

Representation of the True Discipleship in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin"

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Abstract: Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811 - 1896) a nineteenth century American female writer, rose from a religious family and enrooted in Calvinism preached by her father Lyman Beecher, she pictures the true disciple of Christ in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *Uncle Tom*, a blackish slave of Kentucky plantation in the year 1840 who plays the central character and he owns only the Bible. Throughout the novel he often found reading it with great religious feeling and quotes it to educate *Eva*, *Cassy*, and others to find the strength to survive in their trials. This paper aims to observe the characteristics features of the true disciples with reference to the Bible. As the bible says, in [Colossians 3:22](#) "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord". The Holy book says that humans ought to treat one another as they themselves wish to be treated. *Uncle Tom and Eva* are true martyrs of love, compassion, sacrifice and obedience. They stand as a symbol of saintliness, representation and a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Index Terms: true disciple, obedience, humility, saintliness, sacrifice.

I. INTRODUCTION

Harriet Beecher Stowe, an eminent pious personality reminds us the eminence of true discipleship owning the qualities of obedience, humility, saintliness and sacrifice are grounded in her works. Stowe also stretches her strong disagreement in slavery and its actions. Though this novel is primarily observed on the elements of racism; slavery; anti-slavery and abolition in addition it can be observed in the context of religious symbolism also. The theme of disciple, a true follower of Christ is evident in two characters in the novel. They are portrayed as typical representations of Christ. Uncle Tom, the central character who is a black slave and loyal in obeying his white masters. Evangeline St. Claire, an incredibly beautiful, sweet, naive, virtuous little angel called as Eva. Everyone loves and protects her. Which means, of course, that she has to die. Stowe presents two characters with different images of Christ, using the similarities and differences in characterization, the reader can comprehend characteristics of the discipleship.

Evangeline as the name depicts bearer of good things love

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everyone irrespective of their race, livelihood and even their character, projects Christ-like figure. Eva parallels Christ in her general appearance and personal characteristics. Eva is young, white, and beautiful. When Tom first sight, Tom describes her as "...something almost divine; and whenever her golden head and deep blue eyes peered out upon him...he half believed that he saw one of the angels stepped out of his New Testament"(152). Here Stowe makes reference of Eva's heavenly glory by also saying, "[Eva was] Always dressed in white...and that visionary golden head, with its deep blue eyes, fleeted along"(152). This is equivalent to Jesus' transfiguration. The book of Matthew describes Jesus' "...face [that] shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light" (Matt. 17:2b).

In addition, Eva was educated making her more independent from others. This becomes evident in her speaking skills. Eva felt no shame in letting her feelings be known. When talking to Rosa, a "talkative" slave, Rosa says that St. Clare should whip the disobedient Topsy. Eva immediately says "...you mustn't talk so, Rosa. I can't bear to hear it...hush! Don't you say another word of that sort!' and the eye of the child flashed, and her cheek deepened its color"(253-254). Rosa then is quiet and says, "Miss Eva has got the St. Clare blood in her, that's plain. She can speak, for all the world..."(254). In comparison to Eva's speaking skills, Jesus as a child had courage to speak. In Luke, Jesus went to "...the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers"(Luke 2:46b-47). Furthermore, Christ being the Son of God was naturally good as was Eva. St. Clare, her father, makes this known to Miss Ophelia by saying, "[Topsy] can't teach [Eva] mischief; she might teach it to some children, but evil rolls of Eva's mind like dew rolls off a cabbage-leaf,--not a drop sinks in"(256). Through these points, it is evident that Eva represents Christ in many ways by her appearance and her personal characteristics.

Similarly, Tom also represents Christ in general appearance and personal characteristics however in contrasting ways. Stowe describes Tom as being an adult slave who is "...large, broad-chested, power fully-made man, of a fully glossy black, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindness and benevolence"(27). As Stowe describes, Tom is nowhere near the beauty of Eva. However, instead of displaying Christ's glory, Tom represents the rougher, plainer features of Christ. The

book of Isaiah mentions this saying, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, and nothing is his appearance that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2b).

