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The influence of anxiety: Bricolage Brontë style

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THE INFLUENCE OF ANXIETY: BRICOLAGE BRONTÉ STYLE

by

KEITH ALLEN JENKINS

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1993
ABSTRACT

The Influence of Anxiety: Bricolage Brontë Style
by
Keith Allen Jenkins

Driven by her anxiety to create an alternative world view to that offered her by the male-dominated world of nineteenth-century England, enabled by the decline of biblical authority encouraged by the expansion of scientific discovery and the rise of the Higher Criticism, and guided by the Bible's own internal reinterpretative tradition, Charlotte Brontë appropriates the authoritative voice of scripture in order to redirect its energies into new avenues so that she can script a life for herself which transcends the possibilities available to her in the external world. However, if she wishes to redress issues of exclusion and oppression which have their roots in the traditional, male-dominated interpretation of the Bible, then one of her most effective weapons is the Bible's own challenging word, which, though often suppressed by her culture, she reclaims and uses. What Harold Bloom calls "the anxiety of influence" is certainly involved in her apparently willful misreading of the precedent tradition of biblical interpretation in order to clear out a space within which her voice can be heard. The influence of such a powerful and sacrosanct source as the Bible would undoubtedly produce in Brontë the anxiety of which Bloom speaks.
However, rather than abandoning or completely rejecting it, she saw her work as a necessary renewing of the biblical tradition because the conventional methods of viewing it no longer fit the situation of women in the nineteenth century, including her own. From the dominant society's point of view, she commits what can be perceived as acts of "violence" on the Bible and a substantial body of its interpretation. Breaking its stories down into their component parts of character, plot, and setting, she then reassembles them in startling and exciting ways using the process of bricolage. This study traces Charlotte Brontë's reinscription of the Bible through her four novels, paying special attention to her use of three strategies: (1) gender reversal, (2) undermining of God's role in controlling human history, and (3) recasting "otherworldly" locales in this worldly settings.
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Introduction

Over twenty years ago, Richard Altick offered the following assessment of the situation in which Victorian scholarship found itself:
It takes two to communicate, and we have not yet sufficiently recognized, let alone explored, the crucial problem of the mental equipment, the store of information and established responses, which the Victorian reader brought to his perusal of the latest novel.¹

Building upon Altick’s observation, eight years later Robert Lee Wolff asserted that "of all the subjects that interested Victorians, and therefore preoccupied their novelists, none . . . held their attention as much as religion. And of all the subjects none is more obscure to the modern reader."²

Finally, in 1980, George Landow offered this warning:
Although it is a commonplace that we have lost the intimate knowledge of the Bible that characterized literate people of the last century, we have yet to perceive the full implications of our loss. . . . When we modern readers fail to recognize
allusions [to typological interpretations of the Bible] . . . we deprive many Victorian works of a large part of their context. . . . we under-read and misread many works, and the danger is that the greater the work, the more our ignorance will distort and inevitably reduce it.  

Taken together, these three observations should help to convince anyone familiar with the work of the Brontë sisters that critics have not adequately explored the use of the Bible in their novels. The writings of all three sisters require extensive study in this area, but those of Charlotte clearly stand out. I will argue that she is by far the most radical of the three in her far-reaching rewriting of biblical material through her fiction.

While references to the Bible are common in Victorian literature, Charlotte Brontë strikes even the casual reader as uncommonly liberal in her use of allusion. In a list which is not exhaustive, the editors of the Clarendon edition of The Professor index 435 biblical quotations or allusions in her four novels. Yet, while the sheer number of references is striking, it is the ways in which this daughter of a conservative, evangelical Anglican clergyman subverts traditional Christian interpretations of the Bible, virtually rewriting many familiar passages to suit her own personal and literary purposes, which require further exploration. In this study I will explore and try to answer
two related questions. First, what motivated Brontë's rewriting of biblical material? And second, what did she see as her authority for doing so?

This rewriting of biblical material seems to serve two related purposes, one private, the other more public. In her study of female methods of interpreting scripture, Patricia Demers notes the frequency with which historically, women have joined biblical hermeneutics with a focus on both self-realization and social responsibility. Although many women in nineteenth-century England were given only a limited voice in matters of substance affecting their lives, by appropriating to herself the voice of biblical authority, redesigned for her own purposes, Charlotte Brontë was able to script a life for herself which transcended the possibilities available to her in the external, predominately masculine world. Gilbert and Gubar offer a less optimistic view, suggesting that unlike the male Romantics to whom she is akin in so many ways, "Brontë's exclusion from social and economic life precluded her free rejection of it." By contrast, Carol Jean Gerster argues that the great novels of the nineteenth century—many written by women—do more than transmit the values of the dominant culture regarding the roles and function of women. She hears in them "a dialogue between dominant and dissenting voices," both necessary for transmitting "the whole of our heritage." Gerster suggests that women
novelists increasingly felt a "need to make their position known: some acquiescing to and perpetuating the myth [of woman as a paragon of virtue], some rebelling against it as a limited and repressive view of women." Her key term, "re-vision," describes a process of seeing in a given situation alternative views to those offered by the masculine tradition. Gerster identifies Charlotte Brontë, who was well acquainted with "human needs, aspirations, desires, and capabilities that could not be contained within the cultural myth about women," as part of this "feminist tradition of dissent." So when I attribute revolutionary tendencies to Charlotte Brontë, I do not discount the social and political conservatism which is so evident in her letters, and which appears either implicitly or explicitly to some degree in all of her female protagonists. She engages in a revolution of perception which to a large extent remains unactualized in the details of her own life.

To locate this concern with the creation and presentation of a self in a broader context, we can view this effort at self-creation as part of the general Romantic tendency toward introspection, nourished by a persistent tradition, especially within pietistic branches of Christianity, of minute self-examination. Its roots go back to the ancient tradition of spiritual autobiography, made a significant part of British literature by the Puritans. Assuming that "every experience has its biblical
analogue," the spiritual autobiographer feels he can "discover design in his life by appropriating the patterns of biblical history." The search for parallels between one's life and the well-established patterns for a righteous life outlined in the biblical stories provides the devout a means for legitimating their own life patterns. This method of scriptural interpretation, called typology, has been practiced by Christians for centuries, beginning with the New Testament writers, who viewed the life, death and resurrection of Christ as the fulfillment of persons and events prefigured in the Old Testament.

Sacvan Bercovitch traces a subtle shift in the way type (prefiguration) and antitype (fulfillment) relate. Puritan spiritual biographers viewed the Bible more open-endedly than the classical typologists did, claims Bercovitch. "Every Puritan biographer wrote, in one degree or another, as though he were bringing the scriptures up to date through his subject's life." Bercovitch's Puritans discovered (or created?) in their own lives new antitypes in which the old biblical types find their fulfillment. Paul Korshin calls this alteration of the relationship between type and antitype found in the classical system postfiguration.

Writing specifically about Jane Eyre, Heather Henderson asserts that "the use of typology . . . places the novel in the tradition of spiritual autobiography as a search for salvation." She goes on, though, to recall Linda Peterson's
claim that the traditional field of spiritual autobiography "had excluded women precisely by its reliance on Biblical typology to interpret one's life."\textsuperscript{16} Elaborating on Peterson's view, Henderson points out that "because of prohibitions against women engaging in biblical hermeneutics, the traditional reliance on typology to interpret and structure one's past experiences further discourages women from undertaking autobiography."\textsuperscript{17} In the case of Charlotte Brontë, though, she not only "engages" freely in biblical hermeneutics, but also portrays her female protagonists Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe doing so in their fictional autobiographies. From this point of view, then, what seems to be at stake for Brontë is a woman's right, following the precedent of earlier spiritual autobiographers, to take the scriptures in hand and interpret them in ways which are personally meaningful, even if that means altering or abandoning the conventionally "male" interpretations of that precedent tradition.\textsuperscript{18}

To claim this power of self-determination, Brontë found it necessary to enter the male-dominated world, wrestling power, if possible, from those who wield it and wish to retain it. Margaret Blom argues, however, that despite the shrewdness of her perception of the causes and consequences of female repression, Brontë is no revolutionary. Her attitudes towards the cultural patterns she analyzes are ambivalent,
and this ambivalence creates the tone of agony and frustration so typical of her work.\textsuperscript{19} Blom's insight into Brontë's ambivalence highlights the risk of absorption she was taking in using the Bible so extensively in her work. Gilbert and Gubar argue that by "internaliz[ing] the destructive strictures of patriarchy" (e.g. the separation of home and office, with the woman assigned the role of "angel of the hearth"; the cult of the mother; the Madonna/whore paradox) Victorian women effectively ensured their continued entrapment in the status quo. Lucy Snowe, they claim, "bought survival at the price of never fully existing."\textsuperscript{20} Though specifically analyzing Jane's ventriloquistic citation of Revelation at the end of \textit{Jane Eyre}, Carolyn Williams writes in partial support of this view. Williams' claim that "the integrity of her [i.e. Jane's] text almost dissolves into the tradition she [i.e. Brontë] is writing (perforce) within and (by design) against,"\textsuperscript{21} clearly points out what was at stake. But if Brontë wishes to redress issues of exclusion and oppression which have their roots in the traditional, male-dominated interpretation of the Bible, then one of her most effective weapons is the Bible's own challenging prophetic word, which, though often suppressed by her culture, she reclaimed and used.

Charlotte was not alone in this conflict. All three Brontë sisters engaged, to an extent, in this interpretative
power struggle. Not surprisingly, Emily is the least biblically based of the sisters. She wants to find a new way altogether, creating a new vocabulary and a new mythology. Anne is conservative in how she uses the biblical texts themselves, but strongly maintains the need for latitude in private interpretation. By contrast, Charlotte rips the texts to shreds, reducing them to bits of language and imagery and plot, so that she can "re-verse" them.\textsuperscript{22}

Brontë's second purpose in rewriting biblical material appears to be a development of the first, and it is with this purpose that we are most interested. After Brontë conceived new possibilities for her own life, she turned this same reconstructive power to her fiction. As she moved toward a much broader, more public audience for her works, the pool of biblical material from which she drew expanded to include not only the basic mythic and narratival patterns explored in the juvenilia (e.g. exile and return, judgment and retribution, betrayal), but also the extensive quotation and allusion familiar to every reader of her mature works. At this point, the confrontation with the interpretative tradition becomes more overt and, at least in terms of the beliefs one might have expected to find in Patrick Brontë's daughter, more subversive. I contend that, contrary to prevailing critical assessments, Charlotte is finally more subversive than Emily in her reconstruction of the Bible and
the traditional Christian worldview inferred from it.

I began by asking what motivated Brontë's "re-vision" of the Bible and what she might have seen as her authority for doing so. In terms of the second question, we can identify two distinct factors which at least partly account for her remarkable freedom in adapting biblical material in her writings. First, what Harold Bloom calls "the anxiety of influence"²³ is certainly involved in her apparently willful misreading of the precedent tradition of biblical interpretation in order to clear out a space within which her voice can be heard.²⁴ Bloom contends that the strong literary predecessor influences those who follow in primarily a negative way, as an "other" from which the new writer must differentiate both self and work. If we recognize the role played in western thought and literature by typological interpretation of the Bible, we can find a connection between Bloom's idea and Brontë's incorporation of biblical texts into her writings. As both goal and purpose of the movement of historical forces initiated in the type (the earlier figure), the antitype (the later) is superior, as the type's fulfillment. But from a literary perspective, the type--as precursor--casts the shadow of its influence over the antitype, challenging any bid it might make for autonomy. We can expand Bloom's notion about poetic influence to include the adoption of types from one text to another. The influence of such a powerful and
sacrosanct source as the Bible would undoubtedly produce the anxiety of which Bloom speaks. However, Brontë tries to renew the preceding tradition by altering it, rather than abandoning or completely rejecting it. So, rather than reacting against the influence of a single strong poetic precursor, as in Bloom's scheme, Brontë seems to view the male-dominated interpretative history of the Bible—rather than the Bible itself—as the predecessor to which she must impute error. As Carolyn Williams suggests, she pushes these inherited hermeneutic paradigms "away from the center, in a very characteristic dynamic of incorporation and differentiation."  

We must raise the question, then, whether Charlotte Brontë saw her work as a necessary renewing of the biblical tradition because the conventional methods of viewing it no longer fit the situation of women in the nineteenth century, including her own. Biblical types were deeply ingrained in the Victorian mind, but the antitypes traditionally associated with them were either inaccessible or unflattering to women. But if these types could be disconnected from their traditional, usually male antitypes, perhaps a new kind of typology could be created, in which none of the power of the biblical imagery and language is lost, but only channelled in new directions. What Charlotte Brontë does in her novels, then, is supply the new antitypes to renew the old word.
A second factor contributing to Brontë's free handling of the Bible is that "anxious, yearning, impotent, God-desiring, hungry and thirsty, exiled, footsore, feverish, blind, passionate, unhappy skepticism" experienced by so many Victorians, which prompted the movement toward an earnest reevaluation of biblical thought, of which the Brontës are a major example. Deriving a name for this experience from Bloom, we could call it the influence of anxiety--part fear, inculcated by the traditional, authoritarian, Calvinistic view of Christianity against which all of the Brontë children seem to have rebelled; part eagerness and optimism, produced by a sense of amazement over what modern, industrialized humanity seemingly might accomplish on its own.

Charlotte Brontë would be doubly anxious. Though her efforts to read the Bible in such a way as to insulate herself from what she calls "ghastly Calvinistic doctrines" were to a large extent made possible by the decline of biblical authority in the nineteenth century and a new emphasis on the right of private judgment, the Bible itself offered her distress mixed with consolation. As Herbert Schneiderau suggests, "the Bible is not the best book for putting us at ease in the world." He combats any tendency on our part to view Brontë's interaction with scripture as unidirectional, supposing she could immerse herself as deeply as she does in the biblical text but remain
unaffected by it. Schneidau's contention that "the Bible uses authors" to a greater extent than authors use the Bible raises the question of whether Brontë's unorthodox use of scripture in her novels originates in her reading of the Bible's own revolutionary word. Not only in its prophetic message, which challenges the established culture, but also as a linguistic construct, the Bible exhibits what Schneidau calls Sacred Discontent. "It even corrects and reshapes its own verbal formulas," thus giving permission to its interpreters to continue the same process.

To analyze the significance of Charlotte's use of biblical material we must evaluate two points: (1) How successfully does she adopt (and adapt) the multiple narratival voices and theological perspectives of the Bible without finally conforming to, or at least being compromised by, the blocking power of what she may have perceived as its monolithic tradition of interpretation? And (2) to what extent are the limitations of her vision judged by the same sacred word she seeks to employ for her own purposes? Another way of stating the issue is to ask whether a female writer in Victorian England could successfully engage and subvert a body of material with so much latent revolutionary power but also a tradition of interpretation so laden with authoritarian, male-oriented language? And if so, how must she have gone about doing it?

My claim that Charlotte Brontë's use of biblical
material can be seen as a species of typology requires some explanation, because Brontë's typology (if it is fair even to call it that) is certainly atypical. Her use of the method differs from the traditional version most significantly in the area of unity. Traditional typological interpretation assumes the complete unity of the biblical narrative. The events of history and the written accounts of the Bible mirror each other, and both are subject to absolute divine control. Old Testament writers foretold—often unknowingly—events in the life of Jesus or in the early Church because the unchanging will of the all-powerful God lay behind, guided, and inspired all equally. This hermeneutic became problematic when scientific discoveries and biblical criticism began to cast doubts upon the historicity of certain biblical accounts, calling into question the doctrine of inspiration on which typological interpretation depends. However, as long as the theological—if not the narratival—unity of scripture could be maintained, typological interpretation still functioned in a broad sense. Landow suggests that when even the theological unity could no longer be confidently asserted, typological interpretation fell out of favor, in the final third of the nineteenth century. What he calls "the habits of mind associated with typology," though, persisted "long after its initial religious basis had changed or vanished."  

Northrop Frye describes a third type of unity in the
Bible as an "imaginative unity, which is founded on metaphor." Typology based on metaphoric connections would, of necessity, tend toward destabilization. Detached from even broadly applicable religious moorings and used in private, at times even idiosyncratic ways, it would be free floating. It is this imaginative unity of the Bible which Charlotte Brontë exploits as she employs biblical material to enrich (and complicate) her writing, and her writing to reinterpret and reclaim the Bible.

 Perhaps the best analogy I can draw for how this form of typology achieves this destabilization comes from the opening of Volume Two in Villette. After swooning on the streets of Villette, Lucy Snowe awakens in the Bretton home, not knowing where she is. The furnishings in the home are familiar to her, evoking strong associations, but she cannot precisely identify them because she finds their presence in her current setting inexplicable. The very familiarity of the things themselves in an unfamiliar context is what destabilizes Lucy so badly. A similar effect can be accomplished by placing biblical material in a non-religious or unorthodox religious context. The familiarity in the midst of alienness produces a destabilization which cannot be rendered by any other method. A clever author could use the residual significance of the biblical material for the Victorian cultural memory to heighten the effect. Robert Alter suggests that "much of the art [in the use of
allusion] lies in the shifting aperture between the shadowy foreimage in the anticipatory mind of the observer and the realized revelatory image in the work itself.\textsuperscript{37} Could it be possible that Brontë, relying on this anticipated foreimage whenever biblical materials were used, deliberately countered, frustrated, and played upon these expectations in order to achieve her narrative purpose in a way she could not have done without the reader's anticipated foreimage, without the reading public's sense of how that material has traditionally been and should be interpreted?\textsuperscript{38}

In discussing her principles of interpretation, I am suggesting that Charlotte employed an offshoot of the ancient interpretative system of typology. To describe her strategy, I will borrow Levi-Strauss' term \textit{bricolage}, which Northrop Frye defines as "a putting together of bits and pieces out of whatever comes to hand."\textsuperscript{39} Janet Larson discusses the same quality in Dickens' writing, "the fracturing of the Great Code help[ing] to make possible this freely ranging exploitation of whatever parts of the tradition came to hand for particular uses, whether they agreed with each other or not."\textsuperscript{40} Writing specifically about Brontë, Irene Tayler states that

all her life Charlotte had been assembling the pieces of what had by now developed into a kind of personal theology. She pressed the Protestant habit of individual interpretation into special
service, using biblical allusion to give heightened texture and enlarged dimension to her personal experience. ⁴¹

I should point out that Brontë was by no means the only nineteenth-century writer using a form of typology. George Landow claims that typology experienced a revival in the first half of the nineteenth century, though many writers used it for primarily secular purposes. He suggests that types "permit the Victorian writer to communicate with his audience in terms of a recognizable, culturally acceptable narrative or structure which has many powerful associations attached to it." ⁴² Carolyn Williams makes a similar point when she argues that tropes of secularization always work doubly . . . lending borrowed authority to forms of secular life and literature by analogy with the sacred forms they no longer quite represent, but still remember; carrying within themselves an implicit revision of the sacred text even as they borrow its authority for secular ends. ⁴³

(In the case of Brontë, though, the "re-vision" often seems so extreme we are inclined to describe it as explicit.) Since the type carries with it this predictable set of associations regardless of where or how it is used (if it is sufficiently familiar to the reader, that is, which was usually the case for middle-class Victorian readers).
typology offers the possibility of appropriating biblical language, imagery, and narrative patterns for decidedly non-biblical purposes.44

According to Paul Korshin, this form of typology, which he calls abstracted, is being used "when the general circumstances of an event . . . parallel Old Testament or New Testament typical events, but without specific theological treatment," or "when the actions or life-style of a fictional character parallel--either wholly or partially--those of a type-figure or a type myth."45 Because they are part of a system of literary creation and interpretation rather than biblical exegesis, biblical types of this kind may be used to "prefigure" whatever antitype the narrative or poem needs. Calling them "a sort of nonvisual iconography," Korshin suggests that abstracted types are treated as "non-linguistic symbols," like numbers, "which can be shifted about from one text to another, always keeping the same approximate significance."46 While this notion of interchangeability closely resembles Brontë's use of typology, Korshin does not adequately address the unstable nature of such a combination. Christina Crosby's observation, that "the whole structure of analogical extension rests on tropes which have no firm foundation . . . which produce no proper meaning,"47 offers the necessary corrective to Korshin's view. Since all typological interpretation necessarily contains within it the "potential
for introducing some dissonance into literary work because the original text is never completely assimilated into its new environment."\textsuperscript{48} the same method used by Charlotte Brontë to construct her typologies also increases their "rhetorical instability."\textsuperscript{49}

One of the difficulties in writing about literary uses of typology is the lack of a standardized terminology. Even the brief discussion to this point illustrates the need for precise, consistent language usage. Rather than invent my own terminology, I will adopt that outlined by Michael Wheeler in his book, \textit{The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction}:

An \textbf{adopted text} is a work or part of a work from which material is borrowed in the act of quoting or referring, and an \textbf{adoptive text} is a work in which that material is placed. A \textbf{quotation} is an identifiable word, phrase or passage taken from an adopted text. A \textbf{marked quotation} is one whose nature is indicated by means of punctuation or typography, whereas an \textbf{unmarked quotation} is one whose nature is not thus indicated. A \textbf{reference} is a word, phrase or passage which directs attention to an adopted text but which does not share stylistic similarities with it.\textsuperscript{50}

Following Wheeler, I will use the term "allusion" in a generic sense for both quotations and references, with
"alluding to" meaning either quoting or referring to. Though Wheeler quotes E. E. Kellett's definition of allusion as the "natural overflow of a rich and well-stored mind" with a certain disapproval, it certainly describes accurately Charlotte Brontë's use of the Bible in her writings. In her novels, her poetry, and her letters, she seems incapable of writing without allusions. However, if we intend to go beyond biographical curiosity to consider not only her contribution to nineteenth-century fiction but also her place in the history of biblical hermeneutics, we must examine most closely those uses of biblical allusion which either convey or complicate meaning in her writing in some substantial way.

Though very little of my approach will involve the kind of biographical criticism often employed by Brontë critics, I do believe that we can learn much about how Charlotte justifies (to herself if not to her public) her approach to biblical reinterpretation from how she depicts her female characters treating the same material. Without anticipating my discussion of the novel in a later chapter too much, we can look briefly at an example from Charlotte's third novel, Shirley.

In Chapter 18, when Shirley confesses to a degree of puzzlement concerning St. Paul's views on women as expounded in the second chapter of 1 Timothy, Joe Scott replies that "it is very plain," that "he that runs may read." It is
this assertion which first draws Caroline Helstone into the
discussion, suggesting that the hypothetical runner "may
read it in his own fashion" (370 my emphasis). The
interpretative freedom Caroline implies by her phrase, "in
his own fashion," she then makes explicit by questioning Joe
regarding "the right of private judgment." Perhaps not
surprisingly, Joe allows this freedom "for every line of the
holy Book" (370), but only for men. Caroline's willingness
to challenge the traditionally male prerogative of biblical
interpretation raises the question once more of how the
daughter of an Anglican clergyman arrived at a position so
uncharacteristic of her upbringing within the established
church as to be able to portray women with such courage in
their appropriation of the scriptures.

Careful study of Charlotte Brontë's four novels can
produce little doubt that she gains greatly in freedom and
self-assurance in her use of biblical allusion as both her
public acceptance and her maturity increase. Biblical
stories which are adapted to the point of being virtually
rewritten from Jane Eyre on appear in The Professor in a
quite conventional, even proverbial, form. However, the
question of whether or not such a remarkable development
occurred in the few short years involved is not the central
issue of my study. I am more interested in the final
product Brontë produces than in what length of time it took
her to get there. My primary interest is in the ways in
which Charlotte Brontë, enabled in part by the decline of traditional biblical authority, boldly rewrites the Bible through her fiction, and in doing so creates new life possibilities both for her female characters and for herself.

Before outlining the tentative system of categories I have drawn from an extensive examination of Brontë's use of the Bible in her four adult novels, though, we need a brief sketch of nineteenth-century hermeneutics to provide the background against which we can view Brontë's distinctive use and development of this ancient interpretative system. Paradoxically, the nineteenth century was simultaneously a time of great renewal within the Church and a time of far-reaching crisis for faith, produced primarily by scientific discovery and the rise of modern biblical criticism. Gerald Parsons notes that, despite the fact that the critical approach to the Bible was largely pioneered in English studies of the Old Testament from the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century, "in the 1830s and 1840s most believers still held the Bible to be divinely inspired . . . inerrant and infallible in every detail."

Critics have long debated what view of the Bible Charlotte would most likely have inherited from her somewhat theologically mixed upbringing. Christina Crosby's statement is representative: "As the daughter of a moderately Evangelical Anglican clergyman, Charlotte Brontë
was brought up believing that the Bible was the literal word of God and the high-est source of truth."\(^{56}\) While Crosby's assessment may be true, her further claim that "in all her writing--her correspondence and her novels--Brontë declares her faith in divine providence, God's over-arching plan"\(^{57}\) is difficult to support in the light of the many instances of radical reinscription of the Bible in her novels. Regardless of Brontë's specific views, though, the centrality of individual and family Bible reading throughout much of middle-class Victorian society is both a scholarly and a literary commonplace. For those who held its words to be infallible, the Bible became a highly private means of direct communication with God. To place this pietistic practice within a broader context, we can begin with Blake's character Los and move forward through the Romantic and Victorian periods to find an almost universally perceived need to create one's own personal, private system of beliefs to replace the crumbling consensus inherited from previous generations. The effort to extricate oneself from the residual influence of that inherited system produces a great deal of the anxiety which is nearly synonymous with the age. Somewhat ironically, then, this elevated view of biblical authority also carried within it, through its tendency toward privatization, the seeds of the decline of that same authority. We need only recall Caroline Helstone's debate with Joe Scott in Shirley over the "right of private
judgment" to see the fallacy implicit in the attempt to hold both views--i.e. infallibility and individualistic faith--at the same time. While Brontë rarely addresses this theological issue directly, in numerous letters to family and friends she speaks of her reverence for the Bible and her fear of being found unequal to the standards of behavior which it set.\(^{58}\) However, this fear seems finally ineffective in restraining her highly individualized reading of scripture.

The crisis of faith is a standard theme in Victorian studies. The period which E. S. Shaffer identifies as that during which biblical criticism changes the most includes the life and writing of Charlotte Brontë. Describing the change which takes place during this period, she writes:

the Biblical criticism which in Coleridge's youth might appear an obscure, difficult, largely foreign scholarly technique confined to a handful of professors of Oriental languages becomes by George Eliot's time the medium of secular religious experience.\(^{59}\)

Shaffer's reference to George Eliot recalls a watershed event in the decline of biblical authority in the nineteenth century. About the same time Brontë wrote *The Professor*, Eliot completed the first English translation of Strauss' revolutionary work *Das Leben Jesu*, bringing the impact of German critical studies of the New Testament to bear upon
the English church. A few years earlier, in 1838, Charles Hennell published his *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*. Because of Brontë's familiarity with his work, we will briefly Hennell's impact on her writings.

Finding the entire Bible full of contradictions, Hennell observes that the gospels in particular lack any corroborating evidence outside themselves for Jesus' supernatural birth, miracles, resurrection, and ascension, i.e. what he would call "strong proofs of authenticity and veracity." Though such a contention calls into question the historical veracity of scripture, Hennell sought to understand the Bible apart from a literalistic reading, not erode its foundational role in the Christian faith. In contrast to its religious impact, though, biblical criticism in no way lessened the Bible's value as a nearly endless source of imagery to be manipulated to serve a variety of literary purposes. Indeed, my claim is that the Bible's declining authority as inspired, infallible literature made it even more susceptible than previously to the kind of fracturing and reassembly we find in Charlotte Brontë's writings.

Describing the ways in which "abstracted" typology differs from the classical variety, Korshin argues that "in the middle of the seventeenth century in England, typology slowly began to change, to become secular in its applications, and to involve genres of literature other than
the strictly religious."\textsuperscript{61} Citing a shift in the writer's motivation for using typological interpretation, Korshin suggests that

the writer who introduces abstracted typology into a literary work . . . has ceased to be an interpreter of past mysteries . . . . He is not concerned with decoding or deciphering a difficult text such as the Bible.\textsuperscript{62}

While we might want to add the qualifier "primarily" to Korshin's statement about the writer's concerns, his observation is helpful. Clearly, the field of application for typological interpretation expanded greatly in nineteenth-century literature. While debates over the infallibility of scripture raged, artists and authors—even those with Christian sympathies—began treating the Bible with ever-increasing freedom. In the broad sense, then, Charlotte Brontë can be viewed as part of an extensive literary movement, though both her methods and her status as part of a largely disenfranchised segment of her society define her distinctive place in that movement.

Charlotte Brontë's distinctive use of scripture in her novels does not fit easily into any preconceived general descriptive schemes. Therefore, I wish to offer a few provisional categories based on my reading of her novels as possible means of organizing her extensive echoing of the Bible. Several of the systems I will consider are too
specific for general use, but they present valid categories nonetheless.

One of the most broadly applicable criteria for organizing Brontë's biblical allusions is the nature of the material as found in the adopted text. We find clear echoes of:

1. specific characters (e.g. Adam or Eve),
2. specific events (e.g. the Exodus or the Crucifixion),
3. specific biblical locales (e.g. Garden of Eden or Egypt) and general biblical landscapes (e.g. Wilderness or Promised Land),
4. biblical stories as "story" (e.g. Noah's ark or Nathan's parable of the one ewe lamb), and
5. recognizable biblical objects with no narrative framework (e.g. the tabernacle or manna).

In addition to these, Brontë's novels contain numerous instances, more difficult to describe, in which

6. biblical character roles or bits of narrative are patterned within the fiction, with no overt allusions, but remain recognizable (e.g. Jane's "passion" experience as she leaves Thornfield and journeys to Marsh End).

Allusions of all of these varieties appear in all manner of treatments, from straightforward to parodic to proverbial. However, the overlapping we find between a number of these
categories (e.g. events and characters or events and locales) limits their usefulness as an organizing principle.

Brontë's biblical allusions can also be organized around thematic pointers such as creation, exile, sacrifice, the Christ event, and resurrection. This method is useful not only for dealing with the sheer number of references that must be considered in any thorough study of Brontë's novels, but also for providing a sense of continuity from one work to the next. For example, Brontë's treatment of the Adam and Eve myth in The Professor can be considered alongside her much later use of the same material in Villette. By using such an organizational scheme, we can observe closely the extent of Brontë's adaptation of specific adopted texts which seemed both to define and to confine her existence. However, it offers us little insight into what her goals for "re-vising" scripture might be. We must identify strategies which she employs consistently to infuse her novels with the latent power of biblical types without compromising her alternative vision by too closely associating herself with the patriarchal mindset implicit in classical typology.

As I have already indicated, Brontë's use of biblical material in her novels is extensive, perhaps unparalleled in the Victorian period. Many of these instances are little more than her tools for character development or for advancing the plot, reflecting accurately the prevalence of
biblical allusion within the speech of the period. Others, though, serve as Brontë's chief weapon in the battle she wages against the constraints placed on women by her society. In these cases, where her adopted biblical language and imagery claim the Bible's power for her vision of alternative possibilities for her life and the lives of other women, we can identify three basic strategies which she employs. Before outlining these strategies, let me offer one caveat. The observation that Brontë does not in every case employ these strategies overtly should not limit our use of them as a means for evaluating her adaptation of biblical material. The clear contrast between her views regarding the Bible expressed in her letters and the "re-vision" it frequently undergoes when adopted into her fiction testifies to the presence of a subtext in much of her writing which runs counter to the surface rhetoric. Few readers of her novels would deny that Brontë exhibits an inward dividedness on this point typical of the Victorian period.

To begin with, in one biblical story after another, the gender of the biblical character is destabilized as Brontë creates her fictional parallels. The most frequent form of destabilization is a reversal from male biblical character to female character within the novel, but instances of female to male reversal can also be found. In some cases (e.g. the garden scene in Chapter 23 of *Jane Eyre*), the
reversal itself is unstable and gender roles may fluctuate several times within a single scene. Though Brontë nowhere discusses her reasons for this gender-role reversal, we can speculate. Most of the gender-role stereotypes which so severely restricted the options of women in the nineteenth century, as in previous eras, were justified by reference to scripture. If Brontë can encourage a reading of the Bible which is non-gender-specific, she can undermine many of the explicit arguments and unspoken assumptions of her society which she feels imprison her. If the heroines of her fiction can play the roles of major male figures within the biblical salvation history, she can claim a share of God's blessing for them as well. Her particular brand of typology is especially well suited to this end because it allows her to bring all of the weight of the biblical tradition to bear on a point of her own choosing. So long as some form of unity can be claimed for the Bible—whether imaginative or metaphorical—she can use typology for her nonbiblical purposes. If her female characters can become modern antitypes for male biblical types, she can create the impression that her alternative vision is part of a divinely ordained plan.

A second strategy Brontë employs is to call into question God's involvement in human history. She achieves this goal in two different ways. At times, she seems to attack the popular notion of Providence, either by
attributing activity to it in a less than enthusiastic manner, thereby indirectly questioning its existence or at least its efficacy, or by conflating it with an opposing idea, such as Fate. If she can produce in her readers an uncertainty regarding the nature and intentions of the power which oversees and directs human history—if indeed any power does—she can create the possibility of freedom for her characters and, by extension, for all women. If Providence does not function in the manner proposed by traditional Christian thought—or does not function at all—then perhaps social roles and expectations are neither predetermined nor divinely sanctioned, as the Church also frequently suggests.

Related to this undermining of the notion of Providence are the instances in which Brontë's characters either usurp divine prerogatives or such authority is attributed to them by other characters or by the narrator. This variation on the second strategy would include but would not be limited to Brontë's frequent explorations of the human proclivity toward idolatry. Depending on the specific setting, Brontë seems to work this method in two opposite directions. In some instances, characters in her novels are linked to God or Christ in parodic fashion. For example, in an early humorous scene in Villette, Lucy watches the portress nervously scurrying in and out of M. Paul's classroom to fetch students who must attend other classes. Lucy pictures
her "snatch[ing], as it were, a brand from the burning--a pupil from under M. Paul's nose." The tone alone is sufficient to warn us against trying to find deep significance in Rosine's actions. And yet, this allusion to an image found in the writings of the prophets Amos (4:11) and Zechariah (3:2) makes God the counterpart of the frantic portress. The suggested comparison is ludicrous, but it does have the effect of subtly demeaning our estimation of God's providential care attested to by the prophets.

On the other hand, when a character in the novel is likened to either God or Christ in a straightforward manner, that character's stature in the fictional world is greatly enhanced and his or her values strongly endorsed. In these instances Brontë seems to offer such characters as Paul Emanuel for our serious consideration as antitypes for the divine. But through the curious inversion characteristic of secularized typology, the fictional antitype assumes a greater significance than that of the biblical type which it postfigures. In other words, Brontë's linking of Paul Emanuel with Christ tells us a great deal more about the dark, passionate protagonist of her last novel than it does about the Christian Savior. She adapts and uses the biblical language for its literary value without necessarily endorsing its theological implications.

A final strategy I wish to investigate is Brontë's persistent recasting of otherworldly scenes and objects in
earthly form. The biblical creation myth, especially that part of it set in the Garden of Eden, is one of her favorite sources for allusions. The biblical Paradise finds its way into her novels in forms ranging from direct name association between fictional characters and the mythical first man and woman to complex and extended plot parallels, which often contain within them numerous instances of the other two strategies. At the opposite end of biblical history, Brontë also frequently adopts a variety of biblical eschatological images, ranging from the Second Coming of Christ, to the Final Judgment, to a heavenly afterlife. When associated with minor characters—both favorably and unfavorably portrayed—such allusions do point beyond this world, but when they are connected to Brontë's protagonists, they always find their grounding in this life.

While those biblical texts that deal with either primeval history or posthistory can clearly be considered "otherworldly," I would argue that Brontë treats the biblical figure of the Promised Land in much the same way. In classical typological interpretation, Canaan was considered a prefigure of the New Jerusalem, and thus endowed by association with the attributes of Heaven. Since I am claiming that Brontë employs a form of typology in her writing, it makes sense that, even when stripped of its traditional religious implications, Promised Land imagery still evokes a sense of otherworldliness. It is, after all,
the goal of the journey, be it a journey of faith or simply of life. In this strategy, then, wherein Brontë recasts otherworldly goals and rewards in earthly form, allusions to the Promised Land are used to invoke antitypes in this world.

A great deal is at stake in Brontë's use of this third strategy. Traditional Christian thought frequently deals with earthly suffering and injustice in terms of deferred blessing as compensation. Inherently conservative, this approach encourages the downtrodden and disenfranchised members of society to accept their lot in life and endure patiently, setting their hopes on heaven. This view finds its definitive expression in the character of Helen Burns, who views Eternity as "a rest--a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss." And while Jane herself clearly prefers this view to that of Mr. Brocklehurst--to whom she asserts that she will avoid the fire pit of hell by keeping in good health and not dying--it is significant that Jane rejects Helen's notion of postponed consolation. She expects and will accept both justice and reward in this life alone. If Helen Burns represents the clearest expression in Brontë's novels of a hopeful otherworldliness, Lucy Snowe gives us the bleakest view, depicting hope deferred to the point where cancellation replaces the looked-for consolation. In Villette, every hint of an otherworldly paradise is depicted negatively. Those characters who are portrayed most
sympathetically, and whom we most admire, consistently seek their fulfillment in this world, though--unlike in earlier novels--they do not finally achieve it even here. By transferring the locus of blessedness from an otherworldly Paradise to the everyday world of work and leisure, of sexual fulfillment and romantic disappointments, Brontë rejects the narrow, male-dominated Christianity of her day. In and through her "heretic narratives" she attempts to create an alternative religion in which paradise is a present possibility and male and female are truly equal. Neither her inability to articulate it consistently nor her reluctance to embrace all of its implications can finally invalidate her glorious vision.
NOTES


7 Gerster, p. 3.

8 Which I will borrow and use extensively because of its appropriateness.

9 Gerster, p. 7, 3. Gerster cites Elizabeth Janeway's argument that myths are used by those in positions of authority to instruct, even to intimidate, the members of a
society in the proper patterns of behavior (p. 16).

10 The very tendency which, by 1853, Matthew Arnold would declare the leading sign of the disease of the times—"the dialogue of the mind with itself."


13 See, for example, K. J. Woollcombe's statement that "the origins of typology are to be found in the way the New Testament writers handled the Old Testament prophecies," "The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology" in Essays on Typology, ed. G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe (Napierville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 49.

14 Cited in Qualls, Secular Pilgrims, p. 2.


251.

17 Henderson, p. 26, note 37.

18 Carol Ohmann describes women as "stand[ing] outside the corridors and bedrooms of power, outside the testament of religion, culture and history. They need history rewritten and a new mythology" ("Charlotte Brontë: The Limits of Her Feminism," Female Studies, 6 (1972): 160).


20 Madwoman in the Attic, p. 400.

21 "Closing the Book: The Intertextual End of Jane Eyre" in Victorian Connections, ed. Jerome McGann (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 84. Williams goes on to describe what she perceives as Jane's strategy in "us[ing] the patrilineal structure of tradition and its systematics of voice to write herself into the chain, without losing the radical position she would like to construct as its last link" (p. 84).

22 Commenting on Charlotte's faithfulness to the biblical text in her devoir entitled "La Mort de Moïse," Enid L. Duthie offers the following possible explanation: "It seems as if, in drawing the biblical figure familiar to her since childhood, her main concern is to preserve the majesty of the Old Testament original" (The Foreign Vision of Charlotte Brontë (London: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 47-48). If this is the case, Brontë's motives change noticeably in
later life.


25 See Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 13. In the case of Lucy Snowe, at least, it seems clear that it is in rebellion against this patriarchalism--specifically in, but not limited to, Roman Catholic form--that she writes her
"heretic narrative."


28 Especially the doctrine of eternal damnation for the wicked, which Charlotte rejected as mean-spirited, non-canonical insanity, a view she shared with one of her favorite preachers, F. D. Maurice. See, for example, this comment from a letter to Mrs. Gaskell, dated December 27, 1853: "Who that seriously anticipates an Eternity of Torment for half his race - can keep sane?" Published in Brontë Society Tracts 12:2 (1952): 121-23.


31 The wide and ever-changing variety of Christian beliefs present in nineteenth-century England might make the use of the terms orthodox (and its opposite, unorthodox) seem both inappropriate and inaccurate, but with a properly
specific definition, it can still be useful. Literally meaning "right worship," orthodoxy is as much a political as a theological term, dealing with conformity to accepted standards. I am using it in the sense of that range of beliefs and practices endorsed in any given era by the dominant branch of the Church as the authentic continuation of the apostolic Christian faith. Thus, while not always static, orthodoxy is, at any given moment, identifiable. As such, in its nineteenth-century Anglican form, it can serve as a standard against which Brontë's beliefs can be measured and identified as unorthodox.

32 Schneidau, p. 266.

33 Tayler speaks of Charlotte Brontë's "theologically trained imagination" (Holy Ghosts, p. 195). But was it really "trained," or did her naturally fertile mind, having soaked up--by a sort of osmosis--much of the theological wealth of its environment, find a way to use it?

34 Heather Henderson calls it her "feminization of typology" in "Types of the Self," p. 266. A number of other contemporary critics also refer to Brontë's adaptation of scripture as typological. In my conclusion I will weigh the evidence for considering Brontë's interpretative system a form of typology rather than midrash or other form of biblical commentary.

35 Landow, Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, p. 56. Using similar language, Wheeler suggests that "daily Bible
study and exegesis in the family circle, with key texts taken up in accompanying prayers; the familiar use of cross-references to texts in tracts, the marginalia of the Pilgrim's Progress and the Bible itself; and the often unconscious adoption of biblical words and phrases in normal discourse, all helped to make the use of biblical texts for illustrative purposes a habit of mind" The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979), pp. 15-16). Heather Henderson argues that in the nineteenth century "typological motifs and structures persist[ed], even while being questioned, modified, and perhaps subverted" ("Types of the Self" Abstract).

36 Frye, The Great Code, p. 218. In an earlier work, Frye offers this landmark definition of the kind of higher criticism needed: "a purely literary criticism which would see the Bible, not as a scrapbook of corruptions, glosses, redactions, insertions, conflations, misplacements and misunderstandings revealed by the analytical critic, but as the typological unity which all these things were originally intended to help construct... a synthesizing process which would start with the assumption that the Bible is a definitive myth, a single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse." See Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 315.

Echoing Frye, Joan Chard speaks of Brontë's view of the


38 According to Joyce Carol Oates, "Brontë characteristically introduces a situation meant to provoke conventional associations on the part of the reader ... and then, within a paragraph or two, deftly qualifies or refutes it" ("Romance and Anti-Romance," Victorian Quarterly Review, 61 (Winter 1985): 48).


40 Janet L. Larson, Dickens and the Broken Scripture (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 1985), p. 34, my emphasis.
Holy Ghosts, p. 189 (my emphasis). But Tayler seems
to understate her point, since Brontë's use of the Bible in
this way goes beyond her personal experience to be
transformed into her art.

