THE USE OF THE BIBLE IN GEORGE ELIOT'S FICTION

DISSERTATION

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By

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The purpose of this study is to demonstrate George Eliot's literary indebtedness to the Bible by isolating, identifying, and analyzing her various uses of Scripture in her novels.

Chapter I is devoted to a statement of purpose and to an indication of overall organization.

Chapter II traces George Eliot's acquisition of biblical knowledge through three stages: church attendance and familial influence during preschool years, the association with and influence of Evangelical teachers during the years of formal education, and finally the intense study of the Bible and related writings during the years following her schooling. Although her estimate of the Bible changed with the renunciation of Evangelical Christianity, George Eliot continued to read, revere, and draw upon the Bible throughout her career as a novelist.

Chapter III demonstrates George Eliot's use of Bibles in Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss for purposes of characterization and symbolism. Characters who read the Bible provide both comic relief and serious thematic emphasis.

In Chapters IV-VI, uses of biblical quotations, phrases, and allusions are analyzed. Quotations are few but effective:
they appear as epigraphs, serving as organic explications of the prefaced passages; they sharpen the characterization of such characters as Dinah Morris and Rufus Lyon; they occasionally provide humor. Biblical phrases serve basically the same purposes as quotations. They are used for epigraphs, for characterization, for authorial commentary, and for poetic effect. Numerous allusions are also used with ease and effectiveness to suit George Eliot's purpose of the moment and to enhance her fiction.

Chapter VII identifies and analyzes symbols drawn from the Bible. From the Old Testament, there recur in Eliot's writings symbols of Eden, of the flood, of the wilderness and the promised land. From the New Testament, there appear symbols of temptation, of conversion, and—standing preeminent among George Eliot's biblical images—the cross.

In Chapter VIII, George Eliot's use of the Bible in character delineation is divided into three facets: significant use of biblical names such as Adam, Hephzibah, and Esther; use of a specific biblical character or type, as with the prophets Savonarola and Mordecai and the Christ figure Daniel Deronda; and use of various biblical characters to create fictional characters, as with Tom and Maggie Tulliver, Dinah Morris, and Adam Bede.

Chapter IX identifies the basic themes in George Eliot's fiction as the essentially biblical ones of duty, sowing and reaping, sympathy, renunciation, conversion, and suffering.
The biblical elements used to convey each theme are identified and discussed.

In addition to summarizing points made in previous chapters, Chapter X suggests that no significant change took place in Eliot's use of the Bible from first fictional work to last. Moreover, no particular portions of the Bible seem favored by Eliot over others. Rather, the fictional situation and character dictate the type of biblical material used. George Eliot's grasp of the Bible was expert enough to allow use of the obscure facts and characters as well as the well known ones. The King James Bible pervades George Eliot's fiction, and is perhaps the most important single source from which she drew.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. GEORGE ELIOT'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. GEORGE ELIOT'S FICTIONAL USES OF BIBLES AND BIBLE READERS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS IN GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. GEORGE ELIOT'S USE OF BIBLICAL PHRASEOLOGY</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN ELIOT'S FICTION</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. BIBLICAL SYMBOLISM IN ELIOT'S FICTION</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. ELIOT'S USE OF THE BIBLE IN CHARACTERIZATION</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. GEORGE ELIOT'S THEMES AND THE BIBLE</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has been no greater single influence on English literature than the Bible. From Old English times to the present, from Beowulf and Bede to James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, the Bible has served as source for subject matter, theme, character, symbol, allusion, quotation, and phraseology in prose and poetry. As Henrietta Tichy has observed,

Caedmon's Biblical paraphrases marked the first appearance of that golden thread of Scriptural influence that was to brighten and enrich the whole tapestry of English literature... for the most part it has been one of the richest and most beautiful threads in the tapestry...¹

Among the most resplendent segments of this tapestry is the Victorian period, a literary era in which the "golden thread of Scriptural influence" shines brightly. The thread is artistically interwoven into such variegated poems as Keble's The Christian Year, Browning's "An Epistle to Karshish," Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine," Clough's "The Latest Decalogue," and Tennyson's In Memoriam. In Victorian prose, such widely differing writers--both in ideas and in style--as Carlyle, Newman, Ruskin, and Arnold all draw on the Bible as

an important source. Arnold, for instance, demonstrates his reliance upon biblical phraseology when he writes, "It looked in Byron's glass as it looks in Lord Beaconsfield's, and sees, or fancies that it sees, its own face there; and then it goes its way and straightway forgets what manner of man it saw."\(^2\)

And Ruskin, in *Fors Clavigera*, explicitly acknowledges his involuntary indebtedness to the Bible:

Walter Scott and Pope's Homer were reading of my own election, but my mother forced me, by steady daily toil, to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart, as well as to read it every syllable through, aloud, hard names and all, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, about once a year; and to that discipline—patient, accurate, and resolute—I owe not only a knowledge of the book, which I find occasionally serviceable, but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature. From Walter Scott's novels I might easily, as I grew older, have fallen to other people's novels; and Pope might, perhaps, have led me to take Johnson's English, or Gibbon's, as types of language; but, once knowing the 32nd of Deuteronomy, the 119th Psalm, the 15th of 1st Corinthians, the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the Apocalypse, every syllable by heart, and having always a way of thinking with myself what words meant, it was not possible for me, even in the foolishest times of youth, to write entirely superficial or formal English. . . .\(^3\)

What is true of Victorian poets and nonfiction prose writers is true as well of Victorian novelists. The fabric


of their fictional creations is similarly interlaced with this biblical thread. The Bible serves as an influence upon such diverse character creations as Charlotte Bronte’s St. John Rivers and Thomas Hardy’s Bathsheba Everdene; such symbolic acts as Rochester’s conversion by fire in Jane Eyre and little Tom’s regeneration by water in The Water Babies; 4 such mottoes as Hardy’s "The letter killeth" 5 in Jude the Obscure; and such scenes as the death of Sydney Carton in Dickens’ A Tale of Two Cities:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away. Twenty-three.

