  
 no longer have religion after the war then I  
 think there must be some form of civic penance  
 organized that all may be cleansed from the  
 killing or else we will never have a true and  
 human basis for living. . . . .  
 Later on there may be certain days that one can  
 work for the state.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to his commitment to the war, Jordan has a  
 love for a girl, Maria, which is both a joy to him and a  
 protection from the savagery of the universe. Pilar under-  
 stands his longing for personal contact. She tells Jordan  
 that, "'Before we had religion and other nonsense. Now for  
 every one there should be some one to whom one can speak  
 frankly, for all the valor that one could have one becomes  
 very alone.'"<sup>35</sup>

In "The Look of Religion: Hemingway and Catholicism,"  
 Hertzell points out that:

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

Probably the most frequent presentation of this idea of Catholicism without a supernatural dimension occurs in Hemingway's treatment of prayer. Prayer is the most obvious attempt by man to establish some relationship with a supernatural world, and it is probably the only means most men have of trying to test the consequences of belief. Catholics pray frequently in Hemingway narratives. In every case, the prayer is met with silence.<sup>36</sup>

This is particularly evident in For Whom the Bell Tolls. There is also a heavy irony connected with many religious references.

In one instance, Jordan kills a young soldier. He aims his gun at the center of the man's chest, a little lower than a Sacred Heart medal the soldier is wearing. Later, Jordan checks through the soldier's papers and finds a letter from the man's sister, which he reads:

There was quite a lot of religion in the letter and she prayed to Saint Anthony, to the Blessed Virgin of Pilar, and to other Virgins to protect him and she wanted him never to forget that he was also protected by the Sacred Heart of Jesus that he wore still, she trusted, at all times over his own heart where it had been proven innumerable--this was underlined--times to have the power of stopping bullets.<sup>37</sup>

A second incident occurs in the midst of a bombing attack. A young soldier, Joaquin, prays until he is knocked unconscious by a flying rock fragment. After the attack, a

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<sup>36</sup> Leo J. Hertzell, "The Look of Religion: Hemingway and Catholicism," Renaissance, XVII (Winter, 1964), 79.

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Bell Tolls, p. 303.

Lt. Berrendo of the opposing forces finds Joaquin, makes the sign of the cross, and shoots him in the back of the head. Having done his duty, Berrendo walks away sadly, praying for the soul of another soldier, a good friend killed in the same battle.

Shortly before Jordan is badly wounded, Maria breaks down and prays frantically for his safety. Jordan is dead before nightfall. Maria's prayers are comparable to Frederic Henry's prayers for Catherine in A Farewell To Arms. The results are the same.

Clearly, prayer can do nothing to save these characters from physical destruction. Nor is it effective in preparing men spiritually to face death, a problem of major concern to Robert Jordan. A long section of the novel is devoted to Pilar's story of the outbreak of revolution in the town in which she lived. The leading officials of the town were made to pass between lines of armed, jeering townspeople, who beat them and, then, threw them over the edge of a cliff. Before going through the line, each man was allowed spiritual preparation by a priest. All day long, the priest prayed with the men. Not only was he singularly unsuccessful in giving courage to the men, he also made a bad death himself. Even Pilar's common-law husband, Pablo, the revolutionary leader, was disappointed by the priest's cowardice. He explained:

"To me he was a great disillusionment. All day I had waited for the death of the priest. I had thought he would be the last to enter the lines. I awaited it with great anticipation. I expected something of a culmination."<sup>38</sup>

The analogy is simple. If the priest cannot draw enough strength from religion to die well, the faith cannot have much to offer other people.

Occasionally, Hemingway's frustration with the Catholic church in Spain interrupts the narrative. For example, in describing the activities of Lt. Berrendo and a sniper, Hemingway takes time to comment:

There is no language so filthy as Spanish. There are words for all the vile words in English and there are other words and expressions that are used only in countries where blasphemy keeps pace with the austerity of religion. Lieutenant Berrendo was a very devout Catholic. So was the sniper. They were Carlists from Navarra and while both of them cursed and blasphemed when they were angry they regarded it as a sin which they regularly confessed.<sup>39</sup>

Isabelle draws an analogy between Hemingway's treatment of Catholics in For Whom the Bell Tolls and his rejection of Protestant faith and concludes:

Hemingway was sickened by sentimentalized religion and sentimentalized faith. Christians whining and whimpering their prayers to an Almighty God were intolerable, to his thinking. Through their blind, sickly stupor he felt they were sending their souls to hell. Fear and weakness were the neurosis from which their religion suffered.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>40</sup> Isabelle, p. 32.

