

**“All right, then, I’ll go to hell”:
Religious Hypocrisy as the Subjacent
Discourse in Mark Twain’s
*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

Final dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this essay is to analyse the literary elements that Twain utilised as tools to present his sharp critique of religion the institution of slavery and the Southern society which benefited from it. With this purpose in mind, a theoretical framework will be provided first. The historical context will deal with the religious situation of 19th-century U.S. and the abolitionist movement. Moreover, an explanation will be given that accounts for Twain's use of the character of Huck in an attempt to conceal his discourse in the innocent image of a child by making numerous ironic remarks aimed at sparking a moral debate on the part of the readers. Following that, the novel will be analysed from three perspectives: the contradictions found in religious discourse about slavery, the re-humanisation of Jim's character, and Huck's ethics and the literary devices he used in order to express it, in particular, his interior monologue. Lastly, I will summarise the conclusions we reached in the analysis section regarding Twain's exposure of religious hypocrisy in order to further his abolitionist message.

KEY WORDS: Abolitionism, re-humanisation, slavery, Presbyterianism, Calvinism, Southern US society, TULIP, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I intend to analyse the portrayal of the character of Huckleberry (henceforth, Huck) in Mark Twain's work *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) in an attempt to pinpoint the most remarkable patterns of representation of the stance that Christian religion takes on slavery in Twain's work from an abolitionist point of view. The twofold aim of this paper will be to examine the extent to which Huck's interior monologues are meant to denounce the hypocritical, fervent religious society of the time, and to raise collective awareness against slavery in a context in which slight advancements had been made as far as social rights were concerned, even though both institutionalised and generalised racism were still fundamentally ingrained in the social fabric of the time.

To that end, I have systematically singled out all of Huck's interior monologues as well as dialogues¹ and I have exclusively selected those in which religion and abolitionism are the main themes. My preliminary methodology was inductive, which led me to a tentative interpretation. However, a second analysis using a deductive approach resulted in a firm critical foundation whereby I confirmed my findings: Mark Twain makes use of Huck's interior monologues to formulate a criticism of the indolence of religion towards slavery despite the latter's numerous violations of Christian doctrine. Interior monologues are the primary source for this work in that I consider them to be the key point for my thesis, as they act as a faithful conveyor of the flow of inner thoughts of a particular character. Yet, I will also look at some of the dialogues in which Huck's ethics perspective plays a relevant role to that effect, and at both direct.

In order to frame my essay theoretically, I will first contextualise the work historically, providing a detailed explanation of the dominant religion in mid-19th-century² Southern US society, as well as commenting on the influence that the author's faith and religious upbringing may have had on his writing. Finally, following an overview of the development of the abolitionist movement with an emphasis on the situation of the United States of America, I will briefly discuss Twain's attitude towards

¹ Interior monologues, interior dialogues and dialogues between Huck and other characters are the axis on which all the analysis revolves around.

² Even though the exact time at which the novel is set is not specified, Twain himself states that it is set "forty to fifty years" before its publication in 1885 (Twain, title page).

slavery as a means to comprehend the close connection existing between the Christian passivity criticised in Huck's soliloquies and the perpetuation of a bondage-based system. In fact, I will argue that the rationale behind Twain's decision to give voice to such an innocent figure as Huck is to tacitly underpin an anti-abolitionist discourse by commenting on various religious and racial aspects of the time in order to raise awareness of how unfair slavery is.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Historical context: Religion in mid-19th-century Southern US

According to experts, in the 19th-century, the Southern regions of the United States were typically associated with numerous Christian doctrines, with the most widespread one being Calvinism, and more specifically, the sub-branch of Presbyterianism. (Smith 190-193; Berkove and Csicsila 3). From a historical perspective, Calvinism, also known as Reformed religion, emerged from the ideological foundation laid by 16th-century germanophone and francophone theologians, namely, Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Jean John Calvin, and Martin Bucer (Schirmacher 1948). Although his influence was not always determining, John Calvin's role in Reformed Protestant attempts to revive the Christian church and his critical views on the pages of the Scriptures resulted in the creation of a novel ecclesiastical arrangement, a shift in the way in which sacraments were administered, and a firm objection to displays of traditional imagery and figures inside church buildings. As Graeme contends, the Calvinist focus was on the inevitability of God's sovereign will over the inherently sinful nature of humankind. As a matter of fact, whereas Calvin was concerned with explorations of God's inexplicable actions to redeem sinful believers from judgement, others would delve into an accurate categorisation of divine predestination into theological parameters (1344).

Furthermore, established through state colonialism and proliferating rampantly due to a great deal of factors including a variety of mission opportunities and greater flexibility to develop innovative religiousnesses, Calvinist strongholds in the 13 colonies gave an unanticipated response to the patent urge of Reformed Protestantism to revitalise the church towards the end of the 17th-century, which, in turn, led to its spreading into churches in the New world. Once there, however, ideological splits and mergers would take place on a regular basis even to the point that in America, for instance, much

attention was drawn to local dissidences in fields like theology, politics, geography, and ethno-linguistics owing to what Graeme labels as a “seemingly limitless capacity of Calvinists to bicker with each other (not least over predestination) and split into rival organizations³” (1344).