They said of him, about the city that night, that it was the peacefullest man’s face ever beheld there. Many added that he looked sublime and prophetic. 6

Virtually all major Victorian novelists drew from the Bible to some degree. Perhaps none knew it more thoroughly


5 The motto is a partial quotation of II Cor. 3:6—"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

or used it more frequently, however, than did George Eliot. Her Evangelical adolescence produced a lasting reverence for it. Her early omnivorous reading was dominated by the Bible, biblical commentaries, church histories, and theology. In addition, her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach\(^7\) so broadened and deepened her knowledge of the Scriptures that she was thoroughly steeped in the Bible by the time she began to compose fiction. In that fiction, many of her thoughts, themes, characters, images, and phrases can readily be traced to the Scriptures. George Eliot was, like Milton and Coleridge, a widely read author\(^8\) who knew and used many sources, but she relied upon no other so heavily as she did the Bible.

Published studies of George Eliot’s sources have given much attention to the classical influence of the Greeks.\(^9\)

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\(^7\)George Eliot’s translation of David F. Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu* was published in 1846 as *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*; her translation of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* was published in 1854 as *The Essence of Christianity*.

\(^8\)“No one was more thoroughly abreast of the newest thought, the latest French or German theory, the last interpretation of dogma, the most up-to-date results in anthropology, medicine, biology or sociology. . . . She was the first English writer to bring an intellect of that calibre to the service of fiction. . . .” Basil Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 205.

and even more attention to her contemporary nineteenth-century sources. But only indirect notice has been taken of the Bible. In alluding to her use of the Bible, critics have justifiably stressed the impact on George Eliot of Strauss's and Feuerbach's writings. The biblical material in her novels, however, far exceeds second-hand concepts gleaned from these German theologians. Attention has also been called to the carry-over of Mary Ann Evans's early

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11 For the influence of Strauss, see Willey, Chapter VIII, Part III, "Strauss's *Life of Jesus*," pp. 220-227, and Kriefall. For the influence of Feuerbach, see Willey, Chapter VIII, Part IV, "Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity," pp. 227-236; Knoepflmacher; and George R. Creeger, "An Interpretation of Adam Bede," ELH, 23 (Sept. 1956), 218-238.
Evangelicalism into George Eliot's fiction. Again, however, no one has specifically analyzed in any detail the most important and most obvious Evangelical effect—the perpetual presence in her novels of biblical material. In George Eliot's own time, John Crombie Brown pointed to the "doctrine of the Cross" in her novels; shortly after her death, Lord Acton observed that she drew "the best of her knowledge from her own spiritual memories"; more recently, Gordon Haight has written, "The vigorous prose of George Eliot is based on a thorough familiarity with the King James version," and Jerome Thale refers to the "good deal of Biblical symbolism in Daniel Deronda." Observations such as these, made in passing by scholars and critics whose primary interests are

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13 Brown, p. 111.

14 John Lord Acton, "George Eliot's 'Life,'" Nineteenth Century, 17 (March 1885), 466.


16 "River Imagery in 'Daniel Deronda,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, 8 (March 1954), 305, fn. 5.
devoted to other aspects of her life or works, comprise the
current critical commentary on Eliot's use of the Bible.17

This study is an attempt to demonstrate in some detail
George Eliot's literary indebtedness to the Bible, to show
that in the course of her fictional career she made virtually
every possible use of the Bible. She at times presents
Bibles themselves as significant objects, she refers to the
Bible-reading habits of various characters, and she quotes,
paraphrases, and alludes to the Bible. She employs biblical
words, passages, narratives, characters and objects for pur-
poses of scene-setting, symbolism, authorial commentary,
characterization, and presentation and underscoring of basic
themes. Sometimes she uses the Bible to achieve a serious

17 Although no extended study of George Eliot's use of
the Bible has been written, there are several published
studies devoted to biblical influence on the works of various
authors. Those consulted in the preparation of this study
are (in alphabetical order by author): Harris Francis Fletcher,
The Use of the Bible in Milton's Prose (Urbana: Univ. of
Illinois Press, 1929); William Mentzel Forrest, Biblical
Allusions in Poe (New York: Macmillan, 1928); Mary and Ellen
Gibbs, The Bible References of John Ruskin (London: George
Allen, 1898); Minnie Gresham Machen, The Bible in Browning,
With Particular Reference to "The Ring and the Book" (New
York: Macmillan, 1903); Richmond Noble, Shakespeare's Bib-
lical Knowledge and Use of the Book of Common Prayer as
Exemplified in the Plays of the First Folio (London: Society
for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935); Edna Moore Robinson,
Tennyson's Use of the Bible (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1917);
Henry Van Dyke, Studies in Tennyson (New York: Charles
Scribner's Sons, 1920); Bennett Weaver, Toward the Understanding
of Shelley (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1932); Charles
Wordsworth, Shakespeare's Knowledge and Use of the Bible
(London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1864); Nathalia Wright,
Melville's Use of the Bible (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1949);
Harriet Rodgers Zink, Emerson's Use of the Bible, Univ. of
Nebraska Studies in Language, Literature, and Criticism, No.
14 (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1935).
tone; at other times, she uses it with humorous intent. Sometimes she sounds traditionally Judaeo-Christian and employs the Bible to exhort the reader in homiletic fashion, but just as often she uses biblical material to preach her own Victorian gospel. The purpose of this study is to isolate, identify, and critically analyze these various uses of the Bible which together produce the "recurrent Biblical overtones" so notable in the novels of George Eliot.