Also, Tom's opportunities for education were limited because his education was dependent on the whites. Tom learned to read from his former young master, George. However, Tom can still not write when he arrives at the St. Clare plantation. Tom's dependency comes clear when he wants to write a letter to his family. Eva, being more educated helps Tom with writing his letter (244). Similarly, Christ's education was not elite, making His knowledge questionable. After Jesus taught in the synagogue, "...many who heard him were amazed. 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter?'" (Mk 6:2b-3a). In Jesus' time the occupation of a carpenter was a low status especially in intellect. This is similar to the low status of Tom as a slave. Also, Tom was good-natured and persistent as Christ and Eva. However, Tom's trials were much more severe than Eva's. Even though Tom received several beatings from Legree, his fourth master in the novel, Tom is persistent in his goodness by saying, "I can't do it. I did only what I thought was right. I shall do just so again, if ever the time comes. I never will do a cruel thing, come what may" (388). Tom as well represents Christ through his appearance and personal characteristics. Both Tom and Eva have a lot of similarities that point them to being Christ, however there are differences. Stowe uses these differences to point her readers to the whole, true Christ.

Secondly, Eva represents Christ by being a spiritual leader through witnessing and Biblical knowledge. Stowe characterizes Eva as a spiritual leader by Eva's witnessing to slaves. One of Eva's most memorable witness opportunities is with Topsy. After Topsy had gotten in trouble by her master, Miss Ophelia, Eva asks Topsy why she is acting badly. Eva then figures out that Topsy thinks no one cares or loves her. Eva responds, "...don't you know that Jesus loves all alike? He is just as willing to love you as me" (290). Eva witnessed by showing her love and God's love. She did the same with her witness with her father. As Eva's health is declining, Eva tells her unbelieving father what being a Christian is by saying "Loving Christ most of all" (299). Similarly, Jesus witnesses by telling people what a Christian is and how to receive eternal life. In John 5:24, Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, and whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned."

Furthermore, Eva is a spiritual leader by expressing the importance of Biblical knowledge. Eva's leadership really shines when she is debating the importance of slaves reading their Bibles with her mother. Eva debates, "It seems to me mamma, and the Bible is for everyone to read themselves. They need it a great many times when there is nobody to read it" (271). In the novel, Eva's knowledge of the Bible is not as clear as Tom's knowledge. It is known that Eva learns her knowledge from church and from Miss Ophelia. This is evident when she answers why she goes to church, saying, "...cousin told me that God wants to have us; and he gives us everything, you know; and it isn't much to do it, if he wants

us to. It isn't so very tiresome, after all" (188). Eva's Biblical knowledge is broad and paraphrased, however it is evident that she applies the knowledge to her life.

Similarly, Tom represents Christ by being a spiritual leader by being a minister, by witnessing, and by Biblical knowledge. First of all, Tom was a spiritual leader to slaves by being a minister. Stowe tells her readers this by saying, "Uncle Tom was a sort of patriarch in religious matters, in the neighborhood...as a sort of minister among them..." (35). Tom held devotions and prayer meetings in his cabin because of his ability to read the Bible. Tom was also a minister by teaching prayer to his third master St. Clare. St. Clare confides to Tom that he finds it difficult to pray because there seems to be no one listening. He then asks Tom, "But come, Tom, you pray, now, and show me how" (311). Tom then prays showing that there is someone listening to him. Jesus also taught others to pray by saying, "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven...'" (Mt. 6:9).

Furthermore, Tom displays his spiritual leadership by witnessing. Tom witnesses about Jesus' love to Prue, an abused slave and alcoholic. Seeing Prue in a sickly state, Tom offers help and says, "O, Lord have mercy on ye! poor critter. Han't ye never heard of Jesus Christ?...But didn't anyone tell you of the Lord Jesus, that loved us poor sinners and died for us?" (224). In correlation, a good example of Jesus' style of witnessing is his proclamation of being Christ when healing the paralytic man in Mark 2. Jesus says, "...Your sins are forgiven, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has a authority on earth to forgive sins..." (Mk 2:9-10). Just as Jesus shares who He is and how to receive eternal life, Tom and Eva do the same. However, Tom's knowledge is also more extensive than Eva's is. Tom applies the Bible to his life like Eva does, yet he reads and quotes Scripture in the novel. For example, when full of sorrow Tom slowly reads Jesus' words from John 14:1-2 for encouragement (150). Tom and Eva are both spiritual leaders with similar ministries, but different approaches. This again is Stowe's way of fulfilling a representation of a whole Christ.