In Scotland, McCulloch points out the fact that after the coronation of Charles II of Scotland as the king of England in 1660, Presbyterianism suffered nearly three decades of persecution with oppressive law enforcements and numerous executions which obliged Presbyterian churchmen and their flock members to convert to Episcopacy, the newly adopted statal religion (7-11). And in fact, it was “[a]mid such testing times that tried supremely the souls of men [that the] United Presbyterian Church had its beginnings” (McCulloch 9). From the 1720s onwards Presbyterians commenced their emigration to the North American colonies from both Scotland and Ireland, and they expanded gradually over the century. On the one hand, in 1773 the first attempts at consolidating the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America were made with the aid of Irish ministers (McCulloch 24). On the other, the internal wrangling of Associate Presbyterians in Scotland was a catalyst for a split, which as mentioned earlier made a variety of Scottish ministers move to America and lay the foundation for the first Associate Presbytery based in Pennsylvania. Conjoined endeavours gave rise to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of America in 1782, which, however, did not manage to remain a single ecclesiastical unit⁴ (McCulloch 23-27).

In a lecture delivered at the Presbyterian Union of New Jersey in 1905, the tenets of the concept of predestination were first established more theoretically under “the acronym “TULIP” (total depravity, universal sovereignty⁵, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints)”, and ever since “’TULIP’ has come to be seen by some (at least in North America) as a means of identifying Calvinists” (Graeme 1344). These are often referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism (Bryson 2).

Concerning *total depravity*, Calvinism states “*that man by nature in all his existence, with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, has become a servant of sin,*

³ For further discussion on the fundamentals of Calvinism, see Darryl G. Hart.

⁴ On the issues related to the subsequent structural bodies into which institutional Presbyterianism in America split, see McCulloch, especially chapter I.

⁵ Nowadays, the term *universal sovereignty* has been replaced by *unconditional election* as we can see in Bryson (2).

and that he is entirely incapable of doing good and inclined to all evil” [italics in the original] (qtd. in Bryson 9). With respect to the close related *unconditional election* and *limited atonement*, Bryson explains that “God has, from all eternity, elected some to be saved unconditionally” (15) whereas *limited atonement* “says [that] Christ died for some (i.e., the elect) and not for others (i.e., the unelect)” (Bryson 21). Consequently, salvation is determined by predestination. *Irresistible grace* is the idea that “[b]y means of [a] special call, the Spirit irresistibly draws the sinner to Christ [...]. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. **God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended**” [italics and bolding in the original] (qtd. in Bryson 23). As for the *perseverance of the saints*, due to the *unconditional election* “[a]ll who were chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end” [italics in the original] (qtd. in Bryson 26). In a nutshell, predestination determines that humans do not possess freedom of will.

Twain, according to Berkove and Csicsila, “was reared in an environment of frontier Calvinist Presbyterianism—a hard and fundamentalist form of Protestant orthodoxy” (8). He even grew up to aspire to a minister position, and showed significant concern for both the lack of importance placed on the doctrines preached through sermons and the inaction of various congregations when it came to following them strictly (22, 26) Furthermore, Calvinist rigorous dogmatism was so implanted in his thinking that he rejected, amongst other things, the idea of freedom for the human condition. In spite of being an ardent freedom advocate in personal and public spheres, Twain’s literary work, as an extension of his most private thoughts, is replete with allusions to a deceitful, delusional conception of freedom in that his beliefs in God’s omniscience prevented him from portraying realities in fiction that support the achievability of freedom and fulfilment in life (22-23).

2.2. Abolitionist movement in USA

According to Macy, the practice of slavery “had long been an established institution in all the American colonies” (6) in the 17th and 18th centuries due to the fact that the in the colonies, “plantations were created to supply distant markets (mainly in Europe) with staple products that met growing consumer demand for tropical goods”

(Morgan 58). Hence, “[s]lavery as an economic institution became dependent upon a few semitropical plantation crops [amongst which, in the second half of the 18th century] rice and indigo, produced in South Carolina and Georgia, were the two most important” (Macy 21). However, cotton was, “by far, the most important crop for its effects upon slavery and upon the entire country” (Macy 21-22). Cotton required extensive labour and became a strategic resource in the economy of the Southern states. Therefore, plantation owners’ economic interests made it difficult to implement the abolitionist dream of civil rights activists, which was encouraged by the foundational fathers in the United States Declaration of Independence (Macy 21-22), which states:

that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. (“Declaration of Independence” par. 2)

According to Macy, two political standpoints developed in the recently created nation, one in the South dominantly in support of slavery, and another in the North in support of its abolition. Both postures resorted to theology and philosophy, even to history to support their stance (2-5). By the end of the century, the so-called Maxon and Dixon line⁶ together with the Ohio river became by law the political-cultural division between the North and the South in that “slavery was forever prohibited in the Northwest Territory [whereas i]n the territory south of the Ohio River slavery became permanently established” (15). “The struggle between the Southern slave-based labor system and the Northern ‘free soil’ movement produced bitter and violent conflict throughout the 1850s, which culminated in 1861 with Southern secession and four years of civil war” (Calomiris 1).

