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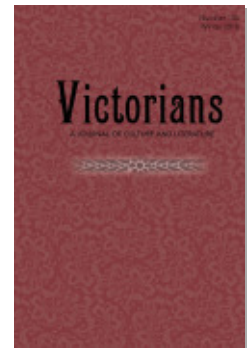
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The Devastating Impact of Lord Wharton's Bible Charity in *Wuthering Heights*

LYDIA CRAIG

ABSTRACT: Since 1695, the Lord Wharton Bible Charity has bestowed distinctive Bibles and two religious books to Yorkshire children able to recite certain Psalms and the catechism. Evidence for the Brontë' siblings' familiarity with the charity's project includes their respective literary criticism of the misuse of rote Scriptural memorization and quoting and the presence of two Wharton Bibles owned by the Brontës in the Brontë Parsonage Museum Library. Descriptions of the charity's project appear in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), representing the catalyst for Catherine and Heathcliff's growing alienation and resistance to Christianity.

KEYWORDS: scriptural memorization, Yorkshire, Bible charity, nonconformist theology, *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë, Branwell Brontë, Anne Brontë

THE LORD WHARTON BIBLE CHARITY, established in 1695 exclusively for the County of Yorkshire by Nonconformist Lord Philip Wharton, encouraged rote memorization of Scripture and catechism for local children. While their guardians received a small financial reward for successful instruction, Yorkshire children reciting certain psalms from memory would receive a unique Bible and two classic works of Christian doctrine. Although this charity is still operational to a lesser extent, its long-term impact on generations of Yorkshire children generally passes unnoticed, except for brief mentions in histories of British

charities and ecclesiastical records.¹ References to this project in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and in a Lord Wharton Bible in the Brontë Parsonage Museum known to have belonged to the Brontës, indicate that one or more of these literary siblings might have been among those Yorkshire children who completed the catechism and Scriptural memorization process necessary to achieve the prize books. This charity's detrimental effect on the spiritual development of the *Wuthering Heights* children, causing them to resist and even reject Bible study, illustrates how the practice of rote Scriptural memorization could be misused as an abusive corrective measure by an authority figure. Studying the charity's manifestations in the novel illuminates the reasons for Catherine and Heathcliff's rebellion against the canting Methodist servant Joseph and his understanding of God; it also indicates why the Brontë children, even those embracing Christianity, reacted negatively to didactic Biblical education and theological tracts of an evangelical persuasion. In order to demonstrate that Emily Brontë had her experience or knowledge of the charity in mind when writing *Wuthering Heights*, this analysis begins by describing the origins, intent, and finances of the project, with reference to its administration in Yorkshire. Then, it briefly explores how familiarity with this project may have caused the Brontë children to excoriate similar endeavors in their own literary writings, perceiving rote Scripture memorization and quotation as forms of psychological warfare intended to establish hypocritical religious authority over others. As a result, in Emily's novel, the project—together with its reading materials—provokes fierce resistance from Catherine and Heathcliff; it is indirectly the cause of their initial traumatic separation at Thrushcross Grange and of their dismissive attitudes towards Christianity in adulthood.

The Charity's Yorkshire History and Activities

A devout Puritan, the fourth Baron Wharton (1613–1696) spent his long career in the Parliaments of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell, and Charles II endeavoring to secure Nonconformist rights and to unite various factions of Dissenters within one Assembly. Although these extremely risky labors caused his 1676 imprisonment in the Tower of London and temporary banishment at the accession of James II, his financial support of ministers, seminaries for training pastors, and religious schools for impoverished children ensured his reputation as a protector of Nonconformists (Dale 2). Yorkshire was both home to his family's ancestral Aske Hall, and a county long fostering opposition to the Church of England, from Roman Catholic recusants to Protestant Dissenters of the Puritan, Methodist, or Baptist persuasion, as J. C. H. Aveling has demonstrated. In his declining years, Lord Wharton established a Bible Charity to provide uneducated, poor Yorkshire folk with the opportunity to memorize Scripture and commit theological precepts to memory. To guarantee the charity's longevity, Lord Wharton allocated specific Yorkshire properties as funding capital for the project to be administered by the charity's first six trustees and their descendants, "upon trust that

¹The charity suffered a near-fatal economic loss in the financial crash of 2008 but has resumed Bible distributions in Cumbria with the cooperation of multiple denominations ("About Lord Wharton's Bible Charity").

the rents and profits of the premises should be deployed for the buying of English bibles, of the translation established by authority, and catechisms, to be distributed yearly to and amongst poor children who can read . . . and likewise for the preaching of sermons yearly” (“County of York” 467). Typical of a Bible charity set up by a Nonconformist, it contained several provisos intended to advance the founder’s own theological beliefs. Sermons by Dissenting ministers were intended to “discover and prove to the people the truth, usefulness, sufficiency, and excellency of the Holy Scriptures, and the people’s right to have them fully in their own language, and also their duty to read, study, and search the Scriptures, and take them for their own unerring rule of faith, worship, and manners” (Miall 115).