As prelude to and evidence for that which follows in later chapters, Chapter II is an outline of George Eliot's acquisition of biblical knowledge from childhood to maturity, a demonstration of the depth of that knowledge, and an assessment of her attitude toward the Bible. Chapters III through IX treat successively these biblical borrowings: III, presence of Bibles and Bible readers in the novels; IV, use of biblical quotations; V, use of phraseology; VI, use of allusion; VII, biblical symbolism; VIII, characterization and the Bible; IX, use of the Bible thematically. In these chapters, all of George Eliot's fictional works are considered. Chapter X is a drawing of conclusions based on the major points made throughout the study.

A certain difficulty arises when attempting to isolate, separate, or classify types of influence for purposes of

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literary analysis. One runs the risk of murdering to dissect, of either destroying or neglecting the total effect while analyzing the parts. As shades of a rainbow merge, so does one use of a source merge with another, so does a faint biblical tinge suddenly become a vivid biblical hue. The organizational intention has been to sufficiently isolate each type of biblical usage or "hue" so as to establish its existence and importance, yet at the same time to stress the interrelatedness of these hues so as not to lose sight of the biblical rainbow glowing in George Eliot's fiction.
CHAPTER II

GEORGE ELIOT'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE

An artistically effective use of the Bible by an author demands first-hand knowledge of the Scriptures. Superficial or second-hand acquaintance will perhaps suffice for an occasional paradise image, Christ figure, or intermittent "faith, hope, and charity." Extensive biblical allusions and imagery, however, require deeper knowledge, closer acquaintance. Such an intimate familiarity with the Bible by George Eliot will be demonstrated in later chapters through analysis of her fictional uses of Scripture. This chapter traces the acquisition of that knowledge through its three stages: church attendance and familial influence during preschool years, the association with and influence of Evangelical teachers during the years of formal education, and finally the intense study of the Bible and of related writings during the years following her schooling.

In Mary Ann Evans' family circle at Griff, the two most influential members during her early preschool years (1819-1824) were her father Robert and brother Isaac. George Eliot has recorded Isaac's influence on her early childhood in the Maggie-Tom relationship of The Mill on the Floss and also in her "Brother and Sister" sonnets; her father, however, served
as the more important influence in religion. His religious influence on his daughter formally began when she was only one week old, while the family still lived at Arbury Farm. At that time he took her to the Chilvers Coton Church to be baptized into the Church of England.¹

Young Mary Ann Evans actually gained little biblical knowledge directly from her father. His religion was "a quiet, unimpassioned thing, a simple teaching of rules of life, with dimly expected rewards and punishments to be proportioned to one's actions."² With this religious outlook, he did not greatly stress either reading or study of the Bible, but "honesty and truthfulness and the necessity of doing one's duty."³ Indirectly, however, he was responsible for his daughter's first fragments of biblical knowledge. Robert Evans regularly conducted his family to Chilvers Coton Church, since attendance was a fixed principle in his religious credo. There, through sermons, hymns, and the various exercises of formal worship, Mary Ann became familiar with Bible names and stories. Such exposure to the Scriptures as church worship provided laid a basic groundwork of knowledge. This groundwork was extended somewhat during her early school

²Ibid., p. 23.
³Ibid., pp. 22-3.
years by the reading at home of such works as Bunyan's。
*Pilgrim's Progress* and Defoe's *History of the Devil.*

In 1828 Mary Ann and her older sister Christiana were
sent to Mrs. Wallington's Boarding School in Nuneaton. An
attraction quickly developed at the school between the prin-
cipal governess, Maria Lewis, and her pupil:

Mary Ann . . . immediately conceived for this prim and
kindly-faced governess a violent and exclusive admi-
ratinon. She, in her turn, seems to have taken an
immediate interest in Mary Ann, probably realizing that
here, surprisingly, from an obscure farm in Warwick-
shire, was a child of unusual intellect.

The bond was so strong and lasting that Gordon Haight terms
the governess "the most important early influence on the
child." The most notable mark of that influence was the
religious impact of teacher upon student. Miss Lewis was
intensely religious, "so deeply imbued with evangelical
earnestness that she would teach only in Church of England
schools or families." Her religion was

mild and sentimental, emphasizing love and salvation
rather than hell fire. She read her Bible constantly
and taught its moral examples to her pupils; she visited

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5Ibid., p. 8.

6Margaret Crompton, *George Eliot: The Woman* (London:
Cassell, 1960), p. 3.

7Haight, p. 8.

8Ibid.
the sick, comforted the mourner, and embroidered slippers for the curate. The Evangelicalism she inculcated in Mary Anne was a gentle benevolence.

In word and deed, the governess set before the young girl a code of belief and conduct which Mary Ann Evans conscientiously imitated. One such activity on Miss Lewis's part was "diligent study of the Scriptures; following her example, Mary Anne read the Bible over and over again during her four years at Mrs. Wallington's." Thus began George Eliot's first-hand study of the Bible.