Macy emphasises the influence of literature to the antislavery movement. For instance, he accounts for the contribution of Harriet Beecher Stowe to the cause by means of her work *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) which “did far more than vindicate the conduct of those who rendered assistance to the fugitive from slavery” (132), it “transmitted to

⁶ The Maxon and Dixon line was an east-west line which delimited the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland (Macy 14).

the world a knowledge of the elemental and tragic human experiences of the slaves which would otherwise have been restricted to a select few” (131). The book supposed an influence in the direction of the “vote of the youthful citizen” (136) for the Republican party⁷ as it “gave effective expression to the moral, religious, and humanitarian sentiment against slavery” (136-137).

Likewise, there were other authors such as Frederick Law Olmsted or Hinton Rowan Helper who criticise slavery on economic grounds. Olmsted claimed “the blighting influence of the institution of slavery upon agriculture, manufactures, and the general industrial and social order” (qtd. in Macy 137). Similarly, Helper asserted that “slavery [was] impoverishing the South” (qtd. in Macy 139). Macy points out that although Helper refused to apply humanitarian reasons against slavery beyond economic matters (139), “Republicans naturally made use of Helper's book for party purposes” (Macy 143).

As regards Twain’s ideology, Budd extensively writes about Twain’s public statements regarding his abolitionist beliefs, as he explains that Twain openly expressed in 1888 that “we used to own our brother human beings, and used to buy them and sell them, lash them, thrash them, break their piteous hearts—and we ought to be ashamed of ourselves” (qtd. in Budd 94). As a matter of fact, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Budds contends, is testimony to his anti-slavery views through a variety of characters described in line with the findings discussed in section 3 below: a heartbroken black slave in pursuit of freedom, whites who own but do not care about blacks, and a child that has to overcome an internal struggle to help a runaway black slave. (94)

2.3. Huckleberry Finn as Twain’s mouthpiece

Mark Twain employs the character of Huck as the narrator and focalizer of the story. As we shall see, he uses Huck to deliver his subjacent abolitionist discourse to the audience. We learn of his age from Huck himself: “Buck looked about as old as me—thirteen or fourteen or along there” (Twain 116). The choice of a child in his puberty as the guiding voice is not coincidental. In western culture it is a common cliché to believe that children and drunkards always tell the truth. At least, children do not have qualms to tell those truths that are politically incorrect, as proved, for instance, in Hans Christian

⁷ The president of the Republican party, Abraham Lincoln, as the president of the country proclaimed the emancipation of the slaves in US (Macy 1, 202).

Andersen's renowned short story *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Therefore, thanks to the choice of a child as the main character, Twain can protect his discourse by enshrouding it in Huck's words. The choice of an adolescent, autodiegetic narrator also entails that the novel can be categorised as a *Bildungsroman*⁸. Huck's process of coming of age is displayed throughout the whole story, as we see him swivel between behavioural expectations imposed on him by a demanding society and his hesitating attitudes towards slavery. This psychological evolution helps readers to mature their thoughts together with Huck's. Indeed, Huck takes the reader with him, by the hand, as it were, so that both can observe the world and develop a point of view about reality. This process is fundamentally inductive in that Huck and the reader must take mental notes and analyse the data before finally forming their own interpretation.

Twain also leaves his novel in the hands of a child narrator to make his discourse sound naive. Likewise, Twain wittily employs irony throughout the novel disguised as childish innocence; as we shall see in the analysis, most of the times there is irony in Huck's reflections which depicts the harsh reality. According to Wales, irony is the device resorted to "when the words actually used appear to mean quite the opposite of the sense actually required in the CONTEXT and presumably intended by the speaker" [use of capitalisation in the original] (263). Indeed, the fact that it is often used sarcastically may serve "as an oblique polite form of criticism" (Wales 263). "It is quite common for the reader to perceive the irony of situations before the characters do: this is known as **dramatic irony**. But the double PERSPECTIVE (of reader and character) applies equally to FICTION as to the stage" [bolding and use of capitalisation in the original] (Wales 264). Wales accounts for the fact that readers can detach themselves "from quite different angle from the POINT OF VIEW of the gullible and hence unreliable narrator" [use of capitalisation in the original] (264), thus, adopting a critical point of view. For that reason, Irony is present throughout the whole work. It is in fact, Twain's key to criticise the Southern society at that time. "Mark Twain is America's greatest humorist not only because his unsurpassed mastery of that essential pattern but because his humor served to point up errors in American life—its gaucheries, pretenses, and political debilities—and at the

⁸ *Bildungsroman* or apprenticeship novel is "a novel which shows the development and formation of a character, from childhood to adulthood, through various experiences and spiritual crises" (Grellet 127).

same time expressed a faith in the American dream, optimistic and unquenchable” (Perkins 863).

3. Analysis

3.1. Religion and slavery

Through the aforementioned inductive approach to narration, Twain begins to develop his strategy by presenting some characters who represent a desirable conduct by Calvinist standards. Amongst those characters is the Widow Douglas, who has been in charge of the upbringing of Huck (Twain 1). She is portrayed as a respectable member of society “how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways” (Twain 2) and as a committed flock member of the church, as we can see in how Huck describes her behaviour: “she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb” (Twain 2); “[a]fter supper she got out her book [the Bible] and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers” (Twain 2). Similarly, her devotion is made explicit in these words of Huck’s: “[s]ometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body’s mouth water” (Twain 14). Her benevolent nature can be observed when Huck comes back home after having made his ‘decent’ clothes dirty: “but the widow she didn’t scold [me], but only cleaned off the grease and clay, and looked so sorry that I thought I would behave awhile if I could” (Twain 13).