Lord Wharton issued specific and lengthy instructions for the yearly dispensation of 1,050 catechisms about the second or third Tuesday in July to “poor people of good report” in various cities and towns designated by himself or the trustees. This catechism was not that of the Church of England, but the Shorter Catechism drawn up by the Nonconformist Westminster Assembly between 1646 and 1647 (Dale 178). In October were given 1,050 Bibles “published by authority, in a large duodecimo; each bible not exceeding 2s.6d. in price, or as near thereabouts as could be bought” (“County” 467). K. W. Wadsworth states that each of these distinctive Bibles was “to be bound with calf leather, to be fastened with a strong brass clasp, to be bound up with the ‘singing psalms’ (the metrical version) and to contain a note stating that this was by the will of Lord Wharton” (8). Pasted inside the cover, this note advised that the child should memorize the following Psalms: “1st, 15th, 25th, 37th, 101st, 113th, 145th.” Lastly, the child’s name was written in the book, usually with the name of the distributive clergyman and the date. The exact number of catechisms and Bibles for each parish was determined by population size; accordingly, the city of York would receive one hundred Bibles (“County” 467), with forty each allotted to Halifax and Bradford (470). In the event of there being fewer qualified children than expected, the trustees were empowered to distribute them elsewhere (468). Furthermore, Lord Wharton decreed that, a year later, “the children must produce their bibles at a place appointed, and that a reward of 12 *d.* be given to the parent of each child giving the best account of his or her improvement in reading the bible, and repeating the catechism and the psalms; and that other books be given to the said child, whose parent or guardian should undertake to instruct each child therein” (467). Additional financial outlays included two shillings and six pence for the examiners and ten shillings for the preacher (Hampden 8).

By the early nineteenth century, the charity relied on local clergymen to select “fit objects of the charity” and send back lists of recipients and parents, according to an 1820 Parliamentary report on British charities (“County” 468). Despite the passage of time, many Lord Wharton Bibles have survived, appearing for sale online or in Yorkshire book stores, containing precious details of dispensers and beneficiaries from previous centuries and decades. Three of these Bibles, all missing their distinctive brass clasps, are currently owned by the Brontë Parsonage Museum; the first of which, “Bb1,” lacks its title page but is dated to 1815, based on the publication stamp on the leather of the front cover (Laycock “18 Nov.”).² The second, “Bb232” was printed in 1830 and contains Patrick’s signature and marginalia

² Thanks to Sarah Laycock, Curator at the Brontë Parsonage Museum, for information and images regarding “Bb1,” “Ab95,” and “Bb232.”

("21 Aug."). Printed in 1856, the flyleaf of the third Bible, "Ab95," was inscribed on October 26th, 1862 to a local boy "John Williams Brown, aged 14 years" ("11 May") by the Reverend John Wade, who succeeded the Brontës' father in 1861 as incumbent of St. Michael and All Angels (Baumber 96).³ Although not owned by a Brontë, Brown's Bible nevertheless retains value due to being given to a child who was baptized by Patrick on 20 March 1848, a few months after the publication of *Wuthering Heights* ("John Williams Brown"), and for its connection to Wade, excoriated by contemporaries for altering and demolishing many features of the church and rectory after entering upon his incumbency (Baumber 96). Additionally, it acquires consequence in light of the investigation as to whether children in the Haworth congregation underwent the experience of the Lord Wharton Bible Charity. This Bible's existence proves that Patrick Brontë's immediate successor at St. Michael and All Angels Church officially doled out reading materials from the charity to local children, possibly following Patrick's previous custom.

Biblical Brontës

Did Emily Brontë personally undergo the process of Bible and catechism memorization to receive a Lord Wharton Bible, or is Patrick's copy in the Brontë Parsonage Museum merely left over from the gifting ceremony at St. Michael and All Angels Church, and readily available to the minister and his children? Sadly, records of the Wharton Bible Charity's activities in the nineteenth century are scant, due to negligent book-keeping and trustees' unfortunate decision to destroy extant records. Bryan Dale notes that "no minute books up to 1786, and no accounts, or lists of persons to whom the books were sent, and none of the correspondence concerning them up even to a later date have been preserved. Several boxes filled with such documents formerly existed, [but except for one general Schedule made in 1827], all these papers were destroyed as useless some years ago" (142). Twenty-four records of the charity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be consulted at the Lambeth Palace Library, and a few letters and papers of its activities are available within the Congregational collection of Dr. Williams's Library in London. But as of yet, no extant entry from the church at Haworth to the charity mentions Emily Jane Brontë, or any of her siblings, as receiving a Lord Wharton Bible. Therefore, to ascertain the degree of Emily's familiarity with the charity, whether by personal experience or common knowledge, clues

³ According to Ancestry.com, John Williams Brown (recipient of Ab95), was born on 10 February 1848, was baptized by Patrick Brontë as an infant on the 20 March the same year, and died at the young age of 15 on 22 November 1865 at Haworth. He had ten siblings. His parents were William Brown and Ann Thwaites, who were 39 and 28, respectively, at the time of his birth. That Brown had completed the project would doubtless have comforted the parents grieving his untimely demise. John's grandparents were William Brown Sr. (buried at St. Michael and all Angels) and Mary Bowcock. William Brown Sr. had a father named John Brown, not to be confused with the church sexton John Brown of Haworth, whose daughter Martha (1828–19 Jan 1880) worked as a servant for the Brontë family and lived in the Parsonage ("John Williams Brown"). Thus, though John Williams Brown may have been related to Martha Brown, it was probably only as a distant cousin.

must be sought within the Bible containing an extant title page and marks of use by the family. Her father's opinions on the subject of Scripture memorization must also be scrutinized.