In 1832, when Mary Ann was twelve, she was transferred to a Coventry school overseen by two sisters, Rebecca and Mary Franklin. There "the pupils were offered exceptionally able tuition in languages and the arts, safeguarded by stringent preparation for a domestic life, and with every thought and action justified by a fervent Evangelicalism." Rebecca, the younger sister, took Miss Lewis's place in Mary Ann's life as governess and religious guide. Miss Lewis's influence became indirect, via letters and visits, reinforcing the direct role played by Miss Franklin.

9Ibid., pp. 18-19.

10Ibid., pp. 8-9. Deakin, p. 21, suggests that "the depth and earnestness of her religious feeling was one of George Eliot's most marked characteristics. That it developed so early is probably largely due to the influence of Miss Lewis. ..."

Like Maria Lewis before her, Rebecca was not content with teaching her pupils only "languages and the arts."

Both Baptist sisters were strongly Evangelical and sternly Calvinistic, and they strove to impart these views to their students.

The religious life of the School was always serious. Mrs. Franklin's brother was Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society; one of her daughters had gone as a missionary to India, and a son had died in training for a missionary career. It is surprising that the School was not more limited in view than it was. Moderation and good sense seem to have animated the place with a tone that held adolescent religious yearnings within reasonable bounds. On Sundays all the girls went to the Cow Lane Chapel to hear Mr. Franklin preach. During the week they organized prayer meetings among themselves, in which, we are told, Mary Anne was one of the leaders--by no means the least eloquent.13

Religiously, then, Mary Ann grew more Evangelically earnest under the influence of the Franklins than she had been under the influence of Miss Lewis. In addition to church attendance and prayer meetings, Mary Ann's religious pursuits included organizing clothing clubs and visiting the poor in Coventry.14

Underlying and inspiring all was continued Bible study, amplified by the reading of theological works. During these years "she used to pounce with avidity upon any approach to argumentative theology within her reach, carrying Paley's Evidences up to her bedroom, and devouring it as she lay upon the floor alone."15

12 Deakin, p. 27. 13 Haight, p. 19. 14 Hanson, p. 15.

These religious activities earned the young pupil a reputation for piety among her schoolmates, teachers, and neighbors. One lady purportedly refused to send her daughter to the Franklins' school, objecting that "it was where that saint Mary Ann Evans had been."\(^{16}\)

This "sainthood" was the result of Mary Ann's last seven years of schooling, four with Miss Lewis and three with the Franklin sisters. She came to Miss Lewis as the daughter of a Tory churchman, a girl whose church attendance and reading had given her an average acquaintance with the Bible. Under Maria Lewis's tutelage her religious sensibilities awakened and her biblical knowledge increased through repeated readings of the Scriptures. Under the Misses Franklin these readings continued, and her religious studies also encompassed works of theology. By the time she was fifteen, Mary Ann Evans was an acutely religious young woman with a profound reverence for and "thorough familiarity with the King James version."\(^{17}\)

In December, 1835, her formal schooling ended with her mother's illness and subsequent death. Both Christiana and Mary Ann were needed at Griff to manage domestic affairs for


\(^{17}\) Haight, p. 9.
their father. Just over a year after Mrs. Evans' death, Christiana married and moved away, leaving Mary Ann alone to assume the role of housekeeper. For the next few years Mary Ann efficiently combined household duties, religious activities, and extensive reading and study. During that time, her Evangelical fervor did not flag in the slightest. There was benevolent work to perform in the community, there was Isaac to keep her keen disputative powers from rusting, and there were books—especially the Bible and biblically related religious writings—to be read and reread.

Mary Ann Evans' early correspondence provides valuable insights into her religious state of mind during the years at Griff. Her letters, which "constitute the chief record of her early life," are distinctly biblical in tone and phraseology. Referring to her reading and its reflection in her letters, Gordon Haight makes the following observation:

During the years at Griff her reading was certainly omnivorous. The Bible, of course, she read every day, studying the text with ever closer scrutiny. She acquired a polyglot version edited by Samuel Lee (1831) and a copy of Cruden's Concordance. Her letters,


19 In religious matters, it was Evangelical sister clashing with High Church brother. "Her extreme Calvinistic views did not please her brother. He had been to a private tutor in Birmingham, and had there imbibed strong High Church views. Marian was certain that her way was the right one, and there were many animated discussions between Isaac and herself... about their different religious views." Deakin, p. 33.

particularly those to the Samuel Evanses, are tissues of biblical quotation. . . .

Evidence proving Haight's point is abundant. An example is the following selection, written to Samuel Evans, her Methodist uncle:

My dear Uncle,

Remembering the Apostle's declaration that "to be absent from the body is (for redeemed souls) to be present with the Lord," I cannot for her own sake regret that my dear Aunt is so near the very brink of Jordan; I would only pray that her Heavenly Father may, out of His tender consideration for His creatures, who "are but dust," lighten her weight of bodily suffering as far as may consist with His designs of mercy to her soul. Give to my dear Aunt if she should be able to receive it an assurance from me of my warm affection for her, and tell her I humbly resolve in the strength of the Lord to "seek his face evermore," that we may sing together a new song before His throne. For you, my dear Uncle, both my Father and myself truly feel, and I have endeavoured to pray that you may be powerfully sustained under a trial that will indeed bereave you of one who has been as the apple of your eye; but is it not to this end? "That God may be all in all" with you, and that having no earthly prop, you may walk entirely by faith? . . . I doubt not, my dear Uncle, that you will evidence the possession of what belongs only to the Christian, "joy in tribulation," and that you will thus glorify the Lord God of Israel even in the fires.