The character of Mary Jane Wilks, too, falls under the same religious-and-good category as the Widow Douglas; her gratitude and devotion are made apparent in her reaction to Huck informing her that her uncles were a fraud after all, “I sha’n’t ever forget you, and I’ll think of you a many and a many a time, and I’ll pray for you” (Twain 221), as well as in Huck’s subsequent reflection on Mary Jane: “she was just that kind. She had the grit to pray for Judus if she took the notion” (Twain 221).

In addition, there are more characters who fit into the description of respectability and piousness, for instance: Miss Watson, who along with the Widow Douglas is responsible for the upbringing of Huck; “[t]hen Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed [...]. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it.” (Twain 13). Likewise, in the feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons (Twain 113-136), the former are portrayed as respectable members of the society: “Col. [Colonel] Grangerford was a gentleman, you see. He was a gentleman all over; and so was his family. He was well born” (Twain 124). They are also portrayed as true believers,

ranging from lady Grangerford “[she] took care of the room herself, though there was plenty of niggers, and she sewed there a good deal and read her Bible there mostly” (Twain 123) to the rest of the family: “[n]ext Sunday we all went to church, [...] everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say about faith and good works and free grace and preforeordination” (Twain 129).

The last devout characters introduced by Twain are the Phelps, Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas. Silas is characterised by Huck as follows: “[h]e was the innocentest, best old soul I ever see. But it warn’t surprising; because he warn’t only just a farmer, he was a preacher, too, and had a little one-horse log church down back of the plantation, which he built it himself at his own expense, for a church and schoolhouse, and never charged nothing for his preaching” (Twain 260). Their kindness is conveyed through Jim’s account of the treatment that the two gave him in spite of the fact that Jim was a runaway slave: “Uncle Silas come in every day or two to pray with [me], and Aunt Sally come in to see if [I] was comfortable and had plenty to eat, and both of them was kind as they could be” (Twain 284).

The same is true in the case of Mary Jane Wilks, whose sister Joanna provides a description of her virtues: “[t]hat’s always your way, [Mary]—always sailing in to help somebody before they’re hurt” (Twain 201). Mary then goes on to portray herself as a good Christian and committed proselytiser educator in her younger sister’s rearing by rebuking her sister for her treatment of Huck (Twain 202).

Similarly, the Grangerfords and the Phelps exhibit a great sense of sympathy for strangers. In fact, lady Grangerford after the whole family’s first encounter with Huck orders his servant and his son: “Betsy [...], you fly around and get him something to eat as quick as you can, poor thing and [...] Buck, take this little stranger and get the wet clothes off from him and dress him up in some of yours that’s dry” (Twain 116). On their part, the Phelps display great hospitality upon the arrival of Tom Sawyer, whom they think is a poor young boy that has been left in the wrong plantation by mistake (Twain 260). Uncle Silas first: “you must come in and eat your dinner with us; and then we’ll hitch up and take you down to Nichols’s [plantation]” (Twain 261) and Aunt Sally afterwards: “it ain’t a bit of trouble to us, not a bit in the world. You must stay. It’s a long, dusty three mile, and we can’t let you walk. And, besides, I’ve already told ’em to put on

another plate when I see you coming; so you mustn't disappoint us. Come right in and make yourself at home" (Twain 261).

In using those characters, Twain creates a link between religiousness and slavery, people of faith happen to be the only characters to own slaves. No other people—i.e., Judge Thatcher or Dr. Robinson—in the story are portrayed as slaves' owners, regardless of their wealth and respectability. The bond between such antagonising stances poses a moral dilemma in that there are inconsistencies between enslavement and Christian precepts derived from Jesus Christ's commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Authorized King James Version Bible, Matt, 22.39). In the novel, all these characters clearly empathise with the neighbour: "but she [the Widow Douglas] told me what she meant—I must help other people, and do everything I could for other people, and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself" (Twain 14). Huck reflects on it after warning the watchman about the wreck in which a gang was trapped (Twain 85): "I was feeling ruther comfortable on accounts of taking all this trouble for that gang, for not many would a done it. I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she would be proud of me for helping these rascallions, because rascallions and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people takes the most interest in" (Twain 89). Yet, the definition of 'neighbour' clearly does not include the "niggers". The first seed of doubt is thus sown and it will only grow from now on until, as we shall see, Huck will explicitly question such blatant hypocrisy when he finally verbalises his belief that Jim has a soul and a "white" soul at that.

Even though Twain manages to capture venerable citizens who feel sympathy even for the slaves that they have in their possession, they seem not to be aware of the connection existing between their creed, their empathy, and "negroes'" humanity⁹. In that way, the incoherent sympathy for the negroes they have enslaved can be seen, for instance, in a dialogue between Huck and Mary Jane Wilks, we can see Mary Jane's reaction to the sale and posterior split between members of the same family of slaves. She is deeply dismayed by the fact that the slave mother and her children has been sold

⁹ It worth mentioning that in the chapter II Twain, through Tom Sawyer's character, chooses a cross as the emblem of his band of robbers. Even though theirs were just children's empty words, they wrote and otah that said: "if anybody done anything to any boy in the band, whichever boy was ordered to kill that person and his family must do it, and he mustn't eat and he mustn't sleep till he had killed them and hacked a cross in their breasts, which was the sign of the band." (Twain 9-10). It is at least peculiar that Twain opts for a cross in an environment of crime when he could have chosen any other symbol.

separately. “She said [...] she didn’t know how she was ever going to be happy there, knowing the mother and the children warn’t ever going to see each other no more—and then busted out [crying] bitterer than ever” (Twain 215). Yet, she did not seem to object to the fact of *owning* slaves in the first place, only to the cruelty of their treatment.