Whether or not Patrick formally integrated the charity's reading materials into his Sunday school, servant Sarah Garrs testified that he regularly assembled his children and the servants for Bible reading and catechizing on Sunday evenings (Green 127). Evidence of Patrick's Scriptural study appears in "Bb232" (Laycock). This bulky volume lacks its brass clasp but retains Lord Wharton's instructions pasted on the verso page within the front cover along with a photograph of Patrick, obviously added later. On the recto page appears a Latin phrase in pencil "Vide ch—XXV de libro Deut -" (my translation: "Consult chapter 25 of the book of Deuteronomy") above an inscription in Patrick's hand: "P. Brontë, A. B. / Incumbent of Haworth." Additionally, "Patrick's black ink annotations appear on multiple pages," including throughout the Psalms (Laycock, "21 Aug."), along with the year he read each marked verse, suggesting he only used the Bible following Charlotte's death in 1855 and that this was indeed his children's Bible. Within the volume are the Book of Common Prayer, Bible, and Psalms, all containing Patrick's annotations and marginalia. An inscription appears in pencil on the verso page of the back flyleaf, apparently in Charlotte Brontë's hand: "Mifs Brontë / Mifs Brontë- / Haworth:—Yks -" (abbr. "Yorkshire") with what appears to be the word "Brontë" scrawled in a different, larger hand against the right side. Considering that Charlotte and Emily were the two oldest Miss Brontës after the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth in 1825, this may be a statement of joint ownership in the Bible, with the additional name as a pen trial.

Soon after arriving in Thornton, Yorkshire, Patrick published a short story in *The Pastoral Visitor* (1814) entitled "The Cottage in the Wood, or the Art of Becoming Rich and Happy" (Green 178–79). In this story, Mary, a poor girl, learns to read the Bible at Sunday school, proving herself "diligent and apt" in her Scriptural studies while benefiting from the "exhortations" of the "pious Clergyman" (P. Brontë 3). Subsequently, Mary converts her parents through nightly readings of Bible passages, sending the narrator into paroxysms of admiration over their devotionals: "How much better than what it once was with themselves! How infinitely preferable to the thoughtless and profane manner in which the ungodly spend their Sabbath evenings!" (5). Eventually, the pious girl weds a newly converted assistant teacher named William Bower, who devotes his talents to poor children on Sundays. Further indicating his sympathy with Bible reading, Patrick formed the Haworth Auxiliary of the Bible Society in 1823 and established a Sunday School in 1831 on a plot of land released by church trustees, that was intended to compete with the more popular Methodist Sunday school established two years prior (Green 110). In a heavily Nonconformist area, using the charity as part of the new Sunday school activities would have proved an excellent means to attract children to Anglican service. In 1844, Charles Musgrave, Archdeacon of Craven received what appears to be thirty additional Lord Wharton Bibles for Halifax due to population increase (Dale 170), suggesting that local ministers of his archdeaconry, possibly including Patrick, urgently required the surplus for their Sunday schools. Bibles were precious commodities in Yorkshire: an inventory in 1816 of Patrick's first Sunday School at the Old Bell chapel in Thornton revealed a meager supply of "twenty-one Bibles, twenty Testaments and five spelling books" for one hundred students (Green 73–74).

Patrick's Scriptural emphasis seems to have caused his children to develop individual religious perspectives, usually diverging from their father's acceptance of the doctrine of eternal punishment (Winnifrid, "Religion" 268). As Marianne Thormählen remarks, "It is interesting that successful tuition in the Brontë novels is hardly ever associated with religion" (*Education* 99). In fact, judging by their plentiful and negative use in his Angrian stories, Branwell disliked Scriptural quoting, suggesting tension between himself and his father over Biblical memorization.⁴ Terry Eagleton notes the similarity between Emily's character Joseph and Branwell's demonic S'death, who hypocritically spouts Biblical rhetoric in a Yorkshire dialect either to serve his evil ends or mock religion (2). However, two other characters in his juvenilian *The Wool is Rising* (1834), Methodist clerk Timothy Steaton and the Byronic Northangerland, provide even clearer evidence of Biblical references being misused for deceitful purposes, or as a subversive code accessible only to others equipped with Scriptural ken. The narrator describes the "puritanical" Timothy as winking "at his own adroitness," while outlining a plan to steal diseased sheep's wool to resell for profit: "Lo may not my master perchance sojourn into the far country and gather together as sheaves into a garner all the fleeces of sheep fallen through the rot . . . I forbear to enlarge providence we see will provide" (49).⁵ After delivering a passionate speech at his rival Zamorna's coronation, comparing the listening Verdopolis crowds to enslaved Israelites in Egypt, the "Satanic Orator" Northangerland complains to his wife Zenobia, "And was I forced to veil my hints under Biblical expressions. was I—Ha if I spare now Ill smite. at last [*sic*]" (41). While critics largely concur that Branwell's atheism is atypical of the Brontës, his "disgust at religious hypocrisy" (Barker 206–07) and cynicism concerning Scriptural memorization and usage appear to have been shared and explored by every one of his sisters.