Landow, Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, p. 152.

"Closing the Book," p. 83. Paul Korshin argues
similarly that the introduction of typological patterns into
nonbiblical writings would serve to bolster their authority
among a culture which understands typology and still gives
credence to the Bible. See Typologies in England, p. 186.

Frye suggests that mythological and typological
conceptions are "liquid rather than solid (not gaseous: they
tend to keep their volume if not their form)," The Great
Code, p. 174. In the same way, even when Charlotte Brontë
uses biblical language or images in loosely reconstructive
ways, they still carry their full metaphorical weight—i.e.
their "volume."

Korshin, pp. 93-94. Korshin's term "abstracted" is
not entirely suitable for what we find Charlotte Brontë
doing. It seems to reflect more of an Enlightenment view of
typological interpretation as an intellectual exercise,
whereas the nineteenth-century approach is more intuitive
and emotional. For this reason, I will use Landow's term
"secularized" to describe Brontë's use of typology in ways
which further her literary purposes without advancing the
Christian faith.
Korshin, p. 106.


Crosby, p. 117. Though the use of biblical material by the Brontës has been previously explored by such critics as Adam, 1958; Shannon, 1959; Bell, 1962; Fine, 1969; and more recently Chard, 1988, the treatment has usually been limited in its scope and often superficial, assuming that the biblical material itself has a stable hermeneutical value which survives intact its introduction into the fiction. By contrast, I contend that a great deal of the anxiety which influenced Brontë's incorporation of biblical material into her mature fiction arises from the paradox of her free handling of what she nevertheless believes with one part of her being to be the inspired word of God.


Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley*, ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 370. All further references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses within the main body of the text.

Discussing Northrop Frye's work in her introduction, Elinor Shaffer argues that "as the myths of the Bible have rapidly lost their authority . . . and are becoming mere fables, there is a sense in which Frye's phrase 'the secular scripture' now applies not (as in his earlier book) to romance as distinguished from the serious poetry of myth, but to the Bible itself," "Editor's introduction: The 'Great Code' deciphered: literary and Biblical hermeneutics," *Comparative criticism*, Volume 5, ed. E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. xxii.

I am indebted to Paul J. Korshin's extensive work in English typological interpretation for the majority of this history.


Crosby, p. 118.
See, for example, her letter to Ellen Nussey dated May 5, 1836: "I know the treasures of the Bible, and love and adore them. I can see the Well of Life in all its clearness and brightness; but when I stoop down to drink of the pure waters, they fly from my lips as if I were Tantalus" (Clement Shorter, The Brontës: Life and Letters (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), pp. 119-20).


C. C. Hennell, An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of Christianity (London: John Chapman, 1838), p. 370. Hennell cites as the most serious historical difficulties the fact that the gospels were written anonymously and long after the fact, that their authorship is uncertain, and that the authors offer no explanation of how they came by their information.

Korshin, p. 5.

Korshin, p. 88.

This positive use of the second strategy functions in much the same way as I have suggested the gender-role-reversal in the first strategy does.
The Professor

Critics have typically either ignored Brontë's first novel altogether or dismissed it as "part of her literary apprenticeship . . . . a pale and colourless book," a "grey and featureless" work when compared to her other novels, the "work of a beginner."¹ And yet Brontë herself vigorously defended her first novel and earnestly sought to publish it, even in the face of great opposition. Can we find in it the point from which the expertise apparent in the three later novels began?² In her introduction to the Penguin Classics edition, Heather Glen makes a persuasive case for not rejecting The Professor as "merely a piece of prentice-work, written before its author found her mature fictional voice."³ Along the same lines, Michael Wheeler suggests that "the development of a network of biblical . . . allusions in The Professor indicates a technical advance on the juvenilia and a step towards the more sophisticated narrative and allusive methods of Jane Eyre."⁴ So, while we may distinguish Brontë's use of the Bible in The Professor from that found in her juvenile writings, which contain little if any "significant" use of biblical material,⁵ we
must still account for Brontë's apparently awkward and tentative use of biblical allusions in the novel. Direct quotations of scripture and more generalized use of biblical language and imagery appear in random fashion, rarely exploring great biblical themes in clearly sustained patterns. Though in many ways it is a strong first novel, which would have introduced its author as a force to be reckoned with in the fiction-writing world (if anyone had accepted it for publication!). I will argue that The Professor can best be considered the venue for Brontë's first full employment of a new way of reading and understanding the Bible.

In The Professor we witness a significant shift in Brontë's style from that of the juvenilia, as she attempts to create a more public persona in and through her writing. Though not her first time to experiment with a male narrator, The Professor marks her first serious effort to turn from the "ornamented and redundant composition[s]" of her earlier writing and toward a style and subject matter she describes as "plain and homely." In her Preface to The Professor, written after the publication of Jane Eyre and Shirley, Brontë blames the novel's unenthusiastic reception on the public's "passionate preference for the wild, wonderful, and thrilling." Most critics of the novel find a different cause to blame.

Helene Moglen's assessment of Crimsworth as the novel's
"most crucial problem" is typical of critical opinion:
Never realized as a fully dimensioned character,
Crimsworth is unable to develop a clear narrative
voice. Never conscious of his own experience on
any but the most immediate level, he is unable
to bring to the events he describes a vital
complexity of vision.7
She goes on to suggest that much of Crimsworth's weakness
can be understood as yet another of Brontë's unsuccessful
early efforts to create an adequate persona for herself.
Even if we might want to qualify somewhat Moglen's reading
of the novel's genesis, she offers a quite useful insight
into Brontë's method. Her claim that Brontë "rummages among
bits and scraps of the past and tries to synthesize an image
of her potential self,"8 sounds closely akin to the term
bricolage, which I have borrowed from Levi-Strauss to
describe Brontë's strategy for incorporating biblical
material into her novels. However, whereas Moglen seems to
view this practice negatively--either in psychological terms
as evidence of confusion or underdevelopment or in authorial
terms as a rather casual randomness of approach--I want to
suggest that Brontë boldly and deliberately disassembles
biblical stories. Stripped of traditional interpretations
yet maintaining its influence as familiar and authoritative
scripture, this biblical material can then be better used to
suit her fictional purposes. In The Professor, though, she
often seems less successful in this process than in her three later novels. Perhaps Crimsworth is part of the problem here as well.

Michael Wheeler describes Crimsworth as a narrator "who can [never] be imagined . . . quoting from or referring to . . . the Bible in his own way." Elaborating on Brontë's difficulty with her narrative persona, Wheeler further claims that "it is sometimes Charlotte Brontë rather than Crimsworth who seems to be choosing the allusions which are incorporated in the text."9 I will suggest, though, that Crimsworth's inadequacies ought not be construed as Brontë's as well. We should not interpret his clumsy or even obtuse use of biblical allusions as evidence of Brontë's lack of development in devising and employing her strategies for manipulating biblical material. It is evidence, instead, of his inappropriateness as a vehicle for the kind of reinscription Brontë envisions.

Numerous factors may have influenced Brontë's choice of a male narrator and her decision to publish her writings initially under the ambiguously gendered name Currer Bell. Given the male dominance of professional literary circles at the time,10 her strategy of masking her true identity behind both her professional pseudonym and a masculine persona is understandable. I would suggest, though, that many of what are often perceived as flaws in The Professor can be attributed to this strategic decision. As we all know, when
she abandons that male persona, after failing to find a publisher for The Professor, and turns to the female voice of Jane Eyre, Brontë achieves remarkable overnight success and guarantees her place in literary history. So unless we are willing to attribute to her a phenomenal growth in artistry in the few months which pass between completing The Professor and beginning Jane Eyre, part of the difference in both public reception and critical evaluation between the two works can safely be attributed to Brontë's change in the gender of her narrator. In the female narrator Jane, she creates a far more effective vehicle than Crimsworth for her reinscription of the biblical message. In The Professor, she often seems to be struggling against her own narrator--largely against his maleness--to achieve her purpose.

For many readers, Crimsworth seems to make himself deliberately inaccessible, both as narrator and as character. A revealing image which he uses for the "self" occurs in his account of his relationship with his brother Edward.

I shewed him my countenance with the confidence that one would shew an unlearned man a letter written in Greek--he might see lines, and trace characters, but he could make nothing of them--my nature was not his nature, and its signs were to him like the words of an unknown tongue. (21) Character would appear to be discernible, then, to one who
knows the language, the code system. But in a fictional world presented to us by such an unreliable narrator,\textsuperscript{11} who seems so inept (or downright dishonest) at reading his own character, we begin to wonder if interpretation of such a text becomes more a matter of imposing meaning onto it than of drawing the meaning out of it.

Crimsworth's regular practice is to read thoughts and motives into the persons with whom he comes into contact, as if they were merely characters under his authorial control. The novel's other "narrator," Frances Henri, also indulge\textsuperscript{s} in a bit of fanciful attribution of inner character when, "on the basis of Hunsden's portrait of his lost love, Lucia, she is able to 'read' a whole narrative."\textsuperscript{12} Annette Tromly suggests that Crimsworth's "pronounced tendency to self-inflation" calls his narrative reliability into question even further. Revealing what she calls a "self-serving suggestiveness," Crimsworth "elevates his personal significance by means of the patterns he imposes."\textsuperscript{13} But perhaps Brontë offers us here a parallel to the kind of "reading" she does of biblical texts. Rather than repositories for universal religious truths, biblical stories become for her instead the raw materials from which she can begin to construct an alternative vision for women's lives, imposing meaning on them and employing them as her narrative needs demand. Helene Moglen's observation is pertinent here:
As an artist and as a woman Brontë was caught in a painful bind. . . . She could not yet be a feminist. . . . But neither could she simply accept. The awareness which so flaws The Professor--an awareness which is incomplete and confused--marks the stirrings of a feminist consciousness and with it a new sense of the possibilities of fiction. 14

A large part of those new possibilities will involve her reconstruction of biblical material in radically anti-patriarchal ways. However, in terms of biblical allusions and borrowed narrative patterns, Crimsworth seems less the conscious manipulator of fictions, as Tromly claims, than merely an unwary victim whose limitations as a narrator are frequently exposed by his creator's desire to say more.

The more general problem of identifying Crimsworth's narrative stance toward his readers and toward the story he tells is particularly evident when non-literal speech is employed, as in biblical allusion. Since its publication, The Professor has been criticized, among other things, for its treatment of the Bible. In a letter to Sir James Kay Shuttleworth written in 1856, Mrs. Gaskell expresses her feeling that Brontë's first novel is "disfigured by more coarseness--& profanity in quoting texts of Scripture disagreeably than in any of her other works." 15 But what Mrs. Gaskell labels "coarseness--& profanity" we might
attribute to other causes. Brontë's apparent awkwardness in using biblical material in this novel cannot be accounted for solely in terms of her stage of development as a writer. Such a view would imply a lack of experience on her part (which is certainly not the case!) and would require a greater passage of time than we find for the evolution of what that view would label apprentice work into the full-blown mastery evident in Jane Eyre. Examining a particular instance in which Brontë seems to be less than wholly successful at the fusion of Bible and novel might be helpful.

When Crimsworth angrily confronts Mlle. Reuter regarding what he incorrectly assumes to have been Frances Henri's dismissal from the school, he describes the extreme contrast between the external effects of a gentle, refreshing breeze blowing through the enclosed garden area where they walk and his inner turmoil: "my heart was still hot within me, and while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue---" (181, see Psalm 39:3). If the words sound strange coming from this speaker, it is because he is quoting a verse directly from a psalm. However, though neither the vocabulary nor the word order belongs to Crimsworth, the quotation is unmarked. Brontë gives the reader no verbal or typographical indicators that Crimsworth is quoting the Bible. These alien words are grafted directly onto his--attached by only a comma--and yet clearly they are not his.
At the same time, however, their relative obscurity would seem to diminish their effectiveness as an allusion. Apart from the oddity of the diction, even a biblically literate reader could easily overlook such a veiled quotation. We must apparently assume then either that Brontë tried (and failed) to make Crimsworth's allusion to the psalm seem natural, hoping to convey through the borrowed weight of the psalmist's pent-up anxiety something of Crimsworth's own angst in confronting Mlle. Reuter, or that she was unconcerned whether or not her readers detected the allusion, indulging instead in a private display of referential pyrotechnics.

Or perhaps there is a third alternative. The very awkwardness with which the biblical words are incorporated into Crimsworth's speech, while drawing attention to the presence of an allusion, could serve as a signal to the reader not to take the biblical material used at face value. After all, when the psalmist finally speaks "with [his] tongue," he cries out to God, lamenting his suffering, imploring God for deliverance; when Crimsworth breaks his self-imposed silence, he speaks only to Mlle. Reuter regarding Frances Henri's whereabouts. In this action on Crimsworth's part, we find a significant parallel between the adopted biblical text and its new context in the novel, and in that parallel we find an example of Brontë's strategy of destabilizing biblical gender roles in an effort to call
into question society's differentiation between men and women and placement of women into inferior positions. This strategy will be the first of three which we will explore in some detail.

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Both Crimsworth and the psalmist feel they have been wronged by the one whom they now address and from whom they seek redress. In a sense both are correct in this assumption. God is frequently depicted in the psalms as omniscient, seeing (and perhaps even causing) the psalmist's suffering and yet apparently doing nothing to alleviate it. Still, the speaker of the lament is drawn toward his tormentor. Despite his suffering, he cannot bring himself to denounce God. In the end, he can say only: "Look away from me, that I may know gladness,/ before I depart and be no more" (Psalm 39:13). While Mlle. Reuter has technically not dismissed Frances Henri, the would-be omniscient Directress must certainly be held responsible for her leaving and, consequently, for Crimsworth's present suffering. At the same time, though, he admits his attraction to her as he engages in a dangerous game of fascination and flirtation until he can bear her inaccessibility no longer and "departs." Our concern here is less with what the allusion implies about Crimsworth,
though, than with the role played by Mlle. Reuter.

The parallels suggested by this obscure, unmarked quotation of the psalm connect Mlle. Reuter with the God addressed by the psalmist in more than an incidental manner. Both are portrayed as aloof and unconcerned with the suffering they see; both still inexplicably attract the ones who suffer thus. One effect of the parallel is to elevate Mlle. Reuter. While she is not transformed into an idol in the same way that Brontë's female protagonists deify the men they love, Crimsworth does offer an apparently unconscious tribute to her power over him. At the same time, we must consider whether the link with Mlle. Reuter does not in some manner alter our way of thinking about God. By linking God with a female character in her novel, Brontë implies in a subtle but significant way that, in spite of the bulk of biblical language to the contrary, gender cannot be attributed with any stability to God. In other words, if God can be postfigured by a woman, femaleness must not be wholly foreign to God's nature. By extension, then, she also attacks theological and cultural arguments for male superiority based on assumptions about the order of creation of the sexes and a narrow, gendered definition of the term "image of God."

Beginning at least as early as St. Paul, the argument has frequently been made, on the basis of the second creation account (see especially Genesis 2:21-22), not only
that the human male is superior because created first, but also that the woman's creation from the man's rib implies that the "image of God"\(^{16}\) is to be found only in the man, the female deriving her image from the male, not directly from God. For example, Paul tells the Corinthians:

> For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. (1 Corinthians 11:7-9)

In a very real sense, then, in an apparently insignificant allusion, Charlotte Brontë lays the foundations for an ongoing midrashic debate with St. Paul over the implications of the Genesis creation account for male/female relationships in her world.

As we can see from this example, Brontë does employ biblical allusion in *The Professor* to suggest meanings which run beneath the surface of the more obvious elements of plot and characterization, though we don't consistently find the same degree of complexity we will find in the later novels. Unless we are willing to consider her still somewhat amateurish at this point--but poised for a remarkable development in the next year--we must account for this apparent awkwardness in some other manner. The search for such an explanation will be one of my primary concerns in
this chapter.

The two final examples of gender-reversal I will consider also exhibit a second allusive strategy—the diminution of the role of God's providential oversight in human lives—but I am treating them here because their questioning of gender-based assumptions is fundamental to their meaning. The first allusion is made in passing by Hunsden Yorke Hunsden and self-destructs shortly after being offered to us. The second involves a much more fundamental issue in the novel: the power dynamics implicit in the relationship between Crimsworth and Frances Henri.

Out for a walk in the country one evening, Crimsworth is accosted by Hunsden, who is casually leaning on the iron gate to the garden in front of his home. Unsure who has spoken to him, Crimsworth stops. At this point, Hunsden begins to spin an elaborate conceit around the first meeting of Isaac and Rebecca. He is the young patriarch, "meditating in the field at eventide" (232, see Genesis 24:63), and Crimsworth is Rebecca, brought back by Abraham's servant Eliezer to be claimed as Isaac's bride. Except Rebecca is precisely who Crimsworth is not. Like most of Brontë's gender reversals, Hunsden's clever allusion plays upon the differences, rather than the similarities, between the biblical story and its counterpart in the novel. Obviously, as Hunsden himself points out, his "counting-house clerk, in a grey tweed wrapper" is rather unlike the
original Isaac's "Rebecca on a camel's hump" (32). Even though the connection is negated as soon as it is made, the gender-role-reversal is surprising. Hunsden could offer numerous illustrations of significant encounters, from biblical or non-biblical sources, but in this particular instance, he chooses to link Crimsworth with a woman, the prize for one man's searching and the object of another man's love. Despite the brevity of the allusion, we find in this passage exactly the kind of fluid role reversal so characteristic of much of Brontë's adaptation of biblical narratives. The deftness with which Hunsden manipulates the sacred material argues against critical devaluations of The Professor on this point. But perhaps it is significant that Brontë places these words in Hunsden's mouth rather than in Crimsworth's, for he is less priggishly masculine than her narrator is.

A more significant difference between adopted and adoptive text can be found, though, in the assignment of responsibility for the encounter. The writer of Genesis claims with certainty that God has "appointed" Rebecca to be Isaac's bride. In the narrative, Eliezer gives thanks to the God of his master Abraham for leading him to Rebecca. By contrast, Hunsden attributes the chain of events which brought Crimsworth to his door to an impersonal power, Fate. Crimsworth's own account of his actions suggests only that he was under an unknown and unnamed influence as he "uncon-
sciously . . . steered [his] course towards the country" (232). Since the outward events would presumably be the same regardless of the mechanism by which they are achieved, the attribution of responsibility seems to raise a religious question. Hunsden's allusion here exemplifies the general weakening of the notion of Providence which arose as a result of scientific advances and the spread of critical interpretation of scripture. God's role in human history and individual lives is often taken for granted in one's language, but it is seldom espoused seriously as an explanation of the way things are.

The final allusion I want to consider in this section comes from a slightly earlier position in the novel than the previous one and originates with Crimsworth. In terms of the actual words used, it is even more abbreviated than Hunsden's mocking caricature of the narrator. And yet it is significant because it explores the pressing question of God's control over human affairs using one of Brontë's favorite themes, Israel in the wilderness.

While lamenting his status as a homeless wanderer and bemoaning the "humility" of his position (174), Crimsworth compares the pistolets served by Frances to manna, the miraculous food supplied by God to the Israelites in the wilderness after their escape from slavery in Egypt. By extension, he links Frances with God and himself with Israel. Ironically, just before tasting this sweet,
heavenly bread of grace, Crimsworth speaks of his "strong desire to do more, earn more, be more, possess more" and "inwardly vow[s] to win" (174) Frances as his wife. While these sentiments may be consistent with what Heather Glen calls "Crimsworth's world of individualistic achievement"\(^\text{19}\) and with Brontë's own plan outlined in the Preface that "whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow" (3), they are totally incompatible with the biblical symbol invoked. Manna was all that kept the Israelites alive in the wilderness, and so it became one of their primary symbols for God's grace, which freely provided for their needs. Additionally, manna possessed a curious trait. If stored overnight, it spoiled and became inedible (see Exodus 16:19-20). Since manna could not be accumulated, no "competency" could be achieved, let alone an "independency." Its recipients remained totally dependent upon God—not on themselves or their own efforts—for their survival. In Crimsworth's case, though, in spite of his equating Frances with God, as the source of the manna, he seems unwilling to trust her to provide for his needs. Indeed, as we will see in the next example, he all but refuses her help even after they are married.

* * *

In my Introduction I suggested that Brontë frequently
employs a two-fold strategy to call into question God's involvement in human history. Either by direct assault on the notion of Providence or by allowing characters in the novel to usurp the prerogatives of God, she can weaken the foundation for many of the deterministic assumptions—both theological and cultural—which seem to limit possibilities for all but a few in her world. We have already considered, in the previous section, two allusions which exemplify this strategy, combining it with gender reversal. In what follows I will offer several more examples of Brontë's use of this allusive strategy, beginning with those which deal directly with Providence, followed by those in which characters are likened to God.

His speech littered with biblical allusions of a complex nature, Hunsden embodies, among other things, the greatest freedom in alluding to the Bible without any sense of obligation to precedent tradition. For example, when he tells Crimsworth of his brother Edward's financial collapse and subsequent recovery, Hunsden describes Edward as "flourishing like a green bay-tree" (207). The reference might seem to be little more than a descriptive simile until we read the larger context from which it is apparently drawn. Psalm 37 begins with these words:

Fret not yourself because of the wicked,
be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.
What follows is a typical "wisdom" psalm, which assures those discouraged by the ways of the world that the apparent triumph of the wicked will be short-lived and that God will eventually reward the righteous. Edward Crimsworth, then, is described as a wicked man who, for the moment, is "flourishing like a green bay-tree," but will soon topple and vanish:

Again I passed by, and, lo, he was no more;
though I sought him, he could not be found.

Psalm 37:36

Though the implications regarding Edward Crimsworth are unmistakable, what remains unclear is what inferences regarding William might be drawn from Hunsden's remark. If he considers him an upright fellow made bitter by his treatment at the hands of his brother, then Hunsden's reference could be intended to console him, much as the psalm does in its original setting. Eventually, both brothers will receive their due. Or possibly he detects in William traits similar to those in his brother which would "flourish" in their own right, given the opportunity, and seeks to warn him, though in his typically sarcastic and off-handed way. The fact that Edward does experience financial collapse and that William transcends the life of struggle outlined for him in the Preface by achieving an independency through both hard work and prudent investment
would seem to be an endorsement of the view of Providence espoused by the psalm. However, Crimsworth's silence on the subject when recounting the reasons for his success offer an alternative view.

Though almost always insensitive and inappropriate, Crimsworth's use of biblical allusion takes on an especially dark cast when directly relating to his relationship with Frances. Immediately after she "consent[s] to pass her life with" him (224), Crimsworth grasps Frances securely, perhaps retaining her against her will: "My arm, it is true, still detained her; but with a restraint that was gentle enough, so long as no opposition tightened it" (224, my emphasis). If such a display of male dominance over the female occurred in isolation in the narrative perhaps it would not be so disconcerting, but next Crimsworth questions the need for Frances to "fag [her]self by going out to give lessons" in order to supplement their income. He even goes so far as to demean her willingness to work as "useless" (225).

Measuring worth purely in monetary terms, Crimsworth dismisses the twelve hundred francs she would earn annually as "not form[ing] a very important addition to our income" (225).

Crimsworth's inability to transcend his cultural blind spot regarding women working outside the home would not necessarily reflect so harshly on him if he did not add to it by claiming for himself the prerogatives of divinity:
There is something flattering to man's strength, something consonant to his honourable pride, in the idea of becoming the providence of what he loves -- feeding and clothing it, as God does the lilies of the field. (225, my emphasis)²¹

Even assuming that Frances wishes to be supported entirely by her husband (an option which she clearly rejects by her insistence that she continue working), surely she is not overly flattered to know that she is "what" rather than "the one whom" the 'godlike' Crimsworth loves, or that he will feed and clothe "it" rather than "her." The implications becomes even less appropriate when we examine more closely the biblical passage to which Crimsworth alludes. In the adopted text, Jesus suggests that the lilies of the field are of significantly less worth than God's children (see Matthew 6:28-30), and yet when Crimsworth adopts Jesus' words, it is to the lilies that he likens Frances. Not only is she made subservient and dependent, but also her very humanity is impugned. Crimsworth seems to embody divine attributes only selectively, emphasizing the extreme sovereignty and separation which are part but not all of the notion of Providence.

Even at this point, however, Crimsworth is not yet through with his scriptural self-aggrandizement. Echoing once more the words of Jesus, who invites those who are "weary and heavy-laden" to come to him and find rest
(Matthew 11:28), he offers Frances a similar repose: "Relinquish your labours: you must be weary, and let me have the happiness of giving you rest" (225). By emphasizing through the use of the first-person pronoun how he stands to benefit from his own magnanimity, Crimsworth seems more eager to cast himself once more in the role of superior provider than he is actually to provide Frances with rest. By granting benevolence only out of his own "abundance," Crimsworth reveals his basic wish to maintain control over Frances. He is as absolute and invasive in his assumed sovereignty over her as he was in the gaze he directed toward Mlle. Reuter's school through his boarded-over window.22

At one point, Crimsworth's ascendancy over Frances even takes a frightening turn toward the physical. When she contrasts his three thousand francs to her paltry twelve hundred, Frances "stir[s] uneasily" (226) in Crimsworth's arms. Since the link between Crimsworth and God has already been established, we can hear in this description echoes of God's depiction as forceful lover, ravishing his reluctant intended, ranging from the prophet Jeremiah (see 20:7) to the poet John Donne and beyond, with which Brontë would have been familiar. The arguments that such images are offered as sincere expressions of intensely private religious experiences or that they may capture and convey profound religious truths do not make them any less disturbing. If
Crimsworth, exercising providential care over Frances, can also coerce her and interfere with her right of choice, does a similar view of God require reexamination? Though we should be careful about reading our own late twentieth-century values back into Brontë's fiction, it is hard not to be repulsed by the arrogant and unthinking paternalism implied by a straight-forward reading of these biblical allusions. Perhaps, though, we can also see Brontë's attributing of providential powers to Crimsworth as a rough, embryonic form—in this case in the form of masculine wish fulfillment—of the idolatry of the male that we find to some extent in all of her later heroines. In a sense, through Crimsworth, Brontë tries to become what she admires and desires so greatly—even to her own detriment—a strong man. The anxious tension remains, then, between her apparent unwillingness, on the one hand, to accept the strictures placed on women by the society of which she was a part and her exploration in her novels, on the other, of the issue of male dominance over the female. And as we see in this instance, her method for using biblical material often reflects her sense of uneasiness.

In many cases we can find connections linking characters with God buried deep within passages in the novel—passages which do not always even contain obvious allusions to the Bible. While the less obvious nature of these references might offer an argument against reading
them polemically, as part of Brontë's "re-vision," the unsettling implications are unavoidable once the allusion is detected. So, in these instances, we may have a case of Brontë reinscribing the Bible more effectively than she knows. In any case, the allusions affect our reading of both the novel and, in some cases, the biblical text as well.

A good example of this kind of deeply buried allusion can be found at the end of Chapter 24, when Crimsworth offers what appears to be a vague allusion to the prophet Isaiah's description of his calling by God. After a heated argument about Frances Henri's merits, Crimsworth offers this final word to Hunsden:

> Bribé a seraph to fetch you a coal of fire from heaven, if you will... and with it kindle life in the tallest, fattest, most boneless, fullest-blooded of Rubens' painted women -- leave me only my Alpine peri, and I'll not envy you. (243-44)

Several critics see in Crimsworth's words a reference to Isaiah 6:6, but when we try to establish a link between the biblical text and Crimsworth's odd words, several difficulties become apparent. To begin with, Isaiah's seraph takes the burning coal from the altar in the temple, whereas Crimsworth's fetches the coal "from heaven."

Perhaps this difference can be accounted for, though. After all, Crimsworth's use of scripture is not marked by
precise quotation of his sources. Perhaps in this case his memory is faulty. Or, perhaps we should view this apparent discrepancy as a necessary metaphorical expansion. Since Isaiah experiences the direct presence of God, "sitting upon a throne" (see Isaiah 6:1) and surrounded by royal retainers, the literal, physical setting in the temple could easily be transformed into a figurative, spiritual setting, i.e. heaven. Without a certain degree of alteration, the allusion would make even less sense than it does in its present form. If Crimsworth were to suggest that the "bribed" seraph bring a burning coal from the altar of the temple in Jerusalem, both Hunsden and we would be hard pressed to decipher his meaning. Lifted intact from its context without any attempt to construct an extended narrative setting for it, the reference would neither enhance nor complicate meaning; it simply would not fit.

If we broaden our contextual frame of reference, we can find support for an association between this biblical passage and the idea of heaven in another novel. At the end of Chapter 17 of Shirley, Caroline Helstone and Shirley are discussing love, and the ignorance of most people regarding this "divine virtue."24 Shirley's suggestion that such people "in their ignorance ... blaspheme living fire, seraph-brought from a divine altar" (357) seems clearly to refer to the Isaiah passage as well. She stretches the image well beyond its biblical context of prophetic call and
purification, though, to associate it with love. It is Caroline, however, who links the borrowed image with heaven, though she does so by contrast, insisting that the bulk of humanity "confound[s this living fire] with sparks mounting from Tophet" (357), a defiled place of human sacrifice in the Old Testament, later to be associated with hell. On this basis then, we cannot dismiss Crimsworth's transformation of the temple altar into heaven in his supposed reference to Isaiah as an isolated reading.

But what if Crimsworth is not referring to the words of the prophet at all? Or--what seems more likely--what if he has conflated the imagery of the Isaiah text with that of a far different source? While the burning coal and the seraph seem to point toward Isaiah 6:6,\textsuperscript{25} what follows certainly does not. Just as the coal brought to the prophet has no apparent connection with love, neither is it associated with the power of "kindl[ing] life" (244),\textsuperscript{26} as Crimsworth suggests. Indeed, the notion of fire from heaven giving life is quite foreign to the worldview out of which Isaiah writes. Yahweh's life-giving elements are dabar (the "word of the Lord" which enacts itself) and ru'ach (breath). Fire is viewed primarily as a destructive element and associated with judgment. Perhaps what we find here is an indiscriminate mixing of language from the Bible with action from the Prometheus myth, the burning coal representing the divine gift of fire.\textsuperscript{27} If such is the case, then
Crimsworth, once more not content with giving men the privilege of naming appropriate to "Adam's sons," seems to attribute to Hunsden in particular and males in general the godlike power of bestowing life on ideal female counterparts. If we combine the thrusts of both adopted texts, men possess not only the power to commission themselves to their life's work—-as God called Isaiah—-but also divine creative powers to call into being a woman of their own particular design. Crimsworth leaves his cherished modesty intact, though, by settling for a lesser creation, a paler, more delicate version of the woman he is certain Hunsden will call forth and claim. If such is the case, Brontë no doubt offers this complex allusion with tongue in cheek, poking fun not only at Crimsworth's pretensions, but possibly also at male-empowering creation myths in general, including the Bible's. If Crimsworth and Hunsden can be conceived as antitypes for a deity—-whether the God seen by Isaiah or Prometheus—-then it is deity which is diminished by the comparison. If anything, Brontë shows her female characters being more successful at self-creation than their male counterparts are.

Though Crimsworth invariably casts himself in a God-like role through his biblical allusions, the comparison is always imperfect at some point, frequently in terms of his self-awareness. Perhaps no other factor reveals more about Brontë's goal in making these connections than Crimsworth's
lack of awareness regarding the implications of his language. With a single strategy she can demolish male assumptions of divine prerogatives and raise questions about how those same prerogatives affect women's lives when attributed to God.

Though Crimsworth occasionally hints at painful memories from his past, he never deals honestly with the ways in which memory affects his narration. Chapter 7 opens with this fond recollection of his arrival in Brussels:

Belgium! I repeat the word, now as I sit alone near midnight. It stirs my world of the past like a summons to resurrection; the graves unclose, the dead are raised; thoughts, feelings, memories that slept, are seen by me ascending from the clods . . . but while I gaze on their vapoury forms . . . they sink, each and all, like a light wreath of mist, absorbed in the mould, recalled to urns, resealed in monuments. Farewell, luminous phantoms! (55)

While the imagery of memories "buried" in the past is certainly not uncommon, the detailed parallels between this passage and the language of St. Paul's letters are startling. When Paul writes to the Corinthians that at the last trumpet "the dead will be raised incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 15:52), he foresees the resurrection of the dead as one of the signs to accompany the return of Christ, God's
Word made flesh. In Crimsworth's memory, the name Belgium takes on a kind of life-giving power akin to that of God's creative word, except that its effects are only momentary and without real substance. Significantly, Crimsworth's resurrecting word calls forth nothing more than phantoms, not incorruptible new bodies. We must wonder, then, if Crimsworth, as the one who pronounces this word, becomes a failed, or at least inadequate, figure for the redeeming God pictured by the apostle. And if we recall that just a few verses earlier in this same letter Paul also associates the old Adam (the "type"),28 who brought death, with Christ (the "antitype"), the new Adam in whom all shall be made alive (see 1 Corinthians 15:22), Crimsworth's use of this important theological language in a secularized form becomes even more significant. As "Adam's son" he could be construed as the New Adam, especially since he seems to link himself with God through his use of biblical language. And yet, in this passage he is unable to conjure up new life—even for his memories. Despite his belief that his path is sufficiently "strait" to reach the desired heavenly terminus, his own language seems to undercut any suggestion that he is moving steadily toward new life, whether offered by Christ or by his own diligence. Moreover, Brontë's strategy here of exposing Crimsworth's inadequacies as a parallel for God may call into question such movement as a valid enterprise, or even a possibility. If so, this
allusion would point us toward her third strategy—recasting the Bible's "otherworldly" locales and their promised blessings in earthly terms.

Hunsden's applications of christic parallels to himself are totally unlike Crimsworth's in their self-conscious parody. They frequently serve the same purpose in the novel, though, downplaying the validity of any interpretative scheme which encourages a static, authoritarian view of a God bent on judgment. In Chapter 21, he ends his note to Crimsworth with this warning:

Be on the look-out, for you know neither the day nor hour when your--(I don't wish to blaspheme, so I'll leave a blank)--cometh. (193, see Matthew 24:43-51 or Luke 12:35-48)

The gospel accounts record that Jesus spoke frequently to his disciples about his return at the end of history, and of their need for watchfulness. His stories always caution those who should expect his return that they are likely to be unprepared. Hunsden, then, assigns to himself the role of Lord, coming to judge Crimsworth, though he forgoes the "blasphemy" of outright self-identification with Christ. 29

Aside from his delight in clever, literate banter, he seems to imply that Crimsworth's present situation betrays an unspecified principle sacred to both of them and that he needs to make immediate amends before being caught at it. Doubting aloud that Hunsden is particularly Christ-like in
this or any other respect (indeed, he is "very like" the devil himself, p. 193). Crimsworth wishes him on: 'Come quickly, Lord Hunsden,' as it were. If we think ahead to the numerous instances in Villette when this same language is seriously associated with Paul Emanuel, we see the range of expression Brontë employs in her adaptation of biblical material.

When Crimsworth is finally reunited with Frances Henri, the use of small bits of a very familiar biblical narrative sequence produces the novel's only serious extended parallel between Crimsworth and Christ. He comes upon her unseen as she sits crying beside her aunt's grave. At the moment of recognition, Frances utters a rather special name for Crimsworth: "Mon maitre! mon maitre!" (168) Were this first century Judea and the language spoken Aramaic rather than French, we could visualize Mary Magdalene, also in a graveyard, also unexpectedly reunited with her beloved, crying out, "Rabboni" (which also means 'master', see John 20:16). Crimsworth's first words to Frances confirm and extend the role suggested for him: "I little thought to have discovered my lost sheep straying amongst graves" (169). Like Jesus the Good Shepherd, Crimsworth has left his other "sheep" in the fold to go in search of his one lost student (see Matthew 18:12), whom he claims as his own for the first time on this occasion. Foreshadowing the relationship she will create between Lucy Snowe and Paul Emanuel, Brontë
depicts a scene which she would script for herself if she could—being found and claimed by a powerful, good man. And yet, Crimsworth is not the appropriate man to fill her projected role of Risen Savior. As we saw in our consideration of his reverie on Belgium in Chapter 7, he can't even keep his own memories out of the grave, let alone himself.

When Crimsworth finishes reading the note from Hunsden and returns to the letter from Frances, we find his most overt self-representation in the role of Christ. We must examine his words closely:

Two results of her letter were then pleasant, sweet as two draughts of nectar; but applying my lips for the third time to the cup, they were excoriated as with vinegar and gall. (194, my emphasis)

The echoes of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane and his death on the cross are obvious. The gospel writers record that Jesus prayed in the garden that God might "remove this cup" from him (see Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42), referring metaphorically—we assume—to his impending suffering. Matthew's gospel records that just before his death those who crucified Jesus offered him first a drink of wine mixed with gall (27:34) and then a sponge soaked with vinegar (27:48), presumably to ease his pain. But what significance are we to draw from these parallels?30 Either Crimsworth feels his suffering at
the moment merits such a dramatic image, or he has fewer scruples than even Hunsden about casting himself in the role of Christ. We might be inclined toward sympathy if he did not immediately leave his passion imagery behind and begin to whine about various European national weaknesses, never adequately explaining what bearing any of this has on his situation. By the time he finally ends his tirade and admits that resigning his teaching position has now made his marriage to Frances impossible, we have lost all memory of his bitter "cup" of suffering. However, he is not through with it yet.

After recounting the battle his Conscience fought with self-reproach and then sitting down to think, Crimsworth reports feeling "like one sealed in a subterranean vault . . . [in] utter blackness . . . [with] yard-thick stone walls around" (195). Buried, but not completely dead, he believes he sees a ray of light indicating the narrow path back to life. "After two, three hours' torturing research in brain and memory, I disinterred certain remains of circumstances, and conceived a hope" (195). Following loosely upon his agony in Gethsemane and his death on a cross, disinterment and conception are as close as Crimsworth gets to visualizing resurrection and rebirth. Granted, these are only faint, awkward echoes of these important biblical themes, and many readers may find Crimsworth's hyperbole of suffering repulsive and his parody of rebirth ludicrous.
But our chief interest in this reference is the degree to which its connection of Crimsworth with the crucified and risen Christ undermines the redemptive value of its adopted text. Like his earlier unsuccessful attempt to call the "luminous phantoms of memory" forth from their tombs, here Crimsworth's only conception of rebirth is cerebral. Like Lucy Snowe in Villette (and perhaps like Brontë herself), he thinks he must believe in Reason as his only source of salvation, though part of him constantly battles against it.

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In this final section, we will consider Brontë's allusions to biblical stories in otherworldly settings—those stories which seem to hold out the promise of a life better than what is presently known. We will find these biblical stories set in three loci in The Professor, Eden, the Promised Land, and the heavenly Kingdom of God. Brontë recasts stories from each of these settings into stories in an earthly setting, suggesting that the lost blessedness might be recaptured in this life.

When Charlotte Brontë writes in her Preface to The Professor that "whatever small competency [her hero] might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow" (3), the reader might be tempted to overlook the final phrase as merely a common, descriptive figure of speech employed by
Brontë to support what one critic calls "the overt self-help ideology of the book,"\textsuperscript{31} and look no further for additional meaning. But Brontë places her intention to evoke a specific biblical image beyond any doubt when, in the next sentence, she states: "As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment" (4).\textsuperscript{32} Adam's "doom" is the punishment given by God to the first man for his role in eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden:\textsuperscript{33}

In the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken.

Genesis 3:19

The communion which existed between the first humans and the fertile earth has been shattered by the sins of presumption and disobedience. Henceforth, human life will be characterized by pain and deprivation. The earth will resist all efforts at cultivation, and man will be forced to toil ceaselessly to produce the food necessary for his survival. Not surprisingly, the Eden myth, and its denouement in the Fall and the expulsion of the first human pair from the paradisiacal garden have become one of the Western world's most enduring sources of imagery for depicting the harshness of human existence. It is also one of Charlotte Brontë's favorite biblical story cycles to
adapt to her own fictional purposes. Joan Chard suggests that Brontë understood "the story of Eden as paradigmatic of the human condition, fraught as it is with brokenness but endowed with a vision of wholeness." As we will discover in all her novels, the search for that "vision of wholeness" will often take the form of an attempt to recapture--with mixed success--the lost innocence of Eden.

In these references to the "sweat of his brow" and to "Adam's doom." Brontë seems to invite her readers to view the entire novel as a contemporary working out through fiction of the legacy of suffering handed down from our mythical forebears. In a recent article, Sue Ann Betsinger suggests that "the controlling vision for the novel" is Brontë's "consciously expanded, private understanding of the Genesis myth." If Crimsworth's "sufferings" are the result of his status as the old Adam, then his success can be viewed as evidence of his being the new Adam, to use St. Paul's term. We have already seen, though, how other biblical allusions qualify or in some cases seem to call into question entirely the degree of Crimsworth's success. Still, we should note that the allusion contained in the Preface is not strictly typological. Brontë calls her hero "Adam's son," not Adam himself. He is fully and representatively human, rather than the specific antitype of the biblical Adam. However, to achieve a balanced reading, we must weigh this particular restriction on typological
interpretation against the many other references to the Eden myth throughout the novel.

From almost the very moment of his arrival at Pelet's school, Crimsworth desires to obtain the forbidden, a glimpse of the young girls at play in the yard of Mlle. Reuter's school. And yet, his way to this coveted mysterious knowledge of the female is blocked, not by angels armed with flaming swords, but by boards nailed up over the window. Crimsworth does nothing to remove the hindrance. And while his desire recalls Eve's active role in seeking the forbidden fruit, but his passivity is more like Adam's willingness merely to stand by. But after being allowed to enter the garden--not as an intruder but as an invited teacher--he offers us this glimpse of his feelings:

I found that the uppermost feeling in my mind on the subject was one of satisfaction ... to teach young ladies would be an occupation so interesting -- to be admitted at all into a ladies' boarding-school would be an incident so new in my life. "Besides," thought I, as I glanced at the boarded window, "I shall now at last see the mysterious garden: I shall gaze both on the angels and their Eden." (75-76)

The glance at the boarded window which previously blocked his view but no longer does so recalls the opening of Adam's eyes when he eats the forbidden fruit. In the biblical
story, the newly attained power of vision brings with it a sense of shame, but Crimsworth claims that his voyeuristic desires arise merely from curiosity (though we might suspect him of disguising strong sexual impulses about which he feels uncomfortable).

And yet, upon first discovering that the view from his window is largely inaccessible because of the nailed up boards, he speaks of his "astonishing" degree of disappointment.