On the basis of this conjecture, she attempts to turn criticism of the Church into a prescription for religious reform. Yet, she provides no evidence to support such a statement.

There is no reason to assume, however, that a rejection of religion in Hemingway's novels precludes the author's use of religious symbolism. There is something mystical, for example, in the repetition of the number three in the novel. It seems possible that Hemingway had in mind the three days of Christ's death and resurrection. This is worth noting, as it appears in other Hemingway fiction.

Jordan spends exactly three days with the band led by Pilar and Pablo before he is killed. As a result, his love affair with Maria, whom he meets with the band, is confined to this period. There are three references to this, and they are very explicit. In the first, Jordan speculates that, "Maybe I have had all my life in three days."<sup>41</sup> In the second, he notes that the land has turned from brown to green (possibly suggesting the growth of his love) in three days.<sup>42</sup> In the third, just before his death, he realizes that his earlier prediction has come true. His correction of a miscalculation gives the number greater significance. He says to himself, "Well, we had all our luck in four days.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 438.

Not four days. It was afternoon when I first got there and it will not be noon today. That makes not quite three days and three nights. Keep it accurate. . . . Quite accurate."<sup>43</sup>

Earlier in the story, Maria and Jordan make love, and the world seems to move. Pilar tells Maria that this is a sensation that she will have only three times in her lifetime. It is a prophetic statement, "'You have had one and there are two more in the world for thee,'" she says.<sup>44</sup>

In planning his last military action before his death, Jordan sketches the plans for the action three times.

He also thinks about a mysterious wheel of life which "has been around twice already" and which he does not want to ride. The wheel always brings the rider back to where he started. The book opens with Jordan lying on the pine-needled floor of a Spanish forest. It ends three days later with him waiting for death, "his heart beating against the pine needle floor of the forest."<sup>45</sup>

There is even greater use of religious symbolism in the next two Hemingway novels, although conventional belief is still strongly rejected. In Across the River and into the Trees and The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway's code

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 471.



characters assume membership in a private religious order in which the Hemingway hero is the supreme being. According to Martin Shockley in "Hemingway's Moment of Truth," the Hemingway hero must possess seven virtues: honesty, courage, skill, sincerity, loyalty, stoicism, and compassion.<sup>46</sup> Characters who possess these virtues are members of the order. Those who do not are banned. The novels present an interesting contrast, for the religious symbolism in Across the River is clumsy and irritating, while that in The Old Man provides a beautifully unified spiritual theme which parallels, without obstructing, the physical action of the plot.

Col. Richard Cantwell, in Across the River, is a seasoned military man who, like other Hemingway heroes, has been seriously wounded, both physically and spiritually, and whose problem is to live well despite his losses and to make a good death.

Leo Hertzfel says that:

Experience-wise, Cantwell is Jake and Frederic and Robert. Cantwell is old, a dying man. He no longer possesses the illusions. He turns to sex, alcohol, and sport even in his dying moments. He dies with no thought of God, religion, eternity and without Jordan's excitement of martyrdom. With the foolishness of his immaturity and the stoicism born of disillusion he is a most pathetic and stupid old man.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Martin Staples Shockley, "Hemingway's Moment of Truth," Colorado Quarterly, V (Spring, 1957), 380-388.

<sup>47</sup>Hertzfel, "Problem of Belief," p. 33.

Cantwell does often seem childish and pathetic. Yet, with all his faults, he is considered a hero both by his friends and by the beautiful, young girl who loves him. Although he does not die in battle, he faces death with the calm stoicism of a Robert Jordan. His serious leg wounds and other biographical details parallel Hemingway's own life closely enough to suggest that the author considered admiration, rather than pity, the proper dominant response to the character. Unless, Hemingway was pitying himself at the time.