Truly the commandments of God are not grievous, for the Apostle sums them up by a "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice," and though this may seem a great difficulty when the heart is bowed down and rent in twain by the loss of our earthly gourds, in reality that is the very time when we can best relish the waters that make glad the city of God. "Trials make the promise sweet," such promises as these, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit on my throne," and "the Lamb that is before the throne shall feed them, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." 22


In commenting on this letter, Haight lists the following passages as being quoted, paraphrased, or alluded to: II Corinthians 5:8; Joshua 3:8; Genesis 18:27; Psalms 105:4; Revelation 14:3; Psalms 17:8; II Corinthians 5:7; II Corinthians 7:4; Isaiah 24:15; Philippians 4:4; Matthew 27:51; Psalms 46:4; Revelation 3:21; Revelation 7:17; and "doubtless others." For the seventy letters written from May 1838 through December 1841, Haight footnotes a total of ninety-six separate biblical references. Certainly there are, as Haight notes, "doubtless others." His listed references span the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, with thirty-three separate books of the King James Bible represented. Sometimes, as in the letter to her Uncle Samuel, Mary Ann flits from one book of the Bible to another. In other letters she focuses on a particular passage:

I was struck yesterday with Mr. Hake's text, 2. Hosea 6 and 7 verses. They appeared partly an exact description of some of my experience. How exquisite the succeeding chapter is, the 3d I fancy, in which the Almighty covenants to bestow on His people all blessings for time and eternity! "I will betroth thee unto me" etc. Why do we yearn after a fellow mortal but because we do not live and delight in conscious union with Him who condescends to say, "Ye shall no more call me Baali or Lord, but ye shall call me Ishi, my husband." Our Lord's words, "Henceforth I call you not servants but friends," etc. seem to be an allusion to this text.

Considerations of Old Testament passages are balanced by

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23Ibid., p. 61, fn. 1.

24Ibid., p. 46. The quotations by Mary Ann Evans are from Hosea 2:19, Hosea 2:16, and John 15:15, respectively.
reflections upon the New Testament:

The Epistle to the Colossians is preeminently rich in the colouring with which it portrays the Divine fulness contained in the Saviour contrasted with the beggarly elements that a spirit of self-righteousness would in some way mingle with the light of life, the filthy rags it would tack round the "fine raiment" of His righteousness. I have been reading it in connexion with a train of thought suggested by the reading of "Ancient Christianity and the Oxford Tracts," by Isaac Taylor, one of the most eloquent, acute, and pious of writers.25

Such comments focusing specifically upon the Bible or employing biblical quotations, paraphrases, allusions, and general phraseology and tone abound in these early letters, and attest convincingly to a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

The letters of this period further demonstrate Mary Ann's growing knowledge of the Bible by their allusions to her reading and to various biblically oriented projects. The reference to Isaac Taylor in the preceding quotation is one of many examples. Although Gordon Haight has judiciously observed that during these years Mary Ann was not a "recluse, burying herself in tomes of theology,"26 she did concentrate especially on biblical commentaries, church histories, and theological works. The ease with which she moved among ponderous works on fine doctrinal points is indicated by the following selection:

I have been reading the new prize essay on Schism by Professor Hoppus, and Milner's Church History since

25 Ibid., pp. 63-4.
26 George Eliot: A Biography, p. 25.
I last wrote to you. The former ably expresses the tenets of those who deny that any form of Church government is so clearly dictated in Scripture as to possess a Divine right, and consequently to be binding on Christians. The latter you know exhibits the views of a moderate evangelical episcopalian on the inferences to be drawn from ecclesiastical remains; he equally repudiates the loud assertion of a jus divinum, to the exclusion of all separatists from the visible church, though he calmly maintains the superiority of the evidence in favour of episcopacy of a moderate kind both in power and extent of diocese, as well as the benefit of a national establishment. I have been skimming the "Portrait of an English Churchman" by the Rev. W. Gresley. This contains an outline of the system of those who exclaim of the Anglican church as the Jews did of their sacred building, (that they do it in as reprehensible a spirit, I will not be the judge) "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are exclusively these," while the authors of the Oxford Tracts go a step farther and evince by their compliments to Rome, as a dear though erring Sister, and their attempts to give a romish colour to our ordinances, with a very confused and unscriptural statement of the great doctrine of justification, a disposition rather to fraternize with the members of a church carrying on her brow the prophetical epithets applied by St. John to the Scarlet beast, the Mystery of iniquity, than with pious non-conformists. It is true they disclaim all this, and that their opinions are seconded by the extensive learning, the laborious zeal, and the deep devotion of those who propagate them, but a reference to facts will convince us that such has generally been the character of heretical teachers. Satan is too crafty to commit his cause into the hands of those who have nothing to recommend them to approbation. According to their dogmas the Scotch church and the foreign Protestant churches as well as the non-episcopalian of our own land are wanting in the essentials of existence as part of the Church.27

Frequently cited in Mary Ann's letters to Miss Lewis are works of the sort mentioned in this passage, works that she indicates she is reading or has recently read. Mentioned

or quoted in her letters of 1838-41, aside from the Bible itself, are the following religious writings:

Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*;
William Cowper, *The Task*;
Hannah More's letters;
Pascal, *Pensees*;
Edward Craig, *Jacob; or, Patriarchal Piety. A Series of Discourses Delivered in St. James's Episcopal Chapel, Edinburgh*;
Robert Leighton, *A Practical Commentary Upon the Two First Chapters of the First Epistle of St. Peter*;
John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* . . . ;
Robert Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*;
William Cowper, *Olney Hymns*;
Henry Moore, *The Life of Mrs. Mary Fletcher . . . of Madeley*;
G. P. R. James, *The Huguenot: A Tale of the French Protestants*;
John Hoppus, *Schism as Opposed to Unity of the Church*;
Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*;
William Gresley, *Portrait of an English Churchman*;
Leveson Vernon Harcourt, *The Doctrine of the Deluge, Vindicating the Scriptural Account from the Doubts Recently Cast Upon It by Geological Speculations*;
Ward's Library of Standard Divinity;
The Christian Family Library;
Robert Leighton, *Theological Lectures*;
Edwin Sidney, *The Life of Sir Richard Hill*;
John Milton, *Paradise Lost*;
Reginald Heber, "Palestine, a Prize Poem";
John Keble, *The Christian Year*;
Edward Bickersteth, *A Practical Guide to the Prophecies, with Reference to their Interpretation and Fulfilment* . . . ;
William McCombie, *Hours of Thought*;
Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*;
Charles Grandison Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*;
John Milton, *Comus*;
John Harris, *The Great Teacher;*  
Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs for Children;*  
Isaac Taylor, *Physical Theory of Another Life;*  
John Sheppard, *Thoughts Preparative to Private Devotion;*  
Thomas Chalmers, *Sermons;*  
John Pringle Nichol, *View of the Architecture of the Heavens;*  
John Pye Smith, *Relation Between the Holy Scripture and Some Parts of Geological Science;*  
*Priscilla the Helper: A Memoir of Mrs. Rowton.*

The reading of such works as these must have significantly furthered her knowledge of the Bible as well as of Christian history and doctrine.

In addition to the testimony of Mary Ann's letters, there is further evidence of her preoccupation with and growing mastery of the Bible. In July, 1839, the young Evangelical composed a ten-stanza poem, the "crude fruit of a lonely walk" during which she pondered "the words of one of our martyrs" as recorded in II Peter 1:14: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus hath shewed me."29 This poem, the first published work of the young woman who later became one of England's most noted novelists,30 not only "sums up a chapter in Eliot's life"31 but also teems with words and thoughts from the Bible:

28Ibid., pp. 4-123.  
29Ibid., p. 27.  
30It was published in the *Christian Observer,* 40 (Jan. 1840), 38.  
As o'er the fields by evening's light I stray,
I hear a still, small whisper—"Come away!
Thou must to this bright, lovely world soon say
Farewell!"

The mandate I'd obey, my lamp prepare,
Gird up my garments, give my soul to pray'r,
And say to earth and all that breathe earth's air
Farewell!

Thou sun, to whose parental beam I owe
All that has gladden'd me while here below,—
Moon, stars, and covenant confirming bow,
Farewell!

Ye verdant meads, fair blossoms, stately trees,
Sweet song of birds, and soothing hum of bees,
Refreshing odours, wafted on the breeze,
Farewell!

Ye patient servants of creation's lord
Whose mighty strength is govern'd by his word,
Who raiment, food and help in toil afford,
Farewell!

Ye feeble, freer tribes, that people air,
Fairy like insects, making buds your lair,
Ye that in water shine, and frolic there,
Farewell!

Books that have been to me as chests of gold,
Which, miser like, I secretly have told,
And for them love, health, friendship, peace have sold,
Farewell!

Blest volume! whose clear truth-writ page, once known,
Fades not before heaven's sunshine or hell's moan,
To thee I say not, of earth's gifts alone,
Farewell!

Dear kindred, whom the Lord to me has given,
Must the dear tie that binds us, now be riven?
No! say I only till we meet in heaven,
Farewell!

There shall my newborn senses find new joy,
New sounds, new sights my eyes and ears employ,
Nor fear that word that here brings sad alloy,
Farewell!

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Stanzas seven and eight are especially noteworthy, indicating as they do her love for books in general, for the Bible in particular.

About the same time that her poem was published, Mary Ann undertook a much more ambitious task, the preparation of a chart of ecclesiastical history. In a letter dated March 30, 1840, she describes the projected work for Miss Lewis:

The series of perpendicular columns will successively contain, the Roman Emperors with their dates, the political and religious state of the Jews, the bishops, remarkable men and events in the several churches, a column being devoted to each of the chief ones, the aspect of heathenism and Judaism toward Christianity, the chronology of the Apostolic and Patristical writings, schisms and heresies, General Councils, eras of corruption, under which head the remarks would be general, and I thought possibly an application of the Apocalyptic prophecies, which would merely require a few figures and not take up room. I think there must be a break in the Chart after the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire, and I have come to a determination not to carry it beyond the first acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Pope, by Phocas in 606 when Mahommedanism became a besom of destruction in the hand of the Lord, and completely altered the aspect of Ecclesiastical History.33

This prospectus is itself a tribute both to her knowledge of church history and to the height of her aspirations. The project was never completed, however; in a later letter34 she mentions that a similar chart has just been published.

The original reasons for her investigation into church history had been her general thirst for knowledge and a

33Ibid., pp. 44-5. Haight's brackets.
34Ibid., pp. 50-51.
specific desire "to explore the points at issue between Puseyites and Evangelicals,"35 Tractarianism being championed on the one side by Isaac, Evangelicalism on the other by Miss Lewis. The results of the investigation were unforeseen and far-reaching. Mary Ann Evans' research into the history of Christianity was one of the more decisive steps along the road toward her eventual disenchantment with Evangelicalism.