Once the foundation of his criticism of religion is set by drawing an unbreakable connection with slavery, Twain furthers his problematisation of the Southern ‘slave culture’ through various techniques. Firstly, he makes use of Huck’s strong sense of ethics, which, in turn, relies on Huck’s beliefs about and in God, his awareness of social demands, and his innocence. The irony that surrounds Huck’s character in the form of naivety plays a crucial role in successfully delivering the underlying abolitionist discourse. Secondly, Twain makes a conscious effort to re-humanise Jim by showing his similarity to any other human being, and by making use of racist terminology. In the latter case, again, irony is the instrument employed by Twain to momentarily awaken readers from their immersion in Huck’s psychological development so as to allow them to rise to a critical position which Huck, as the child he is, does not and cannot possibly experience.

3.2. Re-humanising Jim

Twain begins by presenting an unremarkable slave, who is stereotypically portrayed as ignorant and full of superstition: “Jim said you mustn’t count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck [...]. And he said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the bees must be told about it before sun-up next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die (Twain 52-53). He is also portrayed as half-pagan¹⁰ as he uses a hair-ball taken out of the stomach of an ox to tell the fortune: ”[h]e said it would tell my whole fortune if I wanted it to [...]. So the hair-ball talked to Jim, and Jim told it to me” (Twain 21).

Both his paganism and a naivety that closely resembles Huck’s are evident the night in which Tom and Huck were almost caught by him while they were trying to go out stealthily to their band’s meeting. Finally, when Jim falls asleep at the foot of a tree, Tom goes to the kitchen and takes three candles, leaving a “five-center” piece as compensation. Then, Tom sneaks towards Jim and pranks him by hanging his hat on a limb (Twain 6-8). Jim’s response shows his naivety: “[a]fterwards Jim said the witches

¹⁰ Half-pagan and not fully pagan because, as we will see later on, Jim also believes in the Christian God.

be witched him and put him in a trance [...], and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it [...]. Jim was monstrous proud about it [...]. Jim always kept that five-center piece round his neck with a string, and said it was a charm the devil give to him (Twain 8).

Once Twain has introduced Jim as a conventional negro to the reader, he starts a process of re-humanization of the character. The first step is to put white Christian people on the same level as Jim by showing Southern society as superstitious and credulous as Jim. In that way, we can see Pap (Huck's father) who wears¹¹ "a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil" (Twain 19), even Huck himself wallows in superstition:

Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence [...]. I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider (Twain 4).

However, the best example of Twain's caricature of the ignorance and naivety of Southern society is portrayed in chapter XXIII in which the king and the duke—two rascals that destiny has put together with Huck and Jim in their voyage along the Mississippi—fool a whole town playing the Royal Nonesuch, a play in which they dishonestly take 465\$ (Twain 172-176).

The next step Twain takes to re-humanise Jim is to disclose his humanity so as to equate him to the whites. To that end Jim is described as a Christian believer and a person capable of feeling hope for the future and love for his friends as people usually do. He always calls Huck 'honey' and worries about and takes care of him, as we can see from Huck's reflection about his character: "But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping [...], and pet me and do everything he could think of for me [...]; [he] said I was the best friend old Jim ever had" (Twain 246). In the same way, we can learn that Jim feels nostalgia for his family as any other person would do: "[Jim] was sitting there with his head down betwixt his knees, moaning

¹¹ We learn later on that the crossed left boot track belongs to pap: "I stooped down to look at the tracks first. I didn't notice anything at first, but next I did. There was a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil [...] So I went to [Jim] that night and told him pap was here again, for I found his tracks in the snow" (Twain 19-20).

and mourning to himself [...]. He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick; because he hadn't ever been away from home before in his life" (Twain 178).

Twain's deployment of irony to equate Jim to white people is noteworthy in Huck's words: "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so" (Twain 178). This resource is found in many passages of the work. For instance, when Huck compares the behaviour of Aunt Sally's children with a slave woman's children: "and behind her comes her little white children, acting the same way the little niggers was going" (Twain 253). We can find another sample of irony disguised as Huck's disingenuity when Huck complains about the fact that the "king" and the "duke" have betrayed Jim for money: "Once I said to myself it would be a thousand times better for Jim to be a slave at home where his family was, as long as he'd got to be a slave" (Twain 244).