Cantwell has been initiated into a godless, hostile universe with his first serious war wounds:

He was hit three times that winter, but they were all gift wounds; small wounds in the flesh of the body without breaking bone, and he had become quite confident of his personal immortality since he knew he should have been killed in the heavy artillery bombardment that always preceded the attacks. Finally he did get hit properly and for good. No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of the immortality, he thought. Well, in a way, that is quite a lot to lose.<sup>48</sup>

Twice he tells Renata, the girl he loves, that he does not believe in an afterlife. Both times, it is with the full realization that he is close to death.

On the day he dies, Cantwell, like Count Greffi in A Farewell To Arms, speculates on the possibility of turning

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<sup>48</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Across the River and into the Trees (New York, 1950), p. 35.

to religion before death. "You going to run as a Christian?" he asks himself in a moment of weakness. "Maybe I will get Christian toward the end. . . . Who wants to make a bet on that?"<sup>49</sup> It is the last time he thinks of the possibility, and he dies without experiencing conversion.

To Cantwell, life is a game which can be played skillfully, but there are no second chances. He regrets that he is old and ill and cannot hope to live long enough to make a good husband for Renata, but he does not allow himself any illusions. Instead, he thinks to himself:

And why can't I have her and love her and cherish her and never be rude, nor bad, and have the five sons that go to the five corners of the world; wherever that is? I don't know. I guess the cards we draw are those we get. You wouldn't like to re-deal would you dealer?

No. They only deal to you once, and then you pick them up and play them.<sup>50</sup> I can play them if I draw anything at all.

The problem is that he has few cards left to play, and he knows it.

Cantwell relies on his love for Renata, his enjoyment of hunting, and his friendship with male companions for spiritual satisfaction. After telling Renata that he does not believe in an afterlife, he tells her that, because of her love, he does not fear death:

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 179-180.

"I feel as though I were out on some bare-assed hill where it was too rocky to dig, and the rocks all solid, but with nothing jutting, and no bulges, and all of a sudden instead of being there naked, I was armoured. Armoured and the eighty-eights not there."<sup>51</sup>

Cantwell is Supreme Commander of the Order of Brusadelli, a "noble, military and religious"<sup>52</sup> order founded in honor of "a particularly notorious multi-millionaire non-taxpaying profiteer of Milan, who had, in the course of a dispute over property, accused his young wife, publicly and legally through due process of law, of having deprived him of his judgment through her extraordinary sexual demands."<sup>53</sup> There are only five members, all close friends, and, although the order is supposed to be a great private joke, they guard it jealously against unworthy outsiders. When Renata is finally initiated into membership, she is told that the supreme secret of the society is that "'Love is love and fun is fun. But it is always so quiet when the gold fish die."<sup>54</sup> The "secret" message, like the title, is supposed to be in jest, yet the major concerns of the initiates seem to be to enjoy life and to be prepared for death.

The religious symbolism is heavy-handed. Col. Cantwell is Supreme Commander of the order. He loves Renata, whose name means "reborn."<sup>55</sup> In one passage, he asks her if she

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-129.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>55</sup> Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York, 1969), p. 477.

would "'ever like to run for Queen of Heaven.'" A few minutes later, she looks at his scarred hand and tells him that she has dreamed "'it was the hand of Our Lord.'"<sup>56</sup> She is continually asking to see or touch his hand. When she asks him how it was wounded, he replies, "'On a rocky, bare-assed hill.'" When she asks to touch it, he replies, "'Just be careful around the center . . . . it's split there and it still cracks open.'"<sup>57</sup>

The number three also recurs consistently throughout this novel. The winter that Cantwell was first seriously wounded, he had been hit previously three times. He has made three bad decisions in his career, and he has lost three important battalions. He has loved three women before meeting Renata and has lost all three of them. He recalls having fought alongside an old friend in three major battles. In describing the capture of a prisoner, he says that it took three men to take him. In describing the liberation of Paris by the Allies, he says that he had to fight three times. He says that he has loved three countries and lost them thrice though two have been retaken. He remembers that, on his divorce from his last wife, the papers were in triplicate. He tells Renata that a general has three regiments to command and that each is composed of three battalions. When the

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<sup>56</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Across the River, pp. 83-84.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

first contraction of his last heart attack occurs, he thinks, "Three strikes is out . . . and they gave me four."<sup>58</sup>

When the third pain hits, he realizes that he is dying.