Charlotte and Anne's responses to Biblical memorization and quoting appear more conflicted; notably, of the three Brontë sisters, their novels contain the greatest number of Biblical allusions (Wang 160).⁶ Where Charlotte's literary views on spiritual learning apparently coincide with Emily's is on the subject of religious writing for children. At an extremely young age, Charlotte and Emily encountered the Christian tract, which they experienced as a form of mental cruelty that they uniformly resented. Reportedly, Charlotte based Mr. Brocklehurst, head of Lowood School in *Jane Eyre* (1847), on Mr. William Carus Wilson, their Calvinist superintendent at Cowan Bridge and author of *The Children's Friend* (1826–1828). This penny periodical contained stories of what Wilson termed "bad girls [who] go to Hell," deathbed conversions, pleas for repentance, and his own recommendations for the kind of rigorous educational methods described in Charlotte's novel (Shorter, *Brontës*, 425). Brocklehurst hands Jane a tract entitled "The Child's Guide," containing frightening stories of God's wrath evidenced against misbehaving children (*JE* 18). At his school, Jane undergoes rote Scriptural memorization and catechizing on Sunday nights,

⁴ This is not to suggest that Patrick coerced his children into espousing his theological beliefs. Apparently, as Marianne Thormählen states, he encouraged his children to "evolve their own views on life, to an unusual extent" (*The Brontës and Education* 39).

⁵ Punctuation and capitalization (or the lack) are Branwell's own.

⁶ Lisa Wang's contention that ". . . there are only fourteen biblical allusions or quotations in Emily Brontë's novel, *Wuthering Heights*" (162) is inaccurate, as by my reckoning there are at least forty.

besides a sleep-inducing sermon, a weekly ritual calculated to quell her rebellious nature. Indeed, when Mr. Brocklehurst originally cross-examines Jane, he is horrified at her disinclination for memorizing Scripture and complete antipathy to the Psalms, a key feature of the Lord Wharton Bible Charity's requirements:

“Do you read your Bible?”

“Sometimes.”

“With pleasure? Are you fond of it?”

“I like Revelations, and the book of Daniel, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah.”

“And the Psalms? I hope you like them?”

“No, sir.”

“No? Oh, shocking! I have a little boy, younger than you, who knows six Psalms by heart . . .”

“Psalms are not interesting,” I remarked. (*JE* 17)

Although Charlotte treasured certain religious works, she also comprehended that spiritual authorities could force repentance and enact obedience through compulsory Scriptural memorization.

As for Anne, Marianne Thormählen has extensively described both the despair she derived from a comprehensive, self-imposed study of the Bible undertaken from 1841–1843 and the comfort she experienced due to her subsequent belief in universal salvation (“Anne Brontë” 342). Consequently, Bible reading assumes a dual role in Anne's prose fiction, productive of both spiritual enlightenment and emotional endangerment. In *Agnes Grey* (1847), the heroine visits a local widow, Nancy Brown, who is prevented from reading her “well-used” Bible by blindness. Although both women bond over the reading of 1 John, chapter 4, which speaks of God's love, Agnes entertains secret misgivings over Nancy's tendency to be “somewhat afflicted with religious melancholy,” successfully cured by minister Mr. Weston's optimistic interpretation of the Bible's redemptive message (92–100). A more dubious perspective on Scriptural reading and exegetical interpretation appears in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), when Helen Graham and her aunt, Mrs. Maxwell, engage in a battle of Biblical references to determine whether or not her ill-fated marriage to Arthur Huntingdon is judicious. Disagreeing with Helen's insistence on stressing Christ's redemptive power rather than judgment and impressive range of Scriptural citations (30), her aunt exclaims:

“And is that the use you make of your Bible? And did you find no passages tending to prove the danger and the falsity of such a belief?”

“No: 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 . . .” (166–67)

Despite her own fervent Christian belief, Anne still recognized the tendency to selectively utilize passages of Holy Writ based on individual human fears and temptations. How-

ever, her own Biblical studies were pursued voluntarily. It is in Emily's *Wuthering Heights* that the most explicit references to the Lord Wharton Bible Charity appear, along with indications of the extreme trauma that children could experience if compelled to memorize.