Finally, Eva represents Christ's death by predicting her death and willing it even when others disbelieved, and her last communion. First of all, Eva predicts her death when Tom and her were looking at the sky, talking about angels and the glory of heaven. Then, Eva simply says as she pointed to the sky, "I'm going *there*...to the spirits bright, Tom; *I'm going, before long*" (269). Eva is quite aware that the Lord is calling her just like Christ who also predicts his death in Matthew 16:21. Also, Eva is willing to face death even though her father, St. Clare, denies it. Eva offered no objections to death because it was the Lord's plan. She reinforces this by saying, "...I know it perfectly well, --and I am going, before long. I am not nervous, --I am not low-spirited. If it were not for you, papa, and my friends, I should be perfectly happy. I want to go, --I long to go!" (284). Jesus too knows His death is near and prays to God in the garden saying, "...Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but

your be done"(Luke 22:42). Jesus also faces opposition from his friends after telling them about His death. In the book of Matthew, Peter says to Jesus, "Never, Lord!...this shall never happen to you!"(Mt. 16:22).

Furthermore, just as Christ gave a last communion with His disciples in remembrance of Him in Matthew 26:26-35, so did Eva. Similarly, on her deathbed, Eva calls everyone in the house to come. After she tells them that she loves them all and to behave like Christians, she says, "...I want to give you something that, when you look at, you will always remember me. I going to give all of you a curl of my hair; and, when you look at it, think that I loved you and am gone to heaven...."(297). Eva represents Christ's death by predicting and willing it, and by her last communion.

II. RESULTS

Similarity, Tom represents Christ's death by being willing to face death, quoting Scripture, being under questioning, and witnessing to two men while dying. First of all, Tom was willing to face death instead of confessing the location of the fugitives. Stowe tells her readers this saying, "...[Tom] knew the deadly character of the man he had to deal with, and his despotic power. But he felt strong in God to meet death, rather than betray the helpless"(419). After Stowe says this and Tom sets his basket down knowing death is near he says, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit! Thou hast redeemed me, oh Lord God of truth!"(420). Jesus too says this before his death in Luke 26:46.

Moreover, just as Christ was under questioning of His authority by priests and government officials, Tom was under questioning by his master Legree (420). In addition, after being whipped to near death, Legree's two black overseers witnessed Tom's courage and asked him about Jesus. Stowe tells us that "[Tom] poured forth a few energetic sentences of that wondrous One, --his life, his death, his everlasting presence, and power to save"(422). After weeping and praying, these two men accepted Christ as their Savior. This scene is similar to Christ's witness to the two thieves on the cross. Even though one did not believe, the other slave said, "'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom' and Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise'"(Lk. 23:42-43). Tom displayed many similarities of Christ's death as did Eva. However, Tom and Eva displayed different aspects and events of Christ's death to show Stowe's whole Christ.

III. CONCLUSION

Tom and Eva represent Christ in similar and different ways, which engineers a whole, complete Christ as Stowe planned. These similarities and differences of Tom and Eva's were depicted by their appearance and character, by being spiritual leaders, and by their death. Stowe, showing the differences of their appearance and character, made it clear that Stowe believed in a Christ that was neither black nor white. Also, Stowe presented the differences of being spiritual leaders by their different approaches in ministering to others to conform to Christ who ministered in many

different ways. Finally, Stowe shows Tom and Eva's differences in their deaths. Eva's death was bloodless, but displayed communion with those whom she loved just as Christ did. Tom's death however, was real like Christ's with bloodshed and suffering. Stowe's comparisons in characters give us a true picture of Jesus Christ's life on this earth..

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