I thought it would have been so pleasant to have looked out upon a garden planted with flowers and trees, so amusing to have watched the demoiselles at their play; to have studied female character in a variety of phases, myself the while sheltered from view by a modest muslin curtain. (65)

This Adam wants to have it both ways. He denies any sense of shame, calling his spying amusement. Still, he wants to cover himself—not with a fig leaf or animal skins but with a "modest muslin curtain." In this respect, Crimsworth's allusions to the Eden myth can be read with him cast in the role of Adam, especially since that link has already been established in the Preface. On the other hand, he also resembles another character in the myth who sees but pretends not to. To see without being seen, to obtain the control implicit in observation without risking any vulnerability from exposure in turn is, in many ways, the
ultimate human fantasy. The explicit linking of this voyeuristic desire with the imagery of Eden at the end of Chapter 8 makes clear the part Crimsworth wishes to play. In a world of covert surveillance, he aspires to a transcendent, God-like, omniscience from which he can exercise power without real involvement. The resemblance between this desire and the aspiration to "be like God" encouraged by the serpent in the biblical story (see Genesis 3:5) cannot be incidental. If this scene of deception and frustrated desire is an earthly Eden, it bears the marks of judgment more than the signs of blessedness. Any redemption possible here is not yet evident.

Crimsworth's relationship with his son Victor is one of the more difficult aspects of the novel's final chapter. Perhaps not surprisingly, in it we find another echo of the Eden myth, again this time with no hint of paradise. While contemplating the pain they will all soon experience from Victor's necessary departure for Eton, Crimsworth admits his own reluctance to "uproot [his] sole olive branch" (266). The phrase is a fairly common biblical metaphor for a male offspring. In a typical example, Psalm 128 celebrates the large and prosperous family thought to be God's reward to the righteous man.

Happy is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go
well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. (Psalm 128:1-4)

Immediately, a contrast is apparent. The Crimsworths are indeed prosperous, but the use of the word "sole" indicates what, from the point of view of the psalm, would be considered a deficiency. Crimsworth has only one heir, to whom he lays exclusive claim by his use of the pronoun "my." He clearly resents Frances' tenderness and leniency toward the boy. He is also jealous of Victor's "indiscriminating" preference for Hunsden, whose advice that the boy's "spirit ... not be curbed" 38 Crimsworth rejects. Refusing to view the trait in question positively, he calls it instead "the leaven of the offending Adam." In his view, "if not whipped out of him," it should be "at least soundly disciplined ... [since] any amount of either bodily or mental suffering which will ground him radically in the art of self-control" (266) will be well worth the exchange.

How ironic that Crimsworth, as he acts out under the direction of his creator (i.e. Charlotte Brontë) the consequences of the original Adam's "offense," bequeathed to him as "Adam's son," explains his own son's difficult temperament as the product of original sin. 39 Presumably, he too has suffered from the troubling effects of this "leaven," though he now tries to give the impression of
total self-mastery. Exchanging his status as a flawed fellow human being for the sovereignty of deity, Crimsworth sees his role as the meting out of punishment for those who cannot control their passions. In his Eden, the remedy is not to be found in concepts such as forgiveness through grace, but rather in the paradoxical notion of externally imposed self-control. In her introduction, Heather Glen suggests that Crimsworth's "treatment of his son Victor, exactly mirroring his own self-suppression, is an external image of that violence of inner 'self-control' that has been evident throughout" the novel.40 But this violence extends into other areas as well. Crimsworth seeks to control others by any means possible, from his arrogant, insensitive narrative technique41 to his intrusive voyeurism; from his attitude toward and "man"handling of both Frances and Victor to his inexplicable killing of an innocent animal. Brontë's narrative linking of the view of masculinity embodied in Crimsworth with God raises serious doubts about the possibility of redemption in such a world.

At the beginning of Chapter 24, Hunsden becomes once more the occasion for a revealing biblical allusion, though the actual words are supplied this time by Crimsworth himself. He claims the ability to read Hunsden's passing glance, imposing this rather significant set of meanings on the tipping of a hat and a grimace:42

To you they said, "How do you do, Wilhemina
Crimsworth?" To me, "So you have found your counterpart at last; there she sits, the female of your kind!" (230)

Hunsden's alleged reference to Frances as Crimsworth's "counterpart" and his word-play deriving a name for her from William's clearly echo the Genesis account of Adam's search for a "helper corresponding to him" (2:18) and his discovery of such in Eve. However, the similarity must not lull us into an uncritical reading of the allusion as mere clever word play. Two notable differences require exploration: (1) the one who does the naming, and (2) the role of God in the pairing.

The second of the two biblical creation accounts twice attributes to Adam the highly significant power of naming his new mate, once in the more general and more inclusive sense of a name for her entire gender and once in the more specific sense of a personal name. In Genesis 2:23, the first man calls this new creature "Woman" (from the Hebrew word *ishshah*), punning on the word "Man" (ish). The roots of these two words are not related, but the biblical writers delighted in this highly creative form of etymology because it manifests the inter-connectedness of God's creation, even down to the smallest details. Similarly, after God has pronounced sentence on them for their transgression in the garden, the man gives the woman her specific name: "the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of
all living" (Genesis 3:20). The biblical writer has clearly depicted the first man as the name of his mate, and yet Brontë attributes to Hunsden, not to Crimsworth, the coining of the name "Wilhemina" for Frances Henri. She gives Crimsworth the words to put into Hunsden's mouth, so to speak, in much the same way that the writer of Genesis creates indirect discourse for Adam. The similarity of names suggests connection, likeness if not sameness, just as in the Hebrew pun in the Genesis account. But Crimsworth is distanced from that connection with Frances, occupying instead the role of the one who grants the naming power and observes the naming, i.e. God. So, if Brontë offers us in this allusion an antitype for the original pair of human beings, the new pair somewhat surprisingly emerges as Hunsden and Frances, with Crimsworth watching and controlling as he always seeks to do.

In a number of other instances, Brontë does allow Crimsworth the narrator to assume directly the power of naming over his characters. Tromly comments on the way in which, at the end of the novel, he populates "his doubtful Paradise" with persons transformed into "birds, plants which he tends, or fruit." Frances in particular he characterizes as "his 'dove,' his 'butterfly,' his 'precious plant'."46 However, it is difficult to determine here whether Crimsworth functions merely as an Adam-like namer or as the creator God whose very speech calls beings into existence.
It seems we cannot finally resolve the tension in his character between the parallels with Adam and the parallels with God. Or perhaps more accurately we might view him as Adam wishing he were God, grasping for that power. If so, then Crimsworth fits well with a common interpretation of the motives which led to the Fall. In either case, Brontë's ironic presentation of him leads the reader to view Crimsworth as unsuitable for either role. This consistent casting of her narrator in a negative light indicates Brontë's struggle to convey her vision of a new Eden on earth through a persona who participates so fully in the very restrictiveness from which she seeks to liberate herself.

The issue of how men and women relate, come into conflict, and share power is inseparable from the use of the Eden myth in the novel. Sue Ann Betsinger argues that Charlotte Brontë, in her reinterpretation of the Genesis myth in *The Professor*, "envisions a woman and man who are created equal and who remain equal after their challenge of the debilitating command and their fortunate expulsion from the restrictive Eden."47 Crimsworth and Frances "have restored the best part of Eden—equal humanity, reciprocal love—to a long-fallen world."48 While this view could be espoused for *Jane Eyre* or *Villette* (the male/female question in *Shirley* is handled somewhat more ambiguously), equality is not what we find at the end of *The Professor*. Betsinger
seems not to be accounting for the degree to which Brontë has allowed Crimsworth to distort the narration. While clearly sensing Brontë's radical rereading of the Eden story, she does not adequately account for the bitter irony of Crimsworth's failure to embody his creator's vision, a vision which may well be beyond his grasp.

What are we to make of Brontë's use of these allusions to the Eden story in ways which are almost universally unsatisfactory? It seems unlikely that she wants us to see her narrator as a total dupe, unable to incorporate references into his story effectively. Perhaps, then, she has attempted something in Crimsworth which cannot be effectively done. He can no more embody her female perspective than he can be the vehicle for her efforts to reread scripture in a consciously less male-oriented manner. This is by no means to imply that in The Professor Brontë fails entirely. Though she seems to struggle against the limitations of her chosen narrative voice, at times we do see glimpses of the playful Brontë familiar to readers of the later novels, teasing her readers with definite, but unsettling and imperfect biblical associations. She traces parallels between biblical characters and her own, only to undermine those same connections. But finally we are led to view Crimsworth and Frances as a new Adam and Eve only to be frustrated by the incompleteness of that vision, perhaps because what we are made to expect is unattainable.
Brontë's efforts to rewrite the Bible's "otherworldly" stories and images are not limited to those set in the Garden of Eden. Throughout her novels, Brontë employs the figure of the Promised Land to capture the sense of possibilities beyond the ordinary which are available to those who dare to resist the enslaving conventions of society and religion. References to Canaan are common in *The Professor*, but they differ greatly depending on the character with whom they are connected. Indeed, in some ways her use of Promised Land imagery is what gives *The Professor* its distinctive allusive flavor.

When Crimsworth interrogates Frances regarding her previous education, almost taunting her for what he assumes to be her lack of acquaintance with "the most ordinary branches of education," she defends herself by claiming knowledge of "other things" (141), specifically grammar, history, geography, and arithmetic. Continuing, she speaks of her intention to "go and live in England" (142). Crimsworth detects a change to an emphatic tone in her voice and overlays a revealing biblical parallel onto her words. "She said 'England' as you might suppose an Israelite of Moses' days would have said Canaan" (142), i.e. the Promised Land, the special gift of God to his chosen people. Frances herself uses the same expression later in the novel when she claims she "always look[s] to England as [her] Canaan" (176). Quite plausibly Crimsworth, as narrator, is reading
Frances' own words back into the earlier setting.

If we extend our reading beyond the narrator's perspective for just a moment, we must ask what such an image would mean to a young woman like Frances Henri. In what way would England be a "Promised Land" for her, and what does it mean that Charlotte Brontë uses this figure at this point in the novel? We don't know if Frances has escaped from some form of past bondage--real or figurative--and considers herself enroute to something better, or whether she perceives her present situation as the "Egypt" from which she must escape to enter her Promised Land. Indeed, the image may be used here as much in the sense of destiny as of destination, both of which fit the biblical usage. After all, Canaan is that land to which God led Abraham as part of the promised dream of a better, more fulfilling life, as well as the refuge toward which the runaway Israelite slaves fled. Indeed, the latter meaning is dependent historically and theologically on the former.

After their marriage, Frances shares with Crimsworth her hopes for the future, which include achieving an independency (as opposed to the mere competency of the Preface) and moving to England, a plan to which he willingly gives his "free consent" and even offers his assistance (249). As it did much earlier in the novel, Crimsworth's language here causes us to view Frances' dreams in a different way by labeling England "her Promised Land" (248).
We see a potential conflict between the newlyweds, though, because each tends to view the other's "Promised Land" as his or her "Egypt." Annette Tromly explores this tension-producing reversal in her study of the novel.

Crimsworth's Egypt (England) becomes Frances' Canaan, and by means of a letter from Hunsden, the entire notion is ironically reversed. Hunsden imagines Crimsworth as an Israelite in Belgium, not England. The implication is that Crimsworth would be a displaced Israelite wherever he lived; for him, exile is a state of mind.

Living as he does in self-imposed exile, Crimsworth does not share her feelings about England. Even at this late point in the novel, the reader still wonders if Crimsworth considers any place his Promised Land. Only after he finally returns does his "heart yearn[] toward [his] native county" (257), suggesting at least the possibility of future blessedness.

Following an established typological link, Brontë relates the Promised Land imagery in the novel to that which offers a view of heaven. Indeed, Eden's close association with sinfulness often tends to make the Promised Land a more suitable type for the future, heavenly paradise than the Genesis myth of Paradise is.

The third "otherworldly" setting which Brontë tries to relocate in her fiction is Heaven. We will consider two
examples in which Brontë deals with the Bible's descriptions of and statements about after-life. The first presents the possibility of achieving the kind of earthly paradise Brontë seems to be envisioning; the second raises serious doubts about it.

When William Crimsworth reflects on his brother's harshness toward him, he insists that he will never let another's behavior make him stray from his chosen path. No; at least, ere I deviate, I will advance far enough to see whither my career tends. As yet I am only pressing in at the entrance--a strait gate enough; it ought to have a good terminus. (20)

The reference is to Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, warning his listeners away from the wide gate and easy road that lead to destruction, promising life only to those who travel by the hard way and enter by the narrow gate (see Matthew 7:13-14). Here we find a classic example of Brontë's strategy of bringing heavenly concerns down to earth. Jesus is speaking of eternal life, while William focuses exclusively on the beginning of his earthly career.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this particular reference is its virtual identification of personal and professional success with the promised heavenly paradise of the Christian faith. If Crimsworth merely assumed that his hard work and initial deprivation would eventually be rewarded, we would be dealing with little more than a fairly
common, secularized version of the Protestant work ethic. However, the clear evocation of Jesus' words puts a new twist on the matter. In Matthew's gospel, the "terminus" for those who enter by a sufficiently narrow gate is Heaven, which can probably be described more favorably than merely "good." But Heaven is far from Crimsworth's mind. Instead, his own words seem to expose his lack of self-awareness, challenging his unquestioning masculine confidence that he is guaranteed success. On the other hand, if we read Crimsworth's words without any sarcasm on Brontë's part, then they tend to minimize Heaven to the point of being reasonably attainable, without divine aid, by one of Adam's sons.

In Crimsworth's "Hypochondria" digression at the end of Chapter 23, we find two images of heaven invoked. One is little more than the memory of a young boy's bad dream, but the other raises serious doubts about the very biblical concept it evokes. Tormented by this "evil spirit" once before, in boyhood, Crimsworth recalls how at that time she invited him to "her own country . . . Necropolis," and pointing to its rows of graves whispered, "It contains a mansion prepared for you" (228). Readers unfamiliar with biblical texts might assume that this language presents no more than an imaginative figure for the grave. As Surojit Sen's comments on the passage make clear, though, Hypochondria's words "acquire a deadlier weight from their
inversion of the scriptural promise of eternal life⁵⁵ in Jesus' words in the fourth gospel: "In my father's house are many mansions . . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2 KJV, my emphasis). However, such borrowing of biblical language, even to invest it with a meaning which reverses that of the adopted text, is relatively simple and straightforward. In the mouth of "Hypochondria" these words present no serious challenge to Brontë's vision of potential blessing, in Heaven or in an earthly paradise. However, we do find one other, extremely suggestive use of biblical language in the Hypochondria episode.

In his description of her assault on his adult character, Crimsworth states that "a horror of great darkness fell upon" him as he "felt his chamber invaded by one [he] had known formerly" (228, see Genesis 15:12). Abram experienced a similarly uncanny moment in the wilderness when Yahweh came to him and spoke these words of warning and of promise:

Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs [i.e. Egypt], and will be slaves there . . . and afterwards they shall come out with great possessions. (Genesis 15:13, 14b)

A "horror of great darkness" (see Genesis 15:12) is the precursor of Yahweh and of the promise to Abram, so the echo of this same phrase in Crimsworth's experience ties them
together explicitly. These few words borrowed from Genesis complicate in two ways our reading of Crimsworth's brief experience of despair before his reassertion of control and apparently confident movement toward his promised land. The allusion may suggest that Crimsworth is chosen in the sense that Abram was, and thereby validate his self-depiction. Or the similarity of language may merely serve to highlight the difference between Crimsworth's god and that encountered by the ancient patriarch. If we consider an even more radical reading of this language, though, the novel can be seen raising questions about the biblical story. Were the God encountered by Abram and the promises he received from this God any more real than Crimsworth's highly personified bout with depression? Given Brontë's acknowledged anxiety since childhood regarding dark and forbidding portrayals of God, the allusion's linking of Abram's unsettling encounter with Yahweh with Crimsworth's haunting female bogey-man is revealing. We can read it either as an attempt to dispel the anxiety and by implication present a more consoling view of God or as a rejection of the frightening God of Calvinism and all the structure of religious doctrine and the social controls predicated upon that God's existence and nature.

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How can we account for the noticeable change in
Brontë's handling of biblical material from *The Professor* to her later novels without making a qualitative judgment and thus implying a specious developmental thesis? Too many readers and critics dismiss *The Professor* outright without trying to account for its difference. I would suggest that Brontë's first novel can be more profitably viewed as an experiment in the limits of a masculine narrative voice than as the practice field on which she honed her biblical interpretative skills. Writing under an assumed name of, at best, ambiguous gender and insinuating herself into the predominantly male world of professional writers, Brontë was no doubt sensitive to the possible reception awaiting her work. When we consider that she complicates this potential reception even further by appropriating the assumed male prerogative of interpreting the Bible through her extraordinary manipulation of its stories and images, her decision to employ a male narrator in her first literary venture into public is quite understandable. In this respect, her use of a female narrator in *Jane Eyre* may be viewed partly as an attempt on her part to avoid the inadequacies of Crimsworth as a vehicle for her "re-vision."

Clearly, Brontë is still experimenting at this point, searching for a voice which will be appropriate not only to her reinscription of the Bible but also to her literary creation of a self. Part of the inadequacy of *The Professor*, which no doubt prompted Brontë to return to this
same basic material and revise it drastically in writing *Villette*, can be attributed to Crimsworth's limitations as a narrative voice. Frances Henri's partial usurpation of the narratorial task halfway through the novel may be read as a signal of Brontë's frustration with the male voice as a vehicle. However, if we assume that she is in control of her fiction, the more acceptable conjecture may be that Brontë enacts at least part of her purpose in writing the novel through this transference of Crimsworth's role to a woman. As both clergyman and teacher, he seems incapable of putting into practice fully the religiously and socially heretical implications of his own language. His treatment of the Bible often contains implicit critiques of the materialistic and imperious aspects of his character of which he seems unaware. And though we might dismiss this apparent blindness on his part as no more than a feature of his character, we might also attribute it to nineteenth-century males in general. What Brontë seeks to accomplish in terms of scripting new possibilities for her own life--explored and ratified through the lives of her female characters--simply cannot be embodied in a masculine narrative voice. We find in *The Professor* a definite advancement beyond Charlotte's overworking of familiar mythical patterns in the juvenilia. At the same time, though, the limitations of the masculine narrative voice seem to restrict her ability to create a satisfying alternative voice for herself.
NOTES


2 Mrs. Gaskell was perhaps the first to declare The Professor the proper predecessor to the later novels. "I think it inferior to all her published works . . . but I think it a very curious link in her literary history, as showing the promise of much that was afterwards realised." From a letter to George Smith, Aug. 13, 1856, excerpted in The Brontës: The Critical Heritage, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 318.

Discussing the somewhat clumsy opening of The Professor, Surojit Sen comments that with Jane Eyre a year later, Brontë "is to show an almost miraculous development in the ease and economy with which the novelist effects our entry into its world" ("The Evidence of Eden: Art and Vision in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë," An unpublished dissertation, The University of Rochester, 1980, p. 29).


While I basically agree with Wheeler's conclusion, I would question his use of the term "network" to describe the biblical allusions in *The Professor*. If anything, they seem isolated in comparison to what we find in the three later novels.

5 The following observation by Winifred Gerin makes the point well, even if she does exaggerate the absence of biblical language and imagery in the early writings:

It must be a matter of wonder to any student of Brontë juvenilia to note the absence of all reference, either direct or indirect, to religious or clerical influences shaping their minds. This is the more striking because of the prodigal use they ultimately made of biblical allusions and quotations in their adult writings and correspondence. The knowledge of the Bible was there and early absorbed, as was to be expected of parsonage children. Yet their silence, on a subject occupying at least as much time as their other studies of history and literature, was complete.


6 Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, ed. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), Preface. All references to *The Professor* will be cited from
this edition. All further references will be indicated in parentheses within the body of the text.


8 Moglen, p. 87. My emphasis.

9 Wheeler, p. 28.

10 Though Charlotte certainly had female role models available to her, we might also recall Robert Southey's advice to her regarding the inappropriateness of her desire to enter a field presumed to be for men only.


14 *The Self Conceived*, p. 104.

15 Dated Sept. 7-8, 1856.

16 Since this term is actually drawn from the other creation account (see Genesis 1:1-2:4a), it is foreign to this story, but many rabbinic and Christian interpretations have harmonized the two accounts because the interpreters assume a fundamental historical and theological unity in the
scriptures.

Rather interesting considering how strongly Charlotte Brontë seems to have felt the need to be loved by a strong man.

Cf. Matthew 8:20: "Foxes have holes . . . but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

The Professor, Introduction, p. 19.

At another time Crimsworth professes values quite different from those he has enacted: "Strong faculties stirred in her frame, and they demanded full nourishment, free exercise: mine was not the hand ever to starve or cramp them; no, I delighted in offering them sustenance, and in clearing them wider space for action" (249, my emphasis). Apparently Crimsworth knows only two modes in which to act, enslaving Tyrant or nourishing Providence.

See Matthew 6:28. In another instance, Crimsworth casts himself as a God-figure in relation to Mlle. Reuter, experiencing "a sort of low gratification in receiving this luscious incense from an attractive and still young worshipper" (184).

Interestingly, when Frances asserts her desire to maintain her independence by establishing her own school, Crimsworth is struck by "a horror of great darkness" (see Genesis 15:12) in the return of hypochondria. I treat this passage on p. 50.
23 See, for example, the notes of both the Clarendon and the Penguin Classics editions of the novel.

24 Charlotte Brontë, Shirley, ed. Herbert Rosengarten and Margaret Smith (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 357. All references to the novel will be to this edition. All further reference will be indicated in parentheses in the body of the text.

25 The suggestion by the editors of the Clarendon edition that the image, when used in Shirley, is "perhaps a reminiscence of Byron's tale, The Giaour, 11. 1131-4" (note to p. 357, l. 16) similarly offers only a partial basis at best.

26 The use of the fire-oriented verb, with its metaphorical associations with passion, may establish yet another tie between this use of the image and that found in Shirley.

27 Crimsworth has already betrayed at least a familiarity with the mythic terminology in his letter to Charles in Chapter I. Analyzing the appeal that Mrs. Edward Crimsworth would have for other men--though not for him--he maintains that "white necks, carmine lips and cheeks, clusters of bright curls do not suffice for me without that Promethean spark which will live after the roses and lilies are faded, the burnished hair grown grey" (13).

28 With whom Crimsworth is connected, both in the Preface and in the novel.
29 It is impossible to know at this point whether Brontë chose this momentary reluctance on Hunsden's part as consistent with his character or simply could not bring herself, at this point in her career, to place such a bold appropriation of scripture in any character's mouth. In later novels she will once again come up to this line, and then cross over it.

30 Interestingly, Crimsworth will use the same "cup" imagery in Chapter 23, only this time he believes that "the full cup of contentment... drawn from waters said to flow only in heaven" (214) is within his grasp on earth, indeed, near at hand.

31 Boumelha, p. 40. Eagleton insists that although "the novel on the whole bears out this meritocratic myth... a significant qualification must be made." Despite his rejection of his aristocratic heritage, Crimsworth has been "furnished with privileged accomplishments which he can put to profitable use" (Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), p. 43). He offers Crimsworth's swimming ability, acquired at Eton, which enabled him to rescue easily Vandenhuten's drowning son as a prime example.

32 Brontë's language here seems to be a clear conflation of the theme of expulsion from the garden and the agony of Christ, especially as depicted in the cup of suffering in Gethsemane, two biblical scenes which are
strongly linked in classical typological interpretation, though more frequently through the enmity between the serpent and the woman's seed.

33 As pointed out by Heather Glen in her notes to the Penguin Classics edition of the novel.


35 A few critics seem to believe that Crimsworth and Frances have indeed found paradise at the end of the novel. For example, Surojit Sen states that "the protagonist, his family and his devoted [...] bachelor friend live in the Edenic environs of Daisy Lane" (p. 4). We might choose, however, to question Sen's optimistic assertion that the 'conception of a world' revealed by Milton's heavenly muse to Moses on 'the secret top of Oreb or Sinai' is "actualised in life at Daisy Lane" (p. 78).


37 Since the young girls to be gazed on are referred to as the "angels" of Eden, it seems that Eve is missing, at least for the moment. Crimsworth's sexual desires cannot accommodate a real flesh and blood partner at this point.

38 Both Crimsworth and Frances seem to have reservations about Hunsden's influence over young Victor, but nowhere are these misgivings couched--as we might
expect—in the language or imagery of the Eden stories, depicting Hunsden as the serpent, the agent of temptation. In an unrelated passage, though, at Frances’ first meeting with Hunsden, Crimsworth admits that as Frances’ enthusiasm “thawed Hunsden’s reserve as fire thaws a congealed viper,” his friend "vividly reminded [him] of a snake" (235).

39 Though both Clarendon and Penguin editors cite Henry V as the source of the reference, it is so in a derivative manner only. For the concept originates in St. Paul’s letters to first-century churches.


41 For example, his attitude about uncovering his fourth memory picture, the curtain over which he "may hereafter withdraw, or may not, as suits [his] convenience and capacity" (55).

42 Earlier in this chapter I discussed other instances of intrusive narrative voyeurism of this kind. However, since the projection of thoughts and feelings onto another tends to be more self-revealing than insightful, this narrative technique is actually the opposite of voyeurism.

43 A surprising number of critics carelessly cite this passage as an actual speech by Hunsden, rather than words imposed on him by Crimsworth, and this time in his capacity as character rather than narrator.
44 Compare a similar issue in the Prometheus allusion in the previous section.
45 An assumption which lies behind all classical typological interpretation of the Bible.
46 Tromly, p. 122.
47 Betsinger, p. 307.
48 Betsinger, p. 306.
49 Irene Tayler's evaluation of Brontë's use of Promised Land imagery is significant:
The biblical contraries of Egypt and the Promised Land provided, in their full typological significance, a newly liberating structure for the falling and rising pilgrimage of Charlotte's spirit. What if her stubborn impulse to rebel against the god who seemed so cruelly to diminish her was no sin after all, but a resistance to idolatry? What if her passionate love were to be redirected toward a worthier goal? Then might it not redeem rather than destroy her?


50 Several years before beginning The Professor, in a letter to Ellen Nussey dated December 10, 1841, Brontë writes: "Brussels is still my promised land, but there is still the wilderness of time and space to cross before I reach it." Neither Crimsworth nor Frances seems to embody
this view in any direct way.

51 Tromly, p. 117.

52 The question of exile is complicated, though. As an Englishman living in Belgium, Crimsworth is, in a sense, in exile throughout most of the novel. And yet, he finds a temporary home of sorts with M. Pelet, thereby ameliorating his exiled condition somewhat. When he leaves this position (making himself homeless once more) it is with the intention of finding his own "Promised Land," though he would not necessarily choose England, as Frances does. It is here that Hunsden's somewhat backhanded reference to the escape of the Israelites from Egypt and their uncertain movement toward freedom in a new home (and old homeland) serves to enrich the fiction and deepen our sense of the risk involved for Crimsworth.

53 Sen suggests that the language used to describe the departure of hypochondria "is meant to awaken associations of the casting out of devils" ("The Evidence of Eden," p.36). While his observation is correct, the source of the language is much more general than the specific reference he makes to Matthew 8:28ff. In fact, if we are looking for a specific source text, we should consider the story of the young David and King Saul found in 1 Samuel 16. Since hypochondria departs of her own volition, though, Crimsworth has cast no one to play "David" across from his "Saul."
Readers of American literature will be familiar with comparable figures in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, e.g. "Because I could not stop for Death."

Sen, p. 35.
Jane Eyre

From the vantage point of ten years after her marriage to Rochester and her presumably happy settling into life at Ferndean, Jane Eyre begins her autobiography at a moment of rebellion against authority in the person of Master John Reed. Perhaps Charlotte Brontë's choice of this moment for the genesis of Jane's fictional self-creation suggests a basic attitude toward all, but especially toward patriarchal authority.¹ One arena in which this rebellion is staged in particularly significant but often overlooked ways is the incorporation of biblical material into the narrative. Though many readers and critics are aware of the profusion of biblical resonances in Jane Eyre, few seem to consider the ways in which Brontë disassembles biblical material into discrete units of imagery or narrative which she can then reassemble in new combinations in the novel to serve her own purposes. Joan Chard suggests that, "recognizing the limitations of traditional exegesis of scripture," Brontë "broke the ancient bond between scriptural authority and patriarchy by questioning the
persistent assumption that the biblical texts without exception validate stereotypical ideas about women rather than render them invalid. In so doing, she gave new direction to the art of biblical allusion. 

In *The Professor* we found Brontë using a new form of typological interpretation to harness the energy of biblical stories and images and associate it with her characters and plot. The narrator and other characters, however, showed little if any awareness of this added dimension behind their words and actions. In *Jane Eyre* we find a narrator who seems to use biblical material much more consciously for effect than William Crimsworth does. Indeed, from her description of certain items in a third-floor room at Thornfield, Jane seems to be familiar with the notion of typology. "With their strange carvings of palm branches and cherub's heads," these chests look "like types of the Hebrew ark" (92), i.e. the Ark of the Covenant, the residing place of God's Spirit while Israel dwelt in the wilderness. Her use of the term is loose and figurative, and obviously not intended to be precise in a hermeneutical sense. Still, the reference is revealing since it reinforces the obvious typological bent of the novel by actually mentioning the term in the text.

Like other forms of figuration, typology depends heavily upon suggestion of meaning. The reader must have the knowledge necessary to decipher those suggestions. In
classical typological interpretation of scripture, the associations became codified to a certain extent, following the lead given by the adaptation of the Old Testament by the writers of the New. In the kind of typology employed by Brontë, though, traditional associations with biblical type characters and type scene become destabilized. So, as in the beginnings of typological interpretation, we find a greater reliance on suggestion than on codified readings.

In one of the early encounters between Rochester and Jane, Brontë gives us a scene which embodies this ambiguity between type and antitype. When Rochester examines three water-colours produced by Jane (see Ch. 13), one of his most searching questions concerns the extent to which she was able to realize her original conception in the actual execution. In response, Jane must admit that "in each case [she] had imagined something which [she] was quite powerless to realise" (111). If we consider Jane's art a metaphor for Brontë's art, perhaps we may conclude that much of her fiction is suggestion, pointing toward an idea which cannot be fully expressed. Presumably, the writer must hope that readers will be able to reconstruct from these suggestions something at least resembling the original idea. Robert Alter certainly implies something of this nature when he describes the relationship between "the shadowy foreimage" anticipated by the observer and the "realized revelatory image" as presented in the work of art itself.  

3 If this is
the case, then perhaps in her typological use of the Bible Brontë strives to make a similar connection, hinting toward something ineffable. Landow recognizes the existence of this gap in his use of the term "shadows" to refer to the antitypes created by Victorian artists. By exploring a number of specific instances in which Brontë apparently adopts biblical texts into Jane Eyre for some purpose other than demonstrating her mastery of scripture, perhaps we can catch a glimpse of that inexpressible something toward which she so persistently points. To aid in our investigation, we will again be guided by the three allusive strategies which I am suggesting describe the bulk of Brontë use of biblical material.

* * *

A female writer in the nineteenth-century was certainly not without literary role models, but when we try to trace a line of influence for Charlotte Brontë's use of the Bible, we are more hard pressed. I am suggesting that at least part of the phenomenon can be explained as an effort on her part to respond creatively to the anxiety of being an intelligent, goal-oriented female in a still largely male-dominated society. Gilbert and Gubar describe female writers of the nineteenth century as "identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has
imposed on them." Employing a Bloomean strategy, her "radical misreading of patriarchal poetics frees the woman artist to imply her criticism of the literary conventions she has inherited even as it allows her to express her ambiguous relationship to a culture that has not only defined her gender but shaped her mind." If the tradition of interpreting scripture in ways that endorsed the subservience of women was perceived as a substantial part of the problem, one way of envisioning new possibilities would be to rewrite that sacred word. But whereas complete reinscription was probably impossible, because of both external and internal resistance, the most a writer like Charlotte Brontë could do was question conventional interpretations, hoping to undermine them, or at least lessen their damaging impact. So we will begin our consideration once more with those instances in which Brontë inverts gender within biblical allusions in ways that challenge our assumptions regarding gender-based role expectations. What we must not expect to find, though, are examples of this strategy used in any simple, one-dimensional manner.

In fact, the first example I will examine presents no obvious reversals of gender roles, and I have found no other readings to support my view of this passage. However, I believe that such a strategy lies at the heart of this complex allusion. In Chapter 27, Jane speaks of the abrupt
change in her situation produced by the "discovery" of Bertha Mason Rochester: "My hopes were all dead--struck with a subtle doom, such as in one night fell on all the first-born in the land of Egypt" (260). Even without considering the biblical reference, we can feel the devastating blow which Jane's "first-born" love has suffered. The images of plague and death conjured up by the allusion serve to intensify our sense of the rejected and displaced female orphan's self-loathing. What is unexpected, though, is the irony of Jane (who usually casts herself as the rebellious slave) linking herself with the archetypal biblical tyrant nation, Egypt. For only the Egyptians suffered from the Angel of Death's touch; the houses of the Israelites were all passed over. Doreen Roberts suggests that the reference is not odd at all. Rather, its naturalness "reveals how readily the heroine thinks of herself as an object specifically marked out by divine providence." However, her reasoning seems weak. Israel is portrayed as the object of God's providential oversight much more frequently than Egypt is. Few readers would "naturally" associate a reference to Egypt with Providence. Barry Qualls also offers what he deems a plausible explanation for the reference. "The equation of her hopes with the Egyptians underlines their pagan (or worldly) nature, and emphasizes Jane's still outcast state." Egypt is frequently described as pagan, though not necessarily worldly. The two terms are not always
interchangeable in the biblical vocabulary. But the greater difficulty here seems to be in presuming a link between Egypt, the great tyrannizer, even at times the instrument of God's judgment against Israel, and the notion of an outcast. In the Old Testament, Israel is the archetypal outcast, in spite of its status as the chosen one of God. Both of these attributes make it the much more natural parallel with Jane and call into question Qualls' explanation. But we still have not accounted for the connection between Jane and Egypt.

I would like to suggest that at this point Jane thinks of herself in a dichotomized manner, separating her "hopes" from the rest of herself, the almost-married Mrs. Rochester from still single Jane Eyre. If we recall that the first-born Egyptian children innocently suffered as a necessary consequence of Israelite freedom, then perhaps we can see Jane's "hopes" being sacrificed in a similar manner. For Jane to reach her full potential and return to Rochester as a confident, independent woman, part of her must first die. So she is both condemned Egyptian first-born and spared Israelite slave. But if this is the case, who is the Angel of Death? In one sense Bertha Mason Rochester is. The revelation of her existence is depicted as the efficient cause of this "plague" which afflicts Jane, sent by Richard Mason. Then, in an even more ironic reversal, it is Bertha's own death which finally frees both Jane and
Rochester from exile and makes possible their entry into the Promised Land, making her something of a paschal lamb. And since the lamb was already established as a type for the crucified Christ in the New Testament, by extension, Bertha is associated with Christ in a dark way. Though we saw little of it in The Professor, this kind of rapid-fire shifting of parallels for biblical types is common in Jane Eyre.

In a brilliant use of double gender reversal, Brontë casts Rochester in a female role which is not directly related to any biblical text, then has him portray Jane in language which links her with the biblical prophet Elijah. Disguised as a gipsy fortune-teller, Rochester reads Jane's forehead and offers the following insight:

Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in argument, and the casting vote in every decision. Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire may pass by: but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience. (177)

Though the quotation is unmarked, the reference to Elijah's experience of theophany on Mount Horeb is unmistakable (see
1 Kings 19). In the adopted text, the natural phenomena of wind, earthquake, and fire form a procession for Yahweh's glory, but they neither contain nor embody the divine presence. "The Lord was not in the wind ... [nor] the earthquake ... [nor] the fire" (1 Kings 19:11-12). However, the biblical text makes no claim that God is in the "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12) either. Indeed, another voice speaks to him after the strange procession, commissioning him to aid in the extermination of all those in Israel who have worshipped the foreign god Baal. In the adopted text, then, both the origin and the nature of the so-called "still, small voice" remain ambiguous, but it seems to be associated with the other physical manifestations, rather than with God. Following the popular, greatly reduced sense of the phrase as the inner voice of the conscience, though, Rochester associates it with reason and judgment, contrasting it with the "strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire" of Jane's passionate nature. Like Elijah, Jane is called to do battle with the "true heathen" forces (177), though this time they are her own divided inner nature. The irony of the reference either escapes Rochester, or he successfully represses it. Though as the female gipsy he commends Jane for her reason, as masculine Rochester he secretly longs for her passion and will eventually call forth from her feelings which she will label as idolatry. He will, in a sense then, transform her
from Elijah into a worshiper of Baal.

Whereas many of Brontë's borrowing from the Bible are overt, taking the form of quotation or allusion, in some cases the only indication that an adopted text lies behind the fiction is a subtle but elaborate system of plot parallels. For example, numerous parallels with the biblical character Jacob can be found throughout the novel, beginning with Jane's first encounter with Rochester. As we might expect, though, the character parallels will not remain stable for long.

When we first meet him, Rochester is returning to Thornfield alone after an extended absence, just as Jacob remains alone when he sends his family and his peace offering ahead to Esau, across the ford at the river Jabbok. Both encounter a stranger, both are injured in the ensuing "struggle," and both leave walking with a limp. Parallels can be found in the identities of both the biblical and the fictional strangers as well. Jacob's stranger is called a man (see Genesis 32:24), but he acts more like an angel. Afterwards, Jacob even states that he has seen the face of God (see Genesis 32:30). Rochester's stranger is a woman, but still she mysteriously overpowers him. The novel also hints at a supernatural element in the encounter between Rochester and Jane. When Jane sees Rochester's dog Pilot, she fears she is being confronted by a mythical beast called a Gytrash. Of course, we've already learned from the Red
Room episode that Jane is prone to view unfamiliar situations in this particular light. Perhaps the surprise is that Rochester is also inclined in this direction. We can trace his habit of calling Jane a "fairy" or "elf" and of attributing strange powers to her to this first encounter. Finally, after his wrestling match, Jacob's name is changed to Israel to signify his new identity. Here Brontë employs one of her first transferences between Rochester and Jane. Even though his name is not changed, as we might expect if Brontë were following the plot of the adopted text exactly, he does give Jane a new name, Janet. Considered in isolation these parallels may seem insignificant, but they form part of a network of biblical imagery in the novel through which Brontë asserts her authority to manipulate the scriptures in order to counter her readers expectations about gender-based behavior patterns.

If Rochester can play the part of Jacob, so can Jane. When she returns to find a blind, crippled Rochester at Ferndean, the reunion resembles, in almost parodic form, the scene in which Jacob tricks his father Isaac and steals Esau's birthright (see Genesis 27:18-29). When Jacob approaches his father, pretending to be his brother Esau, Isaac is perplexed at first, because the evidence of his now dim senses is contradictory. Hoping to dissolve his uncertainty by the most concrete of the senses, Isaac calls
Jacob to him that he might touch him. But even after doing so, the old patriarch remains confused. "The voice is Jacob's voice," he says, "but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Genesis 27:22). Or at least they feel that way because on his mother's advice Jacob has covered them with animal skins. Only the additional evidence of the smell of the fields leads Isaac to conclude—though in error—that this is indeed his first-born son. He then blesses him, blessing Jacob in place of Esau. Similarly, Jane hides her true identity as she approaches Rochester, bearing food as Jacob did, and seeking what could fairly be called a blessing. In the novel, however, the feel of the hands and the sound of the voice match, revealing to Rochester the presence of one unlooked for but welcome.

In addition to the similarities in plot, both stories deal with questions of entitlement and deceit, though not in the same manner. Jacob deceives his father and steals the blessing which rightfully belonged to Esau, but the biblical story suggests that he does so with God's approval. Jane, by contrast, runs away from the "blessing" because Rochester has deceived her in offering it. The "blessing" which Jane receives initially belonged to one (i.e. Bertha) and then was apparently intended for one (i.e. Blanche) other than Jane. However, through death and inheritance—central themes in both stories—it becomes both legally and socially accessible to her. Though both stories involve a degree of
deception, both imply that the blessing is ultimately bestowed appropriately. And like Isaac, Rochester's blindness mysteriously "enables" him to bless the right one. Through her radical reversal of biblical character roles, Brontë is able to tap into the Bible's own critique of such cultural precepts as the right of primogeniture and use it to reject the gender-based assumptions of her society which imprison both her and her characters, male and female alike. By casting Jane as Jacob, Brontë asserts her belief that the possibility of "blessing"—i.e. for freedom, happiness, and fulfillment—should be available to everyone, regardless of gender or class.

Brontë anticipates the link she will draw between Rochester and Pilate with a scene in which Jane combines aspects of almost every major character in the Passion narrative. Though this extended allusion also employs her strategy of creating parallels between her characters and God or Christ, I will consider it here because of the high degree of gender reversal it exhibits.

When Rochester leaves her alone in that terrifying third floor room (recalling Jane's experience in the Red Room at Gateshead) to tend the wounds Bertha inflicted on Richard Mason, she steels her nerve with this incantation of duty: "I must keep to my post . . . . I must watch this ghastly countenance . . . . I must dip my hand again and again in the basin of blood and water, and wipe away the
trickling gore" (184). In the fading candlelight, she sees the carved cabinet bearing "in grim design the heads of the twelve apostles" and above them "an ebon crucifix and a dying Christ" (184). The repeated action of dipping into the basin recalls not only the shared Passover meal of the Last Supper and Jesus' washing of the apostles' feet (see John 13:1-30), but also the means by which, according to Jesus, his betrayer will be revealed (see e.g. Matthew 26:23, Mark 14:20). In another twist, in the Fourth Gospel, it is Jesus who dips the bread into the dish and hands it to Judas (see John 13:26). The water in the basin and Jane's seemingly futile efforts at cleaning away the blood recall both literally and metaphorically Pilate's attempt to absolve himself of guilt in Jesus' death by washing his hands. As Jane labors under the gaze of the crucified one's image on the cabinet, her exact terminology for the basin's contents--"blood and water"--echoes the description of Jesus' death: "One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). Tending the wounds of Mason's corpse-like body, Jane seems to be partly cast as the women followers of Jesus who prepared his body for burial. Even the sponge which Jane uses seems to belong as much in that ancient scene as here, having been used to offer comforting drugs to Jesus as he hung on the cross (see Matthew 27:48). Certainly the scene can be read realistically as a rather graphic
description of first aid, but Brontë has used the physical details and the otherwise extraneous cabinet to set the stage for a much more complicated reading. The parallels are numerous and unstable, especially in terms of gender. Jane seems to embody, in varying degrees of detail, Jesus, the Twelve in general and Judas in particular, Pilate, the women who followed Jesus, and bystanders at the cross. So, rather than establishing clear fictional antitypes for biblical characters, from which we could then draw definite theological conclusions, Brontë's primary goal seems to be the general destabilization of cultural gender-based assumptions.

After her return, Jane teases Rochester, even mildly tormenting him, by withholding information regarding her whereabouts after leaving Thornfield. Vexed with her reticence on the point, Rochester resorts to his usual mild name-calling: "You mocking changeling--fairy-born and human bred!" But then he admits that Jane's teasing--which he has missed greatly in her absence--is actually therapeutic for him. "If Saul could have had you for his David," he says, "the evil spirit would have been exorcised without the aid of the harp" (386).11 The reference appears innocent enough on the surface, but it offers a different perspective when we look deeper.