Eventually, Jim is completely divested of his paganism and displayed as a Christian believer. This becomes particularly evident when Jim tells Huck of the time in which he slapped his daughter because he thought she was defying him by not shutting the door at Jim's request (Jim was not aware of the fact that his daughter was deaf and dumb because of the scarlet fever she had recently suffered): "Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin' en grab her up in my arms, en say, 'Oh, de po' little thing! De Lord God Amighty fogive po' ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to fogive hisself as long's he live!' Oh, she was plumb deaf en dumb, Huck, plumb deaf en dumb—en I'd ben a-treat'n her so!" (Twain 179). Jim is a believer because only Christians would be aware of themselves as sinners and repent of their acts, and also, because only a true Christian would make an appeal to the Lord God Almighty asking for benevolence just like an elected would do, as Calvinist doctrine dictates.

After putting Jim and the whites on the same level, Twain lets Jim himself give a master lecture to Huck, which is not anything but an extended metaphor of race equality and normal differences within the same race. Huck is trying to explain to Jim that French people speak differently from English people, and to do so, Huck uses an analogy between a cow and a cat to show how different beings speak differently. However, Jim sagaciously changes things up by acknowledging that it is natural for a cow not to speak as a cat and the other way around in that they are different species and, also, by stating that if the

French are people, they should speak as (English) people do. At the end of his speech after stating that it makes no sense that men speak as animals, he asks Huck if a Frenchman was a man. When Huck admits it to be so, Jim blurts out: “Well, den! Dad blame it, why doan’ he talk like a man? You answer me dat!” (Twain 96). In fact, since the only apparent difference between French and English people is the language they speak, Twain, through Jim, makes an analogy between French and English people, on the one hand, and black and white people, on the other, to show that the colour of their skin is a negligible difference that enforces a slavery-based system.

Furthermore, the way Huck grovels to show Jim his respect and love for him is highly significant from a U.S. 19th-century perspective, because it would have been unthinkable for a white to humble themselves before a black person. After playing a distasteful trick on Jim, and making Jim, therefore, feel foolish since he had suffered a great deal thinking that Huck could be dead, Huck admits the following: “[i]t made me feel so mean I could almost kissed his foot [...]. It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn’t ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d a knowed it would make him feel that way. (Twain 103)

Finally, Twain bestows Jim the only thing that really distinguished black people from white people at that time: agency. Twain gives Jim the opportunity for the first time in his life to decide for himself. Jim is given the unthinkable, from a Calvinist point of view: freedom of will.

He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn’t sell them, they’d get an Ab’litionist to go and steal them.

[...] He wouldn’t ever dared to talk such talk in his life before. Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free. (Twain 106)

However, on another occasion, in which Tom has been shot and a doctor is urgently needed. Jim uses his free will to completely reject the idea of abandoning Tom. Instead of keeping running away, he stays by Tom while Huck goes to find a doctor. Jim employs his recently bestowed agency to save the life of his friend despite the fact that doing so, he is going to be captured and enslaved again. From a Calvinist point of view, this could be read as God’s Providence using Jim for his grand master plan. What is undeniable is that this act of Jim’s seems to prove his status as one of ‘the elect’, for it

moves Huck to the point of saying: “I knowed he was white inside, and I reckoned he’d say what he did say—so it was all right now, and I told Tom I was a-going for a doctor” (Twain 315).

Since Twain was a fervent Calvinist and, therefore, personally rejected any beliefs in the idea of freedom of will¹² (Berkove and Csicsila 22), he can be argued to be making an implicit reference to the fact that God’s will is behind Jim’s martyrdom. In the same way, the fact that Jim ends up becoming a free man after all tells us that Providence¹³ is favouring him. In other words, Jim has been chosen by God. Furthermore, Twain uses a synecdoche “he was white inside” (315) through Huck’s words to imply that if he was white inside, he could be as well white outside, at least metaphorically¹⁴, bringing about this debate on the readers.

3.3. Huck’s ethics

Huck’s ethics are articulated around three main axes: his Christian faith; his duties as a member of society, i. e., what society expects from him to be a rightful member; and his inner voice, in other words, his conscience.

As already stated, Twain uses Huck as a mouthpiece for his personal thoughts and moral debate. Specifically, Twain uses interior monologues, as well as internal debates, to display the inner struggle between what Huck feels he must do and what both society and religion dictate. Above all, Huck performs an interior dialogue about faith, duty and morality. As they are getting close to Cairo¹⁵, we can see a sample of the use of interior dialogues to portray the internal battle Huck is experiencing to match his feelings with social morality:

¹² One of the principles of Calvinism is the belief in predestination according to the unconditional election precept (Bryson 2).

¹³ Providence is the manifestation of God’s will. “God’s predestination is immutable both in scheme and in detail. [...] Those reprobated to hell will infallibly go there; those elected to heaven will never completely fall away from or lose grace, but will ultimately be eternally saved. What are called ‘special providences’ (apparent exceptions to the course of nature or the law of averages—for example, miracles) are actually the workings of the immutable plan God predestined from before creation” (Berkove and Csicsila 17).

¹⁴ In fact, this is a metaphor to indicate that Jim has a religious soul and can be elected by God.

¹⁵ “Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio River comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free States, and then be out of trouble” (Twain 97). Cairo is, thus, Jim’s ticket for freedom.