The religious symbolism in The Old Man and the Sea has been accurately catalogued by Joseph Waldmeir in "Confiteor Hominem: Ernest Hemingway's Religion of Man." According to Waldmeir:

The Christian religious symbols running through the story, which are so closely interwoven with the story in fact as to suggest an allegorical intention on Hemingway's part, are so obvious as to require little more than a listing of them here. The Old Man is a fisherman, and he is also a teacher, one who has taught the boy not only how to fish--that is, how to make a living--but how to behave as well, giving him the pride and humility necessary to a good life. During the trials with the great fish and with the sharks his hands pain him terribly, his back is lashed by the line, he gets an eyepiercing headache, and his chest constricts and he spits blood. He hooks the fish at noon, and at noon of the third day he kills it by driving his harpoon into its heart. As he sees the second and third sharks attacking, the Old Man calls aloud "'Ay,'" and Hemingway comments: "There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just such a noise as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hand and into the wood." On landing, the Old Man shoulders his mast and goes upward from the sea toward his hut; he is forced to rest several times on his journey up the hill, and when he reaches the hut he lies on the bed "with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up."

Three, seven, and forty are key numbers in the Old and New Testaments, and in the religion, and Hemingway makes a judicious use of them. The Old Man, as the story opens, has fished alone for forty-four fateful days and with the boy for forty more. The Old Man's trial with the great

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

fish lasts exactly three days: the fish is landed on the seventh attempt; seven sharks are killed; and, although Christ fell only three times under the Cross, whereas the Old Man has to rest from the weight of the mast seven times, there is a consistency in the equal importance of the numbers themselves.<sup>59</sup>

Waldmeir contends that, in The Old Man, Hemingway used allegory to elevate the Hemingway code to the level of religion.<sup>60</sup> The old fisherman's victory lies solely in his adherence to code principles. He cannot control the sharks who destroy his marvelous fish, but he can, and does, control himself. Thus, even in defeat, he knows that he has fished well and that he has done all that is humanly possible to defend his prize.

Edmund Wilson, in The Wound and the Bow, says that, "Despite Hemingway's preoccupation with physical contests, his heroes are almost always defeated physically, nervously, practically; their victories are moral ones."<sup>61</sup> The old fisherman, Santiago, distinguishes clearly between physical and moral defeat. When the sharks come, he comforts himself with the knowledge that ". . . man is not made for defeat. . . . A man can be destroyed but not defeated."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph Waldmeir, "Confiteor Hominem: Ernest Hemingway's Religion of Man," Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Robert P. Weeks (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962), pp. 161-162.

<sup>60</sup> Waldmeir, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> Edmund Wilson, The Wound and the Bow (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1941), p. 241.

<sup>62</sup> Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (New York, 1952), p. 114.

Yet, if Hemingway has elevated his code to the level of religion, this religion is, as Waldmeir points out, "a religion of man."<sup>63</sup> There is no indication of a supernatural force at work. Santiago has, in fact, the same success in praying as other Hemingway characters; he is worse off afterward. Under stress the old man, who says he is not religious, prays for success in catching the fish. Then, Hemingway tells us, "With his prayers said, and feeling much better, but suffering exactly as much, and perhaps a little more, he leaned against the wood of the bow and began, mechanically, to work the fingers of his left hand."<sup>64</sup> Santiago's success lies in the beauty of his own efforts; the sharks take the fish.

After the fish is destroyed, Santiago experiences a feeling of guilt for having killed such a wonderful animal. He eventually concludes that "everything kills everything else in some way."<sup>65</sup> His own actions are not sinful because they are part of the cycle of nature in a world in which everything lives by killing something else. As for worrying about conventional concepts of sin, he decides that, "It is much too late for that and there are people who are paid to do it. Let them think about it."<sup>66</sup> Being a good fisherman

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<sup>63</sup>Waldmeir, p. 168.