In the background of the David and Saul story lies the bitter conflict for supremacy which arises between the two,
eventually leading to David's becoming king of Israel in Saul's place. In the same sense, Jane's return as an independent woman of means threatens the authority of the now emasculated Rochester.  

As Eagleton suggests, "Jane finally comes to have power over Rochester," returning to him as she does "on her own terms, financially self-sufficient." Despite Jane's protestations to the contrary, the reader clearly senses her superiority to, even dominance over, Rochester at this point in the plot. But not at this point only, for her feelings after marrying Rochester clearly influence her entire recollective process. Additionally, Rochester's self-identification with Saul, and his suffering with an evil spirit, raises the question of his mental and emotional stability. Were this reference in Jane's mouth, we could read it as a subtle effort at self-assertion on her part, even at the cost of the beloved. Here Brontë's polemical purpose seems to have gotten bolder and more specific. For the first time we see hints not only of a levelling between the sexes, but also a reversal of the power balance. If we consider the manner in which the novel begins in the light of Jane's status at the end, we receive an impression of the rebellion against patriarchal authority having been successfully carried off--through both the frustration of St. John Rivers' designs and the taming of Rochester.
Few writers, either male or female, range as far in their adaptation of scripture as Charlotte Brontë does. I have suggested that the emphasis placed within evangelical Christianity on privatized interpretation of the Bible by the individual believer, rather than supporting the doctrine of infallibility, actually encouraged Brontë's practice of *bricolage*. Once broken free of their traditional typological associations, the bits and pieces of biblical material were adaptable to Brontë's particular purposes. In *Jane Eyre* we find her employing this style of interpretation frequently to challenge the notion that God watches over and controls the outcome of human affairs. As in *The Professor*, she launches this attack along two lines. She blurs the lines of distinction between Providence and Nature portrayed as a female deity, and she casts almost every major character in the novel, at one time or another, in a role which parallels either God or Christ as described in the Bible.

Brontë proves that she considers no biblical passage beyond the reach of her method when she allows Jane to adapt Christ's words from the cross to express her lingering bitterness toward Mrs. Reed. After reminding her readers that she writes at some distance of time from the events she narrates, Jane addresses this apostrophe to her late aunt:
Yes, Mrs. Reed, to you I owe some fearful pangs of mental suffering. But I ought to forgive you, for you knew not what you did: while rending my heart-strings, you thought you were only uprooting my bad propensities. (16)

The use of present tense verbs for Jane's actions (as opposed to past tense for those of Mrs. Reed) clearly indicates that at the time of writing, some ten years after the incident narrated, Jane still feels those "pangs" and has not yet forgiven her aunt. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the biblical scene to which she alludes.

According to the gospel account, while dying on the cross, Jesus asked God to forgive his tormentors because they were unaware of the full implications of their actions (see Luke 23:34). The degree of mercy shown by Jesus is extra-ordinary, but the real theological issue at stake in the adopted text is the question of the power to forgive sins. The gospel accounts indicate that the Jews of Jesus' day believed that only God could forgive sins. In the story of the healing of the paralytic, though, Jesus claims that authority for himself (see Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; and Luke 5:24). In this case, though, rather than making his own first-person statement of forgiveness, Jesus implores God to forgive them. By contrast, we should note that Jane claims for herself full authority to forgive Mrs. Reed (though she has yet to do so). Through this adaptation of Jesus' words,
Brontë casts Jane in role of God, the potential dispenser of forgiveness, though in this case she is actually the withholder of it. At the same time, though, she casts the younger Jane in the role of Jesus, the one who suffered the pangs at the hands of the one now in need of forgiveness. If we follow the narrative logic of the adopted text, then perhaps Jane as "God" never offers forgiveness because Jane as "suffering Jesus" has never implored her for it on Mrs. Reed's behalf.

The relationship between this passage and the Bible is further complicated by the next phrase in Jane's apostrophe to Mrs. Reed. Her accusation that her aunt sought to cure Jane's "bad propensities" by " rending [her] heart-strings" (16) echoes language found in the book of the prophet Joel: "'Yet even now,' says the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments'" (Joel 2:12-13). Whereas tearing one's garments was the conventional sign of mourning in ancient Israel, God demands more than an outward, ritualized act. True contrition can be shown only inwardly, by " rending" one's " heart-strings," with a resulting visible change in one's outward behavior. Surprisingly, such a change seems to be what Jane admits Mrs. Reed was trying to effect in her, and by the very act which God demanded of Israel. Does this make Mrs. Reed something akin to Jane's conscience, a prophetic voice
calling her to repentance? The use of the word "uprooting" to describe the strategy Jane attributes to Mrs. Reed provides a further echo from Israel's prophetic writings (see e.g. Jeremiah 1:10). In a single brief passage, then, we find Jane assuming the roles of God, the crucified Christ, and sinful, unrepentant Israel, while Mrs. Reed is simultaneously the unforgiven executioner of God's son and a would-be prophet, pointing the way to forgiveness and reconciliation. Brontë clearly demonstrates here a surprising degree of freedom in dealing with biblical material. One early reviewer labelled Jane Eyre "an anti-Christian composition"\(^\text{15}\) for its spirit of rebellion and its murmuring against the providential ordering of society. In a sense, this assessment is true, though it makes no specific mention of Brontë's audacity in manipulating biblical texts to accomplish this rebellion.

Lowood Institute labels its students, imposing on them new identities which mask or distort their true natures. In Jane's account of one teacher's treatment of Helen Burns, we find this revealing observation: "Miss Scatcherd wrote in conspicuous characters on a piece of pasteboard the word 'Slattern,' and bound it like a phylactery round Helen's large, mild, intelligent, and benign-looking forehead" (64). Unable to endure Helen's degradation any longer, when Miss Scatcherd leaves, Jane tears the sign from Helen's head and throws it in the fire. The incident would hardly be worth
exploring further except for the use of the term "phylactery." When we recall what is traditionally written on this curious form of headgear, we find a deeply buried allusion to one of the most fundamental texts defining Israel's relationship with God.

In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses explains to the children of Israel the significance of the first, and most important, of the commandments he has just delivered to them in the preceding chapter. The words he speaks—called collectively the *shema*—are central to Israel's faith: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Moses instructs the Israelites, "Bind [these words] as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead" (Deuteronomy 6:8). These emblems, or frontlets, on the forehead are called phylacteries, and the Israelites were to wear them as a badge, identifying them as belonging to their God, Yahweh.

By likening Miss Scatcherd's pasteboard sign for Helen to a phylactery, Brontë creates an uneasy parallel between these two utterly different identity-bestowing labels, the single word "Slattern" and the Jewish recitation of faith in the one true God, called the *shema*. Once identified, the parallel is shocking. Miss Scatcherd's action seems nearly blasphemous until we recall that nothing she says or does
implies any parallel with the biblical text. What we have instead is a perfect instance of the kind of suggestion of meaning discussed earlier. Without quoting a single word of it, Brontë alludes to one of the most important passages in the Bible and challenges it through her bold simile.

Given the treatment she has received up to this point in her life from the representatives of institutionalized religion, it is probable that Jane would view the shema's badge of faith as little different from Helen's badge of disgrace. Both impose an identity on the wearer; both imply judgment on the wearer; both demand suppression of the wearer's self in submission to a higher authority. But if Brontë truly suggests that Helen's degrading sign is an antitype of the Jewish phylacteries, and that "Slattern" is somehow associated with the Jewish faith in and obligation to worship one God, then what can we make of Jane's tearing the sign from Helen's forehead and throwing it into the fire? Does she act to liberate Helen not only from the demeaning label imposed by Miss Scatcherd but also from what she perceives as the self-imposed limitations of Helen's devout faith? If so, does Brontë delineate a means for freeing herself from the restrictions of traditional Christian orthodoxy through this passionate outburst on the part of her narrator? I am unsure how much weight we should place on this brief simile, but the rebellious implications of Brontë's depiction of Jane destroying the "phylactery"
are hard to avoid.

At various points in the novel both Jane and Rochester describe their relationship with the other in terms which, considered theologically, constitute idolatry. When Rochester leaves Thornfield for a time, and Jane is unsure whether she will ever see him again, she convinces herself that she must quench any newly born feelings for him or imagined relationship with him. Speaking to herself, she warns:

Don't make him the object of your fine feelings, your raptures, agonies, and so forth. He is not of your order: keep to your caste, and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised. (142)

Given her admission later in the novel that she comes to idolize Rochester, we should not be surprised to find her contemplating here the possibility of offering him the single-minded devotion traditionally reserved for God alone. Though we are far removed from the novel's first reference to the shema, we hear it echo again in Jane's words. On that occasion Brontë seemed to reject its use to subjugate Helen Burns, here we see Jane warning herself against surrendering too much to Rochester. In Deuteronomy Israel is instructed: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might"
(6:5). The demand for total devotion precludes the possibility of any divided loyalty on Israel's part. Yahweh is to be the only God Israel worships; no one or nothing else may claim that position. And while Jane hesitates offering this degree of devotion to Rochester, her objections are specifically not for religious reasons. We find no suggestion here that such usurpation by another human of God's privileged position in the human heart is dangerous or forbidden. Rather, Jane's reservations simply pertain to Rochester in particular. At this point, she has not yet discovered the likeness to him that Brontë will soon explore through complex allusions to the Garden of Eden myth. Brontë's choice of these words for Jane's first conscious realization of her feelings for Rochester points the way toward later, more explicit movement toward idolatry. Even if we discount Jane's words somewhat as romantic hyperbole, they begin to suggest to us that Brontë will employ the second strategy I have identified more overtly in Jane Eyre than she did in The Professor. But we also see clear evidence of the divided nature of her rebelliousness. Identifying Rochester with God shows a tendency to exchange one form of subservience for another.

Further evidence of Brontë's strategy of undermining a Providential view of life can be seen in the substitution of objects, ideas, or values for God, often in surprisingly casual references. When she learns that Rochester is
bringing a large group of society mongers back to Thornfield with him, she decides to remain as much as possible in the "sanctum of the schoolroom," which she describes as "a very pleasant refuge in time of trouble" (145). The reference to the opening verse of Psalm 46 is unmistakable, and indeed Brontë notes the reference in the text through the use of quotation marks. But she alters the language in two significant ways. To begin with, she borrows the word "refuge" from the first half of the verse, substituting it for the word "help" in the second half. The psalm describes God as a refuge where active help will be found, but Jane has only a safe, empty classroom. The removal of the word "help" from the adopted text facilitates this transfer of focus. No help is to be found in the classroom, only refuge. The second alteration involves a clever pun which substantially changes the meaning of the adopted text. Whereas the psalmist finds in God a very "present" help in difficult times, the schoolroom will provide only a "pleasant" refuge. The Hebrew term translated "present" more accurately means "well proved." That is, based on past faithfulness, God can be relied on to be present in the present. The schoolroom, as merely a passive place of hiding, can offer Jane none of this assurance. And so, the apparently innocent, offhanded reference to the psalmist's declaration of faith suggests that the safety and help formerly thought to be available in God's providential care
may no longer be available. While this thought is perhaps unsettling, Brontë also seems to find its liberating implications pleasant.

Another variation on Brontë's strategy for undermining the notion of Providence is her blurring of the lines of distinction between the biblical God and Nature as a kind of personified goddess. On her first night after leaving Thornfield, fleeing from Rochester, Jane is forced to sleep on the heath. But she is unconcerned because, for the moment at least, nature seems "benign and good" (285). In fact, Jane conceives of Nature as a mother-figure who loves her despite her outcast status. "To-night, at least, I would be her guest--as I was her child: my mother would lodge me without money and without price" (285, my emphasis). Jane's words seem so natural, the reader could easily overlook the unmarked quotation of Isaiah 55:1, in which the prophet speaks of a glorious (and free) banquet which symbolizes God's coming restoration of the people of Judah after their exile in Babylon. But while the biblical text emphasizes the unmerited nature of God's grace toward Judah, the novel's use of the image focuses on Jane's destitution. Still, the quotation clearly creates a link between the biblical God and Jane's Earth Mother.

And yet, Brontë's reversal of the order of events in the adopted text prevents any reading of the two texts as simple parallels, of the novel as a mere pious echo of the
biblical proclamation. Whereas Isaiah celebrates the end of exile for Judah, Jane is only just now heading into hers. The allusion is further complicated when, on the same page, Jane speaks of the omnipresence and omniscience of God in a quite traditional fashion. She reveals no apparent awareness of any contradiction between such a view and her earlier panentheistic statements, nor does she make any overt attempt to harmonize them. And in spite of Jane's confidence on this first night spent on the heath, Nature will prove to be a less than perfect provider. She will eventually be reduced to begging, desperate in her hunger. It will be the Rivers family—not Nature or God—who take Jane in and feed and clothe her. The effect of Brontë's treatment of biblical material here is to promote an extremely unorthodox theological position, one which raises serious questions about God's providential oversight. At the same time, though, it leaves Jane free to make her own way in the world. And while she does profit greatly from good fortune in her eventual inheritance, we find no consistent effort to give God credit for it.

After being informed by St. John Rivers of her inheritance, in one of her characteristic moments of passionate hyperbole, Jane speaks of her power to benefit her newly discovered cousins: "They were under a yoke: I could free them: they were scattered,—I could reunite them" (339). Employing two phrases which are commonly associated
with Israel's experience of exile, Jane ponders her ability to restore them. Brontë may have any number of passages from the prophetic writings in mind, but some of the strongest echoes can be found in the Book of Jeremiah. After acknowledging his own role in sending the people of Israel into bondage, God promises, "I will also bring back to this place... all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon... for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon" (Jeremiah 28:4). Tired of the disloyalty and deceit of the nation's leaders, God further insists that he himself will now assume the role of shepherd: "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock" (Jeremiah 31:10). Though Jane certainly can literally "benefit" St. John, Diana, and Mary by sharing her wealth with them, her language suggests that she can--at least in this case--act as God has acted in restoring Israel. The parallel which Brontë creates here between Jane and God partly answers the question raised earlier in the novel by the blending together of God and Nature and the virtual dismissal of both. Rather than needing to rely on either super-human power, Jane simply becomes her own Providence, benefiting both herself and others.

Brontë often brings the same kind of fluid shifting of biblical type roles that we find in her gender-reversing to the allusions in which characters in the novel are linked with either God or Christ. By far the most commonly invoked
biblical story in this strategy is the account of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. As the central drama of salvation in Christian understanding, it offers Brontë the possibility of constructing an alternative plan of redemption for Jane and Rochester. I will consider all of these passages as a unit.

When Jane accepts Rochester's proposal of marriage in Chapter 23, his response is both troublesome and enigmatic:

It will atone--it will atone . . . . It will expiate at God's tribunal . . . . For the world's judgment--I wash my hands thereof. (225)

In this obvious invocation of Christ's Passion, Rochester combines the roles of the "Christ" who atones for sin--though by his devotion rather than his suffering--and Pontius Pilate, who sets the atoning death in motion without realizing or admitting his complicity in it. The violent change of weather which follows immediately upon Rochester's words, producing the lightning which splits the horse chestnut tree, certainly resonates with the gospel account of Jesus' death. In Matthew's gospel we are told that "from noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. . . . Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27:45, 50-51). While this language suggests a "passion" of some kind,
whether it will heal and restore the broken community symbolized in that same chestnut tree when viewed as a reminder of the sin of Eden remains to be seen. A partial answer is offered in Chapter 25.

When Jane views the chestnut tree once more, in the sky between the "cloven halves," she sees the moon, "her disk . . . blood-red and half overcast." After casting on Jane "one bewildered and dreary glance," the moon disappears behind the clouds (243). If the "blood-red" moon's "disk" somehow represents the elements of the Eucharist, the fractured tree (perhaps a cross?) can be viewed against the background of the redemptive suffering of Christ symbolized in the sacrament of broken body and shed blood. However, the moon's appearance merely raises, it does not answer, the question of the redemptive value of suffering in the novel.19 Though he does not ever overtly link himself with the suffering Christ, Rochester believes his marriage to Jane will expiate his sins. But the charred and fractured trunk of the chestnut tree seems to stand in mute denial of such a conclusion. Unknown to either of them, Bertha Mason, who lurks in the background, will be the expiation for Rochester's sins. Whatever redemptive value is expressed in this glimpse of the moon is quickly obliterated by the gathering clouds of disaster. The reference to apples around the base of the tree seems to interweave the motifs of Adam and Eve in the garden and the Passion of Christ.20
suggesting at least the possibility of redemption. We will not see that redemption fully realized, though, until we join Rochester and Jane in their new Eden at Ferndean.

The most overt reference to the death of Christ occurs in Jane's account to Rochester of her frightening encounter with Bertha Mason. On awakening from what she believed to be a dream, Jane finds the wedding veil given to her by Rochester "torn from top to bottom, in two halves" (250, my emphasis). In the gospel accounts of Jesus' death we find the words: "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38). The "curtain" referred to separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. Since the days of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the Jews had believed the Holy of Holies to be God's uniquely concrete dwelling place on earth. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter this sacred place, one day each year, to offer sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. In much Christian thought, the tearing of the temple curtain signals that Christ's death, as the ultimate sacrifice, offers direct access to God, eliminating the need for the Holy of Holies.

The parallels between the account of Bertha's outburst of rage and this elaborate theological tradition behind the biblical symbol of the torn veil are real, but they extend our power to draw connections to the uttermost. Still, we have already seen how Brontë's fluid adaptation of
scriptural materials frees bits of biblical narrative and symbolism for unexpected uses in her novels. But amid this constant, unstable recombination, certain themes persist. In this case, we find a definite association of biblical images of suffering and sacrifice with the eventual restoration of union between Rochester and Jane, finally accomplished partly by Bertha Mason's gruesome death. Though at the time Bertha can be viewed only as the embodiment of some chaotic power, disrupting Jane's peaceful prospects with Rochester, in retrospect Bertha's rash action embodies the novel's overall pattern of rebellion against authority and the assertion by women of their right--though not always their ability--to script their own lives.

When Rochester's marriage to Bertha is revealed, and Jane decides she must leave Thornfield, she finds herself in utter despair. Chapter 26 ends with a series of biblical resonances, all of which seem to link the Jewish story of the Passover with the Passion of Christ. When Jane describes the death of all her hopes as a "subtle doom," like that which "fell on all the first-born in the land of Egypt" (260), she refers to the Passover, the tenth and final plague sent against the Egyptians, from which the Israelites were spared by the interposition of the blood of a sacrificial lamb. We considered this allusion in the section on gender reversal, but its use in the novel also lends itself to Brontë's strategy of casting her characters
as key figures in the biblical drama of salvation. In Christian thought the Passover, with its slaughtered innocent lamb, became a type for the death of Christ. As she remembers God once more, Jane sends up "an unuttered prayer" whose words "went wandering up and down" her mind, but she found "no energy . . . to express them" (261). Her words reinforce the connection in the narrative between the Passover and the crucifixion: "Be not far from me, for trouble is near: there is none to help" (261). Though in themselves these words produce no resonance with the crucifixion, her choice of this Psalm 22 is significant, because according to the gospel accounts Jesus may have quoted the opening line of this psalm as he died on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1; cf. Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34). Oddly, these words seem more appropriate to Jane's present state of mind than the verse she does quote from the psalm. Even the image Jane uses to express her despair echo the Passover story. She speaks of drowning in a torrent which floods the dried-up river bed. She even recalls the words of a second psalm: "I came into deep waters; the floods overwhelmed me" (Psalm 69:1). It should not surprise us at all to find, though, that Brontë reverses the plot of the Passover story. If Jane is the slave fleeing from captivity (as she frequently conceives of herself), then it is Israel that drowns rather than Pharaoh's troops. Brontë's linking of
the images of Passover and Passion certainly follows traditional Christian typological lines, but once more she dissects and then reassembles the pieces of the stories to suggest the role of suffering in Jane's experience of redemption.

An extended resonance of the Passion-Resurrection motif begins in Chapter 28. In it we will find Jane portrayed as the suffering and dying Christ, but in the end she will find new life—though in an unexpected direction. When Jane flees from Thornfield, the coach will take her no farther than Whitcross (a name which combines the liturgical color for resurrection with the instrument of crucifixion). From there she begins a period of wandering and deprivation not unlike death, which will last for three days, finally to be restored to life when found and taken in at Marsh End by the Rivers family. Certainly Jane's arrival at Marsh End marks a kind of rebirth or resurrection, but only in a partial sense at best. After arriving, she lies "motionless as a stone" for another three day period, recovering her strength (298). At the very moment we would expect to find the novel's parallel for Christ's resurrection, Brontë gives Jane another Passion experience. Jane's initial interview with the Rivers family—which occurs between these two periods of three days each—resembles Jesus' trial before Pilate. Asked where she is from and what is to be done with her, Jane will give no full account of herself and passively
accepts her fate. If this is the beginning of a second "Passion," then its corresponding "resurrection" must lie in the other direction, beyond Whitcross, back with Rochester, though not at Thornfield. So, the line demarcating Jane's "passion" and her "resurrection" is unclear. Once more, Brontë seems to discard the biblical chronology in favor of her own, moving backwards and forwards simultaneously, frustrating any strict, linear interpretation. She narrates two alternative resurrection experiences for Jane which move in opposite and mutually exclusive directions. She can move ideologically forward into the world of St. John Rivers, or she can return whence she came. She initially opts for the former, until she discovers it leads to death rather than to new life. Only after following this path to its end does she conclude that rebirth for her lies in the healing embrace of this life.

The final clear resonance of the Passion/Resurrection motif is found in St. John's departing note to Jane in Chapter 36: "watch and pray that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, I trust, is willing, but the flesh, I see, is weak" (370; cf. Matthew 26:41). St. John's words echo those of Jesus to Peter, James, and John in the garden of Gethsemane. Unable to stay awake and stand guard over Jesus as he prays, the three apostles succumb to the weakness of their fleshly natures. In his typically self-righteous arrogance, St. John appropriates the words of
Jesus to castigate Jane for her weakness. In his view, Jane shuts herself off from the glories of self-sacrifice by her unwillingness to pay the price of discipleship. By contrast, Brontë seems to redefine the nature of true discipleship. Jane has communed with the "Mighty Spirit" (370), she has experienced her own Gethsemane in St. John's tempting persuasion, and she submits to the will of heaven (though the mechanics by which this will is made known is rather vague), rather than to the will of St. John Rivers. He calls her to take up her cross and march with him forward to death and glory; instead she moves backwards to encounter a different kind of death and to recapture a pure, Edenic past with Rochester at Ferndean.

As we saw in the previous section, Brontë shows no reservations about casting her characters into seemingly inappropriate biblical roles. In many cases, the uneasy parallels created by such allusions not only offer insights into a particular character but also raise disturbing questions about the adopted biblical text itself, or at least its traditional interpretation. For example, when confessing to the reader her inability to "unlove" Rochester simply because she sees "all his attentions appropriated by a great lady" (163), Jane makes the rather startling remark about Blanche Ingram that she "scorned to touch [Jane] with the hem of her robes as she passed" (163). Recalling Mark's story of the woman with the hemorrhage, who believed she
would be healed if she touched the hem of Jesus' garment (see Mark 5:24-34), we might view Blanche as a haughty, contemptuous "Christ," guarding against unwarranted contact with the lower classes and the inevitable loss of power and demeaning of self produced by association with them. In the biblical story, Jesus stopped to speak with the woman and affirmed her in the faith which brought about her healing; in the novel, Blanche tries not to even look at Jane. In that sense, Brontë's use of the adopted text helps reveal Blanche's true character. But how much, if at all, does Jesus suffer from his association with Blanche? Is Brontë asking us to view him also as haughty and contemptuous, removed from those he supposedly came to serve? Even if Brontë draws on this incident from the gospels solely to offer Christ as a counter example to Blanche, the mere establishment of a figurative link between them is no doubt disturbing to many of her readers. The frequency with which she casts her fictional characters in the roles of biblical figures in this manner may account, in part, for the criticisms of Jane Eyre as revolutionary and anti-Christian. And if Brontë sought to malign Christianity by portraying its founder as petty and self-absorbed, she could find no better character in Jane Eyre to link him with than Blanche Ingram.

Not surprisingly, St. John Rivers often claims the role of Christ for himself. In the middle of his tirade against
Jane for her refusal to marry him and accompany him to India, he prays that God would give her the "strength to choose that better part which shall not be taken from" her (368). The reference is to a scene from Luke's gospel, in which two sisters compete for Jesus' approval, one by exhausting herself providing hospitality, the other by sitting at his feet, listening to his teaching (see Luke 10:38-42). When Martha complains about receiving no help from Mary with the serving, Jesus tells her that Mary has "chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). While the contrast drawn between Mary and Martha may offer insight into Jane's character, St. John's choice of this passage reveals a great deal about his own self-assessment. Even if we read his words as not referring specifically to himself as the "better part," his arrogance in assuming an essential connection between his mission and Christ's kingdom is clear. And it is this arrogance which nearly overwhelms Jane's resistance. The link with St. John Rivers may cause us to reassess our view of Jesus in the adopted text. He seems to treat Martha a bit brusquely, with little sympathy for her plight. Ironically, he seems to encourage precisely the kind of single-minded devotion to himself that we find Brontë's female characters offering to the men they love. And while we might be inclined to excuse such behavior coming from one considered by the gospel writer and most of its readers to
be the Son of God, we still find in the arrangement the implied subjugation of women. Clearly, Jane's problem, as far as Rivers is concerned, is that she is too strong-minded, in the vein of Martha, rather than accommodating, as Mary is.

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More than any of Brontë's other novels, Jane Eyre is characterized by elaborate strings of biblical parallels tied together to articulate a consistent alternative mythology. Probably no other biblical narrative receives as much reconstruction in Jane Eyre as the story of the Garden of Eden does. To a greater extent than the Promised Land was in The Professor, in Jane Eyre the Eden myth is the signature biblical text which carries the bulk of the weight of the alternative vision Brontë offers in the novel.

In the opening paragraph of that pivotal twenty-third chapter, Brontë sets an idyllic stage: pure sky, radiant sun, flocks of birds, green fields, everything growing and thriving. It is the "sweetest hour of the twenty-four" and the dew is falling in the "Eden-like" orchard where Jane is walking (217). The orchard is surrounded by a high wall, shutting out the rest of the world and its possibly corrupting influences. Suddenly, Jane's peace is troubled by her awareness that Rochester is also "walking in the
garden in the cool of the day," so she hides. Believing that Rochester is unaware of her presence, Jane tries to slip away but is caught. Once alone with Rochester, Jane grows uneasy, feeling guilt and shame. When Rochester questions Jane about her feelings for Thornfield and its inhabitants, though she answers truthfully, she also conceals part of her feelings. Only when Rochester has led Jane into betraying herself by her answers does he pronounce the dreadful sentence: she must leave Thornfield; she is expelled from this "Eden." Up to this point, Brontë's simple parallels to the story of Adam and Eve in the garden merely heighten the reader's sense of Jane's innocence and Rochester's deceit. Jane combines the roles of Adam and Eve, the guilty and evasive creatures, while Rochester plays the part of God, the owner of the garden, the questioner, the Judge. Of course, the reader knows Jane's innocence and suspects Rochester's deceit. Following the paradigm of the Genesis story, Jane's expulsion from Thornfield/Eden will mean the loss of her paradisiacal home, as well as separation from Rochester, who not only plays the role of God here, but--as we learn later in the novel--has assumed that place in Jane's heart as well.

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myth. Rochester's striking simile for his bond to Jane—a string somewhere under my left ribs, tightly and inextricably knotted to a similar string situated in the corresponding quarter of your little frame (221)—clearly recalls the creation of Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:21-22). Resisting Rochester's advances, Jane declares that, as "a married man" (222), he is not free to join himself to her in this way. As Eve does when tempted by the serpent, Jane raises legitimate objections to the proposed sin. But not knowing the true extent of their legitimacy (i.e. that Rochester is already married to Bertha Mason rather than merely engaged to be married to Miss Ingram), Jane allows herself to be dissuaded. Seated under the horse chestnut tree with Rochester, Jane suddenly becomes the forbidden fruit which Rochester/Eve plucks and tastes. Her eventual agreement to marry Rochester marks her Adam-like entry into complicity in the sin, lured by Eve. For the moment, though, Rochester and Jane are both unaware of the consequences of their plans. Their eyes have been opened only enough to see each other and the "paradise of union" (224). Their short-lived paradise is soon destroyed, though, by a sudden weather change which drives Rochester and Jane from the orchard. The lightning-struck chestnut tree, formerly their "tree of knowledge," the symbol of the
lure of self-determination and freedom from restrictive social conventions, now resembles more closely the tree of life from which Adam and Eve are cut off by the angel's "flaming sword" (Genesis 3:24).

Brontë has taken the ancient myth and reshaped it in such a way as to undermine any literal correspondence to her story. Such an extreme reshaping of the biblical story suggests that she feels the old restraining myth must be challenged. Its codified interpretation supports male-dominated social structures by voicing the assumption that the female bears a disproportionate share of the blame for humanity's "fall," and justifies the perpetuation of female subservience in the name of God's sentence of judgment pronounced in the Garden just prior to expulsion. Brontë's typology is at its most secularized here. Her freedom in using this sacred source reveals a theological independence on Brontë's part less interested in establishing a validating connection with orthodox religious thought than in using traditional materials in a new and decidedly untraditional way. If Rochester can play the parts of God (expelling Jane from the garden under false pretenses only to reinstate her three pages later!), the serpent, and Adam and Eve; and if Jane can act as both Eve and Adam individually and a combination of the two, as well as the forbidden fruit; then clear, unvarying meanings must not be inherent in these
roles. The artist is free to practice *bricolage* Brontë style, retaining the weight of the biblical narrative components while discarding the interpretive framework within which she finds them.²⁹

If we accept the horse chestnut tree as somehow related to the resonances of Eden in *Jane Eyre*, it becomes an even more powerful symbol when it reappears in Chapter 25. Jane is perfectly content in her anticipation of marriage to Rochester, unaware of the deep undercurrents at work to shatter her happiness. She freely admits to making an "idol" of Rochester (i.e. making him "like God"), recalling the motivation toward sin in Eden (see Genesis 3:5). When Jane notices that though the chestnut tree's division is not physically complete--the two halves are still joined at the base of the trunk--any unity apparent in it is illusory, for the "community of vitality was destroyed" (243). Such separation and isolation echo the judgment pronounced by God upon Adam and Eve. The presence of apples around the trunk only reinforces the connection with the themes of temptation and sin in the biblical story, just as Jane's "dividing the ripe from the unripe" (243) suggests the sorting process through which judgment exposes the sin (cf. Matthew 25:32). In spite of the liberties Brontë has taken in rendering the Eden story, at this point the narrative seems to remain largely within the framework of traditional Christian
thought. Rochester's proposed bigamy and Jane's ignorant compliance are judged sinful and deserving of punishment, which follows. However, the final two resonances of the Eden motif tend to modify, indeed even reverse, such a judgment.

In Chapter 34, seeking her aid in his missionary endeavors in India, St. John Rivers asks Jane to go with him as his "help-meet" (354). Deeply buried within this term is a reference to God's creation of Eve: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18 KJV, my emphasis). The term Rivers uses is a common employed conflation of two words, a noun and an adjective. The hyphenated form tends to blur the original meaning of "a helper fit for" or "corresponding" to him. Adam did not find a partner who was like him among the animals, so God created another human being, Eve. Assuming a freedom of choice not given to the first woman in the biblical account, Jane clearly refuses to marry St. John Rivers because he does not correspond to her.30 She is drawn to the magnetic zeal of his faith--just as she was attracted to Helen Burns--but they share no true community.31 Jane loves and is loved by only one person in this Edenic sense of "corresponding to": Edward Fairfax Rochester. In her own words, from the concluding chapter:

I know what it is to live entirely for and with
what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. No woman was ever nearer to her mate than I am; ever more absolutely bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. (397, my emphasis)

The final words echo Adam's expression of joy when God brings Eve to him for the first time (Genesis 2:23). Brontë claims nothing less than that Jane and Rochester achieve that perfect mutuality known previously only by Adam and Eve. Whereas Helen Burns yearned for universal human fellowship with God in heaven, Jane finds perfect union with Rochester on earth, replicating the paradise which existed in the garden before the Fall.

At the end of Chapter 37, in one of his last directly quoted speeches in the novel, Rochester makes an earnest and compelling statement of his faith, thanking God for showing him mercy "in the midst of judgment" (395). His emphasis on how judgment is followed by and tempered by mercy, and the unmistakable echo of the closing line of Paradise Lost in Jane's final words ("We entered the woods, and wended homeward") reinforce the frequent use of Adam and Eve as types for Rochester and Jane. Karen Rowe suggests that this use of the ending of Milton's epic "makes plain the final Christian context for Jane's marriage," which "unites
equals in the sight of a benevolent God who pities men and women their frailties and gives them each other as props for this fallen life of woods and wanderings."\textsuperscript{34} And yet, Rochester's blindness and his dependence on Jane as both "his prop and his guide" (395) suggest a disparity between the two which almost reverses the outcome of the biblical version of the story, in which the woman is made subservient to the man, who is made her master. Despite Gerster's enthusiastic announcement that "\textit{Jane Eyre} retells the ancient Eve myth in line with Wollstonecraft's insistence that men and women are created equal,"\textsuperscript{35} Jane certainly has not experienced judgment to the same extent that Rochester has. Indeed, given Rochester's tendency in the closing chapters nearly to deify Jane, one might almost see her as the "Creator" in this scene, leading the creature, forgiven yet still marked by the punishment received for sin, toward the new life which awaits. I have argued that Brontë rewrites biblical stories to redress the restrictions placed upon women by patriarchal society. She usually seems to strive for a highly idealistic, Edenic equality between male and female. In this case, however, the old disparity seems not so much surpassed as merely replaced by a new one. Jane may describe her life at the end of the novel as paradise, but for Rochester it looks remarkably like Nod.

The last and most deeply buried resonance of the Adam
and Eve story is echoed in the phrase which Jane uses to describe her usefulness to the blind Rochester: "the apple of his eye" (397). Coming immediately after the "bone of his bone" echo of the language of the Genesis myth, and containing the key word "apple," this expression naturally extends and deepens in an almost playful way the associations with the Eden story. But it is a phrase with biblical roots, and examining the contexts within which it occurs in the Bible will reveal Brontë's strategy in placing these words in Jane's mouth at this point in the narrative.

The phrase is rare in the Bible, occurring only five times, most significantly in the "Song of Moses" (see Deuteronomy 32:1-43). The so-called song is a celebration of God's choice of the Israelites from all the tribes of the earth to be his "chosen" people. Yahweh found Israel in the wilderness and cared for them and kept them as "the apple of his eye." Literally, the phrase means "little man in the eye," or the reflection of ourselves we see in the pupil of another's eye. Though we cannot assume with any certainty that Brontë knew the details of its Hebrew derivation, the idiom, which combines a sense of diminutive stature with high esteem, perfectly expresses Rochester's view of Jane. Though he must view the world through Jane's eyes, he sees Jane as she is reflected in that part of his "sight" which still perceives her great worth. The connection of this
phrase with its ancient context in the "Song of Moses" powerfully reveals the differing estimations of Jane held by Rochester and St. John Rivers. St. John asks Jane to be his "help-meet," but he is unwilling to play Adam to her Eve. Indeed, he finally decides that he was mistaken in considering her one of God's "chosen." Like his alter ego, Helen Burns, St. John Rivers aspires to judge not by outward appearances, but rather to see as God sees. But this aspiration leads him to reject Jane on any but his own terms, under which she can never be "the apple of his eye." Rochester, on the other hand, has chosen Jane--just as God chose Israel--unlikely though she may be, as his perfect mate.

If we can risk hearing these resonances of the Adam and Eve story in Jane Eyre, we begin to see the revolutionary quality of Charlotte Brontë's theological vision. The biblical story is a paradigm for a sin-caused estrangement which can be wholly reconciled only by God's judgment and mercy. But the uses to which Brontë puts the biblical material seems to transcend this understanding of the story. The symbols of the old Eden (the man, the woman, the tree and the fruit), reclaimed from their association with sin and invested with positive value, are shaped into Brontë's new Eden, in which the role of the divine is greatly reduced and both male and female share equally the responsibility
for the success or failure of their union. These decontextualized bits of biblical material become not only the vehicle for Brontë's depiction of Jane's rebellion against the patriarchal authority vested in such figures as Master John Reed, Reverend Brocklehurst, St. John Rivers and even the pre-fire Rochester, but also a road map by which the reader can trace the progress of Jane's journey back to Eden. If the adopted text can be reinscribed, then perhaps the consequences spelled out and the judgment pronounced in it can be altered as well. If so, then the perfect mutuality intended in the original design of creation may be attainable in this world. To argue this view successfully, Brontë must reclaim not only the Eden story, but also all other biblical types for Paradise, including the Promised Land and Heaven.

On the eve of her scheduled wedding to Rochester, Jane recounts to him the abrupt decline which has occurred in her spirits and her sudden, unexplained sense of apprehension. She assures him that she had previously thought of their marriage as the result of Providential guidance. Contemplating her future life with Rochester, she finds herself wondering "why moralists call this world a dreary wilderness" when for her "it blossomed like a rose" (247). The image is clearly suggestive in its own right, but linking it with its adopted biblical text expands its
significance. In the Bible the Promised Land is frequently portrayed as a wilderness, miraculously renewed by Israel's return to God's favor. The prophet Isaiah speaks specifically of the wilderness "blossom[ing] as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1) when God bring Israel back from exile and restores the holy city of Zion. Jane's echoing of Isaiah's words seems to suggest that in Rochester she will find both the end of her own exile and her Promised Land. It seems, however, that whereas Israel's future promised a right relationship with their God, Jane foresees marriage to Rochester as the equivalent experience. Despite its rather innocent appearance at first glance, the allusion claims a new possibility for Jane and, by extension, for other women as well. Not only can love turn exile into paradise, but even the judgment implied by that exile can be reversed. Women looking for fulfillment in life have no need to look beyond this world to find it.³⁹

*Jane Eyre* is filled with the language and imagery of apocalypse borrowed from the Bible, and these references play more than an incidental role in the novel. The apocalyptic allusions in *Jane Eyre* differ from other uses of biblical material chiefly in their relative detachment from the interwoven narrative structure, their straight-forward treatment, and their almost exclusive association with one character. Overt references to the Book of Revelation are
found in only two limited locations in the novel and consist only of direct quotation and allusion. The lack of a purely narrative aspect to these references makes them much less susceptible to the kind of fluid reconstruction carried out by Brontë in her appropriation of the other clusters of biblical material. As examples of Brontë's strategy of recasting "otherworldly" locations in earthly form, parallels with biblical eschatological passages can be fairly clearly differentiated by the character to which they are most closely connected. We'll begin our consideration with those associated with St. John Rivers.

Most of the apocalyptic references in the novel present an essentially reductive vision of the future which is basically inimical to Brontë's re-creative vision. They serve only to indicate an extreme toward which Jane is attracted throughout the novel, but ultimately finds the strength to reject. In Chapter 35, while he is ostracizing Jane to express his disapproval of her refusal to accompany him to India as his wife, St. John Rivers reads from the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, describing the vision of a new heaven and a new earth. Transported by the power of his voice, Jane feels as if she were back at Lowood, listening to Helen Burns speak of her private vision of heaven as "a rest--a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss" (51). However, as St. John continues, his voice alters
slightly, and Jane senses that his next words are aimed
directly at her: "the fearful, the unbelieving, &c. shall
have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and
brimstone, which is the second death" (367). Suddenly, St.
John sounds more like Brocklehurst, and Jane begins to feel
ill at ease, though she remains under the dominance of his
will. At the point of surrender, she is saved by an
intervention no less dramatic than the abrupt weather change
which drove Rochester and her from the orchard at Thornfield
a year earlier. As Jane prays desperately to be shown God's
will, she hears the "known, loved, well-remembered voice" of
Rochester calling to her: "Jane! Jane! Jane!" (369). St. John's
apocalyptic worldview suddenly and decisively ends. The only heaven she
desires she will seek and find on this earth.

St. John Rivers surfaces once more in connection with
the Book of Revelation, but in a totally different context.
He writes from India, near the point of death, to share the
hope of his vision with Jane. Though St. John's vision is
given a privileged place at the end of the novel, Jane no
longer desires to share it. If anything, her objective
serenity in relating his words tends to diffuse the earlier
intensity of the apocalyptic vision. Carolyn Williams sees
Jane here "appropriat[ing] the words of another as a means
to her own end." In what Williams calls her "culminating
act of self-definition," Jane "honors his [i.e. Rivers']
vocation from a safe distance, accepting and even admiring
for another what is rejected for herself." Having found
Eden, Jane has no desire for the heavenly city. The novel's
final words--"Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!" (398)--are no
more than a resounding echo of the apocalyptic marching song
which Jane no longer hears. By allowing Jane to place these
words at the end of the novel, Brontë does not suddenly
recant her vision. Rather she sets it in free and glorious
relief against the stony background of traditional religious
fears and hopes from which her new view of life is totally
alien.  

Rochester is the only character other than St. John
Rivers who echoes the words of Revelation, but unlike those
of his rival for Jane's affection, his words resonate with
that fluid reversal and recombination we have found to be so
typical of the novel's appropriation of scriptural material.
In telling Jane his version of the experience which led to
their reunion, Rochester calls Jane "the Alpha and Omega of
my heart's wishes" (394). The Christ of the Revelation
uses these same words to express his sovereignty over both
creation and history, embodying all that was, is, and shall
be (see Revelation 22:13). From a traditional Christian
viewpoint, Rochester's words verge on blasphemy. He speaks
of his renewed faith in and gratitude toward "the beneficent
God" (393)--whom he technically credits with bringing Jane back to him--but he freely admits that Jane--not God--is the center, if not the source, of his existence. Brontë is at her most radical here, and yet her theology is consistent. Rochester is conscious of the debt he owes God, who "in the midst of judgment . . . has remembered mercy" (395). He speaks of his gratitude numerous times and exhibits a changed attitude toward life as proof of it, but his experience of judgment and mercy have produced in him a rather unconventional faith. As a new, thoroughly human Adam, Rochester must center his life around another human creature, not around the ineffable and transcendent God. And Brontë's treatment of the matter clearly suggests that Rochester's response is not his choice alone, but the will of God for his creatures.

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Sue Ann Betsinger argues that "Charlotte Brontë's heroines are successful in their growth to independent womanhood because they reject conventional religion and its images of women and live by personally meaningful beliefs." This certainly appears to be what Jane does, constructing an alternative vision to that patriarchal view of the world in rebellion against which she begins, carries
out, and ends her autobiographical self-creation. Parama Roy claims that "Brontë endeavors, in explicit as well as oblique ways, to denounce the various patriarchs that Jane encounters . . . . She is particularly inveterate against the ascendency of property and male authoritarianism as manifest in the manorial world." However, by Jane's ascendency at the end, "Brontë seems to frustrate the logical development of her unorthodox conceptions." So, while Brontë's rejection of orthodox Christian views may never be complete, from the point of view of the traditionally male-dominated Church to which she belonged, all of her novels may be labelled "heretic narratives," as her narrator explicitly describes her final one.