Among her readings in church history were Tracts for the Times and Isaac Taylor's Ancient Christianity and the Oxford Tracts. Taylor contends that the fourth-century church, which the Tractarians maintained was the basis of the English church, was "already corrupted with superstition."36 Although Taylor's intention in writing the book had been to undergird rather than to undermine the faith of orthodox readers, he aroused in Mary Ann Evans' mind serious questions concerning the very origins of Christianity.

Another work influencing Mary Ann greatly at this time was Charles C. Hennell's Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity. It is usually cited by biographers as a logical successor in her reading to Taylor's Ancient Christianity: "By showing how full the Early Church was of errors and faults Taylor had prepared the way for Charles Hennell's


Origin of Christianity, which carried the dismay and doubt so roused, back into the New Testament itself. As preparation for reading, the story goes, she and a friend determined to first "read the Bible through again from beginning to end." According to Cooke, when Mary Ann completed the Inquiry she "pronounced it 'the most interesting book she had ever read,' dating from it a new birth to her mind." Cooke has summarized the thought of the Inquiry as follows:

Hennell rejected all supernaturalism and the miraculous, regarding Christianity as a slow and natural development out of Judaism, aided by Platonism and other outside influences. He finds the sources of Jesus' teachings in the Jewish tendencies of the time, while the cause of the supremacy of the man Jesus was laid in a long course of events which had swelled to a crisis at the time of his appearance, and bore him aloft to a height whence his personal qualities told with a power derived from the accumulated force of many generations. . . . Hennell found a mixture of truth and error in the Gospels, and believed that many mythical elements entered into the accounts given of Jesus. A thorough rationalist, he claimed to accept the spiritual essence of Christianity, and to value highly the moral teachings of Jesus.

In January, 1842, only two months after reading the book,

37Deakin, p. 37.
38Deadline Blind, George Eliot (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1904), p. 50. Deakin, p. 45, suggests the reason for the rereading of Scripture: "Knowing her own proneness to take for her own the opinions of any decided person whom she could admire, and shrinking with timid pain from the risk of losing the old faith which had been the centre of her life and affections for many years, she resolved to fortify herself by re-reading the Scriptures."
39Cooke, p. 20
40Ibid., pp. 20-21.
Mary Ann Evans openly renounced Evangelical Christianity and refused to attend church with her father.

Until 1841, when Mary Ann and her father left Griff and moved to Coventry, the influences in her life had been largely orthodox Christian ones. In her preschool years her High Church father indirectly introduced her to the Bible; during her school years, first the Evangelical Maria Lewis then the Baptists Rebecca and Mary Franklin encouraged first-hand reading and study of the Scriptures; back at Griff, Mary Ann was again in the company of two High Churchmen, her father and her brother Isaac, with much correspondence and occasional visits with Miss Lewis, Martha Jackson (a former Evangelical schoolmate at Coventry), and her Methodist kin-folk, Samuel and Elizabeth Evans. During these years, and under these influences, Mary Ann Evans acquired a knowledge of the Bible that remained with her throughout life. If Miss Lewis planted at Nuneaton, and the Misses Franklin watered at Coventry, it was largely Mary Ann Evans herself through her reading at Griff who was responsible for the increase. At Griff she pored continually over the Bible and religious writings. The years ahead would in some ways

The rejection of Christian orthodoxy was of course based on several factors—secular reading and personal influence, for example—in addition to her religious readings. While her public renunciation was a sudden shock to family and friends, the mental process leading to it was a gradual one, spanning years. For analyses of Mary Ann’s religious transition, see Deakin, Chapter VI, and Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, p. 39.
deepen her knowledge of such matters as textual criticism, particularly through her translation of Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, but by 1841 the basic knowledge was already there.

With the shift in belief, of course, came a reassessment of the Bible as the source of that belief. Her Evangelical conviction had been that the Bible was the authoritative word of God, an inspired divine revelation. Shortly after her refusal to attend church, she explained in a letter to her father her altered estimate of the Bible:

I regard these writings as histories consisting of mingled truth and fiction, and while I admire and cherish much of what I believe to have been the moral teaching of Jesus himself, I consider the system of doctrines built upon the facts of his life and drawn as to its materials from Jewish notions to be most dishonourable to God and most pernicious in its influence on individual and social happiness.  

Her later estimate of Christianity was to soften considerably;

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44 In 1859, for instance, she wrote to François D'Albert-Durade, "I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves; on the contrary, I have a sympathy with it that predominates over all argumentative tendencies. I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity--to the acceptance of any set of doctrines as a creed, and a superhuman revelation of the Unseen--but I see in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages." Ibid., III, 231.
moreover, she continued to read, study, and esteem the Bible throughout her life. Writing of the last months of George Eliot's life, her husband John Walter Cross recalls,

We generally began our reading at Witley with some chapters of the Bible, which was a very precious and sacred Book to her, not only from early associations, but also from the profound conviction of its importance in the development of the religious life of man. She particularly enjoyed reading aloud some of the finest chapters of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and St. Paul's Epistles. 45

In the years following her break with Christianity, as translator, editor, essayist, and finally as novelist, Mary Ann Evans was to come under the philosophical influence of Strauss, Spinoza, Feuerbach, Comte, Spencer, Lewes, and others. Earlier and more abiding in many ways than any of these influences, however, was the influence of the Bible. Nathalia Wright has observed of Herman Melville's knowledge and use of the Bible,