The Lord Wharton Bible in *Wuthering Heights*

Accidentally setting fire to a Testament in Cathy Earnshaw Linton and Heathcliff's childhood bedroom occasions Mr. Lockwood's investigation of the dilapidated library's contents and acquaintance with the first part of the children's story of passionate resistance to religious authority. Stranded at Wuthering Heights, Lockwood shelters in an oak closet, a kind of old-fashioned bed enclosed by panels to allow privacy. Unable to sleep, he searches for some light reading among the "few mildewed books piled up in one corner" (16). One in particular first engages his notice:

I discovered my candle-wick reclining on one of the antique volumes, and perfuming the place with an odour of roasted calf-skin. I snuffed it off, and, very ill at ease under the influence of cold and lingering nausea, sat up and spread open the injured tome on my knee. It was a Testament, in lean type, and smelling dreadfully musty: a fly-leaf bore the inscription—"Catherine Earnshaw, her book," and a date some quarter of a century back.

The most likely candidate for the identity of Catherine's Testament based on physical description and use is the Lord Wharton Bible, bound in calfskin and the property of a child. Instead of simply referring to any Bible, Emily Brontë apparently had her family's childhood Bible in mind, the Lord Wharton Bible, specific to the Yorkshire charity itself, and therefore visually odd to a London gentleman.

Opposing this theory is the circumstance that Lockwood does not specifically mention the metrical psalms when leafing through the Testament; but those were located at the end of the Lord Wharton Bible, and might not have been obvious on his brief perusal. Usually, the Book of Common Prayer was printed first in the Bible, with the Book of Psalms appearing in its usual place in the middle of the Old Testament, while the New Testament and metrical psalms concluded the volume. Sometimes the Psalms, Apocrypha, or Book of Common Prayer were gifted to children separately, depending on the edition of the Bible. Also, although Lockwood does not mention unlatching the dog-eared Testament's brass clasp, it may have been lost like the copies owned by the Brontë family and John Williams Brown. That Lockwood "spreads it open" on his knee suggests the volume is both large and heavy, according with the appearance of the charity's duodecimo. Admittedly, the family at Wuthering Heights, although socially lower than the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange, are not the "poor people of good report" warranting a Lord Wharton Bible. However, the fact that the Brontës owned at least one, as clergymen's children, suggests a more relaxed definition of the "poor" was made when local dispensers such as Patrick Brontë had extra

or unclaimed copies, or clergymen prioritized Scriptural memorization for all. As will be discussed shortly, if the curate ministering to the Wuthering Heights children realized their embarrassing lack of Bibles, he might dispense one to the wild daughter of the house as a correctional tool to aid Catherine's repentance.

The Two Religious Books

Prior to his two dreams, Lockwood observes religious books whose pages are "covered in a pen-and-ink commentary—at least the appearance of one—covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left. Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand" (*WH* 16). Children acquired two other religious works from the charity, a significant number in light of the twin fictional works: "The Helmet of Salvation" and "The Broad Way to Destruction," that Joseph uses to spiritually educate Catherine and Heathcliff until the children rebelliously destroy them (17). Which books were dispensed apparently fluctuated with changing times, availability, and the trustees' preference. The 1820 report claims, "With every 10 Bibles, 12 Catechisms [sic] with the Psalms, and Companion to the Altar, (and one of Crossman's Introduction, as a reward) are sent" ("County" 470). However, an 1895 report on the Lord Wharton Bible Charity states, "The Book of Common Prayer is now distributed instead of this Catechism," and notes that the reward books were formerly Puritan Joseph Alleine's *Sure Guide to Heaven* (1671: sometimes retitled *An Alarm to the Unconverted*) and Thomas Lye's *Principles of the Christian Religion* (1706), containing the basic theological tenets of Christianity in catechism form; another option was Thomas à Kempis's medieval Christian classic, *The Imitation of Christ* (1418–27) (Dale 178–79). A copy abridged and published by Methodist founder John Wesley ("Bb202") is currently held by the Brontë Parsonage Museum ("The Brontë's Own Books"), the copy gifted to Charlotte by Patrick in 1826 when she was nine, a prime age for undergoing the memorization project (Shorter, *Charlotte Brontë*, 31).

One of these books possibly received by the Brontë children contains spiritual language regarding death and the afterlife strikingly reminiscent of Catherine and Heathcliff's love. Outlining the process of salvation as necessitating guilt and extensive self-examination before repentance can be achieved, Alleine's text begins with these lines "To the Reader":

If it were only possible thou mayest live hereafter and be called to account in another world for what thou dost in this, it would be thy wisdom to take the safest course, and not to run the constant hazard of being dragged to death to judgment, before thou wert prepared to meet thy Judge. But another Life, and a Judgment to come, are more than possible: There is an high probability, yea as great a certainty as can with reason be expected, that death will not put an end to thy being, that thou shalt live after the return of thy body to the earth, and that then thou shalt be tried, and sentenced to such an happiness, or misery, as

will be incomparably greater than any thing, nay than all thou didst ever feel or see, hear of or imagine. (2)

This passage sums up one of the major themes of *Wuthering Heights*: the question of whether Catherine's soul is at rest after her "incorruptible" body is laid to rest in the churchyard, damned, or whether it wanders the moors, having been flung out of heaven by the angels as she once saw in a dream. While after death some go to "be like the Angels, their delightful companions," warns Alleine, others, "that are reprobated and damned, shall never be admitted into the regions of light, nor yet be favoured with a glimpse thereof, but suffer with devils in the blackness of darkness for ever." Recommending constant spiritual examination, divine communion, and obedience to God's commandments, Alleine concludes, "In short, Before thou ascendest to heaven, thou mayest be in a heaven on earth, and find by happy experience, that the way to have all thou canst wish hereafter, is to be and do what is best for thyself here" (3). Emily Brontë may well have read these lines and applied them to Catherine and Heathcliff's spiritually heretical love that is described in words reminiscent, in their intensity, of Christian salvation and the afterlife.