<sup>64</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Old Man, p. 72.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 116.



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is, for Santiago, the important religious experience. The church offers nothing comparable.

Islands in the Stream, published posthumously in 1970, is a composite of ideas and attitudes reflected in other Hemingway works. Reports indicate that Hemingway had begun work on the novel as early as 1949, and he may have continued sporadic work on it until his final period of breakdown in 1961.<sup>67</sup> This probably accounts for the close resemblance between sections of this work and Across the River and into the Trees (1950) and The Old Man and the Sea (1952).

It may be Hemingway's most nihilistic work. The major character, the artist Thomas Hudson, is, like many other Hemingway heroes, a man with no conventional religious faith. In the course of the novel, he is stripped of those substitute values which make life worthwhile until life becomes a living hell in which pride and a blind devotion to duty are all that remain to order an otherwise meaningless universe. He seems to be the only Hemingway hero who welcomes death as an escape from life.

Hudson's rejection of religion is introduced in a rather comic scene near the beginning of the novel in which a friend asks jokingly if he has "'Seen The Light.'" Hudson replies, "'Relations with the Deity about the same. . . . We are

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<sup>67</sup>John W. Aldridge, "Hemingway Between Triumph and Disaster," Saturday Review, LIII (October 10, 1970), 23-24.

tolerant. . . . Practice any faith you wish. Got a ball field up the island where you can practice."<sup>68</sup>

Later, when Hudson's world is badly shaken by the death of his two younger sons in an automobile accident, his friend Eddy asks the eternal question, ". . . how can such things happen?" Hudson replies mechanistically, "I guess they hit something or something ran into them."<sup>69</sup>

After the death of his third son, Tom, the boy's mother, Hudson's first wife, tells him, "I love you and I want you to be worthy of yourself." To which he replies bitterly, "And of you and God and all other abstractions. I'm not even an abstract painter."<sup>70</sup>

The last days of his life are spent in leading a small Allied force in pursuit of a group of survivors from a German submarine sunk near Cuba. His first clue to their whereabouts comes with the discovery of an island where the Germans have massacred the civilian population. It has just rained when Hudson reaches the island, and he remarks to himself, "It is strange how they had such a rain here where there was no need for it and we had nothing." Then he thinks, "We always wait for something that does not come."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Islands in the Stream (New York, 1970), p. 27.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

Shortly before his own death, he remembers Tom and thinks, "It is something that happens to everybody. I should know about that by now. It is the only thing that is really final, though."<sup>72</sup>

When Hudson and his friends do think of forces at work in the universe, these forces are often malevolent. In reply to Hudson's joking, "'Practice any faith you wish. Got a ball field up the island where you can practice.'" his friend, Roger Davis, says, "'I'll give the Deity a fast one high and inside if he crowds the plate.'" A second friend, Johnny Goodner, reproaches him:

"It's after dark. Didn't you see twilight fall and dusk set in and darkness come? And you a writer. Never a good idea to speak slightly of the Deity after dark. He's liable to be right behind you with his bat poised."<sup>73</sup>

To which, Roger answers, "'I'll bet he'd crowd the plate, too. . . . I've seen him crowding it lately,'" and Johnny again warns, "'Yes sir, . . . and he'd step into your fast one and knock your brains out. I've seen him hit.'"<sup>74</sup>

Near the end of the book, Hudson, nervous and plagued by nightmares, thinks to himself:

Just rest and use your head until it won't work any more, and when you go to sleep, expect to have the horrors. The horrors were what you won

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

in that big crap game that they run. You put it on the line and made your point and let it ride and finally you dragged down the gift of uneasy unpleasant sleep. You damned near dragged down not sleeping at all. But you traded that in for what you have so you might as well like it.<sup>75</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Hudson enjoys a full life despite the absence of religious conviction. He has his devotion to his three sons, his work as an artist, and a social conscience which allows him to feel good about the way his life is lived. These are the things which form the center of his private moral code. When Davis' girl friend tells Hudson that she wants to help his friend, Hudson advises, "'What he needs is to work well to save his soul.'"<sup>76</sup>