Through the vehicle of fictional autobiography, Brontë not only creates an Eden for Jane and Rochester at Ferndean, she also consummates the rebellion against patriarchal religious traditions enacted by Jane on the author's behalf. Speaking through her fictional narrator, Brontë redefines the will of God for his creatures. Rather than leading forward to a cosmic paradise attainable only through an apocalypse (either personal or historical), the redemptive power of suffering in ordinary human lives such as Rochester's and Jane's restores the "paradise of union" which existed in Eden before the Fall. Redemption becomes re-creation and renovation, not a cataclysmic eschaton which
destroys before it starts anew. Thornfield is destroyed, but Rochester and Jane are not. True, they are transformed, but they remain definitely "of" this world as well as "in" it. And while Ferndean may not strike us as particularly Edenic--because it collapses traditional boundaries between Paradise and the fallen world--it clearly remains an earthly (even earthy) residence. It stands as Brontë's ultimate embodiment of an "otherworldly" paradise in a setting fully grounded in this world. Jane's rejection of the cosmic, apocalyptic visions of St. John Rivers (and Helen Burns as well) is absolute. As we retrace Jane's steps from Thornfield to Marsh End to Ferndean, if we listen to the way in which Brontë echoes familiar biblical sources, only to alter them once she has called them to our mind, we can catch a glimpse of her vision--of an ending which recaptures and restores all the lost innocence and shattered hopes of its beginning.
NOTES

1 In her essay, "The Pleasures of Submission: Jane Eyre and the Production of the Text," ELH 58 (1991): 195-213, Bette London discusses the paradox that Charlotte Brontë continues to rebel against the very authority to which she has submitted herself. Citing Brontë's rebuttal to G. H. Lewes' critique of Jane Eyre's melodramatic style, London suggests that her "submission" opens up a space which Brontë can exploit. Writing about her trance-like style of composition, Brontë describes an irresistible "influence [that] seems to waken in" writers, "becom[ing] their masters." Insisting on "certain words . . . being used," this influence "reject[s] carefully-elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creat[es] and adopt[s] new ones" (Cited from Mrs. Gaskell's The Life of Charlotte Brontë, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 336). London argues that Jane Eyre is not the radical feminist text that many recent critics have claimed, but rather Brontë's own version of "a nineteenth-century deportment book, offering . . . lessons in the proper forms of feminine conduct" (p. 209). London further claims that "for all its social protests, the novel repeatedly inscribes texts within texts that demonstrate the complicity of narrative in the work of regulating conduct . . . . Jane (re)produces herself in precisely the image her culture mandates" (p. 200).
Describing the novel as "profoundly divided between revolutionary and conservative impulses" and calling it "a radical text which is qualified in significant ways by a conservative subtext," Parama Roy makes a similar argument, that "Brontë gives her assent to camouflaged and insidious forms of patriarchalism . . . . She thus yields a furtive assent to the authoritative word of her culture, in matters socioeconomic as well as religious" ("Unaccommodated Woman and the Poetics of Property in Jane Eyre," SEL 29 (1989): 713, 715). While this may be one way of reading the novel, both London and Roy seem to ignore or discount the continuous undermining of patriarchal systems of biblical interpretation through the reckless adoption of their own authoritative texts into the novel in unorthodox and "inappropriate" ways.


3 A fuller discussion of this idea can be found in my Introduction. Interestingly, Rochester tells Jane that she has "secured the shadow of [her] thought: but no more, probably" (111).

4 The Madwoman in the Attic, p. 79.

5 In our discussion of The Professor we saw Brontë frequently "misapplying" scriptural references to her characters. Whereas negative types were a feature of classical typology, Brontë does not use these parallels to imply a negative judgment on her characters. Instead, she
seems to use these unexpected connections to break down rigid assumptions based on gender, class, or status, creating an unstable interpretive atmosphere within which she can then suggest her own meanings.


8 Also following this traditional rendering, Qualls suggests that the allusion to the so-called 'still, small voice' "asserts that God is no longer part of nature as he had often been for Moses, but is a quiet voice speaking to man's soul" (Secular Pilgrims, p. 61).

9 The stile at which Rochester and Jane meet recalls the ziggurat which Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel when he fled, as Rochester does, from his home and from the consequences of his deception.

10 Rochester will receive a permanent version of this injury in the destruction of Thornfield.

11 See 1 Samuel 16:23 for the account of young David's service in the court of King Saul. On an interesting side note, when Rochester accounts to Jane his discovery of God's judgment on his life, he describes God's ability to penetrate surface appearances with these words: "He sees not
as man sees" (393). He is quoting 1 Samuel 16:7, also quoted earlier by St. John Rivers to justify his mistaken notion that Jane was "one of the chosen" (365). In their original biblical setting, these words refer to young David, when he was chosen to replace Saul as king.


13 Eagleton, Myths of Power, p. 30.

14 All three synoptic gospels record this story, and in each Jesus claims that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

15 From a review by Elizabeth Rigby in The Quarterly Review, December 1848, pp. 162-76.

16 Even Jesus recognizes it as the greatest commandment. See Matthew 22:37-38.

17 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble" (Psalm 46:1 KJV).

18 The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV), Psalm 46:1, note h.

19 Peter Allan Dale associates this image with the Apocalypse. See "Charlotte Brontë's 'Tale Half-Told': The

20 This connection is made explicitly by St. Paul in Romans 5:12ff and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

21 By contrast, Qualls suggests that Jane's choice of "language from the Psalms rather than from the biblical histories she enjoyed as a child indicates her confusion and her want of a certain road to journey along." He goes on to assert that "no scriptural correspondences" can be found for her at this point (*Secular Pilgrims*, p. 60). However, I would argue that the very choice of this psalm places Jane within an elaborate network of biblical correspondences.

22 Interestingly, Gilbert and Gubar describe "the painful experience that is at the center of [Jane's] pilgrimage, the experience of Thornfield" as the figurative location "where, biblically, she is to be crowned with thorns, she is to be cast out into a desolate field, and most important, she is to confront the demon of rage who has haunted her since her afternoon in the red-room" (*Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 347).

23 Pat Macpherson's comment on the sociological and economic realism of this episode seems to ignore the obvious typological dimensions of the three days: "When the net of gentility is rent, the fall to destitution and death could be as quick as three days, in Jane's case" (*Reflecting on Jane Eyre* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 62).
Though Luke makes no specific reference to location, the home seems to be the same one mentioned in John 11 as belonging to Jesus' close friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. If so, the gender and number parallels with the Rivers household are interesting.

Carole Gerster asserts that "Brontë portrays Jane and Rochester as Eve and Satan in the garden" in this passage, "evoking the familiar, once again to draw attention to her significant departures" from it ("Women of Authority," p. 248). While correct in pointing out Brontë's technique of displacing the reader's expectations, this interpretation is vastly oversimplified in its view of how she actually uses the biblical material.

Somewhat later, when Jane presses Rochester to take her into his confidence, he reveals the extent to which he too needs to be broken down and rebuilt before he can be a suitable new Adam for Brontë's new Eden. Purporting to spare her any unnecessary pain, he begs her: "don't desire a useless burden! Don't long for poison." But then he adds the warning, "don't turn out a downright Eve on my hands!" (230). The implied stereotype of all women as meddlesome potential betrayers of men reveals Rochester's traditional, masculine, biased interpretation of the Eden myth.

Compare one of Charlotte's most fascinating self-depictions in her letter to George Smith, dated March 8, 1851:
What a rich field of subject you point out in your allusion to Cornhill, &c. -- a field at which I myself should only have ventured to glance like the serpent at Paradise; but when Adam himself opens the gates and shows the way in, what can the honest snake do but bend its crest in token of gratitude and glide rejoicingly through the aperture?

28 Given the parallels with the Garden of Eden already present in this scene, we might hear in Jane's objection an echo of the apocryphal story of Adam's first wife, Lilith.

29 Henderson cites Linda Peterson's argument that in spite of the effort by male characters to apply female biblical roles to Jane, she "insists on applying Biblical types universally, irrespective of gender" ("Types of the Self," pp. 251-52). Though Henderson never calls it such, this is an example of what I am identifying as Charlotte Brontë's use of secularized typology.

30 When Rivers claims that "Reason, and not Feeling is [his] guide" (330), he sets himself at one extreme of the dialectic with which Jane struggles throughout the novel. Despite her statements to the contrary, Jane, on the other hand, clearly inclines toward Feeling. Whereas St. John looks coldly toward a sterile, heavenly New Jerusalem, Jane views a warm, fertile Ferndean as her "Promised Land."
As very few, it is presumed, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject, ever supposed that Eve was, literally speaking, one of Adam's ribs, the deduction must be allowed to fall to the ground, or, only be so far admitted as it proves that man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to shew that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure.


39 Peter Allan Dale comments extensively on the irony of Brontë's language describing Jane's anticipation of her upcoming marriage to Rochester. He cites numerous parallels from Chapter 25 in which, he claims, "Brontë underlines Jane's apostasy by having her speak in a way that must seem to the orthodox reader something like blasphemy. Rochester becomes ... a type of Christ, and marriage with him a parody ... of the apocalyptic 'marriage' announced at the close of Scripture" ("Tale Half-Told," p. 117).

40 Carolyn Williams suggests that in this uncanny auditory experience, which "wraps together the voice of Jane's romantic alter ego, the Protestant 'inner voice,' and
the narrative voice." Jane hears "the voice of her conscience, of God's will, of her own wish-fulfillment, and of her lover's need all in one" ("Closing the Book: The Intertextual End of Jane Eyre" in Victorian Connections, ed. Jerome McGann (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 79).

41 Tom Winnifrith's point is well taken that while "believers in heaven could represent the conventional happy ending as symbolic of the joys of heaven, and in this sense the rather contrived happy ending of Jane Eyre is a satisfactory one. . . . Rochester with his strongly delineated physical passion is a somewhat unlikely symbol of heaven" (The Brontës and their Background: Romance and Reality (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 51).

42 "Closing the Book," p. 82.

43 Irene Tayler suggests that after providing Jane with the fulfillment of human love, Brontë "allowed St. John's triumph over such [carnal] desire to have the last word" in the novel (Holy Ghosts, p. 248). Objecting to the ending for a different reason, Parama Roy argues that Brontë's "decision to allow St. John literally the last word is ideologically loaded . . . . It emblematizes most aptly her clandestine submission to the dictates of the institutions she had sought to reevaluate and dislocate" ("Unaccommodated Woman," p. 726).
"Rochester's use of this phrase to refer to the "new" Jane, the woman of independent means, is especially significant. In a letter to Ellen Nussey dated January 1847, Charlotte states that "from all [she] can hear and see [money] seems to be regarded as the Alpha and Omega of requisites in a wife" (Shorter, *Life & Letters*, p. 344).

In a much earlier letter to Ellen's brother Henry, dated October 28, 1839, Charlotte echoes the conventional view in support of the husband's dominance:

The wife who brings riches to her husband sometimes also brings an idea of her own importance and a tenacity about what she conceives to be her rights, little calculated to produce happiness in the married state. Most probably she will wish to control when nature and affection bind her to submit. (Shorter, *Life & Letters*, p. 171)

While these references reveal Brontë's awareness of the harsh realities of male/female relationships in her world, they also suggest a progression over the eight year span represented. Compliant women with money are still considered by society to be highly desirable mates, but Brontë no longer blithely endorses that view. Few readers of the ending of *Jane Eyre* would suggest that Jane "submits" to Rochester. Perhaps more significant for our purposes, though, is what the quote reveals about Brontë's apparently
rather casual attitude toward using sacred scripture as a source from which to coin figures of speech.

45 Jane seems to reinforce this view with her response to Rochester's cry, narrated both here by Rochester and earlier, by Jane herself. If he links her to the returning, triumphant Christ by labeling her "Alpha and Omega," she in turn accepts the characterization by assuring him, "I am coming . . . wait for me" (cf. Revelation 22:20, which Jane quotes from a letter from St. John Rivers as the closing words of the novel). Jane further reinforces the parallel, though at the same time complicating it, by telling the reader that as she listened to Rochester's account of the events, rather than confirming his hunch she chose to remain silent. "I kept these things then, and pondered them in my heart" (394), she informs us. So it seems that Jane can be both Christ and his mother Mary at the same time. Carolyn Williams comments on Jane's extended typological figure for herself: "Jane positions herself as Mary after the Nativity (Luke 2:19), delivered of the Word. This time, however, it is not God's word, but her own name on the wind--'Jane! Jane! Jane!'--that she keeps inside" ("Closing the Book," p. 80).


47 With Rochester effectively emasculated (see Chase, p. 108; Eagleton, pp. 29-30; Blom, p. 101; and Moglen, p.
142 for discussions of this view) and dependent upon her, Jane seems to have carried off a successful rebellion against all forms of patriarchy in the novel.


Critics and readers alike recognize that in *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë attempted what was for her a new kind of fiction, "a novel whose focus is not so much on the individual as on the individual seen in close relation with the various forces moulding the society in which he lives."¹ Part of the interest in *Shirley* is watching Brontë work with two heroines, neither of whom is the novel's central consciousness. Andrew and Judith Hook suggest that the "conflicting impulses"—frequently described as Passion and Reason—which define Brontë's autobiographical heroines are "channelled into two separate characters" in *Shirley*, neither of whom "emerges as the kind of figure in and through whom the central issues of the novel might be explored."²

In *Shirley* Keeldar, Brontë supposedly tries to create an image of what her sister Emily would have been like if she had been healthy and prosperous. And indeed, like Emily, *Shirley* seems more interested in creating a private mythology than in trying to redeem and use the existing religious traditions of her society. Unfortunately, if this
is one of Charlotte's goals in the novel, it seems to misfire, leaving Shirley inexplicably weak in her surrender to Louis Moore at the novel's end. By contrast, in Caroline Helstone we find a woman apparently more interested in exploring the intellectual and philosophical bases for a proto-feminist biblical reinterpretation than in actually engaging in it. The language she uses in her encounter with Joe Scott is tentative: If she could employ scholarship, she could read Paul's words differently. But there is a sense in which what Caroline proposes to do would engage the dominant tradition of interpretation on its own turf. But in spite of its challenges to long-held notions about biblical inspiration and authority, nineteenth-century biblical criticism would not produce the kind of reinscription necessary for the alternative vision Brontë wishes to construct.

Clearly, Shirley differs greatly from Brontë's first two novels in a number of ways, but perhaps the most obvious is the narrator. After trying with only mixed success in The Professor to create a male persona through which she could develop a new way of seeing the Bible, then switching to the distinctive female voice of Jane Eyre, she explores yet another strategy in the unnamed, non-gendered narrator of Shirley. This new voice gives Brontë access to a more public perspective on the "woman question" than the more private voices of either Crimsworth or Jane did, a
perspective from which she launches a broad attack on the restrictions placed upon women by society. Consequently, though Shirley is as richly allusive as any of Brontë's other novels, we see her using less of the freely gender-reversing style of biblical interpretation than she did in the earlier novels. She creates, instead, a strong, pseudo-masculine heroine who appropriates male privileges and powers to herself but then finally submits willingly to the authority of the man she loves. In Shirley Keeldar, we see the real danger Brontë constantly faces of being assimilated because the same patriarchal society she seeks to challenge is too pervasive in her language and her cultural assumptions to be subverted entirely. The novel suggests that any woman who tries to claim and wield unredeemed power will ultimately be consumed by it. I will argue that Shirley represents another experiment on Brontë's part to address her perennial topic from a new perspective—one which attempts to draw an uneasy truce with the male-dominated society it calls into question.

Another way in which Brontë breaks new ground in Shirley is her claim that she ventures here into realism for the first time. From its opening chapter,3 Shirley announces that it will be a very different novel from either The Professor or Jane Eyre. Brontë's narrator warns against expecting "anything like a romance." Instead, "something real, cool, and solid, lies before" the reader, "something
unromantic as Monday morning." And yet, in spite of this claim, Shirley is filled with the figurative use of biblical language and imagery. Even the metaphor of the meager Good Friday meal used in the opening pages to foretell the novel's alleged simplicity of style carries far-reaching associations which belie the narrator's assurances of a mimetic realism. Given the historical and typological associations between Jesus' death and the Jewish feast of the Passover, the inclusion of such menu items as "unleavened bread with bitter herbs" (8) at a Good Friday meal is not surprising. But the narrator warns us before the "meal" is even served that it will likely disappoint our expectations. The meat is missing, and without the paschal lamb, the sacrifice which lies behind the Jewish celebration will be inefficacious. By omitting the basis for the original typological link, though, Brontë creates an opening for a new antitype to take the place of Christ as the sacrificial lamb. Still, the narrator's cautious tone warns us against raising our hopes too high. Early indications suggest that we should not expect to find the conventional Christian Savior figuring in any meaningful way in the novel, nor should we look for too much from the Church, that Savior's traditional representative on earth and guardian of his gospel. The pessimistic realism with which the novel ends is already fully present in its opening.

This tone continues as we encounter the novel's
characters. When we first meet the Reverend Mr. Helstone, he employs a playful typology to castigate the three young curates: Donne, Sweeting, and Malone. Bursting in upon their dinner party (which definitely includes more than unleavened bread and bitter herbs), Helstone pretends at first to mistake their noisy conviviality for a renewal of the miracle of Pentecost, with the sound of many tongues filling the house (see Acts 2). Then feigning a sudden realization of his mistake, he chooses a different type to "prefigure" his three embarrassed antitypes—the Tower of Babel:

I mistook the chapter, and book, and testament:-
Gospel for law, Acts for Genesis, the city of Jerusalem for the plain of Shinar. It was no gift, but the confusion of tongues which has gabbled me deaf as a post. You, apostles? What! - you three? Certainly not: - three presumptuous Babylonish masons, - neither more nor less! (16, see Genesis 11)

From this point forward, the curates will provide much comic relief, but their treatment must be viewed as more central to the novel's meaning than as merely a source of humor. In his book The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction, Barry Qualls argues effectively that the curates are the novel's most powerful indicator of the established Church's inability to offer any redemption to this badly divided
society: "Except for the good but ineffectual Mr. Hall, Shirley's priests offer as sorry a spectacle as spiritual guides as the manufacturers do as earthly helpers."

Even beyond their role as a vehicle for the narrator's critique of the curates in particular and the established Church in general, Helstone's words mark the first of many instances in the novel in which the use of biblical allusion comments upon itself. Taken alone, this passage might be read as nothing more than a depiction of Mr. Helstone's penchant for rather grandiose biblical allusions as part of his clerical demeanor. But the fluidity with which he moves from one biblical type to another, and his implication that the stories of Babel and Pentecost are sufficiently alike to be mistaken for each other, raises the question of the appropriate boundaries for biblical interpretation. If this fictitious rector can apply biblical texts at will to persons and situations around him to add weight to his own opinions, then what limits--if any--are there to how the novelist can handle biblical material?

Significantly, Brontë extends this two-sided biblical parallel into the middle of the novel, naming Chapter 16 "Whitsuntide," the name for the liturgical season following Pentecost. Despite the associations of this season with unity and harmony, the narrator's echoing of Helstone's phrase, "confusion of tongues" (16), to describe the great feast for the patrons and teachers of the schools (327-28)
recalls the "Babel" label Helstone placed on the lively and inane conversation of the three curates. If this central gathering of the leaders of church and community is marked by Babel-like confusion and dissension rather than guided by an indwelling Pentecost spirit of peace and a unity which transcends barriers of culture and even of language, very little hope can be held out that the unsettling progress signalled by the mechanization of Moore's mill will be channelled into fruitful directions.

The highly evocative first chapter ends with a flurry of biblical character parallels. Mike Hartley, the visionary Antinomian weaver, is likened to the prophet Daniel because he "not only rehearsed [his] vision" of a coming violent conflict, but also "gave the interpretation thereof" (22). Playing on their given names, Helstone teases the curates mercilessly for their reluctance to join in the defense of Moore's mill. Calling Malone "a great floundering Saul . . . good only to lend [his] armour" (23), he offers "little David" Sweeting and "spotless Joseph" Donne the chance to "be the champion" in Malone's place. However, unlike their biblical counterparts when they were called to action, both "the little minstrel" and the "great satrap of Egypt" (23) decline. While the rapid-fire use of biblical allusion here quickly sketches the outline of Helstone's character, it is difficult to see any profound interaction between the biblical text and the
novel. As far as we can see, Sweeting and young King David share very little beyond a common name. And though Donne does exhibit a certain arrogance that recalls the negative side of the biblical Joseph's attitude toward his family, the connection is pursued no farther. These minor typological skirmishes early in the novel serve a greater purpose than merely developing character or furthering the plot. They help create the atmosphere of hermeneutical instability which seems to prevail throughout all of Brontë's mature fiction.

Unlike in Jane Eyre, where we find Brontë using extended parallels between the novel and central biblical stories and clusters of biblical images to create a vision of alternative possibilities for Jane, the primary use of biblical material in Shirley seems to be to raise the issue of appropriate interpretation of scripture. The self-consciousness with which biblical material is incorporated into this novel and the shift to the more public third-person narrative technique may reflect a growing concern on Brontë's part about the success of her reinterpretative enterprise. As we examine her use of the three strategies of reversing gender, creating God parallels, and relocating the "otherworldly," we will note the extent to which--in this novel only--Brontë departs from her usual practice in handling the Bible.
Reversal of the gender of biblical characters occurs much less frequently in Shirley than in Brontë's other novels. Where it does, though, we find her breaking down the sex role stereotypes which are frequently used to restrict the roles available to women. The first example we will consider reverses gender in general, rather than for a specific character.

We see in Caroline Helstone's encounter with Joe Scott in Chapter 18 the centrality of the issue of biblical reinscription both for Brontë as author and for the novel as a whole. Caroline counters Joe Scott's decidedly traditional views on women and biblical interpretation (which he supports with a reference to St. Paul's admonition to the women in the church at Corinth to be silent\(^1^4\) with a bold appropriation for women of "the right of private judgment" (370). She argues initially that St. Paul "wrote that chapter for a particular congregation of Christians, under peculiar circumstances." but soon moves beyond this argument to one with much farther-reaching implications:

besides, I dare say, if I could read the original Greek, I should find that many of the words have been wrongly translated, perhaps misapprehended altogether. It would be possible, I doubt not, with a little ingenuity, to give the passage quite
a contrary turn; to make it say, "Let the woman speak out whenever she sees fit to make an objection:" - "it is permitted to a woman to teach and to exercise authority as much as may be. Man, meantime, cannot do better than hold his peace," and so on. (323)

Though Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar consider Caroline's attempt to refute Joe Scott's anti-female biblical barrage "feeble," they do connect it with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her rejection of many of St. Paul's view in her Woman's Bible almost fifty years after Brontë wrote Shirley. The primary difference they point out is the effort by Stanton's Revising Committee "to reveal how Paul's misogyny is related to male attempts to control not only women's speech, but their property and their persons." More sensitive to what she perceives as Brontë's social agenda, Kate Lawson points out the ways in which the "feminist dissent" in Shirley "undermines the conservative orthodoxy of the narrative's surface endorsement of the established church." However, she too discounts Caroline's "attempt to 're-translate' Paul," calling it "both brave and amusing . . . [though] hardly convincing."

I would disagree with both readings on this point. The issue of male control of female speech, central to Shirley, can be viewed as symbolic of male efforts to control female property and persons as well. If we accept the notion that
through her fiction Brontë is attempting to reclaim the Bible's own liberating word from a rigid system of interpretation which supports male dominance and restricts the choices available to women, then Caroline's so-called "feeble" and "[un]convincing" attempt to vanquish Joe Scott's biblical chauvinism by "re-translating" the writings of St. Paul (as representative biblical texts) are anything but amusing. Biblical language must be transformed and set free from its connection with patriarchalism before it can be employed by women to envision new possibilities for their lives.

Though we must avoid viewing Caroline as a mere fictional mouthpiece for her creator, Brontë does indeed couch much of her dissent in just the kind of reinterpretation of scriptural passages suggested by Caroline, in ways that undercut their traditional interpretation. And though no reader would link Charlotte Brontë with the Reverend Mr. Helstone, as we saw earlier, his method of using biblical allusion can also be viewed as pointing beyond his particular character to raise general questions about the novel's attitude toward and treatment of scripture. If what Caroline is here proposing is a truly modern hermeneutic, the implied appropriation of authority to reinterpret the Bible could reveal as much about the creator as it does about the character she created. But if she offers merely a wishful shifting of the locus of
authority in order to redress the historic imbalance of power inherent in all patriarchal societies, but especially in the Church, the real possibility exists that Brontë's "re-vision" will be compromised by its appropriation of unredeemed power.

In the chapter entitled "Shirley Seeks to be Saved by Works," we find the role of Adam and Eve's ill-fated first-born son potentially filled by the novel's title character. Struck by the suffering of those in need around her, Shirley announces her intention to "enter on a series of good works" by becoming "outrageously charitable" (297). When Caroline assures her that she does a great deal for others already, Shirley insists that it is not enough. "I must give more, or, I tell you, my brother's blood will some day be crying to Heaven against me" (300). Shirley's allusion to the story of Cain and Abel conveys her utter seriousness on the subject. Not to share one's resources with those in need is the equivalent of fratricide. The wealthy who do not accept the responsibilities of their position are guilty of betraying a basic law of God and human society, and their guilt cannot be hidden.

On the surface, Shirley's declared charitable intentions would seem to dissociate her from the biblical type. After all, Cain is anything but concerned about his brother's well-being. Brontë seems to use Cain as a counter-example. The blood guilt Shirley fears is only a
possibility—and only if she ignores the needs of her fellow human beings. But this simple negative use of typology is complicated by what follows. Shirley qualifies her benevolence, revealing its paternalistic quality. "At present," she says, "I am no patrician, nor do I regard the poor round me as plebeians" (300, my emphasis). But she will acknowledge noblesse oblige only so long as the poor are docile, law-abiding, and grateful. "If once the poor gather and rise in the form of the mob," she promises to "turn against them as an aristocrat" (300). Shirley is no more willing than Robert Moore is to acknowledge her essential connectedness with all of her fellow human beings. However, whereas Moore is twice linked to Cain, Shirley is here allowed to differentiate herself, if only by circumstances. She too bears the mark of Cain, though it is presently hidden. Her protestations notwithstanding, Shirley's belief in connection across class lines is marginal and largely self-serving. She intends to join ranks with Moore and, through benevolent control, hopes to keep the poor in their place. Brontë's connecting of Shirley with Cain shows clearly the effects of a woman trying to appropriate unredeemed masculine powers, though the battle lines are drawn here in terms of socioeconomic class rather than gender.

One of the richest clusters of biblical images in the novel is found in the chapter entitled "Valley of the Shadow
of Death," where we finally learn Mrs. Pryor's secret—that she is Caroline Helstone's mother. The allusions in this chapter exhibit the Brontëan strategy of substituting a character for God, but because they also give us some of the only fluid gender reversal in the novel, we will consider them here. Whereas the information regarding Caroline's mother is revealed in rather dramatic fashion, behind a locked door, an equally important piece of intelligence drops quite casually from Mr. Helstone's lips: Mrs. Pryor's given name is Agnes.19 If we recall that the chapter title contains a clear allusion to Psalm 23, in which God's providential care is celebrated in the imagery of shepherdimg,20 several different connections can be made. The name "Agnes" is derived from the Latin word agnus, meaning lamb. And in one sense, Mrs. Pryor is lamb-like. After revealing her identity, she alludes to a gospel story to describe Caroline's power over her (491). A centurion comes to Jesus seeking healing for his servant, but refuses to trouble Jesus by asking him to come to his house (see Matthew 8:5ff). He demonstrates his faith in Jesus' healing power by likening it to the military chain of command. Merely speaking the word will suffice. Mrs. Pryor attributes to Caroline this unquestioned authority over her. And though the imagery is unrelated to sheep or shepherds, the notion of power over another is comparable. By extension, then, Caroline is the shepherd, while "Agnes"
Pryor Helstone is the sheep.

But in another sense, as the one who saves Caroline from the threat of death, Mrs. Pryor is more like the sacrificially offered Passover lamb, which is typologically linked with Christ in the New Testament, where he becomes Agnus Dei, or the Lamb of God. The connection with Christ is strengthened by the closing sentence of this important chapter. Mrs. Pryor is depicted as "Jacob at Peniel . . . wrestlin[ing] with God in earnest prayer" (497, see Genesis 32:24-31), a fitting role for her given the deception she committed to conceal her true identity. But this association with Jacob is more than a simple case of gender reversal. Jacob wrestling at Peniel is also a popular type for Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In his account of the Passion, Luke records that "being in agony [Jesus] prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). The chapter following "Valley of the Shadow of Death" (entitled "The West Wind Blows") begins with these words: "Not always do those who dare such divine conflict [i.e. wrestling with God, as Mrs. Pryor does] prevail. Night after night the sweat of agony may burst dark on the forehead" (498, my emphasis). Indeed, Jesus does not prevail. He is the sacrificial Lamb of God precisely because he submits to death without uttering an objection. And as Mrs. Pryor makes her silent vigil, Caroline is
rescued from death and restored to new life. What Mrs. Pryor sacrifices to make this rejuvenation possible is not clear. Perhaps admitting her long-kept secret causes her to renew an old, long-buried pain. But surely, through Brontë's manipulation of these biblical images and stories, Mrs. Pryor is pictured here at least partly in the light of a savior--and an effective one at that.

In all of these instances, from the centurion's servant to Jacob to Jesus in Gethsemane, Brontë reverses the gender of the biblical type, continuing her rejection of gender as a defining attribute which can be used to restrict the freedom of women. But she also uses these same allusions to suggest the possibility of a new kind of redemption. If Agnes Pryor can function as Caroline's "savior," then utter dependence on an all-powerful God who frequently seems far-removed and unobservant may not be an inescapable fact of life. In the next section, we will examine those allusions through which Brontë challenges the authority of this God in a number of ways.

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As before, Brontë's use of the second strategy takes two different forms. We find in Shirley both the direct attack on the notion of Providence and the more subtle undermining of divine authority by creating fictional
parallels for God, some of them not terribly flattering. We'll consider those instances in which the adapted text deals with Providence first.

Often we find casual, easily overlooked biblical references which, when explored, reveal startling parallels being drawn. For example, during a simple and not terribly interesting description of Caroline Helstone's French lessons, the narrator tells us that she would often escape the "analyses logiques" assigned by Mlle. Hortense to seek out Robert Moore for help. Carrying her lesson book to the counting house, she would "get the rough places made smooth by his aid" (88). When the prophet Isaiah speaks figuratively of the enormous obstacles which God will overcome in bringing the people of Israel back from exile in Babylon across the wilderness to the Promised Land, he proclaims that "the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (40:4 KJV). The unmarked quotation of part of this verse evokes a two-pronged association.

Caroline's struggle with French lessons is cast in the light of Israel's perilous journey back from captivity in Babylon to the Promised Land. Surely we can consider this parallel a case of extreme hyperbole, partly for humorous effect. But does that mean the implied parallel should be as easily dismissed? If we recall that Yahweh is the one who makes "the rough places plain" for Israel in Isaiah's prophecy, then the narrator seems to be suggesting that
Caroline Helstone seeks in Robert Moore a liberating god figure. In one sense, whenever any character is linked with God we could describe the association as ontologically inappropriate, but many of Brontë's references of this kind contain meaning beyond the implied hyperbole. What we find here is Brontë questioning God's providential control of history by linking it with a trivial occurrence in the novel. Robert Moore may indeed be able to help Caroline with her French lessons, but he will be unable—even at times unwilling—to guide and protect her. But neither is God consistently credited in the novel with that activity.

Early in Volume 3, as Caroline and Shirley discuss the good and bad qualities of Louis Moore while they observe him sitting in Shirley's garden, we find one of the novel's few extended echoes of biblical narrative material. In it we find both the characteristic Brontëan reversal of gender and the "heretical" appropriation of the role of God for a character. When Louis cannot feed the birds who come hopping expectantly toward him, Shirley emerges from her place of unseen surveillance and "easily supple[s]" their want with "a morsel of sweet-cake" (517). Just as the unseen but ever-watchful God provided manna for Israel in the wilderness, Shirley offers "Providence for the improvident" (517). Shirley's remark is a clear instance of Brontë's strategy of undermining the notion of Providential control and, by extension, God's role in human
affairs. It is a new thing, though, for her to portray a female character so boldly in the role of God without qualifying the portrait with any hint of parody or hyperbole. But contrary to the assurances Jesus offers that God's care for humans exceeds that he exercises over the birds (see Matthew 6:26), Shirley is "God" only to the birds, not necessarily for Louis. Though he pictures himself as "Adam's son: the heir of him to whom dominion was given over 'every living thing that moveth upon the earth'" (517), Louis is a cocky, independent sort of Adam who, while acknowledging God's ultimate ownership of the garden and its denizens, asserts his own pseudo-possession of all of it via the pleasure he takes in it. He acknowledges no master in an ultimate sense. And when they are united at the end of the novel, this new kind of Adam ends up in ascendancy over Shirley, in spite of her depiction as the Providential God.

A variation on Brontë's strategy for undermining Providence is to replace God with a different agent or blur the boundaries between the two. In a number of cases, Brontë attributes the oversight of human affairs to a non-specific power, then calls it fate.

When Robert Moore fails to reciprocate Caroline's love but instead acts cold and withdrawn, the narrator uses the occasion to reflect on the differences between masculine and feminine ways of dealing with such defeat. While a disappointed male lover could "speak and urge explanation,"
the female "can say nothing." If she were to speak, says the narrator, "the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery" (117). The key word here is inward. The female victim of unrequited love must keep her suffering hidden within. But what is the source of this disparity between the sexes? Is it natural, having to do with inherent disposition, or is it cultural, reflecting the biases of the society of which one is a member? Though on one level the novel seems to be an exploration of this very question, rather than offer an explanation, the narrator turns here to an odd and unexpected biblical parallel, using it to chasten and instruct:

You expected bread, and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyred . . . . You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. . . . the scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson, how to endure without a sob. (117-18)

The reference is to words of assurance offered by Jesus, attesting to God's providential care: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? . . . Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12). The care implied by these
rhetorical questions can be safely assumed, even in a fallen world, suggests Jesus. Building on the idea of the parent's instinct to act only in those ways which protect and provide for the child, Jesus describes the solicitude of God as superior even to this best earthly example of caring.

Beginning with the same assumption regarding a certain orderliness to life, Caroline Helstone expects her feelings of love for Moore to be reciprocated, but somehow she ends up with a stone instead of bread. The narrator tells her--almost bitterly--that her expectations are unfounded, that she cannot hope for even a minimal level of equity from life, but she must endure nonetheless. Here we find one of Brontë's most confusing treatments of the notion of Providence. In several previous instances, we have seen that a weakening of God's control over human affairs can be viewed as a reason to be hopeful. True, humans are basically alone in a risky world, but at least they are free of any divine restrictions, any predetermination for either good or bad. They live and die under the influence of this anxiety, which is simultaneously frightening and invigorating. By this reasoning, Caroline should find a kind of hope in the shift of agency indicated by the narrator. She is given a stone instead of bread, but the giver of the stone is never named; fate hands her a scorpion in place of the bread she expected. The agent in the first case is unspecified, in the second case, fate (note the
lower case initial letter). In neither case is God (or any supernatural being, for that matter) given either credit or blame. And yet, the narrator counsels endurance rather than hope.

Kate Lawson views the use of this imagery as a categorical denial of Jesus' promises regarding the universality of God's mercy. Focusing on the adopted text, she argues that "the narrator twists Christ's promise of the goodness of the Father into its perverse opposite."^23 Viewing this particular allusion as a key the novel's meaning, Lawson sees at the center of Shirley a fear that "though one may ask, one may not receive, or receive only a perverse parody of that which was desired."^24 When we examine Brontë's adaptation of the Eden myth, we will see the effects of this frustration of hope. Lawson does see hope, though, beyond the limitations placed on the central female characters in the novel. Her proposed feminist vision of dissent "can see beyond the narrow confines of 'orthodox' female experience, can imagine a different, an alternative reality."^25 Brontë herself explores this avenue and offers it to female characters in her other novels. But while she can write a novel which exposes this postponement imposed on women by patriarchal society, a novel which envisions this "alternative reality," the central tragedy of her own life seems to be her failure to achieve such a reality for herself in any lasting or significant way.
In *Shirley*, God's control of history is given serious consideration, but the focus is on the apparent discrepancy between life as experienced and life as one believes it should be if God is in control. In the chapter entitled "To-Morrow," the narrator offers us an insight into Caroline Helstone's soul. Describing her as an occasional Calvinist, the narrator claims that Caroline "believed, sometimes, that God had turned his face from her" (394). Given Brontë's own anxiety about the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, the use of a technical theological term in the statement that Caroline "saw darkening over her the doom of reprobation" (394, my emphasis) is highly significant, especially since it is not allowed to stand. The darkest moment, we are told, often "precedes the rise of day." Though Caroline cannot benefit from this insight at the moment, the narrator assures the reader that human fears regarding salvation are due to the limitations of human perception. The same "icy January wind" which sings a dirge for winter announces the coming of spring.

The perishing birds, however, cannot thus understand the blast before which they shiver; and as little can the suffering soul recognise, in the climax of its affliction, the dawn of its deliverance. (394)

Counseling those who grieve to "cling fast to love and faith in God," the narrator quotes the Letter to the Hebrews to
explain the disparity between the traditional image of a loving, watchful God and the often harsh realities of life: "Whom He loveth, He chasteneth" (394, see Hebrews 12:6). What is most interesting for our purposes is the degree to which this view represents a retrenchment from the position staked out in Jane Eyre. The narrator here reminds us of Helen Burns, recommending meek, patient resignation in the face of suffering, a passivity rooted in confidence in the ultimate goodness of God's plan. Apparently either Brontë is trying one last time to embrace the faith of her private life in her fiction, or the often intrusive and reflective narrative voice must be dissociated from her views entirely.

The imagery of the bird caught in the arctic blast as a simile for the suffering person⁷ recalls once more Jesus' words regarding God's watchful care over even apparently insignificant life forms. "Look at the birds of the air," he counsels. "They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).²⁸ The message of Christian hope offered here sounds authentic, but we also detect a subtle note of bitterness produced by the deferral of hope. Additionally, we have seen these words of Jesus alluded to earlier, though that time Shirley was cast in the role of God. Apparently the narrative voice suggests this time that we place hope in the "real" God, one able to save and sustain, not in the faint echoes of a secularized
typology. But neither the narrator nor Brontë has given us any means of distinguishing one from the other. Unsure of the reliability—even the reality—of God's Providence, Caroline can find little consolation in the exhortation to wait and hope when it comes from the same voice which earlier counselled "squeezing the scorpion."

Brontë also creates a number of interesting parallels between her characters and God (or Jesus). Though these characters range from a drunken sham preacher to the title character herself, the parallels all tend to shrink the distance between God and humanity. The effecyt, though, is rarely consoling from a theological point of view. A God who can be linked with the likes of a Moses Barraclough—even if only in fiction—isn't much of a God. We'll start with the scoundrel himself.

When Moses Barraclough advises Robert Moore to close his mill, Moore counters with a personal attack on the hypocrisy of the self-styled working-class deliverer. As the "joined Methody" (151) that Barraclough claims to be, he should abstain from drunkenness and any other licentious behavior, but Moore accuses him of serious variance between his outward behavior and his claims of inward piety. However, by directing these words at him—"While you preach peace, you make it the business of your life to stir up dissension" (151-52)—Moore has placed his own conservative politics in conflict with the radical demand of the Bible.
His words of attack are a mirror image of Jesus’ difficult and startling claim regarding his intentions for and his impact on the world: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). From one point of view, linking Barraclough with Christ is even more blasphemous than either Crimsworth’s or Hunsden’s self-depictions in divine terms. For that matter, though, if we recall the story of the Exodus, the plagues which made possible the Israelite escape from the tyranny of Egypt were certainly not gestures of peace from the Egyptian perspective. Through Moore’s words, Moses Barraclough is portrayed as the fulfillment of the same revolutionary drive which led the Israelites out of Egypt and which Jesus claimed lay at the heart of his mission and ministry. But this radicalism is assessed negatively by both Moore and the narrator.

So the question remains whether Brontë can ever follow the implications of her own views to their logical ends. She allows Robert Moore to call both Noah and Moses “restless, meddling, impudent scoundrels, whose chief motive-principle is a selfish ambition, as dangerous as it is puerile” (152), but she also engages in a kind of reinscription of the Bible in her novels which, when viewed with a negative bias, is subject to a similar criticism. The major difference between her views and those of these two characters seems to be the more internal and individual
nature of Brontë's radicalism. In *Shirley* Brontë makes her most public venture into the world of political ideology, but seems to end the novel demonstrating its inability to effect the change she desires.

Shirley Keeldar herself is the character who articulates most consistently in this novel the idolatrous attitude toward men which we found in both *The Professor* and *Jane Eyre*. Caught up in Caroline's infatuated admiration for Robert Moore, Shirley adds this paean:

I tell you when they are good, they are the lords of the creation, -- they are the sons of God.
Moulded in their Maker's image, the minutest spark of His spirit lifts them almost above mortality.
Indisputably, a great, good, handsome man is the first of created things. (245)

Shirley's words contain numerous references to the vocabulary of the Primeval History in the Book of Genesis, but not in a way which encourages elaboration. She makes a direct, definitive statement labelling good men as pseudo-divine. The subtlety and suggestiveness of the biblical allusions we saw in *Jane Eyre* seem to be missing, but Brontë is not through with this idea yet.

When Caroline questions Shirley's enthusiasm by asking if she means that men of this description are "above" women, Shirley answers evasively, only eschewing the notion of "contend[ing] for empire with" such a man (245). Caroline
presses her for her meaning, asking, "Are we men's equals, or are we not?" (245). Once more Shirley equivocates, remaining at the personal, particular level rather than debating the general question as Caroline wishes. She is charmed, she claims, by a man who can make her "sincerely feel that he is [her] superior" (245), but she refuses to speak for women in general. By a curious inverse logic, though, Brontë attempts to save her title character from the appearance of too much self-abasement. Shirley suggests that, at least in some cases, submission to an allegedly "superior" man would involve stooping, which she would find degrading. If, however, the man were sufficiently high above her, "look[ing] up to him would be "glorious" (246). Shirley's frustration, then, is the scarcity of suitable candidates for her "worship." She complains to her friend: "when I try to esteem, I am baffled: when religiously inclined, there are but false gods to adore. I disdain to be a Pagan" (246).