I tried to make out to myself that I warn't to blame, because I didn't run Jim off from his rightful owner; but it warn't no use, conscience up and says, every time, "But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could a paddled ashore and told somebody." [...] Conscience says to me, "What had poor Miss Watson done to you that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word? What did that poor old woman do to you that you could treat her so mean? Why, she tried to learn you your book, she tried to learn you your manners, she tried to be good to you every way she knowed how. That's what she done." (Twain 105)

Furthermore, Huck is shown to be fully aware of the social repercussions of his transgression, as seen in the following reflection: "[a]nd then think of me! It would get all around, that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again I'd be ready to get down and lick his boots for shame" (Twain 244). Similarly, when he conveys his concern about his reputation within his community, he also makes it perfectly clear that he knows his duty as citizen. For example, when Jim is exultant about his approaching freedom, Huck realises that he and no other is the one who is responsible for the illegal act of helping a "negro" find his freedom:

Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom. Well, I can tell you it made me all over trembly and feverish, too, to hear him, because I begun to get it through my head that he was most free—and who was to blame for it? Why, me. I couldn't get that out of my conscience, no how nor no way. It got to troubling me so I couldn't rest; I couldn't stay still in one place. It hadn't ever come home to me before, what this thing was that I was doing. But now it did; and it stayed with me, and scorched me more and more. (Twain 105)

On the contrary, it shocked him that Tom agreed to help him to steal Jim out of slavery because Tom was a rightful member of society, he belonged to the Oneness as opposed to Jim's Otherness. Yet, he was willing to act against the rules: "[h]ere was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose [...]; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant [...]; and yet here he was, [...] to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I couldn't understand it no way at all" (Twain 267-268).

As for Huck's creed, he belongs to a disjointed family but after the Widow Douglas adopted him, he has been receiving a proper Christian education as we have seen before. However, Huck moves himself into the liminal¹⁶ space between two worlds of the same community: the uncouth, superstitious, deepest Southern society and the refined, educated, reputable, devout Christians. This is nothing but a reflection of the stark

¹⁶ According to Turner, the concept of liminality refers to the fact that an individual "passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (94)

contrast Mark Twain himself, who was born and bred in Missouri, had experienced when he moved to the North of the US in his adulthood. There, he discovered the existence of two different mainstream cultures in the US: the dichotomy between North and South which he had further experienced during the Civil War (Perkins 862).

Many a time does Huck reflect on the Christian Protestant doctrine, both from the point of view of a child and also from the point of view of a rebellious ‘heathen’, as we can see in the way he reacts when told to do everything he, as a Christian, could do for the neighbour: “[t]his was too many for me [...] I must help other people [...], and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself [...], but I couldn’t see no advantage about it—except for the other people—so at last I reckoned I wouldn’t worry about it any more, but just let it go” (Twain 14). His candid questioning of some of the contradictions of Christian practice is further articulated when Miss Watson encourages him to pray so he would get whatever he asked for: “I says to myself, if a body can get anything they pray for, why don’t Deacon Winn get back the money he lost on pork? Why can’t the widow get back her silver snuffbox that was stole? [...] No, says I to myself, there ain’t nothing in it” (Twain 13).

Nevertheless, his faith continues growing up along the story. He finds in God the answer to many questions. An example of this can be seen when he is hidden in a river-island and, half-famished, manages to fish a floating loaf of bread, which was actually—and rather miraculously—meant to find him¹⁷ “[a]nd then something struck me. I says, now I reckon the widow or the parson or somebody prayed that this bread would find me, and here it has gone and done it. So there ain’t no doubt but there is something in that thing—that is, there’s something in it when a body like the widow or the parson prays”. (Twain 44)

Likewise, he believes in Providence’s hand bringing about positive outcomes—“I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I’d noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth if I left it alone” (Twain 252)—but also negative events, as evident in the following interior dialogue that Huck has with himself when he finds out that the king has betrayed Jim. Huck is sorry for Jim and because he,

¹⁷ As it is explained in the book, loaves of bread with a dab of quicksilver on them were used to find corpses sunk in the Mississippi. People would pray for the loaf to find the corpse. (Twain 44)

Huck, will have to decide whether or not to confess everything to Miss Watson and, thus, lose respect of his community:

And at last, when it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time from up there in heaven, [...] and now was showing me there's One that's always on the lookout, and ain't a-going to allow no such miserable doings to go only just so fur and no further, I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared. (Twain 244-245)

As we have seen, society and religion go hand in hand when it comes to supporting slavery as an institution. As Huck's faith has grown morphing the character from a superstitious kid into a quasi-adult, genuine believer, his strong inner sense of own morality makes him clash with society's hypocritical and lax morals. What is more, from the very beginning Huck has shown a sense of ethics unlike that of any of his peers. For instance, when Jim confesses to having escaped, and in pursuit of his freedom, Huck keeps his promise of not denouncing him in spite of it going against the aforementioned social rules and his own self-imposed rule, the aforementioned commandment "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". Above all, Huck is true to his word: "Well, I did. I said I wouldn't, and I'll stick to it. Honest injun, I will. People would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum—but that don't make no difference. I ain't a-going to tell" (Twain 50). As we have seen before he does not hesitate to "humble [himself] to a nigger" (Twain 103) if he feels it to be fair. Moreover, Huck finally cannot bear the fact that the king and the duke are going to ruin Mary Jane and her sisters: "I says to myself, this is a girl that I'm letting that old reptile rob her of her money!" (Twain 202).