By the end of the book, his sons are dead, his painting has been interrupted by the war, and he no longer believes that any good will come out of the cause for which he is fighting:

Then why don't you care anything about anything? he asked himself. Why don't you think of them as murderers and have the righteous feeling that you should have? Why do you just pound and pound on after it like a riderless horse that is still in the race? Because we are all murderers, he told himself. We all are on both sides, if we are any good, and no good will come of any of it.<sup>77</sup>

All that remains to him is pride and a devotion to duty. But duty itself has no special meaning. "Get it straight,"

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. 384-385.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 356.

he tells himself. "Your boy you lose. Love you lose. Honor has been gone for a long time. Duty you do. Sure and what's your duty? What I said I'd do."<sup>78</sup>

But adherence to this sort of code does not provide a reason for living. Instead, it is simply a way to "get it over with."<sup>79</sup> There is nothing beautiful left to believe in. Even the search mission is pretty much of a failure. Hudson, himself says, "'We didn't do so good did we?'"<sup>80</sup> Many Hemingway heroes suffer defeat: Jake Barnes is emasculated; Frederic Henry loses Catherine; Santiago loses the big fish; Harry Morgan, Robert Jordan and Richard Cantwell all die. Yet each achieves a moral victory within the Hemingway code. Thomas Hudson, too, remains true to the code. But the world in which he achieves moral triumph is an intensely constricted, cold and private one. Wounded and dying at the end of the novel, he "felt far away now and there were no problems at all."<sup>81</sup> Death, which has been a major antagonist throughout the novel, seems, in the end, a blessed deliverance from a private hell.

There are three references to the end of the world and hell in the novel. The first occurs when Hudson's bartender friend, Mr. Bobby, suggests a grandiose scheme for a painting depicting the end of the world along the lines of traditional

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 465.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

religious portrayals. It is a comic plan, calling for devils with pitchforks chasing after reluctant holy rollers and breaking their weapons on tough-hided churchmen. Hudson and Mr. Bobby are to be exempt from the general chaos, alone in the center of the canvas, drinking and taking notes.<sup>82</sup>

With the death of his younger sons, Hudson learns that, "The end of a man's own world does not come as it does in one of the great paintings Mr. Bobby had outlined."<sup>83</sup> It comes for Hudson in the form of a simple telegram announcing their deaths. Sailing to France for their funeral, he discovers that hell is, "not necessarily as it was described by Dante or any other of the great hell-describers, but could be a comfortable, pleasant, and well-loved ship taking you toward a country that you had always sailed for with anticipation."<sup>84</sup> Hell for Thomas Hudson is present, personal, and inescapable.

As in other Hemingway novels, people pray earnestly in Islands in the Stream: As in other novels, the prayers go unanswered. When Hudson's son, David, hooks a huge fish and plays him for over six hours in an intense initiation scene, both of the other sons, Tom and Andy, pray that he will bring it in successfully. Instead, he loses the fish at the last, most heart-breaking moment.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

When Roger Davis meets his girl friend, Audrey Bruce, she tells him that when they were childhood friends she was very religious and prayed often for him. "'I wish it would have done more good,'" Roger says. "'So do I,'" she answers.<sup>85</sup>

When Hudson mentions his soldier son, Tom, to his old friend Honest Lil, she tries to comfort him by insisting that she has faith that the Virgen dell Cobre is watching over Tom "'day and night.'"<sup>86</sup> Hudson already knows that his son is dead.

The section of the book in which David plays the great fish is reminiscent of the struggle and imagery in The Old Man and the Sea. Like Santiago, David is struggling against a force that is too great for him. Like Santiago, his victory is a moral one, for he, like the old fisherman, gives all of his strength to the struggle. Like Santiago, the boy comes to experience an almost mystical identification with, and love for, the force that is bound to defeat him. Like the old man, he suffers great physical punishment and bleeds from the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. His back is also marked with welts where the shoulder harness chafes him. He, too, hooks his fish at noon, and a careful record is kept of the time it takes to play it. He, like Santiago, prays for help which he does not receive.

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<sup>85</sup>ibid., p. 186.

<sup>86</sup>ibid., p. 279.