In her dispute with her uncle Sympson over her matrimonial intentions, Shirley clearly expresses her view of romantic love in the language of idolatry when she prepares to tell him "before what altar [she] now kneel[s] . . . the present idol of [her] soul" (629). Only when Sympson alludes to rumors regarding Shirley and "the foreigner Moore" (631) does she soften her satire momentarily and rise ardently to his defense. Sympson's
prejudice against Robert Moore blinds him to the reality that it is Louis Moore of whom Shirley speaks. Finally unwilling to continue the argument, Shirley sets herself apart from her uncle: "Your thoughts are not my thoughts, your aims are not my aims, your gods are not my gods" (632). The first two phrases of her statement echo the judgment of God against Israel (see Isaiah 55:8). Brontë places Shirley in the position of God condemning his people for their idolatry. This theme is reinforced by the addition of the third phrase. But then we must ask to what "gods" Shirley refers. Unless we read her statement as an outright declaration of polytheism (which would be especially ironic after adopting the words of Israel's "jealous" God), we should see the term "gods" as the objects of one's devotion, but not necessarily supernatural beings. So what Shirley really accuses Sympson of is worshiping the standards of the world. She separates herself even further from him by declaring herself "an atheist to [his] god" (633).

Some readers of the novel no doubt see Brontë's appropriation of God's words as blasphemous. Linking God with Shirleyt (or with any character, for that matter) impugns God's divinity. Viewing the exchange more within its context, though, we can see that what Shirley resents is Sympson's meddling in her affairs. Brontë merely employs language commensurate with her character's loathing for her uncle's presumptuousness. To counter this assumption that
it is the male's prerogative to control the female's life, even in extremely personal matters. Brontë attributes to Shirley the prerogatives of God, including a scorn for idolatry. Placing God's words in Shirley's mouth—though in a somewhat modified form—Brontë links Uncle Sympson's attitudes, and by extension those of many males, with the sin of idolatry. We must not assume, however, that in these words Shirley gives any indication of abandoning her private mythology in order to turn orthodox.

We view the scene in which Shirley and Robert Moore finally discuss openly their feelings for each other only through Moore's eyes as he recounts the conversation to Yorke. Moore admits that he thought Shirley loved him, but he is still unaware of Caroline's love for him. He cannot understand Shirley's remarks about her behavior or her objection to the insinuation that she is "a traitor to all [her] sisters" (609). The only words Shirley can find to express her disdain for Moore connect him with the fallen archangel:

Lucifer - Star of the Morning! . . . thou art fallen. You - once high in my esteem - are hurled down: you - once intimate in my friendship - are cast out. Go! (610)

While she uses these words to castigate Moore severely, by contrast, the position she occupies in the allusion is quite elevated, for it is God who casts Lucifer out from the
intimacy of Heaven! This imaging of Shirley as God continues when Moore confesses to Yorke that her obvious disillusionment with him produced "a sense of Cain-like desolation" in his breast (610).

In Genesis 4 we find the story of Cain's sin and his resulting alienation from God and the rest of the human race. Angry and ashamed of his creature's failure to live peacefully in community, God banishes Cain. But God still watches over Cain, placing a mark on his forehead which identifies him as under God's special protection. By contrast, when Shirley sends Moore away from her presence for his unthinking presumptuousness, she does nothing to maintain relationship with him. When he does eventually learn a certain degree of compassion for and connection with his fellow human beings, he does so through his association with Caroline, not with Shirley.

* * *

One of Brontë's most frequently used strategies for incorporating biblical material into her novels is to relocate the "otherworldly" into this world, thereby suggesting the possibility of finding blessedness in this life. She continues this strategy in Shirley, but with a variation. Her more public vision in this novel leads her to offer a critique of the given more than a vision of what
might be. In a fictional world so dominated by narrow patriarchal thinking that even the female characters cannot escape its ideological gravity, it seems more appropriate to focus on the Bible's negative "otherworldly" scenes. Consequently, Brontë will explore primarily the darker sides of the Eden myth and the chaotic scene at Babel. Her concentration on these stories and her apparent goal of diagnosing rather than healing compel her to offer little hope of future blessedness. Indeed, in Shirley we move even closer toward the darkness that finally overwhelms Brontë's writing in Villette.

In what is probably the most frequently commented upon passage in the novel, after convincing Caroline to skip evening church services to sit outdoors, Shirley launches into an extended meditation which personifies Nature. Borrowing imagery, in part, from the Genesis creation myth, she describes Nature as "like what Eve was when she and Adam stood alone on earth" (359). From this starting point, Shirley attacks Milton's interpretation of Eve in Paradise Lost. Admitting that he was a "great" poet, Shirley questions the rightness of Milton's heart. Though he saw deeply into many mysteries, when he "tried to see the first woman," suggests Shirley, "it was his cook that he saw" (359). Her implication that even Milton's greatness did not help him escape the biases common to the men of his society comes close to diagnosing the roots of the sickness Brontë
sees in her own world. Even the women often are not free of these prejudices, having adopted wholesale the dominant world view. Blending Hebrew and Greek mythology, Shirley offers a different reading. She identifies Eve as mother not only of the human race, but also of the race of Titans. In almost the same breath this Titaness is variously labelled "Jehovah's daughter," "my mother Eve," and Nature (361). Reflecting the popular interpretation of the myth, Caroline reduces Eve's actions to "covet[ing] an apple" and being "cheated by a snake" (360), dismissing Shirley's vision as "a hash of Scripture and mythology" (360).33

However, despite appearances, Caroline Helstone's radicalism actually far outweighs Shirley's. True, Shirley challenges Milton's reading of Eve in the Eden myth, but she does so only to replace it with a vision which is private and eccentric. Feminist critics may focus on this passage and claim that the novel "adumbrat[es] . . . a female religion, centred upon the figure of Eve as mother of humanity,"34 but I would suggest that they have allowed their desire to find such a view in the novel affect their reading of it. Shirley here moves into a totally different sphere, one which poses no serious threat to conventional anti-female readings of the Genesis account and offers no effective vehicle for Brontë's reinscription.35 Her "Eve" is as distant from the biblical first woman as she claims Milton's to be. The midrashic debate between Shirley and
Milton is mostly personal and intellectual. Beyond any weakening they may produce in that hermeneutic edifice which condemns women in general based on a particular reading of the Eden myth, Shirley's views do little to define a stance upon which Brontë can build alternative life possibilities.

Obvious parallels can be drawn between Shirley's vision of the Titaness, variously called both Eve and Nature, and her schoolgirl French-writing exercise entitled "La Premiere Femme Savante," which Louis Moore recites entirely from memory. The essay takes as its point of departure the odd, brief reference in Genesis 6 to the "sons of God" taking the daughters of men as wives, thereby producing a race of Titans (547). In Moore's recital, we find yet another midrashic commentary on a Genesis myth, this time borrowing material from a wide range of other biblical contexts and assembling it into a new mythology. When the solitary, young savage girl named Eva is addressed by "Something" from above, her words echo those of the Virgin Mary: "behold thine handmaid!" Interestingly, the voice's response--"I come: a Comforter!" suggests the paraclete, a designation given by Jesus in the fourth gospel to the Holy Spirit, usually translated either 'Counselor' or 'Comforter.' Eva's cry in return--"Lord, come quickly!"(551)--echoes the early Christian call for the parousia, or Second Coming of Christ (see Revelation 22:20). All three of these references have points of contact with
Christian typological readings of the Bible, especially within the tradition of spiritual autobiography. Each depicts an intrusion of the divine upon the human in a way which suggests postfiguration—a reading of events of one's life back into biblical events which they are construed as fulfilling. However, there is a great difference. Eva is not a real person—not a Christian believer seeking to ground her life in biblical patterns. So what we end up with is not spiritual autobiography, but myth.

What we find in Shirley's "Eva" devoir is a loose collection of biblical figures of theophany applied to a single, newly created myth: the marriage of humanity and a celestial being named Genius. In explaining his motives for choosing Eva, this "Son of God" returns to the Genesis language from which Shirley's idea arose: "I saw thee that thou wert fair" (552, cf. Genesis 6:2). Though the adopted text never identifies the "sons of God," in Shirley's composition Genius is called a Seraph\(^9\) and functions as something of a guardian angel for humanity. And though Eva cannot be simply equated with Eve of the Eden myth, the reference to the serpent as well as to "the Father of Lies" suggests a connection. As in her eclectic meditation on Nature, Shirley has here combined elements from a wide range of sources—this time Greek mythology, the allegories of Old Testament wisdom literature, and distinctly Christian references to the Incarnation—in an uneasy mix to produce a
new creation myth. In spite of its superficial resemblance to the "Eve" midrash, though, here we find none of the redistribution of power implied there.

The ability of this myth to depict a new vision for women is also severely compromised by its manner of presentation within the fiction of the novel. Though the composition strongly resembles the "Eve" mythology of her more mature years in tone as well as in actual language, we should note that Shirley is not responsible for its introduction at this time. She dismisses this work of her youth as "rubbish" (547). It is Louis Moore who recalls the essay. He is the novel's only source for these words, and it is his voice that we hear reciting them. Shirley's "vision" of Eve and the mythology she creates around it are chronologically later, and therefore represent more accurately the views of the character as we see her in the novel. However, her uncharacteristic silence during Moore's lengthy recital and the scene's position late in the novel tend to efface the more powerfully feminist sentiments of Shirley's adult vision and replace them with a more patriarchal, more Christianized version of the male/female myth, used by Moore to begin reasserting his dominance over Shirley.

Numerous critics have commented on this passage, though no consensus can be found. Crediting even the young Shirley with a rejection of patriarchalism, M. A. Blom argues that
"Shirley denies the traditional anti-feminist interpretation of the ["sons of God"] myth by linking it to both the story of Cupid and Psyche and the New Testament descriptions of the intervention of the triune Godhead in human affairs."^41 However, very few feminist critics find in Shirley's youthful devoir the genuine "apotheosis" for Eva outlined by Blom. They find instead something quite disturbing. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Shirley's youthful myth differs greatly from her Titaness/Nature myth because it "countenances female submission."^42 Focusing more on the issue of appropriating the voice of another, Kate Lawson argues that Louis Moore's entry into the novel near the end of Volume Two signals the "establishment of masculine control; Louis Moore's voice comes to replace and interpret the voice and being of woman." Lawson further suggests that "closure in Shirley brings with it the silencing of the female voice of dissent and the reestablishment of male authority."^43 By the end of the novel, Shirley and Caroline have been "reduced to a life lived in the shadow of men,"^44 in the same way that the biblical Eve is made subject to her husband Adam. The labels Mrs. Louis and Mrs. Robert reflect this loss of identity. In her fictional experiment with participation in male-dominated society rather than rebellion against it, Brontë shows more realistically than in previous novels the difficulty of constructing a new Eden. A great distance lies between the state of affairs at
the end of Shirley and the mutuality exuberantly described by Jane Eyre Rochester, who retained enough of her identity not only to write her own story in her own voice, but also to omit her married name from the title of her autobiography.

As she did in both The Professor and Jane Eyre, in Shirley Brontë also employs imagery drawn from the biblical account of the garden of Eden to depict the romantic love between a man and a woman. What differs, though, is the decidedly darker tone of the treatment in the later novel. Following a brief discussion with Robert Moore concerning Hortense's well being, Caroline reflects on her feelings for Hollow's cottage, especially for its garden. We are told that "she longed to return to it, as much almost as the First Woman, in her exile, must have longed to revisit Eden" (281). Though missing Hortense is the ostensible reason behind Caroline's longing for Hollow's cottage, the mentioning of Eve suggests that Robert is the true object of her yearning. Having made Robert the center of her world, Caroline experiences his inaccessibility as exile. But the exile from Eden is of a special kind.

The biblical story never suggests that Adam and Eve will be able to return to paradise. Indeed, God takes active steps to ensure that they don't. Consequently, Eden never figures as a strong type for Heaven--though St. Paul does identify Adam as a negative type for Christ. More
frequently, the Promised Land of Canaan appears in that position. Gilbert and Gubar point out the paradoxical nature of the situation in which most of Brontë's female characters--including Caroline--find themselves. Though they "cannot escape the confinement of biblical myth," they are "haunted" by their memories of the paradise from which they have been excluded. Therefore, longing to return to Eden must be viewed, in a typological sense, as a groundless hope. And yet, we have seen Brontë's consistent efforts to redeem Eden as a type for future blessedness fulfilled in this world. The fact that Caroline does finally marry Robert Moore would tend to endorse this view, if it weren't largely undercut by Brontë's depiction of their married life.

The "otherworldly" locales which Brontë chooses to move to earthly settings are not limited to the Garden of Eden per se. On several occasions she steps out of the garden to gather her images from that harsh land of judgment to which the first couple are sent after their expulsion. In the novel's first in-depth description of Robert Moore's character, we are told that his foreign ancestry and foreign birth--he was "but half a Briton, and scarcely that" (34)--contribute to his lack of connectedness to the ordinary working people of Yorkshire.

Not being a native, nor for any length of time a resident of the neighborhood, he did not
sufficiently care when the new inventions threw
the old work-people out of employ: he never asked
himself where those to whom he no longer paid
weekly wages found daily bread. (36)

The description is apt and concurs with Brontë's aim of
presenting psychological realism in the novel. But this
hard, practical business sense is elsewhere linked with
Moore's "sense of Cain-like desolation" (610) when rejected
by Shirley. Refusing to acknowledge the interconnectedness
of persons within the human community, Moore supposes that
his business is to make money, not to be his "brother's
keeper" (see Genesis 4:9).

Moore himself echoes this association with Cain when he
learns of Caroline's regular prayers for him. He admits to
wondering, when going to bed "like a heathen," if "another
had asked forgiveness for [his] day, and safety for [his]
night" (137). Though he doubts the efficacy of "such
vicarial piety," Moore does speak highly of Caroline through
his use of the phrase "acceptable as Abel's offering" (138)
to describe her prayers. While we are doubtless inclined to
agree with his judgment, the real interest is in the implied
contrast between her piety and his lack of it. If her
"offering" is as "acceptable as Abel's," then his--even if
offered--would presumably be unacceptable, as Cain's was.
One striking feature of the reference is the enmity implied
by it. If Caroline is like Abel and Moore is like Cain, we
must entertain serious doubts about their compatibility—
even if they are elsewhere linked with Adam and Eve. But
the most serious echo we hear in this off-handed reference
to the denouement of the biblical Fall story is the
connection with escalating violence and revenge—the
classifying characteristics of both the post-Eden world and
much of the novel's fictional world. Once again, the novel
offers a pessimistic vision which seems at odds with the way
Brontë usually employs this "otherworldly" strategy. If the
central couple in the novel are so unable to transcend the
restrictions of custom and class that they are fittingly
depicted as Cain and Abel, the novel offers little hope for
establishing even a provisional paradise on earth.

We find this focus on the future once more in the
novel's closing chapter, when Robert Moore shares with
Caroline his vision for transforming the valley of
Briarfield, made possible by the return of prosperity.
Through tone and setting the narrator creates an expectation
for optimism, but the details of Moore's vision and the
final biblical allusion combine to convey a sense of
calamity.

The green natural terrace shall be a paved street:
there shall be cottages in the dark ravine, and
cottages on the lonely slopes; the rough pebbled track shall be an even, firm, broad, black, sooty road, bedded with cinders from my mill. (737)
Caroline initially reacts with horror, but her quiet acquiescence to Moore's persuasion in the end indicates that her revulsion is only of a mock form. Hers is not the last word, though. In a rare first-person speech which violates fictional conventions, the narrator intrudes to offer a final evaluation of Moore's vision. The "once green, and lone, and wild" Hollow is now known only in tradition. In its place stands the embodiment, in "substantial stone and brick and ashes." of Moore's daydream: the highway and the cottages. But the most striking feature of this new landscape is the chimney of the new mill, "ambitious as the tower of Babel" (739).

The last in the series of myths with which the Bible begins tells the story of the human race constructing a great tower, with its top reaching to heaven (see Genesis 11:1-9). Viewed by its builders as a monument to their ingenuity and a guarantee against the dissolution and decline of their society, this mighty tower is judged by God as evidence of sinful human pride. By confusing their language so that they can no longer communicate, God transforms this proud unified effort into a symbol of human divisiveness, a monument to failed enterprise.

Grounded in the world of myth more than the world of history which takes over the narrative in the Book of Genesis when Abram's story begins, Babel can be construed as "otherworldly." The ending of Shirley clearly suggests that
this "otherworldly" setting can be relocated to this world. Unlike in her use of this strategy in her earlier novels, though, here the "otherworldly" is viewed with a harsh, pessimistic realism. The negative connotations of Babel strongly suggest Brontë's reservations about the state of affairs described in the novel's conventional happy ending. The judgment implied by this imagery is fully present, unalleviated by any Pentecost-style healing of broken speech. Penny Boumelha emphasizes "the images of mutually incomprehensible language" in the novel and the need for translation.\(^{46}\) But when the translation comes, it often takes the form of confiscation of another's voice. As we have already seen, toward the end of the novel Shirley is not even allowed to speak for herself. Her part of the most important dialogues are "given to us through the words of men, in indirect speech, as a character in their stories."\(^{47}\)

Judith Williams suggests that with this ominous evocation of Babel, "the novel has come full circle back to [the] moral and psychological chaos" depicted in the distinctly unchrist-like behavior of the curates in the opening pages.\(^{48}\) Opposing images from the novel's two primary "otherworldly" settings compete for dominance. In a sense, as Helstone hinted in the opening chapter, Eden is exchanged for the plain of Shinar and the garden for a tower; mutuality is replaced by antagonism and harmony by dissonance. Expanding on its earlier associations in the
novel (both the raucous conviviality of the curates and the incessant chirping of canaries), this great biblical archetype combines with the wistful comment by the narrator's old housekeeper, that the Hollow "is altered now," to eclipse the joy of the novel's supposedly happy ending with the sobering shadow of despair and loss. And when we consider that even the few positive images of paradise found in the novel are either undercut by the continued dominance of women by men or shown to be too private or eccentric for use by the general public, the gloom of these closing images seems even deeper.

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In *Shirley* we discover a style of biblical allusion similar to that found in *The Professor*, though its "deficiencies" can be accounted for in different ways. What we find in *Shirley* is Brontë turning away somewhat from secularized typology to engage in a midrashic debate on woman's role in the creation. Her primary opponent seems to be Milton, whom both the author and her title character view as a strong precursor in biblical interpretation who must be challenged in order to clear a space for a new voice. Brontë seems more interested in clearly defining the ground rules for biblical reinscription and the degree of latitude allowed than in actually doing it. This shift in tactics is
most likely a function of her effort to achieve a more public voice in *Shirley* than in her previous novels. It almost seems as if Brontë cannot employ the same freedom in reinterpreting the Bible as she does in the other three novels because she has committed herself to a different agenda, more social than personal.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call *Shirley* a "feminist critique of the biblical myth of the garden" (374), and argue that, by "focusing upon a world already inalterably fallen," Brontë "suggests that the private broodings of women writers cannot eradicate the powerful effect of public myths."⁴⁹ Starting from a different point, M. A. Blom comes to a similar conclusion in this critique of Brontë as social critic:

> despite the shrewdness of her perception of the causes and consequences of female repression, Brontë is no revolutionary. Her attitudes toward the cultural patterns she analyzes are ambivalent, and this ambivalence creates the tone of agony and frustration so typical of her work.⁵⁰

Blom seems to imply that even when Brontë offers an alternative vision, a closer inspection often reveals it to be little more than what Gilbert and Gubar label "private broodings." Both of these critical readings are accurate, but they don't adequately explain why Brontë has proceeded in the manner she chooses in *Shirley*.
As I have tried to suggest in a variety of ways, Brontë's shift from the pattern of fictional autobiography to employ a third-person omniscient narrator can be viewed as one of the primary causes for the observable differences in how biblical material is treated in this novel. We see in Shirley an attempt on Brontë's part to deal more publicly and more realistically with the possibility of constructing alternative possibilities for women's lives based on her strategies for re-vising the Bible. That she largely discover it cannot be done and returns to a private, first-person, female voice in Villette testifies to the ongoing nature of her search.
NOTES


2 Hook, p. 11.

3 With *Shirley* Brontë begins using titles for individual chapters in her novels, a practice which she will continue in *Villette*, often employing them to make ironic commentary on the fictional world she is creating. The title for Chapter 1, "Levitical," sets the tone of double-edged sarcasm found throughout the novel. The term "levitical" refers specifically to a class of priests in the Old Testament, the descendants of Levi. And while the Anglican Church did refer to its clergy as priests, the status as one specially chosen to offer sacrifices to God, associated with the term in its biblical context, suggests more the negative connotations of "priestcraft," which we are accustomed to seeing Brontë attack in Roman Catholicism. So in one sense, the three young curates introduced in the chapter are criticized for not being "priest"-like, but in another sense, the whole notion of a privileged class of priests, alleged "successors of the apostles" (8), is parodied by its association with Donne, Malone, and Sweeting.

Unless otherwise indicated, all references will be to this edition and will be included in parentheses within the text.

5 Shirley contains the most references to scripture of any Brontë novel. Though many of these references appear to be little more than conventional figures of speech used as part of characteristic dialogue, an alert reader can detect in many of them a heightened significance.

6 The synoptic gospels establish an historical link between these two events. They indicate that the meal Jesus ate with his disciples on Thursday evening was a Passover seder. John's gospel, on the other hand, approaches the story typologically. John apparently alters the customary chronology in order to depict Jesus dying on the cross on the eve of the Passover, at the very moment the paschal lamb is being slaughtered.

7 See Exodus 12:8. I cannot prove that Brontë intended to pun on a word from the preceding verse, but it seems possible. According to Exodus 12:7, the blood of the paschal lamb was to be smeared on the posts which formed the doorway, both the uprights and the upper cross bar, called a lintel. Brontë's first description of this meal is one of "cold lentiles" (8). Why cold? Certainly less appetizing and more spartan. But could it possibly also mean old, outdated, long since forgotten? The passionate faith which, in desperate hope, spread the lamb's blood on the lintel just before fleeing for freedom in a new land has now cooled
and congealed into something more substantial. In like manner, the fiery spirit unleashed in Jane Eyre has now been tamed somewhat—or so the narrator would have us believe. Admittedly, this is quite a bit to hang on what might be a fairly casual image, but still I find the notion intriguing.


9 Indeed, Helstone is responsible for more biblical allusions in Shirley than any other character.

10 No other example reveals this tendency on Helstone's part more clearly than the fiction he creates around a biblical character known to him only by "his name and race" (21), one Saph (see 2 Samuel 21:18). But Helstone admits to endowing him with a personality, describing him as "honest, heavy, and luckless" (21), the perfect image of Malone. And while no deep significance can be drawn from the particulars of Helstone's biblical fictionalizing (which has always been something of a male prerogative), what it indicates generally about the eagerness of his female creator to indulge in it is certainly worth considering.

11 In quite a different context, Shirley adapts the imagery of Pentecost Day to describe "a volley of musketry" ringing out from the skirmish at Moore's mill (387). The reference links Moore with The Reverend Mr. Helstone, especially in their attitude toward rebellion.

12 See 1 Samuel 17:38-39.
A term borrowed from Janet Larson's *Dickens and the Broken Scripture*.

This debate over biblical doctrine regarding women is anticipated in this brief, humorous, parenthetical remark made by the narrator in Chapter 6: "Sarah, it appears, did not partake the opinion of St. Paul, that 'it is a shame for a woman to go with her head uncovered'" (98).

*Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 385, my emphasis.


Lawson, p. 731.

Marion J. Phillips cites the views of Alexander Harris, a writer Charlotte admired, that "the Bible and any individual's mind working upon it are sufficient means to Christian salvation" ("Charlotte Brontë and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Brontë Society Tracts* 20.3 (1991): 150), challenging the place accorded tradition and ecclesiastical authority in the formation of belief by the Catholic branches of the Church. In his work, *Testimony to the Truth: or, the Autobiography of an Atheist,* Harris offers the following view:

The Holy Word is clear and plain, and addressed to minds individually: and minds individually are furnished and complete for acting independently in the reception of its truths. . . . Read the Scriptures; and let them enter, in all simpleness
of meaning, into your heart.

19 In fact, though this information is revealed somewhat indirectly and in two different places, her name was apparently Agnes Grey, the title character of sister Anne's first novel (see pp. 424, 495).

20 A rather comical allusion to the psalm is made in the chapter entitled "The First Blue-Stocking," when Sir Philip tires of courting Shirley indoors and "must have her out amongst the pleasant pastures, and lead her by the still waters" (537). This return of the typical Brontëan boldness in treating biblical material raises questions about how we should read the more literal and more pedestrian allusions in this novel. I am suggesting, though, that they are the result of Brontë's attempt to be more public and more direct in her critique of male-dominated society and the alternative vision she offers to challenge it.

21 If we assume that by "the improvident" Shirley refers to the birds, we find here another echo of the imagery developed in the chapter entitled "To-Morrow" in Volume 2 (see p. 394), and thus a strengthening of the depiction of Shirley as a god-figure here. Interestingly, when Brontë alluded to this passage from Matthew's gospel in The Professor, Crimsworth was God and Frances Henri was the bird.

22 The narrator declines to elaborate on the validity of Caroline's assumption, considering that Moore is neither
her parent nor God.

23 Lawson, p. 734.
24 Lawson, p. 735.
25 Lawson, p. 742.

26 See, for example, a letter to Ellen Nussey, in which she labels such beliefs "ghastly" and speaks with reservations about her own salvation (Shorter, Life & Letters, p. 141).

27 This image is recaptured in the opening chapter of Volume 3 when Caroline, on her sickbed, asks Mrs. Pryor to sing the hymn "O God Our Help in Ages Past," which describes God as "Our shelter from the stormy blast" (484).

28 In the following chapter, Mrs. Pryor quotes to Caroline another passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus seems to counsel a trusting naiveté: "let the morrow take thought for the things of itself" (421, see Matthew 6:34).

29 See also these words of the prophet Ezekiel: "Because, in truth, because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace" (13:10). Or Paul's graphic description of the suddenness with which the calamity of the eschaton will come:

When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! (1 Thessalonians 5:3)
Brontë is certainly familiar with these passages and with these biblical concepts, though she seems not to have embraced them personally.

30 Interestingly, whereas in *Jane Eyre* both Rochester and Jane speak of their love for the other as a displacement of God, using biblical imagery clearly associated with idolatry, in *Shirley* such images are largely missing. In their place we find naturalistic images, such as Shirley's description of Moore as causing an "eclipse" in their friendship. Interestingly, rather than a semi-divine role such as the sun, the source of the light, Moore is depicted as a lesser celestial body which obscures the light by his interposition.

31 The term used in biblical studies for the first eleven chapter of the Book of Genesis because of the markedly ahistorical character of the material contained therein.

32 Brontë's allusion here seems to be more to *Paradise Lost*, or some other literary midrash on the Bible, than to the biblical story directly. But as Shirley's rejection of Milton's view of Eve makes clear, Brontë is always conscious of *Paradise Lost* as a strong precursor from whom she must differentiate her voice.

33 Though Caroline seems to put little store in Shirley's vision, as Judith Williams points out, "the evocation of the Great Mother . . . relights . . . in
Caroline's heart the 'longing of her childhood'" for the return of her mother (Perception and Expression, p. 67).

34 Boumelha, p. 88. Boumelha does qualify her claim somewhat with the following statement: "Brontë's more orthodox (and sectarian) Protestant piety is also present throughout the novel, but it has here less power to console, reconcile or justify than anywhere else in her adult fiction" (89). I would argue that we find in Villette, rather than in Shirley, the greatest reduction in the power of the Christian faith to offer answers to life's difficult questions.

35 Compare what Emily Brontë does in Wuthering Heights.

36 Stephen Prickett defines the term midrash as "essentially one of interpretation, not the creation of 'fact-like' fiction. In a way, Brontë's handling of biblical materials closely resembles this process. Biblical parallels provide more for her than a means of enhancing the literariness of her fiction. She is a conscious reinterpreter of the Bible. But I have deliberately chosen the term typology over midrash because it carries within the suggestion of a unity--albeit only an imaginative or figural unity--in the scriptures. Midrash implies an expansion of the original, derivative, still connected. In typological interpretation, on the other hand, the old is superceded by its fulfillment (Words and The Word: Language, poetics and biblical interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University

37 Moore's phenomenal recall at this point strains our belief in the realism promised in the opening paragraphs and moves us more into the Romance world of *Jane Eyre*.


39 In the chapter which follows, Brontë's narrator will use Harry Sympson's passionate declaration of love for Shirley to differentiate between her and her fictional creation:

Heaven must not claim her! She is lovely in this world, and fitted for this world. Shirley is not an angel; she is a woman, and she shall live with men. Seraphs shall not have her! . . . if one of the "sons of God" . . . descended to claim her, his claim should be withstood - withstood by me - boy and cripple as I am! (567)

Shirley and Eva are not the same. In spite of her esoteric fantasies, Shirley--like Jane Eyre before her and Lucy Snowe after--will seek her paradise in earthly love.

40 Cf. Crimsworth's response to Frances Henri's devoir concerning the young prince in exile, which he abruptly quits quoting in order to criticize its grammar and style.

41 Blom, p. 95.

42 *Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 394.

43 Lawson, p. 738. Eagleton makes a similar point in connection with the (non)depiction of the working class in
the novel. The day after the attack on Hollow's Mill, the attackers are reduced to a personified abstract, Discord. "At the point of its most significant presence in the novel, the working class is wholly invisible" (Myths of Power, p. 49).

44 Lawson, p. 741. All that remains of her original identity is the name of the novel, Shirley. Even the surname Keeldar has been lost.

45 Madwoman in the Attic, p. 386, my emphasis.

46 Boumelha, p. 84.

47 Boumelha, p. 85.

48 Williams, Perception and Expression, p. 78.

49 Madwoman in the Attic, p. 374.

50 Blom, p. 79.
Villette

In her final complete novel, we find Charlotte Brontë once more "using and abusing--presenting and undercutting--images and stories of male devising." And once more, her primary target seems to be that bastion of patriarchy and object of patriarchal hermeneutics, the Bible. If she can appropriate the voice which more than any other has shaped her society and turn it to her own purposes, perhaps she can cancel some of its deleterious effects and at least envision--if not occupy--a world in which women find equality and fulfillment. The great difficulty she faces, though, is that the Bible itself is not univocal. There is no single voice for her to appropriate, but rather a multiplicity of voices. And though the tradition of biblical interpretation which dominates Brontë's world tends to be male-dominated, even it is not stable.

By destabilizing biblical imagery and narrative, Lucy Snowe follows in the path established by Brontë's earlier narrators. Also like them, however, she sends mixed signals to her readers regarding how they should interpret her use of the Bible. When Lucy receives help from Graham Bretton
on her first night in Villette, although she doesn't yet recognize him, she says that because of the familiarity of his British accent within a world of foreign and unintelligible language, she would "almost as soon have thought of distrusting the Bible" as to doubt him as her guide in the strange new setting of Labassecour. However, such a remark assumes a degree of stability and easy intelligibility in the Bible which is not the case. Christina Crosby cautions that the "sustained biblical intertextuality and insistently figurative style of Villette call for an informed interpretation." And yet the implicit trust in the Bible of which Lucy speaks would seem to operate outside of any conscious interpretive framework and more at an intuitive, emotional level, like recognizing a familiar voice or accent. So we must be careful about taking our cues regarding how to interpret the biblical material in the novel from the fictional autobiographer herself. Clearly, though, through Lucy's adaptation of this material, whether the methods be friendly or antagonistic, obvious or subtle, Charlotte Brontë does more than merely enhance the artistry of her now quite mature fiction. She attempts nothing less than the creation, through fiction, of new possibilities for her life and for those of other women, like her and her fictional narrator, victimized by a repressive society.

One of Brontë's most common uses for the Bible in her
novels is the creation of parallels between biblical characters and her own. In some cases these parallels consist of elaborate systems of resonances, from physical appearance to behavior patterns to literal mimicking of actions. In other cases, though, her narrators seem content to make only the slightest association between the canonical and the fictional characters. Some of these parallels may be dismissed as little more than evidence of the degree to which Victorian literary culture was saturated with biblical language and references. Biblical words just flow out whenever some characters open their mouths. Others, though, carry within them intimations of deeper meaning.

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Character roles in parallels to biblical stories are never stable for long in Charlotte Brontë's novels. Diane Sadoff suggests that in Lucy's impersonation of a man at Madame Beck's fête, "the female garb she exposes at her hem is the beginning of Lucy's determination to find her own voice as a woman." Like a man, but not exactly, Lucy appropriates the outward appearance, rights and privileges of the male (one example of which for our purposes would be biblical interpretation), but is not subsumed beneath the garb. This demonstration of the fluid nature of gender offers a perfect emblem for the first strategy we will
consider. If a woman can readily assume those prerogatives of maleness associated with language without jeopardizing her basic femaleness, then perhaps Brontë can incorporate biblical language into her own without being compromised by its male-dominated history of interpretation. But as we saw in the limitations of the narrative style on Shirley, if her "re-vision" is to be successful, Brontë must use a narrator who can be both a participant in and an embodiment of this gender destabilization. Many of the gender-reversing allusions are brief, based on no more than a word or a phrase; others are much more complex, even multiple in their nature. We will examine several of each kind before trying to draw any general conclusions.

Although Graham may be depicted as a god worshiped by at least two, if not three, of the women in his life, at times the relationship of power is reversed and gender matching is abandoned. Upon hearing the story of Joseph read aloud, Polly declares that Jacob loved his son as much as she loves Graham. Indeed, if Graham were to die, Polly claims she would "refuse to be comforted, and go down into the grave to you mourning" (37), just as Jacob did (see Genesis 37:35). The Old Testament patriarch is an unlikely parallel for little Paulina. His very real grief over his supposed loss (i.e. unknown to him Joseph is not really dead) seems disproportionate when compared to Polly's juvenile expression of grief for Graham's hypothetical
death, but the marked quotation forces us to read the two stories side by side, at least for a moment. If we try to expand this connection into a full-blown parallel, though, we raise more questions than we find answers for. While Graham's favored position in his family may remind us of Joseph, his status as an only child certainly does not. And while our sense of the genuineness of Polly's declaration of love for Graham is heightened by her self-depiction as the grieving patriarch, the narrative offers no clear indicators of any further similarities on her part to Jacob.

When we are reintroduced to Mr. Home and his daughter Polly as Count de Bassompierre and "the little countess," the father calls attention to Polly's noticeable lack of change in the ten years that have passed since the novel's opening chapters. "She neither grows in wisdom nor in stature" (401). Readers familiar with the Bible will recognize these words as a negation of Luke's statement at the end of his so-called infancy narrative summarizing Jesus' growth (see Luke 2:52). Luke, in turn, borrowed these words from the narrative of Samuel's childhood produced by Israel's greatest historian (see 1 Samuel 2:26). However, the parallel is imperfect. Both Samuel and Jesus are said to have grown not only mentally and physically, but also "in favour with God and man." We might consider these words a father's urbane and ultra-literary denigration of his daughter, clever, but not especially surprising. Or the
omission of the adopted text's final phrase might signify the whole point of the allusion. If the latter is the case, what exactly does the omission imply? Is Polly so utterly unlike her two young biblical types that her growth in human and divine relationships is not worth mentioning? Maybe she does resemble Samuel and Jesus in this third respect, though not in the first two. In either case, Brontë's linking of Polly with two male biblical characters of such stature suggests that any gender expectations based upon anti-female interpretations of the Bible are subject to "re-vision."

When Graham discovers that Lucy is acquainted with Ginevra Fanshawe, he presses her for information about his beloved. Obviously a bit peeved over his smitten behavior, Lucy imagines herself answering, "Am I her keeper?" (208). Given her own unresolved feelings for Dr. John and her jealousy over Ginevra's attraction for him, Lucy's use of Cain's infamous statement of denial of responsibility for his brother Abel is highly significant, in spite of the brevity of the allusion. Since Dr. John apparently plays God in this mini-drama, clearly it is Ginevra who has made the offering found acceptable in his sight. As Cain, Lucy tries to hide the murderous anger in her heart through feigned nonchalance. And, in this case--since Dr. John is not a terribly perceptive "God"--she succeeds. Though this minor character parallel does not exhaust Lucy's complex attitude toward Ginevra, it does reveal one rather
significant side of it. Lucy the narrator must have a particularly difficult time revealing this anger which she recalls in her younger self. Perhaps she uses the biblical typology as a means of acknowledging it, though only indirectly.

Often the number of words used in an allusion is no indicator of the impact it has on its adopted text. Even single words or brief phrases may produce a string of resonances between the novel and the Bible. In a late-night confession, Paulina tells Lucy about receiving a letter from Graham. Troubled about the propriety of accepting a letter from a gentleman without telling her father, Paulina admits to giving papa "his twelve letters--his herd of possessions" but keeping back her "one ... ewe-lamb" (542). In this very unlikely setting, she seems to be alluding to the parable used by the prophet Nathan to trick King David into condemning himself for his crimes against Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 12:1-6). Nathan's story features two men, one rich and the other poor. The rich man has "many flocks and herds," but the poor man has only one ewe lamb that he treats like one of his children. But in spite of his great wealth, the rich man steals the poor man's ewe lamb, has it slaughtered, and serves it to a guest. On the surface, the parable itself seems to have little visible connection to Paulina's situation. True, her father certainly receives more mail than she does, so on
that level her jealous hoarding of her single letter is understandable. If this is the only link, though, the allusion seems almost trivial. But when we remember the royal predicament to which Nathan addresses himself, more serious parallels become apparent.

At its heart, the act which elicits the biblical story that is the adopted text for Paulina's allusion is about sexual passion and covetousness. The desire to possess leads to deception, violence, and the rupture of relationship. In Paulina's version, though, the letter isn't the real "ewe" to be guarded jealously. Instead, if we view Graham as this object of desire--as friend for M. de Bassompierre and lover for Paulina--the biblical parallel adds a new dimension to the narrative. The parallels with Nathan's story suggests that Paulina, as the rightful owner, is in danger of losing her one prize to a greedy, acquisitive father. But since Graham could easily fill both roles, no conflict necessarily arises. What Paulina seems to fear, though, is that her father's failure to recognize her as a grown young woman will preclude the possibility of any romantic involvement on her part, with Graham or with anyone else. Out of his self-serving desire to interfere with and direct his daughter's life, M. de Bassompierre fills the role condemned by the biblical prophet, with Graham surprisingly cast as a sort of wrong gender Bathsheba.
When narrating her first encounter with Madame Beck and detailing the scrutiny she underwent, Lucy uses what appears to be only an offhanded expression to confess that she was crying. Many readers may simply skip over the words "tell it not in Gath" (106), assuming them to be a private oddity of Lucy's speech. However, when we examine the adopted text for this unmarked quotation, we discover a significant double meaning behind these words apparently used so casually. The words quoted are from the lament which David sings upon learning of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan:

Your glory, O Israel,
lies slain upon your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,
the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult.

2 Samuel 1:19-20

The dramatic irony within David's words is not felt unless the reader knows that before David learns of the deaths the Philistines have already desecrated the bodies of Saul and his sons and "sent messengers throughout the land . . . to carry the good news" (1 Samuel 31:9). What he fears and what he wishes in vain to prevent have already occurred. The "daughters of the Philistines" are already rejoicing.

When Lucy uses these words, there can be no doubt that
she views the people of Labassecour as the Philistines and
the girls of the pensionnat (over whom she is about to be
installed as teacher) as the daughters of the Philistines,
whose taunts of triumph she fears. In the face of such an
enemy, Lucy cannot afford to reveal any weakness by crying.
But there may be a second sense in which we can read these
words. In David's lament Gath is used only in the general
sense of a representative Philistine city. But it also has
a more specific significance, especially in relation to
David, as the city from which the giant Goliath came (see 1
Samuel 17:4). Once we have recognized the connection Brontë
creates between Lucy's words and those of David's lament, by
extension we can view Lucy as the young boy David, scared
but determined, facing and overcoming the enormous threat of
the diminutive pensionnat directress. However, whereas
David's victory routed the Philistines completely, what Lucy
wins is at best a minor skirmish in an ongoing war, the
outcome of which remains doubtful even at the novel's end.
Through this gender reversal, Brontë reveals a side of
Lucy's character which the narrator herself tries to hide.
As we have seen, this is not the only time Lucy assumes at
least a partially male identity in order to enjoy the
prerogatives of power which come with it. However, the
ambivalence she shows toward the overt appropriation of such
power defines many of the gender-reversing allusions in the
novel. Nowhere is this ambivalence more apparent than in
Lucy's Jael/Sisera allusion.

Because of its reversal of the expected power relationship between males and females, the biblical story of Jael and Sisera is a natural for Brontë to adapt to her fiction using this strategy. However, by casting Lucy in both parts, she creates a memorable image for female dividedness in a male-dominated society. Knowing that she has no immediate prospects for relief from her suffering, Lucy feels she must stifle her longings. "It was necessary to knock [them] on the head," she tells us, "after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples" (152). The story to which Lucy alludes is one of war, intrigue, and murder (see Judges 4:17-22). Sisera is the commander of the Canaanite army which has oppressed Israel for twenty years, but the end of his power has been decreed by Yahweh, the God of Israel. The prophetess Deborah foretells that Sisera will be struck down by the hand of a woman. His army routed in battle by the Israelites, Sisera flees to what he believes will be safety in the tent of an ally. But as he sleeps, Jael, the wife of his ally, drives a tent peg into his temple. Brontë's fictional parallel differs from its adopted text, though, in that Lucy's longings refuse to die.

Unlike Sisera . . . they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples
bleed, and the brain thrill to its core. (152) Gilbert and Gubar suggest that "in personifying the wish for escape as Sisera, and the repression of it as Jael, Lucy explains how painful her self-division is."8 Taken at face value, the image is horrifying, not only for the graphic nature of its violence, but also for its implied psychic self-mutilation. Lucy Snowe is a woman divided against herself, a single entity over which and within which two powers—Reason and Feeling—are engaged in mortal combat. Incorporating within herself both the desire for freedom and the disapproving voice of the dominant culture which wishes to restrict her options, she is both Jael and Sisera. Opting for violent repression rather than alliance to only one of the two competing powers, she betrays herself and drives the spike into her own temple. But because of her inner division, she does so without the courage to finish the job, thereby leaving herself in an agony which the reader begins to suspect is her customary state.

Somewhat later, as Lucy describes the tension within her between "the dry, stinting check of Reason" and "the full, liberal impulse of Feeling" (334), Brontë reaffirms this conflict within Lucy with another gender-reversing allusion. Lucy "serve[s] two masters" (cf. Matthew 6:24); she "bow[s] down in the house of Rimmon, and lift[s] the heart at another shrine" (334). The allusion is to the story of Elisha's healing of the Syrian army commander,
Naaman. As a consequence of his healing, Naaman becomes a worshiper of Elisha's God, Yahweh. However, political expediency will require him to "bow himself in the house of Rimmon" (2 Kings 5:18) when accompanying his Syrian master. Unlike Naaman, though, who knows where his true allegiance lies, Lucy is constantly torn between these "two masters." Brontë almost seems to suggest that Lucy cannot carry off the duplicity as successfully as Naaman does because of the mixed signals her culture sends to women. Increasingly in Villette we will find Brontë's gender-reversing allusions revealing problems for which they offer no solutions. We will return to this passage in the next section to consider it at greater length as an example of Brontë's Providence-questioning strategy.