The Annual Sermon

References to the charity suggest the extent to which Biblical reception and both Anglican and Dissenter influences are relevant to the story's dramatic action. As a startling condition of receiving the free Bibles, potentially alarming to an orthodox Anglican incumbent jealous of his pulpit and flock, Lord Wharton had insisted that on the Sunday the Bibles were dispensed, a Protestant Dissenting minister should be paid to "preach a sermon on the Holy Scriptures and offer extempore prayers before and after it, according to the manner of the Nonconformists" (Dale 113). Such a sermon appears in Lockwood's dream, influenced by his previous sight of the printed copy of a local sermon entitled, "Seventy Times Seven, and the First of the Seventy-First. A Pious Discourse delivered by the Reverend Jabes Branderham, in the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough" (*WH* 19).⁷ Lockwood's description of Branderham's sermon reads like an address given by a Dissenting minister:

Jabes had a full and attentive congregation; and he preached—good God! what a sermon; divided into FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit, and each discussing a separate sin! Where he searched for them, I cannot tell. He had his private manner of interpreting the phrase, and it seemed necessary the brother should sin different sins on ev-

⁷ Confusingly, there appear to be three places of worship in *Wuthering Heights*: the Anglican Gimmerton Kirk or Chapel (Anglican, fallen into disrepair) where the Lintons worship and Catherine is buried; the chapel in Gimmerton (Nonconformist) attended by Joseph, Zillah, and eventually Nelly; and the Chapel of Gimmerden Sough (Nonconformist) which, besides being mentioned on the printed copy, is also the location of Jabes Branderham's dream sermon.

ery occasion. They were of the most curious character: odd transgressions that I never imagined previously.

Ultimately, this sermon concludes with Lockwood's own rebellion against the long-winded sermon and the congregation attacking each other, depicting the violent menace of dissident theology.

According to Christopher Heywood, Emily may have intended this passage to caricature Reverend Jabez Bunting (1779–1858), a local minister advocating Methodist Separatism in Yorkshire, thus menacing his colleague Patrick's position (54). According to an 1851 church census, Dissenters outnumbered "Anglicans by two to one with only four in ten going to either church or chapel," (Winniffrith, "Church" 245), emphasizing the very active threat of Dissenter theology to Yorkshire's tenuous Anglican establishment. Initially hoping to attract Nonconformists to his Sunday School, Patrick's failure to "keep on friendly terms" with Dissenters, due to insisting that they contribute towards his salary, led to the decline of his Bible Society (Green 112). Furthermore, during the second dream in which Catherine's ghost scratches at the door and thrusts her bleeding arm through the window, Lockwood ignores her "lamentable prayer" by piling theological books up as a barrier between them, in what Simon Marsden, among others, has termed an instance of "complicity with a corrupted religious discourse" (108). If *Wuthering Heights* is heaven, according to Catherine's previous dream, Lockwood here uses the judgmental and pitiless tomes of Joseph's Nonconformist theology to guard the entrance, leaving her damned. Realizing that even Catherine's Bible and other reading materials and circumstances in *Wuthering Heights* may be allusions to features of the Lord Wharton Bible Charity reinforces popular conceptions of Emily Brontë's novel as inextricable from its specific county setting.

The Effect of the Lord Wharton Reading Materials on Catherine and Heathcliff

Once Mr. Earnshaw sickens and succumbs to anxiety concerning the state of his eternal soul, Joseph acquires standing in the *Wuthering Heights* family by serving as Catherine and Heathcliff's substitute spiritual preceptor. By carrying out their instruction using the print materials of the Yorkshire Bible charity, Joseph also gains approval from the local church authorities, and possibly the twelve pence promised for effective tutelage. Aiding Joseph in this religious endeavor is the impoverished curate of Gimmerton Kirk, who also educates the Earnshaw and Linton children in secular education for payment (*WH* 32) and possibly procures Catherine's Bible and the two books. While Joseph's fervent Methodism might seem to conflict with receiving the charity materials from an Anglican minister, it should be recalled that Lord Wharton, possessing a solid Puritan doctrinal background, originally had made provision for Dissenting ministers in his trust (Dale 111–12). Arthur Clear speculates, "One cannot fail to infer from the Catechisms and books directed by Lord Wharton to be given as rewards, that the benefit was primarily intended for Nonconformists; indeed he himself was a Presbyterian" (102). Even after this practice was discontinued, Nonconformist

as well as Anglican ministers were sent Wharton Bibles for distribution until around 1793, when only ministers of the Established Church were eligible for this dispensary office (147–48). After 1782, only Anglican trustees administered the charity, disseminating the *Book of Common Prayer* and Catechism of the Church of England, not that of the Westminster Assembly (Dale 153). All books and tracts by Dissenters were replaced with Anglican texts; similarly, only ordained Anglican ministers could deliver the sermon (158). Therefore, while possibly drawing from her own experiences of the charity's materials in the 1830s, Emily exhibits accurate knowledge of how the project operated in the 1770s, the setting for the first part of her novel (Thomson 29). Regardless of whether the reading materials derive from the Nonconformists in Gimmerton or the Anglican curate, the children acquire Protestant instruction, and supporting the charity perfectly accords with Joseph's doctrinal beliefs.