Even tough, Huck is not always sure of himself in his internal struggle, he always ends up staying true to himself. For instance, with regard to his doubts about social rules he first maintains an interior monologue: "[i]t most froze me to hear such talk [...]. Here was this nigger, which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children—children that belonged to a man [the slaver] I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm" (Twain 106). Then, he initiates an interior dialogue with his conscience: "I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, 'Let up on me—it ain't too late yet—I'll paddle ashore at the first light and tell.' I felt easy and happy and light as a feather right off. All my troubles was gone" (Twain 106). Eventually, Huck's own ethics overrule social rules and does not turn Jim

in when he is asked whether the man in the raft was black or white: “I didn’t answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn’t come. I tried for a second or two to brace up and out with it, but I warn’t man enough—hadn’t the spunk of a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and up and says: “He’s white”” (Twain 107). Huck, however, is restless and goes on to have yet another interior dialogue with his conscience:

Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s’pose you’d a done right and give Jim up, would you felt better than what you do now? No, says I, I’d feel bad [...]. Well, then, says I, what’s the use you learning to do right when it’s troublesome to do right and ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn’t answer that. (Twain 110)

Huck’s liberation from his doubts about society and religion climaxes when he finally becomes aware of the fact that his ‘sins’ have been seen by the Lord. In the following interior dialogue, his conscience plays God:

but something inside of me kept saying, “There was the Sunday-school, you could a gone to it; and [be taught] that people that acts as I’d been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire.”

It made me shiver. And I about made up my mind to pray, [...]. So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn’t come. Why wouldn’t they? It warn’t no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from me, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn’t come. [...] I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger’s owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie—and He knowed it. You can’t pray a lie—I found that out. (Twain 245)

At first, he is scared to death, and to expiate his sins, he agrees to write a letter informing Miss Watson of Jim’s whereabouts, in order to feel “good and all washed clean of sin for the first time” (Twain 245). However, after remembering all the moments he had lived with Jim and realising how kind Jim had been with him, he overcomes his fear and follows the dictates of his heart:

[b]ut somehow I couldn’t seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind, [...] then I happened to look around and see that paper.

[...] I took [the letter] up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I’d got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

“All right, then, I’ll go to hell”—and tore it up. (Twain 246)

By making Huck breaking up with God, Twain is sending the message that fairness and religion can go on different paths and that it is within the privacy of every individual conscience that truth can be found.

4. Conclusion

Twain denounces the hypocrisy of the Southern society by exposing the contradictory nature of religion and slavery, as respectable and pious characters who follow the Christian “straight and narrow path” are also slaveowners. Through his use of irony, Twain points out the inconsistencies between the Christian doctrine—specifically Jesus Christ's commandment “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—and slave ownership. This idea is reinforced by the fact that religious characters feel empathy for the slaves but are still unable to recognise their humanity. In his explicit cultural criticism of the Southern society, Twain brings to light the fact that in that overwhelmingly religious society in which slavery is ingrained, the original Christian faith has become corrupted. In this way, Twain emphasises the existence of a bond between religion and slavery, a connection that is hard to break once the abolitionist discourse has had its impact on the reader. Hence, if the reader leans towards Twain’s discourse, they will have no remedy but to look critically at Southern Christianity.

Recognition of humanity is precisely what Jim’s character revolves around. Jim is initially portrayed as a “conventional negro”, superstitious and ignorant. Yet, Southern society is depicted as equally naive and superstitious. Then, Twain foregrounds Jim’s humanity by describing his capacity for affective bonding. Lastly, Twain erases the only actual element that set slaves apart from the white people by empowering a slave to self-actualise. As Twain’s beliefs reject freedom of will, what he is indicating is that Jim is being guided by God’s hand when he risks his freedom in order to protect Tom. Providence then rewards Jim and he becomes a free man after all. Huck’s final comment, “I knowed he was white inside”, refers to Jim having a human soul. Therefore, according to Calvinist doctrine, as nobody can asseverate whether someone will be one of the Elect, if anybody has a soul we should treat them as a person, a white person.

Throughout the novel, Huck’s interior dialogue is characterised by three major factors which affect how he acts: his religious beliefs, societal expectations, and his conscience. These factors constantly come into conflict with each other, and Huck is often clueless as to what the right thing to do is. Society and religion demand that he turns Jim in. However, his conscience prevents him from doing so, as personal judgment is more important than anything else. At the same time, the reader is inductively forced to reflect on this choice. A choice between what is expected and what is moral. And the right answer to this question is revealed when the protagonist risks both his soul and his

reputation in the eyes of society in order to save a friend, which culminates in Huck's proclamation "All right, then, I'll *go* to hell!".

Having previously associated hell and heaven with abolitionism and slavery respectively, and making Huck choose hell instead of heaven at a point at which most of the readers have probably been inductively influenced by Twain's discourse is the *coup de grace* to religion's stance towards slavery. What is more, from the point of view of an advocate of Calvinism, as was the case with Twain, this stark criticism towards religion can only mean that Twain detaches the corrupted institution of mid-19th century from the original Christian Church. It can be concluded that Twain blames the persistence of slavery and the attitude of white people towards blacks on the hypocritical use of Christian religion. Precisely due to his fervent religiosity, Twain feels that the true Christian Calvinist spirit has been betrayed by the slave owning Christian South.

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