Brontë frequently employs a single biblical story or image in a chain of references spread across the novel. One such chain is formed by various character parallels revolving around the figure of Nebuchadnezzar and the stories in the book of Daniel. In many of the passages associated with this biblical figure, Brontë explores the idea of idolatry, as part of her strategy for undermining conventional notions of God's sovereignty, but we will consider here only those which also contain gender-reversing tendencies.

Lucy's fear and loathing of Roman Catholicism is so deep that even after she has been received kindly by Père
Silas, in whose confessional she seeks refuge, she privately scorns his invitation to return the next day to receive his prayerful counsel. Though she is personally drawn to his kindness, she links his religious faith—which she labels "honest popish superstition"—with idolatry:

> Did I, do you suppose, reader, contemplate venturing again within that worthy priest's reach?
> As soon should I have thought of walking into a Babylonish furnace. (228)

The reference to Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to destroy the three Hebrew young men who refused to bow down and worship him (see Daniel 3) is somewhat surprising. True, it provides a powerful biblical vehicle for Lucy's assessment of the dreaded Romanism. By linking it with idolatry, she can dismiss it as utterly contrary to the true faith in God. But this critique seems to be offered without any degree of self-critical awareness on Lucy's part. Earlier in the novel she linked Dr. John with Nebuchadnezzar in a flattering way—in a manner which employs and seems to endorse the familiar Brontëan connection between idolatry and the female's consuming love for the male. So, wherein lies the difference between the idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church and the idolatry of Lucy (or Charlotte for that matter)? If the text presented any evidence that the older Lucy disavowed these views and recalled them at this point only to reveal her youthful weaknesses, we could read
the allusions within that context, but such evidence is not readily apparent. We must either dismiss both references as mere literary effects without any hidden interpretive depth, or acknowledge the unreconciled conflict apparent in Lucy's narration.

When M. Paul and Lucy meet at the art gallery in front of the painting of Cleopatra, his disapproval of the "astounding insular audacity" (287) of English women calls forth the imagery of Daniel's story once more. Calling them "nurslings of Protestantism," he admits his astonishment over how "unguarded Englishwomen," if "thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's hottest furnace, . . . would issue forth untraversed by the smell of fire" (291). While it is certainly possible the reference appears here merely for its direct illustrative value, the linking of the two texts demands that we deal seriously with how such proximity affects each. Since we are not privy to M. Paul's thoughts, we cannot be sure what he means by "Nebuchadnezzar's hottest furnace" (291), but the allusion can be read in a manner which reflects critically on the very religious tradition from which he comes. Unlike the young women with whom M. Paul is best acquainted, if English women walk unscathed through the temptations and dangers of European society because of their superior faith, they can justly be associated with the three young Hebrew men miraculously spared by God in Daniel's story. If, on the other hand,
their temerity is simply a product of their unthinking
naiveté and provincialism. M. Paul's linking of them with
the three models of faith in the biblical story calls its
message of unwavering trust in God into question. In other
words, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego may have just been
cocky, or lucky, rather than inviolate in God's protection.
While such a suggestion is almost unthinkable coming from a
devoted churchman like Paul Emanuel, its note of moody,
pessimistic doubt is not foreign to the overall tone of the
novel.

Sometimes these chains of allusion are linked at the
level of the novel's plot rather than by their use of a
single adopted text. When they all involve gender reversal,
though, Brontë is able to compound her destabilizing effect
in both directions--adopted and adoptive text. When the
same chain also contains Brontë's use of another strategy--
e.g. relocating the "otherworldly"--we see how the richness
of the allusiveness in Villette almost defies
categorization.

When Lucy overhears Madame Walravens make reference to
Justine Marie, the name conjures up for Lucy thoughts of the
legendary dead nun. Assuring herself that the one named is
"in her grave," Lucy transforms Madame Walravens into a
figurative King David mourning the dead infant son produced
by his adulterous and murderous union with Bathsheba:9 "You
shall go to her, but she shall not come to you" (670).
While on one level these words may represent no more than wishful thinking on Lucy's part, the connection denounces Madame Walravens et al for the same self-indulgent and sinful scheming for which the prophet Nathan condemned King David. The link is only momentary, though, for as Lucy continues to listen she discovers her assumption, as well as the biblical parallel implied in it, to be unfounded. "The quietest common-place answer met the strange, the dead-disturbing, the Witch-of-Endor query of the hunchback" (670), from which Lucy concludes that the Justine Marie referred to can only be one still living.

After enjoying a brief moment of laughter at Madame Beck's expense over her misguided suspicions regarding a possible love affair between Lucy and Dr. John, Lucy finds her merriment replaced by bitterness. Turning, as she so often does, to the Bible for an image to convey her feelings, she alludes to the incident in which Moses called forth water from the rock at Meribah. We apparently find in this allusion two very similar biblical stories blended together. Lucy speaks of the bitterness which follows upon her laughter, then states, "it was the rock struck and Meribah's waters gushing out" (166). But the account of Moses and the rock at Meribah makes no mention of bitterness. However, two chapters earlier in Exodus we find a story in which the Israelites "could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter" (Exodus 15:23). If these
stories are being drawn from memory, the similarity of the names Marah and Meribah may have led to a blending of the two stories. If we assume that the dramatic action of striking the rock has been added to the story of bitter waters at Marah, the allusion is a simple and direct expansion upon the idea of bitterness. On the other hand, if we assume that the story of Moses and the rock at Meribah is the primary allusion and the link with bitterness is achieved by conflating two similar and nearly contiguous water stories, our reading of the allusion changes rather dramatically.

In the version of the story recorded in Exodus 17:6-7, Moses names the spot Meribah because of the quarreling spirit among the people. But in the parallel account found in Numbers 20:9-13, we learn that Moses disobeys God's commands, thereby forfeiting his right both to lead the people into the Promised Land or even to enter it himself. The mental anguish Lucy describes, the barrage of contradictory impulses by which she is beset, could easily be linked with the quarreling spirit of the Israelites at Meribah. But when her laughter over Madame Beck's mistaken notion about Dr. John's romantic involvements subsides, Lucy is left with the cold reality that she will never enter that particular Promised Land. The autobiographical recounting of her few moments of near intimacy with Graham Bretton becomes Lucy's Pisgah vision (see Deuteronomy 34:1-4).--
elevated, but lonely. In each of these readings, Lucy plays a human role, either the children of Israel or Moses. However, if we feel the force of her statement that "a kind of wrath smote" her, perhaps Lucy envisions herself as the rock itself, from which the uncharacteristic "tumult" of emotions is released with a gush. She tells us that when the "turbulence subsided . . . [she] was again Lucy Snowe" (166). She then presumably regains the cold, hard, rock-like exterior which was hers before being struck by all these conflicting emotions.

In all of these examples of gender reversal, Brontë encourages non-gender-specific reading of the Bible. Lucy alone plays the parts of Cain, David, Naaman, Sisera, and all three Hebrew children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, but the parallels are neither simple nor uniform. Brontë is doing more than asking us to pretend for a moment that her female narrator and protagonist is in some way a fictional fulfillment of this variety of biblical men. If she can demonstrate that gender is not a limiting factor in typological interpretation--albeit a very free and variable form of that hermeneutic system--then perhaps she can challenge many of her society's assumptions about gender which she feels limit the manner in which she can lead her life. In other words, if major male figures within the biblical salvation history can be believably postfigured by women in her novels, she can appropriate and use the
influence which that authoritative word still retains for her society--whether that influence is spiritual, cultural, or literary--to proclaim a new, "re-vised" word.
Brontë employs her second strategy more extensively and more seriously in Villette than in any of her other novels. We find numerous characters--some males, other females--cast in the role of God, with varying degrees of appropriateness, but all of them demeaning the notion of divinity. We also hear questions raised about how easily finite beings can identify the agent behind historical processes--both big and small--or if any such agent exists. Finally, we are asked to consider the painful effects produced by the delays and inconsistencies in what we often call Providence. We will consider examples of all three variations on this strategy in order to determine the extent to which Brontë still tries, in her last novel, to create an alternative world view which will allow both her characters and herself to survive in a world in which former guarantees of order no longer seem valid.

We'll start by considering more fully the artistry and implications of a passage I discussed briefly in the Introduction as an example of Brontë's strategy of undermining the notion of divine control by drawing obviously ludicrous parallels between God and her fictional characters. As Volume 3 begins, Lucy describes the imperious air with which M. Paul presides over his classroom and his particular aversion to interruption. The portress,
it seems, must frequently fetch pupils from his lessons to attend other classes. Strategically placed where she can listen and watch as the unfortunate Rosine plunges into "the gathering storm" to remove another student, Lucy watches her "snatch[ing], as it were, a brand from the burning--a pupil from under M. Paul's nose" (468). At a purely mimetic level, the image is masterful. Its suggestion of a danger which necessitates both caution and quickness makes it especially apt for the situation in which Brontë employs it. The smoldering branch is spared from the fire in order to be put to another use; the students whom Rosine removes must attend other classes.

When we turn from this simple mimetic parallel, M. Paul's wrath corresponds well to the note of judgment sounded in the biblical text from which the image is drawn. But what are we to do with Rosine? When the prophets Amos and Zechariah employ this image, they claim that God is responsible not only for the "burning" but also for the "snatching." The remnant is redeemed by the same one who sent the destruction from which the remnant is spared. In the novel's use of the image, though, these two functions are assigned to two separate agents. M. Paul is responsible for the burning, Rosine for the snatching. Are we then to view Rosine's action as in any way the equivalent of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from the wrath of his own judgment, made manifest in M. Paul's classroom? If so,
given the comic tone of the passage, the allusion seems to undermine the gravity of the original. However, we might justly attribute to either Lucy or Brontë herself a degree of bitterness regarding God's hesitancy or outright inability to redeem those who suffer which could account for such biting sarcasm. The allusion supports two opposite readings, depending on which text's influence prevails. Either redemption is an easier matter than it sometimes appears because--like M. Paul's--God's "bark is worse than his bite," or Brontë views God as an ineffectual redeemer, nervously snatching his charges from a danger more powerful than his ability to save.

Many of Brontë's substitutions of her characters for God in Villette fit the now familiar pattern of idolatry. The reader remains unsure, however, of the exact theological implications of such language. While it seems doubtful, given her background in the Haworth parsonage, that Charlotte would produce literature which espouses outright idolatry, the conflict between flesh and spirit in Villette does suggest what Robert Polhemus calls a "continuing, oscillating displacement between" eros and the Christian God. Polhemus contends that Brontë "uses the tone and forms of religious writing to explore erotic faith." Somewhat surprisingly, though, we find Brontë creating erotic antitypes for God in Graham only. Though M. Paul is frequently linked with God in decidedly "heretical" ways,
these allusions seem to lack the erotic dimension Polhemus speaks of. Indeed, it appears at times as if neither Lucy nor Brontë herself was able to resolve the tension created by the presence of two such antithetical love objects.

Occasionally, Brontë's parallels between God and one of her characters are so subtle we almost overlook them. When Lucy acknowledges the end of their brief period of correspondence, she ponders how she might safely put away her precious letters from Graham. In Lucy's final assessment of what those letters mean to her, Brontë associates Graham with God through a fleeting biblical reference. Lucy speaks of her bundle of letters as "most dear still, though Ichabod was written on their covers" (423). The term is a symbolic name in Hebrew, appearing in one of the darkest moments in Israel's history. The Ark of the Covenant has been captured by the Philistines, and Eli, Israel's judge for the past forty years, has died, along with both of his sons. When Eli's daughter-in-law gives birth to a son, she names him Ichabod, because "the glory is departed from Israel" (1 Samuel 4:21). So if Lucy sees "Ichabod" written figuratively across the front of her letters from Graham, it must be because his "glory" has now departed from her life. She has worshiped him in the past, but now he has become truly unattainable. They will remain friends, and his letters are still "dear" to Lucy, but Polly's reappearance on the scene strikes the death blow to
Lucy's already unrealistic hopes for any romantic involvement with Graham. We can only assume by extension that Polly is the Philistine who has captured Lucy's "ark."

In Lucy's next actions with the letters, Brontë abandons most of the subtlety of the previous example. Because her hopes are now dead, Lucy decides to bury them. In fact, she creates a kind of shrine for them, as if by wrapping them in oiled silk and enclosing them in an airtight glass bottle, then burying the bottle at the base of the ghostly nun's ancient pear tree, she can preserve something of their glory in an ark of her own design. Blending New Testament imagery with that already drawn from the Old, Lucy's preparation of the bottle recalls the burial of Christ. Lucy calls the silk cloth in which she wraps the letters their "winding sheet" (424). She places the bottle in a tomb-like hole in a garden, and then seals the entrance with a stone. And though the letters are never resurrected, the appearance of the "ghost nun" just after Lucy seals the "tomb" partially completes the parallel with the adopted text, though it does so in an extremely convoluted manner.¹⁵

Before recognizing M. Paul in the crowd at the fête, Lucy sees Graham. In the interval of time before he recognizes her, Lucy indulges herself in wondering what place she might occupy in his heart. Temporarily abandoning first-person narration and displacing herself into third person, perhaps to protect herself from the snow-melting
implications of her reverie, she confesses her belief (read "hope") that "in that goodly mansion, his heart, he kept one little place under the skylights where Lucy might have entertainment, if she chose to call" (661). In return, she keeps "a place for him, too," which seems to be measureless, "like the tent of Peri-Banou" (662). As long as she keeps it tightly constricted, she may carry it in the palm of her hand. If ever released, though, "its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host" (662).

Lucy's language here is both highly revealing and disturbingly unorthodox, though not unusual for a Charlotte Brontë heroine. During the period Israel spent in the wilderness, God dwelt among them in an elaborate tent called the Tabernacle (see e.g. Exodus 40). To call the space in Lucy's heart reserved for Graham a tabernacle, then, is to equate Graham with God. Perhaps even more significant, though, is Lucy's use of the term "host," by which Brontë extends the implications of the allusion even further. Graham's space in Lucy's heart is not so much the tabernacle of old, reserved for the mysterious God of fire and smoke and lightning on the mountaintop, but rather the tabernacle on the Christian altar, the repository for the Eucharistic elements (i.e. the "host") after they have been transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Francesca Kazan's assessment is correct (if somewhat understated): "to
speculate on the possibility of enclosing the loved object within a tabernacle, to compare him, in effect, to the body of Christ, could be considered as heretical."16 In this sense of tabernacle, Lucy's heart becomes the altar upon which the body of her beloved Lord, Graham Bretton, is sacrificed and the sacramental elements, which represent that body, rest. If we allow this reading of Lucy's words,17 we have Brontë at her most nearly blasphemous here.

In the previous section we considered Brontë's parallels between Lucy and Naaman the Syrian army commander as an example of her gender-reversing strategy. When we focus on the issue of worshiping two Gods, though, we see the centrality of the conflict between Reason and Feeling in Brontë's writing. By whatever names these "conflicting impulses"18 are called, they represent challenges to God's sovereignty. Brontë's allusive language in these examples is more than clever figuration. She explores here the question of where basic human loyalties lie and what motivates persons, or even what controls the direction of human lives. If the Christian notion of Providence no longer provides a satisfactory answer, because of evidence against the orderliness of life, what power—if any—steers our lives, or are we totally free agents?

In the biblical story, giving Naaman the benefit of the doubt allows us to read his duplicity as nothing more than a shrewd compromise for the sake of appearance which has no
effect on his relationship with the true God. Trying to
decode Lucy's role in the allusion, we might assume that she
observes merely the outward forms of Reason and calm, but
inwardly considers Feeling her true god. After further
consideration, however, the parallel with Naaman's story is
less straight-forward than it first may appear. The
language is sufficiently ambiguous at this point to allow,
perhaps even encourage, misconstruction. Which is being
portrayed as the false Syrian god, Reason or Feeling? The
textual parallels seem to point toward the former. While
the language associated with Reason is strongly negative,
Feeling seems to be greatly desired. Lucy's figurative
bowing down recalls the "stinting check" given by Reason,
and her lifting of the heart suggests "the full, liberal
impulse of Feeling" (363). Finally, the order of treatment
would seem to confirm a link between Reason and Rimmon, the
Syrian god. But Brontë apparently overturns this simple,
direct reading with the interpretation Lucy gives to the
allusion in the following paragraph.

True, she and Feeling unseat Reason for a moment--long
enough for her to vent her passion in the form of two sheets
of paper "covered with the language of a strongly adherent
affection" (363)--but at the very moment of its expression,
says Lucy,

the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar
would yield, Reason would leap in, vigorous and
revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page. She did right. (364)

If we accept at least momentarily the personification, the powerful, graphic nature of the imagery suggests the kind of metaphysical ravishment attested to by the prophet Jeremiah or the poet John Donne. The "bow[ing] down in the house of Rimmon" now looks like a forced, but ultimately willing, submission to a "god" other than the one cherished by the heart. And if Reason "did right" by overpowering Lucy and the false god Feeling, then perhaps the lifting up of her heart "at another shrine" should be viewed as a species of idolatry. While Naaman serves two masters only technically --his true allegiance having been sworn to the God of Israel --Lucy's dilemma is genuine. Her "bowing down" is not mere outward conformity; her "lifting the heart" is not undivided loyalty. So, despite their linking through this allusion, Lucy's genuine inner conflict differs greatly from Naaman's political subtlety, and the appropriate objects of worship in the two stories are diametrically opposed.

Closely related to this dialectic between Reason and Feeling is Lucy's personification of another abstraction, Imagination. When she launches into a soliloquy on how and under what circumstances she is affected by what she calls the Creative Impulse, in typical Romantic fashion, Lucy
envisions the impetus to creativity and imagination as external and largely beyond the artist's control. But, while the doctrine of inspiration described here may be nothing surprising, the choice of personifications for this power sounds almost polytheistic. "The most maddening of masters" (with the exception of M. Paul himself), the Creative Impulse becomes for Lucy "a dark Baal" or "a perturbed Dagon" (515-16) demanding a sacrifice. Even allowing for the hyperbole common to her narrators, Lucy's use of the proper names of pagan deities affects how we understand her view of this process. The Creative Impulse is not only external and independent, but apparently also in contrast to (perhaps even antithetical toward) much orthodox religious thought. Using a biographical critical approach, Irene Tayler tries to baptize Brontë's exuberance into more traditional Christian categories, suggesting that "the divine Father at last slakes Charlotte's thirst for love and approval" as her earthly father never did:

Charlotte dramatized through Lucy's story the redemption of her imagination. From its early, fallen condition, its death-tending worship of the false gods, of sexuality and the flesh, it rises to an eternally life-giving worship of God the Father, the source of her own creative genius and also its mighty analogue and original.
However, Tayler fails to treat the actual language in this passage seriously. The Christian God is nowhere mentioned, and when he is, elsewhere in the novel, the attitude rarely seems to be one of worship. If both Lucy and Charlotte view the power of Imagination as life-giving, as Tayler suggests, it gives life in a way which differs radically from the orthodox Christian view held by much of the culture of which Brontë was a part.

Brontë links two different characters in the novel with Jesus through long series of connected images and plot parallels. Her treatment of the young girl Justine Marie Sauveur seems almost a foretaste of her most full blown typological reinterpretation of scripture—M. Paul Emanuel. Lucy's fertile imagination (aided by her drug-induced delusions) creates in her "a presentiment of discovery, a strong conviction of coming disclosure" (671). Recalling the picture of the nun on the sliding wall panel at Madame Walraes' house and all of the appearances of the ghostly nun at the pensionnat, she engages in her own brand of necromancy. Adapting St. Paul's memorable image for the unveiling of mystery after death (see 1 Corinthians 13:12), Lucy declares, "Hitherto I had seen this spectre only through a glass darkly; now was I to behold it face to face" (671). For Paul, such clarity of vision will be possible only "when the complete comes" (1 Corinthians 13:10, my emphasis). As if on signal, when Lucy leans forward to look
for the arrival of the ghostly nun, Josef Emanuel cries out "She comes!" (671). By the light of a nearby torch, Lucy finally glimpses "the Expected." The air of "revelry and mystery" in the park affects Lucy so greatly she must seek the reader's hypothetical approval for her observation that the newly arrived figure "is like the nun of the attic" and "looks the resurrection of the flesh," even that "she is a risen ghost" (672, my emphasis). Yet no sooner has this fearful apparition been summoned than Lucy's narrative voice intrudes and dissolves it. Disavowing any dealing with such "falsities" and "figments," Lucy returns to a style of story-telling "cut, as heretofore, from the homely web of truth" (672).

If we return to consider the moment of the anticipated arrival, the unexpected assignment of the words of announcement to Paul Emanuel's half-brother Josef cannot be incidental. His given name echoes that of Jesus' earthly father.24 The girl who arrives in place of Lucy's expected ghostly nun, we are told later, bears the "patronymic . . . Sauveur," the French word for "savior" (673). The contrived manner of their presentation leads us to treat all of these details as clues, if not so much to the young girl's identity, then to her significance. The reasons for linking her with Jesus and for suggesting salvific implications to her arrival, though, are far from clear. Her connection with Paul Emanuel only reinforces her association with the
Christ story, though it in no way clarifies it. However, by exploring the links between these references and other echoes of the nativity story, we can possibly discern a pattern in Brontë's use of this particular biblical story.

On her first visit to the home of Madame Walravens, Lucy mistakes the portrait of Justine Marie Walravens for a painting of the Madonna (566). Interestingly, despite the location of the house at Numéro 3, Rue des Mages (i.e. the three wise men), it is Lucy who comes bearing a gift. In Père Silas' explanation to Lucy that the young girl "gave herself to God" (566), Syd Thomas hears an echo of the divine impregnation of the Virgin Mary, "so that the Savior (Sauveur) might be born." Thomas further speculates that this Justine Marie is the illegitimate daughter of Paul Emanuel and Justine Marie Walravens, conceived during their betrothal. And though M. Paul does not acknowledge this parentage, he does refer to Mlle. Sauveur as his god-daughter (is the prefix especially significant?). While no firm textual evidence can be offered in support of a biological link between M. Paul and Mlle. Sauveur, the parallels thus created with Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus are intriguing. However, in Thomas' scenario the imagery becomes seriously convoluted when the one identified in the Bible as the Savior (i.e. Immanuel, or God with us) becomes instead the father of Sauveur. But while Thomas' speculations are intriguing, I find little clear textual
evidence to support her particular reading.

Somewhat later, as she wanders among the strange pseudo-Egyptian sights of Villette's great fête, Lucy finds herself in a chaotic, dream-like state in which she cannot trust her own perceptions. Distracted in her search for the fountain near the center of the city, she suddenly hears what she describes as

such a sound as I thought might be heard if Heaven were to open--such a sound, perhaps, as was heard above the plains of Bethlehem, on the night of glad tidings. (657)

But when she discovers the source of the sound, it is no more than "a wild Jäger chorus" enhanced by the circumstances of the night and her own mood (658). However, we must not too quickly discard this descriptive language.

If a simple human choir can be so readily mistaken for the heavenly host which announced the birth of the long-awaited Immanuel (see Luke 2:8-14), Brontë may be setting us up to have our expectations frustrated. She gives us clear signals that we should view M. Paul as a fictional antitype for Christ, the fulfillment of what Christ--as traditionally conceived--cannot be for a woman like Lucy. But is the typology finally successful? Many of the parallels Brontë draws between Christ and her fictional hero are based upon Jesus' parables of the coming Kingdom of God. Filled with apocalyptic language and imagery, these allusions also
exhibit Brontë's "otherworldly" strategy. We will consider those in which the parallels with Christ seem to take priority.

Lucy tells us that M. Paul, as well as Madame Beck, "was on intimate terms with" her desk, though differing from his kinswoman in making no effort to be secretive. But she confesses that she has never witnessed his visitation: "Watch as I would, I could not detect the hours and moments of his coming" (495). Lucy frequently uses the language of eschatological watchfulness in connection with M. Paul, but always with a twist. In Jesus' warnings to his followers about the necessity of preparedness for his return, he requires a high degree of alertness because the hour is unknown, not because it will be difficult to detect when it does occur. Indeed, the descriptions all depict an event impossible to overlook! And yet, in spite of her vigilance, Lucy cannot catch M. Paul "in the act" (495). To complicate our reading further, Lucy mixes the language of fairy tale with her biblical allusion, calling Paul a brownie, who comes in the night and leaves his finished product behind.

So when we try to assess how these biblical allusions affect our reading of the novel, we find two possibilities. Either Paul Emanuel is portrayed as Lucy's alternative Redeemer but neither the author nor her narrator can bring herself to make the assimilation complete, or the twisted, incomplete links drawn between the biblical Immanuel and his novelistic
counterpart are intended to raise questions about the
traditional Christian paradigm.\textsuperscript{26} Like so many who despair
while waiting for God's promised deliverance, Lucy may begin
to doubt its efficacy, or even its very reality.

In an uncharacteristic moment of self-revelation, Paul
Emanuel all but explicitly links himself with Jesus. His
description of himself as "ferocious, and bearded, and
monkish" borrows elements from various images of Jesus as
portrayed in the gospels and in Christian iconography. He
insists that the only ones "now living in this world" who
love him are "some few beings . . . poor in purse and in
spirit" (585, my emphasis). But these same beings will reap
a generous reward, for to them "a will and testament not to
be disputed, has bequeathed the kingdom of heaven" (586).
The reference to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5),
with M. Paul playing the lead role, is unmistakable. And
while his surname should make such references no surprise to
us, this instance differs from the rest. Here Brontë cred-
its the identification with Christ, in a kind of paradoxical
self-disguising self-declaration, to M. Paul himself, not to
Lucy, either as character or as narrator. What are we to
make of this apparent setting aside of narrative
conventions, even in a novel in which such conventions are
not scrupulously observed? Perhaps Charlotte Brontë herself
is speaking through her male protagonist at this point,
placing words of a messianic tenor in his mouth.
These words, in turn, elicit a statement of recognition from Lucy. She admits to possessing knowledge of M. Paul obtained through indirect means. She praises his constant care for Madame Walravens: "somebody forgave her trespasses, hoping to have his trespasses forgiven" (586-87; see Matthew 6:12-15). Though echoing the words of Jesus and modeling the behavior he requires of his followers, these words definitely imply an un-Christlike status. A central tenet of the Christian faith in all ages has been the sinless nature of Christ's life, so M. Paul's need to have his own trespasses forgiven certainly qualifies his "imitation" of Christ. But if we consider the notion that Brontë offers Paul Emanuel as an alternative to the traditional Christian Savior, rather than his antitype, the differences between the two may be more instructive than perplexing. Like so many of Brontë's heroines, Lucy seems to have little interest in the purely heavenly. If available to her, she probably would not accept it. So her savior must be earthly as well.

After M. Paul presents Lucy with the gift of her own school in the Faubourg Clotilde, she promises to be a "faithful steward." By itself, the term might not suggest any farther reaching implications, but Lucy continues, "I trust at your coming the account will be ready" (704). The combination of the term "steward" and the idea of being prepared to give an accounting to the master upon his return
recall Jesus' parables about his return and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Lucy's passionate declaration of homage to Paul Emanuel as her "king" merely completes the association Brontë is creating. And while we frequently find Brontë's heroines making idolatrous statements of devotion to the men they love, only in Villette do we find the language and imagery traditionally reserved in the Bible for God or Christ so persistently applied to a character.

As she describes Paul's generosity evident in his letters written from across the sea, Lucy exalts him even further. M. Paul "would give neither a stone, nor an excuse -- neither a scorpion, nor a disappointment" (713). In other words, he more than meets the minimum standard set by Jesus for the good father (see Matthew 7:9-10, Luke 11:11-12). But according to Jesus, exceeding this measure of goodness is precisely what God does. So in this respect, in spite of his absence, Paul Emanuel is rather like "God with" Lucy. As if this link were too tenuous, Brontë has Lucy elaborate. Jesus spoke of his own body as the "true bread . . . which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:32-33); M. Paul's letters, Lucy claims, "were real food that nourished" (713). In his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus offers her "living water" and assures her that whoever drinks of that water "will never be thirsty" (John 4:10, 14); words from this Emanuel are "living water that refreshed" (713). What
Brontë tells us, in essence, is that Lucy's relationship with M. Paul Emanuel has become sufficient for all her needs, not only physical and emotional, but spiritual as well. In his absence, now that they are physically apart, they have become even closer. Even his presumed death at the end of the novel may signal that he must leave Lucy in order to be more fully present for her through memory, in much the same way that Jesus leaves his disciples in order to send the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7).

In their meditations on the role of Providence in life, characters in Brontë's fiction frequently blur the lines between God and some other power—sometimes unspecified, but often Nature. Lucy's conviction that certain persons are "so born, so reared, so guided from a soft cradle to a calm and late grave, that no excessive suffering penetrates their lot" (632) may reflect her creator's attempt to view life optimistically, in spite of the marked degree to which "excessive suffering" has penetrated her life. However, we find in Lucy's statement the same Romantic theological vagueness evident in all of Charlotte Brontë's writing. God and Nature are practically indistinguishable. In a single sentence, Lucy describes these fortunate persons as both "Nature's elect" and "kind agents of God's kind attributes" (632). The capitalized form of Nature\textsuperscript{31} is typical of the fondness shown by all of Brontë's narrators for personifying abstract nouns, so perhaps we cannot view it as an entity
per se. Attributing to it the power to elect certain persons for blessedness, however, certainly seems to characterize Nature as like God in almost Calvinistic terms. Either way, Lucy's words here skirt the edge of Christian orthodoxy. But while in previous novels we have often seen this diminution of Providential control used as a strategy for creating hope, here the bitter tone and dark mood which began in Shirley seems to return.

When the "Sunshine" of Chapter 37 gives way to the "Cloud" of the following chapter, we clearly hear these darker under-tones of Lucy's affirmation of God's sovereignty. "But it is not so for all," she begins. Not everyone receives blessings, from Nature or from God. What options remain for those who do not? Resignation seems to be the strategy recommended by Lucy. She frequently claims a cold detachment from the extreme areas of life, far different from the passion which so often erupts from a Jane Eyre. And yet hints of a seething resentment can certainly be found. Her echo of Jesus' statement of submission in Gethsemane--"His [i.e. God's] will be done"--may sound like words of faith, but when she adds "as done it surely will be, whether we humble ourselves to resignation or not" (634, my emphasis), what at first appeared to be faith dissolves into bitterness. The highly rhetorical tone adopted in this paragraph cannot divert our attention from the implacable nature of the Providence described here. "WE
SHALL NOT DIE!" the narrative voice cries out at the end of this exhortation to faith and patience (635), but we might still wish that we could. Focusing on what follows Lucy's sermonette, Robert Polhemus points out that "Brontë immediately undercuts, even blasphemes, her onward-Christian-soldiers piece with an astounding juxtaposition" in which M. Paul is designated as "the master," thereby "casting him typologically as the awaited savior." 34 He finds here evidence of Lucy's inability to separate religion and love, but the juxtaposition also sets the narrator's uncharacteristic declaration of an apparently genuine Christian faith within the broader, decidedly non-Christian context of the novel, making something of an anomaly of it.

In contrast to Lucy's, biblical allusions made by Paulina tend to be straight-forward and uncomplicated, free of any of the irony or other literary manipulation employed by Brontë's narrator. On occasion, though, even Paulina becomes the vehicle for creating through biblical parallels the kind of somber tone we associate most often with Lucy. She confesses to Lucy that she has gathered, more from her reading than from personal experience, that life is "full of pain to some." She has

read of those who sowed in tears, and whose
harvest, so far from being reaped in joy, perished
by untimely blight, or was borne off by sudden
whirlwind. (543) 35
Paulina's allusion seems to question that great vision of Zion's restoration and renewal found in Psalm 126, in which a merciful God reverses the fortunes of those who have suffered while in exile in Babylon. Clearly a deliverance this dramatic rarely happens. In spite of their best efforts, "good, endeavoring people" (544) meet "the winter with empty garners" (543) and die for want of the expected harvest of mercy. What troubles Paulina especially is that, though she claims to be neither "endeavoring, nor actively good" (544), she prospers.

What seems to perplex her most is the apparent capriciousness with which blessings and woes are distributed. Though for Paulina the responsible agent is God, such a view is not consistently voiced in the novel. For her part, Lucy tends to blur the distinctions between several basically incompatible agencies supposedly given power over human life and ends by resigning the matter to faith. Though Paulina attributes her good fortune to God, Lucy at first gives credit to Paulina's "kind Fate," personified as a female. With a hint of bitterness, she admits to having noticed the "gentleness of her cares for" Paulina (545). Just a few sentences later, however, she ascribes Paulina's happiness to Providence. Her final words on the subject declare the blessedness of Paulina and Graham the result of "God's will," calling it "the attesting trace and lingering evidence of Eden" (546, my emphasis). In
other words, they manifest and benefit from what remains of Paradise in a mostly fallen world. Other, less fortunate ones, says Lucy, are subject to "fitful and gusty" weather or "are belated and overtaken by the early closing winter night" (546). Surely it is no coincidence that these representative examples of bad fortune sound so much like the shipwreck metaphor at the beginning of the Chapter 4 and the circumstances surrounding the Christmas Eve death of Miss Marchmont's lover and fiancé, Frank. Having alluded to these vague dark moments from the past, though, Lucy cannot deal with them. Instead, as she contrasts her own life to Paulina's, Lucy declares her faith that even this suffering is just, though the reasons for it remain God's secret.

In Villette Brontë often attacks the notion of Providence indirectly. While her narrator technically professes her belief in God's watchful care, the biblical allusions become opportunities for emphasizing the delay, rather than the certainty, of God's intervention. The chapter entitled "La Terrasse" begins with a somber call to faith and reliance on God. After losing her way in the city, passing out in the street, and being found by Graham Bretton and brought to the safety of his home, Lucy now reflects on the purpose of suffering in life, especially--as in her case--the lonely existence so many must endure. On the public side, she concludes that struggles, if endured with Reason, enable one to be "better regulated, more
equable, quieter on the surface." But as for the private side, below this surface of disciplined calm, her only counsel is to ask your Maker "how you are to bear the pains He has appointed" (255).

Extending the contrast between surface and depth, Brontë turns to the biblical image of the healing pool at Bethesda (see John 5:2-9). Given the goodness of God, "at some hour . . . the waiting waters will stir; in some shape . . . the healing herald will descend" (255). As Lucy reveals the pain of her disappointment that the one about whom she has dreamed—the one for whom her heart has loved and bled—may not be the one to stir the healing waters, the narrator's voice transcends Lucy's own present situation to offer a full-blown lament on behalf of humanity. "Herald, come quickly!" the voice cries out, but the common human experience is to see the waters remain stagnant.

This allusion is one of several instances in the novel in which the general tone of the adopted text runs counter to the use to which it is put in the adoptive text. All of our associations with the pool at Bethesda should be positive. After thirty-eight years of illness, the man who was unable to avail himself of the water's healing powers because he had no one to lift him in when the waters were troubled is healed by Jesus. But when the central image of the biblical story is brought into the novel, a mood of fear predominates. As Margot Peters states in her comments on
this passage, "In Brontë's novels God exists, but is not immanent." The healing and wholeness intended for the creation will no doubt come, but the crippled, the blind, the dumb, and the possessed are tortured as severely by the waiting and the uncertainty over when they will come as they are by their afflictions. Sadly, ends the lament, the first and only angel visitant "many maimed and mourning millions" see is the angel of death. Thus an image of healing and hope becomes instead an emblem for dispassionate resignation to divine neglect.

But we should not be surprised by this shift. In the contrast drawn between surface and depth, Brontë signals the alteration of the Bethesda pool imagery even before it is mentioned. Lucy uses Reason to suppress her emotions, but below the surface, the struggles remain. The tension between these competing forces is Lucy Snowe's signature. The clue to Brontë's adaptation of the biblical material, though, is in the image of the quiet surface. In the version of the Bible available to Brontë, John 5:4 reads:

> For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

In the biblical account, then, it is the "troubling" of the water which signals the presence of healing power. When this literal disturbance of the surface is transformed into
a psychological metaphor, its values are reversed. Put simply, at Bethesda "troubled" is good, at least for whoever gets into the water first; in Villette, a "quiet surface" is good, at least on the Lucy Snowe scale of repression. By insisting on controlling her feelings, Lucy aligns herself against the very "angel visitant" for whom she and so many others wait. If the older Lucy, who recalls this dark moment in the younger Lucy's life, has learned this sad truth, she gives us no clear indication of that being the case.

The portrayal of the idea of God's providential care in the novel also implies its opposite, i.e. abandonment by God. Nowhere do we find this possibility faced more honestly than in an early scene depicting M. Home's impending departure from Bretton. The young Paulina Home's devotion to her father is described in terms which the reader may find vaguely disturbing. When Mr. Home leaves, Lucy caricatures Polly's cry of "Papa" as "a sort of 'Why hast thou forsaken me?'" (28), echoing the words of Jesus from the cross (see Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34). Irene Tayler points out that in spite of her claim to remain calm in the face of Paulina's pain over her father's departure, "it is Lucy herself who supplies the words that connect Polly's agony with the crucifixion." While Tayler's observation is valid, we must be careful not to over read the allusion. Polly's association with the crucified Christ is only provisional; nowhere else in the novel is she
seriously connected with Jesus. Any significance in these words beyond character development must be sought elsewhere, perhaps in M. Home's role rather than in Polly's. Through Lucy's imposition of Jesus' words onto Polly, Brontë links the idea of "Papa" with feelings of forsakenness, perhaps revealing the pain caused by an absent or at least distant father. As many young children do, Polly has deified her father; also as many young children have, she has found him to be an unreliable god. The allusion to Christ's cry from the cross heightens our sense of Polly's despair, which is spoken aloud, as well as Lucy's, which is only intimated. Biographical critics point to this passage as evidence of Charlotte's pathological need to please her own father.

However, since my concern is with how the adopted biblical text and the novel interact, rather than reduce Lucy to a transparent vehicle for Charlotte's emotions, I want to suggest that the real interest of this allusion lies in how M. Home (as fulfilling antitype) affects our understanding of Jesus' Father God as prefiguring type. Does this connection of the novel with the biblical text reveals only the earthly father's inadequacies? Or does it also raise questions about those perceived in the heavenly father as well, who has been unable to shield his creatures from their pain or deliver them from their isolation?

If Brontë can cause her readers to question the efficacy--or even the existence--of a supernatural power
which oversees human affairs, she raises the possibility of radical freedom, for male and female alike. If common Christian assumptions regarding how Providence functions (or does not function) provide inadequate answers to the painful mysteries of life, then perhaps humans may seek answers elsewhere. In *Villette*, Brontë continues her strategy of undermining the notion of God's involvement in and control of history by imaginatively elevating her characters to the status of deity, but then exposing their limitations mercilessly. She also conflates Providence with such other possible agents as Fate or Nature. However, though she continues to ask the difficult questions, as she has in her earlier novels, in her final effort, she is equally honest about portraying the inadequacies of what she apparently once thought were viable answers.

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As in all her other novels, in *Villette* Brontë borrows a great deal of biblical material from "otherworldly" settings. We have already considered several references to the Garden of Eden in conjunction with the other two strategies and seen how the dense intertextuality of this novel makes categorization difficult. In the previous example, we also saw that the tone of the treatment varies depending on the characters involved. Brontë permits Lucy
to portray Graham and Paulina as a new Adam and Eve, virtually free of the consequences of the Fall, living happily in a paradise of this world because they are the rare, chosen ones—and because they can be quickly dismissed from our notice. However, because the experience of most persons is not of this sort—including Lucy's and Charlotte's—most of the "otherworldly" relocation in Villette carries with it a note of despair. The darkness which dominates the ending of Shirley is present throughout Villette, even when paradise is pictured. We will consider first the extended chain of allusions built around the forbidden fruit of Eden.

The chapter which contains the novel's richest, most complex biblical allusions also bears a biblically significant name. In the title of Chapter 36, "The Apple of Discord," surely we can hear echoes of one of Brontë's favorite biblical stories, the Garden of Eden. Moreover, the associations are still fresh in the reader's mind from a previous reference to the Eden myth, only a few chapters before. We'll examine the earlier reference first, as the background against which the chapter title may be viewed, before considering the ways in which discord threatens to corrupt the paradise desired so much by Lucy and her New Adam, M. Paul Emanuel.

Despite her own marked, self-professed voyeuristic tendencies, Lucy chastises M. Paul for his habit of spying
on the pensionnat girls from behind a lattice covering his window. "To study the human heart thus," she objects, "is to banquet secretly and sacrilegiously on Eve's apples" (530). M. Paul's Roman Catholicism (to which Lucy refers obliquely in the next sentence), together with the image of the lattice and the traditional association of the "apple" with human sinfulness suggest a connection between his particular arena of surveillance and the more general invasion of the heart conducted by the priest in the confessional. Lucy wishes aloud that he were a Protestant, not only to remove an impediment to their relationship but also to separate him from the controlling patriarchalism of an institution which she views as the epitome of evil. Through her language, the ancient symbol of human sinfulness becomes an emblem of the fundamental difference between Lucy's Protestantism and M. Paul's Roman Catholicism, a source of discord between them.

When Lucy sees M. Paul out in the rain digging amongst the shrubs of Madame Beck's garden, she imagines him as an antitype of Adam, "working as hard as if his day's pittance were yet to earn by the literal sweat of his brow" (601). And while the reference to Adam is not surprising given the frequency of this story's occurrence in Brontë's fiction, the link with her first novel is significant. The Professor, Brontë's first attempt to draw fiction out of her painful memories of Brussels, is in many ways a mirror image
of Villette. In addition to the obvious parallels produced by the Belgian setting, we find a similar concentration on the conflict between vocational and emotional fulfillment in both. In this seemingly insignificant passage, Brontë links M. Paul not only with Adam but also William Crimsworth. In her Preface to The Professor, Brontë insists that "whatever small competency [her protagonist] might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow" (3). The connection of these same words with M. Paul suggests that Brontë finds the biblical first man a compelling type for many of her own male protagonists and tries repeatedly to replicate an Edenic paradise in her fictional worlds.

In the novel's most overt reference to the Genesis myth, as Lucy narrates her return with M. Paul to the Rue Fossette after his proposal, she imagines the moonlight that lights their way to be like that which "fell on Eden" (709). The image speaks of regeneration, but only as a regressive possibility. "Once in their lives," she contends, "some men and women go back to these first fresh days of our great Sire and Mother" (709, my emphasis). But even if she and M. Paul are transformed in this moment into antitypes of Adam and Eve before the Fall, the novel offers no hope that this state of innocent bliss can be sustained. Unlike in Jane Eyre, where Jane moves forward into a kind of Eden with Rochester at Ferndean and still maintains that state as she writes, Lucy's fleeting moment in Paradise is captured only
through an imaginative retrospection. Except for the rare few like Graham and Paulina, blessedness in this life seems only a dim prospect.