The theological line between Anglican and Nonconformist thought, while present, is easily crossed for spiritual communion, reflecting Emily's awareness of practical interactions between various Christian denominations in Yorkshire. Besides old Mr. Earnshaw, who seeks spiritual solace from both the Anglican curate and Joseph, the servants of Wuthering Heights are equally fluid in their doctrinal allegiances. When her master is absent, Zillah attends prayer-meeting with Joseph, possibly the activity that Linton Heathcliff scornfully refers to as "constantly gadding off to Gimmerton" (*WH* 182) and his father ironically terms "a journey of pleasure" (206). Although Nelly Dean once describes Joseph as "the wearisomest, self-righteous Pharisee that ever ransacked a Bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses to his neighbours" (33), she eventually admits to "generally" accompanying Joseph to worship. Sheepishly, she justifies her change of attendance to Mr. Lockwood thus: "the kirk, you know, has no minister now . . . and they call the Methodists' or Baptists' place (I can't say which it is) at Gimmerton, a chapel" (225). Ignorant, or intentionally careless of theological differences, these characters prioritize any kind of Christian church attendance over none at all, a common attitude in the novel.

The inter-doctrinal alliance between Joseph and the curate to Christianize the "witch" Catherine and the "savage" Heathcliff appears to result from pious old Mr. Earnshaw's death and Hindley's ascension as head of the household. Nelly laments that the latter "would not even have seen after [Heathcliff and Catherine's] going to church on Sundays, only Joseph and the curate reprimanded his carelessness when they absented themselves; and that reminded him to order Heathcliff a flogging, and Catherine a fast from dinner or supper" (*WH* 36). Although the Wuthering Heights children initially attend church, conceivably even a Sunday school, at Gimmerton Kirk, their increasing social isolation might be another reason for forcing them to undergo a more formal process of catechization. Thus, Joseph's spiritual ministrations to the children using the Bible, catechism, and Nonconformist religious tracts are undertaken together with those of the concerned Anglican curate: "The curate might set as many chapters as he pleased for Catherine to get by heart, and Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again" (37). Although the curate's efforts to teach Catherine rote Scriptural memorization initially yield results, the verses leave her memory whenever Heathcliff approaches. That these joint efforts are ultimately futile does not lessen the factional significance of such an unlikely partnership.

Joseph and the curate maintain their ascendancy until the children conduct a successful rebellion with far-reaching consequences by escaping from Wuthering Heights. Under a striking caricature of Joseph, Catherine's childhood diary relates,

An awful Sunday . . . we could not go to church, so Joseph must needs get up a congregation in the garret; and, while Hindley and his wife basked downstairs before a comfortable fire—doing anything but reading their Bibles, I'll answer for it—Heathcliff, myself, and the unhappy ploughboy were commanded to take our prayer-books, and mount: The service lasted precisely three hours. . . . On Sunday evenings we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners. (*WH* 16)

Shaming Catherine and Heathcliff for Sabbath-breaking despite having just heard the Gospel, Joseph shrieks, "Shame on ye! sit ye down, ill childer! there's good books enough if ye'll read 'em: sit ye down, and think o' yer sowls!" (17) In response, Catherine admits:

I took my dingy volume by the scroop, and hurled it into the dog-kennel, vowing I hated a good book. Heathcliff kicked his to the same place. Then there was a hubbub! "Maister Hindley!" shouted our chaplain. "Maister, coom hither! Miss Cathy's riven th' back off 'Th' Helmet o' Salvation' un' Heathcliff's pawsed his fit into t' first part o' 'T' Brooad Way to Destruction!"

Punished for this crime by confinement in the back-kitchen, Catherine first chronicles her misery and then escapes with Heathcliff, presumably on the adventure that leads them to Thrushcross Grange and results in their fatal rupture.