True to the Hemingway code, David accepts his loss with grace and courage, and, true to the Hemingway canon, he is killed, needlessly, before he is able to achieve anything beyond moral victory.

In conclusion, Hemingway's novels reveal a consistent rejection of belief in religious doctrine and a firm denial of supernatural power. This denial produces a void which can, in Hemingway's work, be filled only by the establishment of a highly demanding moral code based on personal experience. It seems natural that this code should assume the proportions of a private religion in the later works.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Throughout his life, Ernest Hemingway was strongly influenced by Christianity. In his boyhood, his life was ordered by the daily prayer services of his Episcopalian grandfather and by his Sunday morning visits to the Congregational church. Until graduation from high school, he was subject to all the influences of a strong, stable, middle-class Protestant community. As a man, he was strongly attracted to Catholicism, and, for a short time, during the early days of his marriage to Pauline Pfeiffer, he seems to have believed that his conversion was successful.

Throughout most of his life, however, he denied himself the "ghostly comforts" of belief, and it seems to have been this absence of faith which drove him to construct a private, highly ritualized moral code. His struggle to develop and maintain this substitute faith is evidenced by his own statements and actions and, most importantly, by the fictional world and characters he created.

Hemingway's characters are forced to struggle in an indifferent, sometimes even malevolent, universe. The absence of religious faith is an important theme in all the

Hemingway novels, and religious references occur in twenty of the fifty-three published short stories.

Many of these stories are highly autobiographical. Thus, in "Soldier's Home" the young man who is embarrassed by and unable to relate to his mother's religious sentiments seems a portrait of the young Hemingway, just returned from World War I with all his illusions shattered, while the dying author of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" reflects the mature Hemingway, a man without religion striving to attain immortality through writing.

The consistency of Hemingway's rejection of religion and the consequent ritualization of other activities with which he sought to fill the void can be traced through his portrayal of the protagonists of his novels. Jake Barnes' stoic endurance of his wound and his attempts to order his life through a ritualized return to nature parallel Hemingway's own post-war retreat to the fishing and hunting excursions of pre-war days. Frederic Henry's rejection of traditional values and his attempt to order his world through love parallel Hemingway's own early romantic experiences. Robert Jordan's combination of dedication to social causes and love of a woman reflects Hemingway's own Spanish Civil War experiences. The solace which Richard Cantwell and Thomas Hudson seek in love, friendship, work, sportsmanship, and devotion to duty also reflect the ritualization of those activities which Hemingway most prized. Santiago's struggle

to capture the giant marlin and his ultimate conclusion that "man can be destroyed but not defeated" seems a summing up of the Hemingway canon in which the ability to live well and accept death nobly eventually replace religion to the extent that traditional religious symbols come to be identified with his own private code.

In each case, it is the death of faith in older religious beliefs that gives birth to the longing for the new, ritualized code of behavior. In this, Hemingway's novels and short stories are identified with a universal trauma occurring regularly throughout the history of man: the death of old life, customs, and beliefs; the birth of a new order.

In "The Missing All," John Peale Bishop, speaking of the historical significance of Hemingway's work, maintains that:

Hemingway's accomplishment . . . will stand.  
 . . . What he has done should give him a place  
 in American literature as sure as that of . . .  
 the New England Nathaniel Hawthorne. For, it was  
 given to Hawthorne to dramatize the human soul.  
 In our time, Hemingway wrote the drama of its  
 disappearance.<sup>1</sup>

The revolution in belief which Hemingway's characters experienced continues today. Throughout his fiction characters struggle to formulate a new basis for belief based on the value of the individual and on the value of

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<sup>1</sup>John Peale Bishop, "The Missing All," Virginia Quarterly, XIII (Summer, 1937), 118.

earthly life. That this faith was not wholly satisfactory, even to the author, is best exemplified in the death of Thomas Hudson and in Hemingway's own suicide. For when the people and the activities which made life exciting and beautiful were gone, neither wished to endure what came after. Yet, Hemingway's fiction cannot be judged in terms of his success or failure as a philosopher. In his portrayal of Twentieth-Century men, estranged from God, yet always seeking for a meaningful order in the universe, Hemingway found the theme which underlies his most important works of fiction.

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