Brontë also turns to the story of Noah's Ark and its promise of redemption symbolized in the rainbow for an "otherworldly" setting of hope which she can import into the world of her novel. We see her undercutting these images, though, as she did with the Eden stories. On board a seagoing vessel, leaving England, bound for an uncertain future, Lucy offers this beautifully poetic description of the land of promise and hope toward which she journeys:

In my reverie, methought I saw the continent of Europe, like a wide dream-land, far away. . . .
For background, spread a sky, solemn and dark-blue, and--grand with imperial promise, soft with tints of enchantment--strove from north to south a God-bent bow, the arch of hope. (76)

Given her earlier use of shipwreck imagery, the rainbow image is particularly significant. The "God-bent bow" (76) recalls the story of the Ark. Commenting on this connection, Bettina Knapp deduces from it Lucy's profound faith in God:

So personal is her relationship with God that, despite her seasickness during the Channel crossing, she feels reassured and encouraged in her decision to leave England. Like Noah's
venture during and after the Flood, she, too, perceives a rainbow as a sign of her covenant with Deity. With its divinely ordained cargo—the future of the human race—the Ark stands in hopeful contrast to the shipwreck's imagery of watery death. And yet, no sooner has Lucy offered us the scene than she cancels it. Reducing her glorious reverie to "an alliterative, text-hand copy" of a moral about demonic delusions and "becoming excessively sick," she stumbles below deck (76). The sea-sickness which finally forces her to forsake the rainbow—presumably to lose the contents of her stomach—seems to undercut with a savage and bitter humor any faith expressed. The promise given in the rainbow is rudely snatched back, and we are left wondering about the nature of the reality Lucy will find in Labassecour.

In another possible reference to the story of the Flood, Lucy laments that nowhere amid all the bustle in preparation for Madame Beck's fête can "a quiet isolated person find rest for the sole of her foot" (180-81, my emphasis). Only the slightest oddity in the vocabulary betrays part of this phrase as an unmarked quotation from the Bible. When Noah "sent forth a dove ... to see if the waters were abated ... the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot" (Genesis 8:8-9). While the casual manner in which the flood story is invoked would warn us
against imposing too much meaning upon Lucy's words, at the very least the preparations for the party are portrayed as chaotic, overwhelming the orderly routine customary in the pensionnat. The solitude in which Lucy would usually seek refuge is nowhere to be found. When Noah's dove can find no place to rest, it returns to the Ark. Lucy's problem is that she has neither a quiet resting place nor an Ark to which she can return. Throughout the novel she attempts to withdraw within herself, shutting herself off from contact with others in her desperate search for calm. But she also constantly reveals the failure of her strategy to quiet the raging passions within her. From their first contact, M. Paul recognizes this conflict in Lucy. He eventually offers her the only hope she will find for refuge in his gift to her of independence, though he is finally unable to join her on board that Ark.

But Lucy's words may not be an allusion to the story of Noah's Ark at all—or at least not exclusively. Another possible source can be found in a warning Moses delivers to the people of Israel. If they do not obey all of God's commandments, God will severely punish them. They will lose their position as chosen ones and become aliens, in a perpetual exile. God will scatter them among all the peoples of the earth, and among those foreign nations they will find "no resting place for the sole of [their] feet" (Deuteronomy 28:65). Given Lucy's feelings of uneasiness
among the people and customs of Labassecour, Brontë could have found no more appropriate phrase to convey this sense of exile.

Earlier we considered several passages in which M. Paul is linked with Christ's parables of the coming Kingdom of God or the eschatological language of the book of Revelation. We found in them instances of Brontë's strategy of substituting one of her characters for Christ, usually with the result of elevating that character to the status of a redeemer or undermining the orthodox view of Christ. While all allusions to these parables also exhibit Brontë's "otherworldly" relocation strategy, we will consider here only those in which this focus is dominant. But as we have seen in the other examples of this strategy in Villette, Brontë no longer seems able to present in them a vision of unqualified hope. Frustration and disappointment are followed by the indefinite deferral of the blessedness and fulfillment Brontë earlier believed could be attained in this world.

No sooner has the mature Lucy as retrospective autobiographer finished proclaiming her faith in Providence at the beginning of Chapter 38 than the voice of the younger Lucy returns to continue retelling events in Madame Beck's pensionnat. Assembled in the classroom, she and the students wait for the literature lesson to begin. "The hour was come; we expected the master" (635). On the literal
level. Lucy's words could mean nothing more than they say. The "hour" for the class to begin has arrived, and M. Paul is the "master" of these pupils. But on the typological level, this language carries with it an obvious eschatological dimension. Throughout the Bible the impending judgment of God is referred to as a pre-appointed hour or day, which will usually come when least expected (see e.g. Isaiah 13:6; Jeremiah 50:31; Ezekiel 39:8; Matthew 24:50; Revelation 3:3, 14:7, 14:15). "Master" is a title of respect frequently applied to Jesus (see e.g. Luke 5:5, 8:24, 8:45, 9:33, 9:49, 17:13), as well as Jesus' own favorite term for the one whose return is anticipated in his parables of the kingdom. Finally, the attitude of expectation is synonymous with an eschatological outlook.

Looking beyond Lucy to her creator, we can easily document Brontë's familiarity with this notion. At the end of Jane Eyre we find quoted the closing verses of that most eschatologically oriented of all biblical books, Revelation. The prayer for the Lord Jesus to "come quickly" was the essence of the late first century Christian eschatological hope. In later times, the Church had to learn to deal with the deferment of that hope. As could also be said of Jesus' much anticipated Second Coming, "M. Emanuel was not always quite punctual; we scarcely wondered at his being a little late" (635). In fact, this particular morning M. Paul does not show up at all. The expected arrival is cancelled
rather than merely postponed. In Lucy's relationship with Paul Emanuel, Brontë seems to offer her heroine the possibility of an earthly salvation through a surrogate Christ, in place of surrender to the tyranny of a divine Providence which works its will regardless of human wishes or needs.\textsuperscript{56} We must acknowledge, however, that such salvation remains unactualized and perhaps even unattainable. All expectations aside, in direct contradiction to his highly significant surname, M. Paul is not "with" Lucy at this particular point in time. Her readiness has yielded only disappointment.

He does, however, send word to Lucy, promising to come to her before he leaves and admonishing her to "be ready for" him (644).\textsuperscript{57} And while she has no doubts about her own preparedness, she wonders whether "that longed-for meeting [can] really be achieved," for between them lies a great chasm with "Apollyon straddled across it" (644).\textsuperscript{58} Lucy's labelling of M. Paul as her "Greatheart" identifies the intermediate source of this reference as Pilgrim's Progress,\textsuperscript{59} but behind Bunyan's arch evil one lies the biblical figure described as "the angel of the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:11). The Greek name for this fearful angel signifies his power to destroy, presumably by casting into oblivion. Seemingly, Lucy fears her hopes for intimacy with M. Paul will come to nothing and feels the need for the strongest terms possible to describe the forces opposed to
her union with Emanuel. The conflict, she feels, is of cosmic proportions. Still, to attach a name such as this to any individual or group of persons, even a trio such as Madame Beck, Madame Walravens, and Père Silas, is drastic to say the least, even allowing for the hyperbole to which all of Brontë's narrator's are prone.

From Apollyon, Lucy's thoughts turn naturally to the nature of eternal torment, if such exists. And what she concludes is that the worst torment is "a doubtful hope of bliss to come, not now, but at a day and hour unlooked for" (645, my emphasis). The suspense of hope deferred, claims Lucy, is worse than despair itself. The words used recall the expectations often spoken of by Jesus, who insisted that the Son of Man would return "at a day and hour unlooked for" (645, cf. Luke 12:46). Lucy's rendezvous with her earthly Emanuel is a looked-for one, but she also fears that it will be postponed indefinitely.

At the moment of Lucy's darkest fears that she will not see M. Paul before his departure, a little child enters with a note. An elaborate conceit places the novel once more within the narrative framework of the familiar story of Noah's ark. The little child alights as a dove on Lucy's knee, bearing the note as an olive branch. The message, borne from some distant unseen place of life across a sea of death, restores Lucy's hope. As she waits, she clings to her trust "in the dove-sent olive-leaf" (645). But we
should recall that in the biblical story, the greenery brought by the dove is only the sign of a hope which yet remains distant, not the signal of that hope's fulfillment. Noah and his family spend three more months in the ark after receiving the olive-leaf sign, waiting for the word from God to disembark (see Genesis 8:13). Lucy waits all that day and all that night, but M. Paul never comes. She finally concludes that she has missed her opportunity to see him. Only much later, after wandering through the streets of Villette in a drug-induced daze, coming finally to the park near the center of town, and seeing him standing with the Walravens party at the fête, does she discover that he has not yet departed. Not knowing the reason why he postponed setting sail for two weeks, for a time Lucy believes the promise of the olive branch has withered.

When the three years of M. Paul's absence have elapsed, Lucy begins eagerly looking for his return. Her twice-repeated refrain, "but--he is coming," projects the tone of parousia over the final chapter. Her ominous description of the "signs of the sky" employs pseudo-apocalyptic language, speaking of flame and battle and blood (715). Fearful, she prays for God's watchful care over Paul's ship, but in spite of her prayers, the seven-day storm litters the Atlantic with wrecked ships. The narrator imagines thousands praying and waiting for divine intervention to calm the storm, but for unknown reasons God delays. The magic
formula, "Peace, be still!" (715, see Mark 4:39), is never uttered, or at least not until the damage is done. Like his apostolic namesake, Paul Emanuel is apparently shipwrecked, but with a less positive outcome.\textsuperscript{61} Though Lucy offers no direct narration of his death, the fact of it cannot be doubted, in spite of her mock optimistic wish to "leave sunny imaginations hope."\textsuperscript{62} Those who cannot bear to see life as it is may "picture union and a happy succeeding life" (715), but clearly the unnarrated portion of Lucy's life does not take this course. If Paul Emanuel was in any sense the Christ, like his biblical type he was unable to save himself.

\* \* \*

All of the eschatological language in Villette ends in frustration. Hopes are conceived but aborted before they can be born. Here (as in Shirley) Brontë offers her readers the notion of hope deferred, assuring them that God will send redemption some day, but then she undermines that assurance by emphasizing the agonized waiting and eventual death of those whose crises arrive before God's delivery does. The angel of death comes for millions before the healing waters are stirred; the voice stilling the storm speaks only after many of the "thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores" (715) are too consumed by their
grief to feel the hush it brings. No amount of lip service
to a benign Providence can deflect the blow delivered by
these images. As Judith Williams states, "M. Paul's death
makes no sense; despite all the positive, apparently
Christian, imagery surrounding him, he does not, in dying,
effect any change for the better in a world dominated by
evil forces. . . . and his death seems to render any
providential view meaningless."\textsuperscript{63}

Ironically, some view \textit{Villette} as Brontë's most
religiously orthodox work and gratefully celebrate it as her
return to a simple, unquestioning Christian faith after
surviving such hardship in her personal life. In spite of
her rejection of any Providential reading of M. Paul's
death, Judith Williams suggests that the writing of \textit{Villette}
is Lucy's response to a kind of "Nebo vision," evidence of
"a depth of wisdom granted only when the desired goal is
denied and the depth of loss is faced as courageously as it
can be." According to Williams, Lucy never enters the
Promised Land of happiness with M. Paul, but she does catch
a glimpse of it, enough to change her life.\textsuperscript{64} While
Williams' image of viewing the Promised Land from atop
Nebo\textsuperscript{65} is quite attractive, I would argue with her
conclusion. While we know nothing of how Lucy's life
progresses after M. Paul's death, the novel she writes as an
old woman is filled with bitter irony and unfulfilled
longing. Her claim that such emotions belong only to her
youth and that she preserves them in order to be a faithful narrator has a hollow ring to it. But if Lucy does not profit from at least getting close enough to the Promised Land to catch a glimpse of it, what about Brontë herself?

According to my reading, Villette contains Brontë's most radical recasting of biblical materials and raises the most serious challenges to orthodox, male-dominated interpretations of the Bible of any work bearing her name. Though in its consistency Villette represents her finest art in employing biblical material, Brontë may have carried the systematic reinscription too far, stripping the Bible's stories and images of their power to enliven and inspire. She may have expended all her energy breaking her adopted text down into the pieces with which she could work, only to find herself in the end unable to reconstruct anything in its place. If what she sought to do in writing Villette was to free the Bible's own reformatory powers from their prison-house of conventional, patriarchal interpretation and redirect them toward creating a definitive statement of equality and fulfillment for male and female alike, her success can be measured only in the gesture she makes in that direction. Coming full circle to the material she treated first in The Professor and the repressed passion of many of her juvenile productions, through the capricious destruction of the novel's savior figure, the perpetual tone of despair and doubt, and the painfully reiterated theme of
redemption delayed, Brontë creates in Villette a masterpiece of suffering and darkness.
NOTES


2 Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Margaret Smith and Herbert Rosengarten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 85. Unless otherwise indicated, all further references to the novel will be cited from this edition and will be indicated in parentheses within the text.

In contrast to Lucy's apparent certainty about him, Irene Tayler calls Graham Bretton a "false redeemer." *Holy Ghosts*, p. 225. However, she calls Paul Emanuel "the fictional embodiment of Charlotte's ultimate muse, the redeemer of her fallen imagination" (p. 242). We should question, though, whether Paul Emanuel is finally any more effective in this role than Graham is.

3 Christina Crosby, p. 114. Crosby's recognition here of the complexity of Brontë's biblical interpretation seems to conflict with her enthusiastic endorsements of Brontë's orthodox faith.


5 Though not fully developed here, this story of Cain and Abel, along with its implications for contemporary human relations, is employed extensively in *Shirley*. 
Brontë is quite fond of this story, using it also in *Jane Eyre* (262).

Compare Paulina's description of the letter lying on her lap "looking up at" her (542).

*Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 412.

See 2 Samuel 12:23. The story, a favorite of Brontë's, appears in a variety of permutations in her novels.

I will suggest at the end of this chapter that this image of the "Pisgah sight" as an emblem of shattered hope epitomizes the vision of Brontë's final novel.

See p. 63 for my discussion of the far different reading Judith Williams offers of Lucy's autobiographical impulse using this same biblical story.

See also her use of the Bethesda pool imagery on p. 64.


*Erotic Faith*, p. 110. In itself, this claim is not surprising, since a number of female ecstatic writers (e.g. Julian of Norwich) link eros with the Christian God in startling ways.

The female ghost of the dead nun would be a gender reversal of the Risen Lord (whether Jesus or Graham). But Brontë actually creates a double gender reversal, because
the alleged "ghost" is really Colonel de Hamal in disguise.


17 While the combination of the terms "tabernacle" and "host" seem to make this reading preferable, perhaps even inevitable, the apparently Roman Catholic flavor of it is hard to reconcile with Lucy's attitude expressed elsewhere.

18 The term Andrew and Judith Hook use in their discussion of this issue in their Introduction to the Penguin edition of Shirley. See my Chapter 3, note 2.

19 Brontë portrays a similar mixing of images of force with images of deity in her description of Frances Henri struggling uneasily in William Crimsworth's arms in The Professor.

20 One need only recall the frequent use of the aeolian harp as a symbol for the inspired poet.

21 By her own admission in Holy Ghosts, Tayler looks constantly for "fictional analogues" between the novel and Charlotte Brontë's life.


23 The figure is a common one in Brontë's vocabulary. Writing to Ellen Nussey in April of 1837, she discusses the effect of close acquaintance with another in removing the veil which hides one's imperfections. "I hope my next
communication with you will be face to face, and not as through a letter darkly" (Shorter, *Life and Letters*, p. 139). Interestingly, in light of her passion for writing, she seems to disparage written communication and to suggest that it allows greater withholding of one's true self than does direct oral communication. Twelve years later, writing to W. S. Williams on May 27, 1949, she employs the figure again, though here she speaks only of darkened or imperfect understanding.

Commenting on Lucy's use of this figure, Judith Williams claims that "the willfulness of her [Lucy's] misinterpretation is emphasized by her misuse of the central Biblical verse describing apocalyptic vision: 'hitherto I had seen this spectre only through a glass darkly; now was I to behold it face to face'" (*Perception and Expression in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), p. 126). What Williams mean by "apocalyptic" here is unclear, though. In the sense that Paul uses the image to speak of an unveiling, the literal sense of apocalypse is contained within it. But Lucy uses the image to obfuscate rather than clarify, at least temporarily. As Williams goes on to suggest, Lucy's "inflated language should alert us to the falsity here" (p. 126).

Like so many elements in this narrative/imagery complex, the name of Paul Emanuel's half-brother seems somewhat out of place. The transference of roles from the
biblical source text to the novel is unstable and inexact.


Judith Williams' judgment that "though M. Paul acts like a comic parody of his one misogynistic namesake . . . the parallels evoked by his other name, 'Emanuel,' are far from parodic" (Perception and Expression, pp. 134-35), is sound, but she gives little attention to the frequently unorthodox implications of Lucy's linking of M. Paul with Jesus.

Does this scene remind anyone else of John Jarndyce's gift to Esther Summerson at the end of Bleak House?

As in the Parable of the Talents (see Matthew 25:14-28), Lucy tries to multiply that which has been left in her care, presumably to be found worthy upon the Master's return. Using the hundred pounds sent to her by Miss Marchmont's heir, she expands her externat into a pensionnat.

In a famous passage, the narrator of Shirley adapts this same biblical imagery to explore the painful consequences of Caroline Helstone's erroneous assumption that Robert Moore would return her love.

This same passage is put to quite a different use in Shirley as the basis for bitter advice to Caroline Helstone
to resign herself to her suffering.

31 The word "Nature" is capitalized in some editions, though not in the Oxford, from which I am citing the text.

32 Bettina Knapp offers the following evaluation of Lucy's long narratorial interpolation at the beginning of Chapter 38: "No longer did Lucy struggle against what she had always interpreted as the Christian God's insensitivity, lack of compassion, and injustice. Rather, she now bathed in the serenity that comes with the acceptance of humankind's inability to dominate empirical events" (The Brontës, p. 179). While we might assume that Charlotte Brontë herself would not necessarily exhibit the same serene resignation that Knapp attributes to Lucy, especially in her role as an author, through which she is entirely able to dominate, even to dictate the events in the lives of her characters, such is apparently not the case. Brontë's high Romantic view of authorial inspiration suggests the same kind of submission to a higher power that Knapp outlines for Lucy (see letter to G. H. Lewes, January 1, 1848, Shorter, p. 386).

If we consider Charlotte Brontë's personal religious faith, we also find many expressions of the kind of resignation Knapp speaks of. For example, in a letter to Ellen Nussey dated April 9, 1851--around the time she began writing Villette--Charlotte borrows an image from the prophet Jeremiah to attest to her belief in God's absolute
sovereignty: "Most true is it that we are over-ruled by one above us--that in His hands our very will is as clay in the hands of the potter." However, if we wish to find clear evidence of serenity in these words, we must supply that reading ourselves.

33 Interestingly, many years earlier, in a letter to Ellen Nussey (cited in Chapter 1), Brontë made the following statement: "At first I could not say, 'Thy will be done.' I felt rebellious; but I know it was wrong to feel so" (Shorter, Life and Letters, p. 137).

34 Erotic Faith, p. 123.

35 Whirlwinds are a common biblical image for destructive power, especially as associated with God's judgment. But a combination of two passages seems the most likely candidate for the adopted text of this figure. Hosea 8:7 connects the act of sowing and reaping with a whirlwind, but is clearly speaking figuratively. Job 27:13-20 describes a more literal whirlwind carrying off the unrighteous before God.


37 Reflecting on the "problematic quality" of the novel's water imagery, Gilbert and Gubar raise the question whether this pool at Bethesda is to be taken as an image of baptism or of drowning (Madwoman, p. 418). However, in the
Christian understanding of the sacrament and in the language of the accompanying rituals, the distinction is never quite so clear cut. Though it is viewed as an avenue to new life, baptism is also depicted as a form of dying to the old life. In Brontë's self-creation through fiction, the dangerous act of rebellion implied in stirring up the stagnant waters of patriarchalism may indeed be her baptism into a new life.

In more recent, critical translations, this verse is relegated to a footnote because it does not appear in what are judged to be the most reliable manuscript copies of the gospel, but it would have been considered part of the canonical text in Brontë's time.

Interestingly, Herbert Schneidau uses his own subtle reference to this biblical image in his admission that "Bible-reading frequently does have a troubling effect on calm surfaces" (Sacred Discontent, p. 1).

The English term "papa" is roughly equivalent to the Aramaic expression abba, used by Jesus to denote intimacy with his divine Father. See, for example, Mark 14:36.

Jesus directs these particular words to God, not to abba or Father. However, many interpreters of the gospels feel that Jesus is quoting the opening line of Psalm 22 at this point, which would explain his use of the less personal term. If he does so, however, he translates the Hebrew of the psalm into his native Aramaic while hanging on the cross, which seems unlikely.

43 We do find, though, additional mock parallels. If separation from her father was a type of crucifixion for Polly, then his replacement in her affections by Graham "on the third evening" (28) must be her resurrection. Even Graham's impulsive hoisting of Polly up above his head at the end of Chapter 2 seems a parody of either resurrection or exaltation, or both.

44 This view would concur with Robert Polhemus' suggestion that through these "daring, almost blasphemous words" Lucy issues "her formulaic denial of emotion, the defense mechanism that casts its dislocating spell over the text" (Erotic Faith, p. 120).

45 The chapter title may be taken as a reference to the mythological story of the trial of Paris, but the novel's many parallels with the Eden myth suggest a typological interpretation based on scripture instead.


47 Given the many parallels between Villette and The Professor, it is significant that Brontë's first narrator linked his own voyeurism from a secluded window with the biblical myth of the Garden.
Robert Newsom applauds their eventual "decision to keep their respective faiths," suggesting that it signifies that "in some fundamental sense they have achieved equality" ("Villetta and Bleak House: Authorizing Women," Nineteenth-Century Literature 46.1 (June 1991): 64). While this view may be true from a relational point of view, it cannot fully erase the negative connotations of the "apple of discord" imagery used throughout this section of the novel. At the same time, though, Newsom admits that Lucy's demeanor toward M. Paul on the night of his proposal (see pp. 584 and 589), seems to be little more than "a positively slavish abasement before patriarchal authority" (p. 74). Lucy's words are typical of the idolatrous attachment of Brontë's heroines to their beloved males.

See Chard, p. 203.

See Genesis 3:19.

I credit Charlotte herself with this connection because it links together works of fiction about which Lucy, a fictional character within one of the works, would have no knowledge.


Lucy later refers to the small child who delivers M. Paul's note as a "little dove [who] dropped on my knee its olive-leaf plucked off" (644). And, indeed, at that point,
feeling lost and adrift without hope, Lucy views the note as a welcome sign of rescue.  

54 See my explanation for using this term in spite of its suggestion of a homogeneity in the Christian faith which did not exist at this time. Chapter 2, note 16.

55 An even more specific biblical source echoed in Lucy's phrase may be John 4:23, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him." If so, Paul Emanuel is once more linked explicitly with Christ.

56 Janice Carlisle raises the question whether Villette "reveal[s] the view of a woman who accepts suffering as the dispensation of a just Providence" or "display[s] the author's 'hunger, rebellion, and rage'" ("The Face in the Mirror: Villette and the Conventions of Autobiography," ELH 46 (1979): 263).

57 Another eschatological theme closely tied to the idea of expectancy is preparedness. Jesus warns his followers to stay in a constant state of readiness for his return. See, for example, Matthew 24:44 and its parallel in Luke 12:40.

58 The figure of Apollyon is common in Brontë's fiction, appearing earlier in Villette (146) as well as in Jane Eyre (578).

By this point we seem to be closer to Lucy the white-haired narrator than to Lucy the young, waiting lover. The quiet tone of resignation and memory has replaced what must have once been the anguish of grief over her loss.

See, for example, Acts 27:14-41.

Charlotte's father allegedly objected to the stark severity of the novel's ending and tried to compelled his daughter to rewrite it as a more traditional happy ending. The ambiguity of the present ending is the extent of the concession Charlotte was willing to make.

Perception and Expression, p. 140.

Perception and Expression, p. 141.

The mountain from which God allows Moses to look into the Promised Land, though he will not enter it, allegedly because he disobeyed God at Meribah. Also called Pisgah. See Deuteronomy 34:1-4.
Conclusion

Driven by her anxiety to create a personal world view as an alternative to the limited options offered her by the male-dominated world of nineteenth-century England, enabled by the decline of biblical authority encouraged by the expansion of scientific discovery and the rise of the Higher Criticism, and guided by the Bible's own internal reinterpretative tradition, Charlotte Brontë appropriates the authoritative voice of scripture in order to redirect its spiritual, cultural, and literary energies into new avenues. In a process akin to what Eric Auerbach calls "revisional interpretation,"¹ Brontë utilizes the imagistic unity of the Bible,² still apparent in the influence of typological interpretation of scripture in the nineteenth century,³ as the basis for a "re-vision"—a second look at those cultural and religious preconceptions which so severely limit the opportunities available to her as a woman in nineteenth-century England.

Since so many of these preconceptions are either based on or supported by a certain tradition of interpreting scripture (which I have identified as patriarchal), she must
engage that tradition "on its own turf." Janet Larson points out that the nineteenth century's "growing unconcern about the unity of the canon" allows specific texts, now freed from traditional systems of doctrine, to "be read (and adapted for fictional purposes) as self-contained units." What I am suggesting, though, is that Brontë engages in a much stronger interpretative act than the one envisioned by Larson. From the dominant society's point of view, she commits what can be perceived as acts of "violence" on the Bible and a substantial body of its interpretation. Breaking its stories down into their component parts of character, plot, and setting, she then reassembles them in startling and exciting ways using the process of bricolage.

A number of historical factors coincide to make Brontë's task easier, not the least of which is the decline of biblical authority. Increasingly in the nineteenth century, the Bible comes to be viewed as an historically conditioned document, produced by and reflecting a particular human culture and time period. Consequently, any system of values which relies on the Bible's authority also comes to be viewed as conditioned by historical and cultural factors, rather than reflective of an eternal and universal divine imperative. This general shift in attitude toward the Bible's authority produces a comparable change in the way Victorian novelists use biblical material in their fiction. Jan Gordon argues that "the gradual disappearance
of religious orthodoxy, with its emphasis upon the primacy of a single, authoritative text, is responsible for the proliferation of texts and tongues.5 Though she writes about Dickens in particular, Janet Larson's description of the daring forms of biblical allusion created in Victorian fiction just as surely applies to Brontë's writing:

The Bible's contradictions, given such alarming attention in nineteenth-century intellectual circles, turn up in the popular novelist's work, as he invites rival allusions from quite different parts of the sacred book to coexist uneasily in the same fictional world.6

This decay of scriptural authority almost certainly contributes to the atmosphere in which Charlotte Brontë feels free to rewrite biblical texts in such startling ways, to the point, in fact, of producing her own "proliferation" of interpreting "tongues" with no apparent stabilizing center.7 At one level then, Charlotte Brontë can be viewed as a contributor to the nineteenth-century debate over biblical authority and interpretation.8 However, since she is a novelist rather than a theologian, Brontë recognizes and uses to her advantage the residual power which biblical language and imagery continue to exercise over much of Victorian culture, in spite of the growing controversy over its origin and authority.

All taxonomic schemes have their limitations and can,
if we let them, begin to influence the ways in which we read a text. For the sake of simplicity and order, I have arranged my study of Charlotte Brontë's use of the Bible chronologically, around the order of completion of the four novels of her mature years. However, such a scheme can lead us toward a developmental thesis which may be unjustified. While I have no reservations about claiming that Brontë's subtlety and sophistication in "re-vising" biblical material increases dramatically from The Professor to Villette, I would hesitate to arrange all four novels in a linear progression, as if Jane Eyre were somehow a lesser achievement of biblical reinscription than Shirley, or that Villette should be viewed as the pinnacle of her art. Rather, it seems to me that once Brontë has perfected her style of secularized typology, and her strategy for employing it, which she clearly does by the time she has completed The Professor, she puts that method and strategy to use in three distinct but equally masterful novels in order to create new ways of seeing from the raw materials of an ancient story. This is not to say, however, that Brontë's vision and her "re-vision" of the Bible remain unchanged from one novel to the next. In many ways Jane Eyre is the high water mark of her optimism. With Shirley and Villette, her vision becomes increasingly darker.

One of the most interesting discoveries to arise from an extensive study of Charlotte Brontë's use of biblical
language and imagery in her novels is that, despite her cloistered upbringing and the forced relative isolation of her adult life, she is not an idiosyncratic interpreter of scripture. Though we cannot assert with any confidence her position on (or even her familiarity with) many of the critical issues surrounding the Bible which preoccupied so many of her contemporaries, we can find approaches similar to hers in a number of different artists of the period. We might expect her sister Anne, as a product of the same household, to share Charlotte's concerns about women in their society and to possess the same basic hermeneutical equipment which she uses so effectively. And in fact, this is what we find when we examine Anne's novels. Two representative passages will serve to highlight their similarities and differences.

A scene from Anne Brontë's first novel, *Agnes Grey*, provides an example of the resistance offered by the male-dominated society of nineteenth-century England to even the suggestion that women could share the male prerogative of interpretation. Undoubtedly because of his position in the established church, the rector, Mr. Hatfield, includes among his favorite subjects for exposition "the reprehensible presumption of individuals who attempted to think for themselves in matters concerned with religion, or to be guided by their own interpretation of Scripture."¹⁰ No scene of dispute occurs as in *Shirley*, and yet Anne seems no
more willing than her sister Charlotte was to allow such an assertion to pass unchallenged. Agnes' evaluation of Hatfield's 'compositions' as "far too studied and too artificial to be pleasing to me" is less revealing than her admission that "it was sometimes hard to listen quietly throughout, without some slight demonstrations of disapproval or impatience" (140). Later, when she visits with Nancy Brown and reads the Bible to her, Agnes hears that Hatfield has scolded the widow for "sitting poring over [her] Bible at home" instead of coming to church, where she could "hear the Scriptures properly explained" (147). Though Hatfield makes no explicit distinction between men and women as would-be interpreters of the Bible--apparently preferring to reserve that privilege for the clergy, who would of course all be males--we should perhaps not consider it merely coincidental that these authoritarian remarks are addressed to one considered by male society the most helpless and least fully human, a widow. Certainly, this "coting old fool" (149), as Hatfield calls her, and probably all women in the rector's opinion, should be denied the privilege of determining the meaning of sacred scripture.

In a memorable scene, Volume Two of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall opens with Helen and Arthur searching for ways to overcome her aunt's predictable opposition to their marriage. Called aside for another of her aunt's "solemn
remonstrance[s]" which "entirely failed to convince" Helen that her aunt's view "was preferable to [her] own."¹¹ she begins to excuse Arthur's lesser qualities, blaming them on his flawed upbringing. The discussion degenerates into an argument over Arthur's probable eternal fate, and then finally into an impassioned defense by Helen of the right of private interpretation of the Bible.

Helen's aunt begins by asserting her view that the scriptures are open to all those endowed by their Maker "with reason and conscience" (190), and therefore Arthur must be held accountable. As she quotes scripture passages seeming to indicate that Arthur's disregard for the Bible's moral injunctions will cause him to be "cast into the lake that burneth with unquenchable fire--there for ever to" suffer unspeakable torture presumably (see Revelation 20:10 and Luke 3:17), Helen blurts out, "Not for ever . . . only till he has paid the uttermost farthing." Her exclamation is then followed by a string of biblical proof-texts supporting a universalist view. When challenged by her aunt, Helen not only claims to have found "nearly thirty passages, all tending to support the same theory" (192), but also offers the following bold assertion:

I found, indeed, some passages that, taken by themselves, might seem to contradict that opinion; but they will all bear a different construction to that which is commonly given. (192)
The final words are the most significant. Biblical passages are open to multiple interpretations; they can be construed in ways other than what be might considered obvious or accepted, and which might be considered unacceptable by traditional canons of interpretation.

Anyone familiar with both this novel and Shirley will undoubtedly hear echoes of Caroline Helstone's argument with Joe Scott in Helen's speech. In both novels, characters engage in debates over the proper understanding of specific biblical texts and the parameters within which biblical interpretation can legitimately occur. Clearly, Charlotte is not the only female member of the Brontë household who feels passionately about the appropriateness of women claiming the prerogative of interpreting the Bible, widely considered an exclusively male right. Interestingly, the connection drawn by many biographical critics between Anne Brontë and Caroline Helstone\textsuperscript{12} seems to corroborate this judgment.

We might easily dismiss the similarity of views on biblical interpretation between Anne Brontë and her sister Charlotte as fully anticipated. Their upbringing in the same reclusive environment might be taken as evidence that both are idiosyncratic in their approaches to the Bible. We need to consider Charlotte's brand of typological interpretation against a broader background.\textsuperscript{13}

In his study on the uses of biblical typology across
the range of Victorian society, George Landow cites Algernon Charles Swinburne and Thomas Carlyle as exemplars of the particular brand of interpretation he calls "secularized." Carlyle, of course, was an older contemporary of Brontë's--though he outlived her by many years--and she was familiar with his work. So we might reasonably expect to find a few similarities between his use of the Bible and Brontë's. Swinburne, on the other hand, is writing after Brontë's death, during a period of even greater decline in biblical authority than what characterizes the first half of the century. His methods are enough like Brontë's, though, that we might consider them a later manifestation of the same approach we find in her novels. A brief consideration of how both men use typological interpretation of the Bible for purposes which are not overtly religious--indeed in some cases outrightly secular--will help set Brontë's work in a literary context. We'll begin with Carlyle.

Landow links Carlyle and Swinburne because he feels that both "masterfully use[d] typological images to attack the religion on which they are based."¹⁴ He points out that like many others, Carlyle uses Exodus typology in The French Revolution (1837) "to attach religious prestige ... to an essentially secular matter,"¹⁵ but he does so in an unexpected manner. He does not cast one side as the oppressed Israelites while the others are the evil Egyptians, using the power of the biblical reference to
claim God's blessing for his favorite faction. Instead, he spiritualizes and internalizes the type. "What makes the Carlylean application of the Exodus narrative function as an unorthodox, extended, and secularized type." Landow claims, is the fact that Carlyle "has no room in his system for a Saviour." He substitutes, instead, either human political creations or psychological propensities. Carlyle calls the French representative assembly "a miraculous Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness; whereupon whosoever looks, with faith and obedience, shall be healed of all woes," or at least so they hope. Later, he describes the moment we realize that the "deep commandment . . . of our whole being" cries out "to be free" as a vision "of a flame-girt Sinai, in this our waste Pilgrimage,-- which thenceforth wants not its pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night!" But in both of these instances, Carlyle employs biblical types without any real reference to God's intervention. The States-General has no divine power to heal; the cloud and fire are symbols of an innate human urge. The rhetoric of biblical typology remains, though wrenched free of its doctrinal foundations.

In contrast to Carlyle, Swinburne epitomizes the late Victorian use of the secularized type. Not a Christian himself, he develops analogies built around such type scenes as the passion and death of Christ because they continue to carry great significance for his readers, many of whom have
also abandoned previously held faiths. Landow traces Swinburne's use of the popular type scene depicted in Genesis 3:15 in three different poems, written over a twenty year period. In each he finds clear reference to the prophecy regarding the bruises Eve's offspring and the serpent inflict on each other, but without any of the redemptive overtones the passage acquires through its association in classical typological schemes with Christ's death on the cross. Landow concludes that Swinburne introduce[s] the subject of the bruised heel to make certain his audience recognizes the allusion to Genesis 3:15, but he manipulates and modifies the type for his own purposes, which do not include advancing the notion of sacrificial atonement.

Clearly, the success of such a strategy depends upon the familiarity of his audience with the Bible. But for Swinburne's allusion to have its full effect, his readers must also be aware of common typological interpretations of the Genesis passage which view the scene as a prefiguration of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. As Landow points out, "not simply a collection of individual biblical images," typological interpretations bring with them "a powerful, coherent conception of things which any artist, writer, or thinker may conjure into existence by employing a well-known type."
Though Landow makes no explicit connections between Carlyle and Swinburne on the one hand and Charlotte Brontë (whom he treats only briefly) on the other, I would contend that she operates in her novels with a strategy similar to theirs. In spite of frequent, earnest professions of faith in her letters, at no time does her primary motivation in her novels seem to be the proclamation or defense of Christian belief. For example, her vision of an Edenic paradise for Rochester and Jane at Ferndean serves the purposes of her fiction; it does not confirm the promise of future blessedness for those who walk in God's ways. The proliferation of what Paul Korshin calls "christomimetic overtones" in the character of Paul Emanuel paradoxically helps create the unremitting tone of darkness in that novel; it does not—as in classical typological interpretation—testify to the past, present, and future unity of God's plan of redemption.

Clearly, Brontë views the Bible as a highly malleable source of imagery and plot elements which she can adapt at will to suit her fictional purposes. Yet despite her apparently casual handling of the material, she often adopts biblical passages to treat those matters about which she feels most intensely and in which she feels the most is at stake. Therefore, at some level she still seems to view the Bible—though not in any conventional sense—as an identity-forming, life-changing narrative, with a powerful
word to speak to life's most critical situations. I suggested in the Introduction that Brontë uses her fiction to script new life possibilities for women in general and for herself in particular, and that in her fictional arsenal typology was a quite powerful weapon. Given the sense of identity still vested in the biblical view of life by much of the Victorian culture, it seems quite natural that Charlotte would feel compelled to challenge the traditional notions of a woman's place in society contained within the Bible and furthered by generations of male-oriented and male-dominated interpretation.

Though neither Carlyle nor Swinburne is traditional in his use of this exegetical system, as I've already pointed out, readers of both must be well acquainted with the conventions of typological interpretation to maximize their understanding of these two writers. The same can easily be said of Charlotte Brontë. Landow argues that secularized types allow writers "to conjure up the imaginative power of a belief system without having to endorse it." While I would not place Brontë in the same category with Carlyle and Swinburne in terms of faith, Landow's point may be applied to her by extension. Her particular brand of typology permits her to tap a wealth of biblical associations without endorsing the prevailing hermeneutic paradigms of her day, which systematically strip women of the power of personal, financial, and even religious self-determination.
While I have called what Charlotte Brontë does with biblical material in her novels typology, it differs greatly from the classical form of that hermeneutic system. In no true religious sense does she view Rochester as the antitype of Adam or Samson, nor Paul Emanuel as the antitype of Christ. As much as some readers may wish to, we cannot view the biblical parallels in her fiction as testimony to her faith in the miraculous interconnectedness of all creation. Brontë seeks to create new fictional antitypes for biblical type characters and scenes in a way which replaces the old with the new. Only in this way can she adequately differentiate herself from that strong precursor text. As she frees herself from the anxiety of the Bible's influence over her, over her views and her voice, she can, at the same time, try to minimize the influence of the anxiety which it and its male-dominated tradition of interpretation produce in her.
NOTES


The New Testament typologists believed that God was ultimately responsible for the creation of types; they simply discovered them, built into the fabric of creation. When this view of extreme historical unity fell into general disfavor, would-be typological interpreters were forced to rely on imagistic unity. In other words, since the Bible contains so many parallels, there must be something in the image itself which gathers to it so many expressions.

3 Landow claims that "the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century saw a great, almost astonishing, revival of biblical typology, which left its firm impress upon Victorian literature, art, and thought" (*Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows*, p. 3).


5 "Gossip, Diary, Letter, Text: Anne Brontë's Narrative *Tenant* and the Problematic of the Gothic Sequel," *ELH* 51.4 (Winter 1984): 738-39. According to Heather Henderson, "the Victorians adapted and transformed typology for their own rather different purposes: rather than merely providing static imagery, typology functioned as the intrinsic and
dynamic basis of their narratives" ("Types of the Self," p. 12).

6 Larson, p. 13. Larson later suggests that "because a unitary Word [was] inadequate to meet the variously challenging words of its nineteenth-century context, a separating out of the differently cadenced messages in the Bible tradition seem[ed] inevitable in order to provide a more flexible lexicon" on which writers could draw (p. 34).

7 Borrowing Jan Gordon's vocabulary.

8 Hans W. Frei suggests that in the face of scientific discoveries and widespread metaphysical skepticism traditional typological interpretation, with its assumptions regarding the inspired nature of the Bible and Providential oversight of a unified historical process, gradually declined into the literary use of scripture as a source for symbolism. Charlotte Brontë's novels mark a point of progress along that path. The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974),

9 I do not consider Brontë's juvenile writings here, but Tom Winnifrith observes that "there is not a great deal of evidence in the juvenilia about Charlotte's religious views, but what there is suggests orthodoxy... Perhaps the most orthodox feature of Charlotte's poems is the constant declaration of the joys of heaven, although the hackneyed imagery of these descriptions hardly gives the
impression of any deeply held feelings" (The Brontës and their Background: Romance and Reality (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 45). If Winnifrith's view is correct, we must account for the shift in Brontë's treatment of the Bible as she matures. I contend that her movement into a more public arena and a perceived need to make a strong statement, through her fiction, of her identity and her needs can be viewed as a major cause.

10 Anne Brontë, Agnes Grey (London: Everyman's Library, 1985), p. 140. All further references to this edition of the novel will be included in parentheses within the text.


12 See, for example, Andrew and Judith Hook's Introduction to the Penguin Edition, pp. 18, 22.

13 Patricia Demers examines the biblically based writing of women in the nineteenth century. She claims that most of the literature was used for moralistic or pedagogical purposes. The bulk of it consisted of catechisms, pious verse, and journey-motif allegories. Interestingly, though she refers to Charles Dickens twice, she never mentions Charlotte Brontë. I suspect this is because she considers only interpreters who are within the faith community--whose chief aim is to interpret the Bible
for use by and instruction of believers.

"Their interpretation consisted of the use of biblical characters and texts in telling stories to educate their audience in a sense of virtue; the Bible was their ultimate measure and model," Demers states. "As managed with varying degrees of artistry and skill, narrativity was their way of understanding themselves and inculcating what they perceived to be fundamental principles" (Women as Interpreters of the Bible (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 118). I would suggest that Charlotte Brontë does not want so much to inculcate principles as to challenge and question.

15 Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, p. 168.
16 Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, p. 168.

18 Works, 2:183-4.
19 The poems Landow considers are "A Song of Italy" (1867), "A Counsel" (1869), and "The Armada" (1888).
21 Landow, p. 40.
22 Korshin, p. 107.
23 The term bricolage is so appropriate to Brontë's method because it emphasizes this almost cavalier attitude.
24 Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, p. 175.
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