The encounter with the wealthy Lintons is primarily motivated by curiosity over whether other Yorkshire children are similarly compelled to learn and recite Scripture. Returning from Thrushcross Grange after Catherine's ankle injury and his near-capture, Heathcliff describes the leisurely Sundays enjoyed by Edgar and Isabella, who are not required to undergo the Lord Wharton Bible project. He indignantly complains,

"Cathy and I escaped from the wash-house to have a ramble at liberty, and getting a glimpse of the Grange lights, we thought we would just go and see whether the Lintons passed their Sunday evenings standing shivering in corners, while their father and mother sat eating and drinking, and singing and laughing, and burning their eyes out before the fire. Do you think they do? Or reading sermons, and being catechised by their manservant, and set to learn a column of Scripture names, if they don't answer properly?" "Probably not," I responded. "They are good children, no doubt, and don't deserve the treatment you receive, for your bad conduct." "Don't you cant, Nelly," he said: "nonsense!" (37–38)

What makes life unbearable for Heathcliff besides Hindley's neglect and Joseph's abuse is the constant religious pressure of learning useless information, such as Biblical genealo-

gies, without intellectual engagement. Notably, the boy does not resent learning in general, only spiritual learning in particular, having once possessed, in Nelly's telling, "curiosity . . . in pursuit of knowledge, and . . . love for books or learning" (53). Reluctantly, Heathcliff accepts his inability to compete any longer with Catherine's educational lessons under the circumstances. Relinquishing the struggle accelerates the boy's social degradation, ultimately constituting the reason for Catherine's rejection of him as a romantic suitor. Having learned to differentiate between two kinds of literacy, then—Biblical rote memorization encouraged for the lower class, and secular "books and learning" advocated for a lady or gentleman—Heathcliff never forgets this lesson. Participation in Scriptural learning has ultimately caused him physical punishment, further blurred status due to a servant's elevation as his preceptor and, lastly, inspired him with a life-long hatred for the sort of religious hypocrisy that would beat meek humility into him while denying him the educational means to maintain or transcend social class.

After Frances dies in childbirth, Hindley curses God for his loss so bitterly that, of the servants, only Joseph and Nelly remain. The alliance between Heathcliff's torturers fractures under the strain of Hindley's changed attitude, Joseph establishing even more household power through spiritual authority, while the curate abandons Wuthering Heights to its "infernal" inner demons, refusing to administer Christian aid when most required by his flock. Concerning the miserable state of the household, Nelly relates,

The master's bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff. His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint. And, truly, it appeared as if the lad WERE possessed of something diabolical at that period. He delighted to witness Hindley degrading himself past redemption; and became daily more notable for savage sullenness and ferocity . . . The curate dropped calling, and nobody decent came near us, at last. (51–52)

When Hindley becomes that most terrifying of Christian rebels, an apostate, Heathcliff delights in seeing how easily one who forced religion upon him spiritually flounders during a tragic, senseless human event. While Nelly interprets his glee as "diabolical," Heathcliff's vicious attitude makes sense as a self-justified reaction to what he comprehends as the true face of religious hypocrisy: Hindley's damnation reveals the hollowness of "mechanical" Christianity.

After his return to Yorkshire and habitation of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff's detestation of his childhood religious instruction resurfaces under the pressure of seeking revenge, though for the first time Catherine's religious perspective undergoes a remarkably divergent transformation, representing yet another aspect of their growing ideological breach. After receiving a visit at Thrushcross Grange from her long-lost companion Heathcliff, she fully recovers from a state of profound depression brought on by his silent departure and experiences a spiritual awakening that appears spontaneous and heartfelt. She tells Nelly,

The event of this evening has reconciled me to God and humanity! I had risen in angry rebellion against Providence. Oh, I've endured very, very bitter misery,

Nelly! . . . I can afford to suffer anything hereafter! Should the meanest thing alive slap me on the cheek, I'd not only turn the other, but I'd ask pardon for provoking it; and, as a proof, I'll go make my peace with Edgar instantly. Good-night! I'm an angel! (78)

Prior to this passage, she refers to the impossibility of her brother Hindley being made “morally worse than he is”: this disapproval of his conduct and recognition of her own rebellion against God establishes her understanding that apostasy equates to abandonment of fellow creatures and rejection of communion with God. Her paraphrase of Matthew 5:39 reveals that she has relinquished, at least temporarily, her own anger. However, Heathcliff's vengeful desires continue unabated, and he rejects multiple opportunities to repent, instead destabilizing both the Linton and Earnshaw families until the next generation has achieved adulthood.

Conclusion

Catherine's old room at Wuthering Heights contains the mildewed remnants of the Lord Wharton Bible Charity along with other books, which the young girl repurposed through journaling on their pages acts of resistance to the texts themselves. The manifold effects of the charity in the novel include exacerbating tensions between members of a divided family and representing the catalyst for Catherine and Heathcliff's rupture after meeting the Lintons. Additionally, the act of rote memorization without extrapolation or reflection buttresses an empty form of religion that none but Joseph embrace heartily, while most—like Heathcliff and Hindley—passionately reject as not providing sufficient comfort either in life, or security beyond the grave. However, her experience with the charity's texts also provides adult Catherine Earnshaw Linton with the Biblical knowledge that enables her to, at least temporarily, forgive Heathcliff and experience spiritual peace. Therefore, Emily Brontë's references to the charity partake of the complicated attitudes developed by herself and her siblings in response to theological interpretations and personal applications of Scripture. Recognizing how memorizing and quoting Bible verses verbatim can be utilized to control others, Emily indicates the spiritual and social dangers of allowing others to dictate belief instead of personally seeking religious enlightenment and a connection with the divine.

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