It was of all his sources, of course, the earliest and best known, the only one with which he was well acquainted before his late twenties, though through no deliberation of his own. But it was also one to which he deliberately turned and returned with the years. When a boy he heard its words as an inescapable part of his heritage; when a man he read it, as he read Shakespeare and Plato, for its message as well as its music. Its effect upon him was correspondingly deepened and prolonged. . . . 46

The same is true of George Eliot. When at the age of thirty-eight she turned to fiction, no source proved more readily

45 Cross, XXV, 311.

useful and effective than her own religious background and her knowledge of the Bible. Her first fictional venture was *Scenes of Clerical Life*; her first major characters were clergymen; and the first page of the initial scene was devoted to the description of a church, the same church in which she had been baptized when only one week old. Her second work, *Adam Bede*, begins by presenting two brothers with the biblical names of Adam and Seth who live in a "land of Goshen"; in Chapter II, a Methodist maiden preaches a sermon interlaced with biblical quotations and allusions. The third novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, is prefaced by an epigraph taken from the Old Testament: "In their death they were not divided." As the succeeding chapters of this study will demonstrate, the same prominent biblical thread is woven into the fiber of her every novel.

Edward Wagenknecht has written of George Eliot that "as an artist she had her roots in the world of her believing youth."\(^47\) In no sense is this truer than in her artistic uses of the Bible.

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CHAPTER III

GEORGE ELIOT'S FICTIONAL USES OF BIBLES AND BIBLE READERS

In George Eliot's early novels, Bibles are used as aids in character creation, plot construction, and symbolism. Especially significant are the two Bibles in Adam Bede, those belonging to Dinah Morris and Adam Bede. Equally important is the Tulliver family Bible in The Mill on the Floss. Each of these Bibles is used by the author for a different fictional purpose.

Dinah Morris's old Bible, "worn quite round at the edges,"¹ is used constantly by the pious Methodist maiden as a source for what she considers divine direction. Her habitual reading of her Bible results in intimate knowledge not only of the book's contents but of the format itself: "She knew the physiognomy of every page, and could tell on what book she opened, sometimes on what chapter, without seeing title or number."² In addition to her usual Bible reading, Dinah twice during the novel seeks a solution to a perplexing

²Ibid.
problem by means of sortes biblicae. She opens her Bible at random, glances at a passage, and acts upon the direction or suggestion provided by that passage. In each instance, George Eliot brings her biblical knowledge to bear by providing Dinah with a passage pertinent to her situation.

The first dilemma occurs in Chapter III, "After the Preaching." Seth Bede, as he accompanies Dinah home following her preaching on the green, urges her to remain in Hayslope and to accept his marriage proposal. In response to Seth's request, Dinah cites her reason for refusal:

This morning when I opened the Bible for direction, the first words my eyes fell on were, "And after we had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia." If it was n't for that clear showing of the Lord's will I should be loath to go, for my heart yearns over my aunt and her little ones, and that poor wandering lamb Hetty Sorrel.

David Leon Higdon, in his forthcoming "Sortes Biblicae in Adam Bede," defines the process as follows: "'Opening the Bible' is a stylized procedure, complex in its psychological and theological assumptions, consisting of four basic steps. Facing a crucial choice, the individual or group . . . must first decide that his individual will should not bear sole responsibility for the decision. After thus deciding to put the dilemma to the test, he ardently implores his god, usually through prayer, to reveal the 'true answer.' He then opens the sacred text at random and reads the first verse at the top of the page or the verse corresponding to a previously selected number. This verse is regarded as divine direction to the individual concerning the problem." Professor Higdon's study, which he was gracious enough to share with me prior to its publication, is an enlightening treatment of Dinah's Bible openings and their importance to the novel.

Eliot, III, 44. The passage Dinah lights upon is Acts 16:10, which reads "he had seen" rather than "we had seen."
To the young Pauline ascetic, her personal yearnings are subordinate to what she considers the divine direction provided by her Bible. She desires to stay, but must leave.

Before she departs, however, she is faced with another decision: just as she had been uncertain whether to remain in Hayslope or journey to Snowfield, so she is uncertain in Chapter XV, "The Two Bed-Chambers," about whether she should remain in her room or go as Christian emissary to Hetty:

She was not quite certain of a divine direction; the voice that told her to go to Hetty seemed no stronger than the other voice which said that Hetty was weary, and that going to her now in an unseasonable moment would only tend to close her heart more obstinately. Dinah was not satisfied without a more unmistakeable guidance than those inward voices. There was light enough for her, if she opened her Bible, to discern the text sufficiently to know what it would say to her. . . . Dinah laid it sideways on the window ledge, where the light was strongest, and then opened it with her forefinger. The first words she looked at were those at the top of the left-hand page: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." That was enough for Dinah; she had opened on that memorable parting at Ephesus, when Paul had felt bound to open his heart in a last exhortation and warning. She hesitated no longer, but, opening her own door gently, went and tapped at Hetty's.5

The visit proves unsuccessful,6 although the authorial adroitness in selection of a biblical passage is itself quite successful. Twice Dinah seeks divine guidance from her Bible, and twice George Eliot highlights passages in


6Although unsuccessful at the time, Dinah does plant the seed of Christian consolation which later blooms in the prison scene.
Acts which prove pertinent. Both verses selected by Eliot focus upon the missionary endeavors of Saint Paul, the dedicated celibate. The similarity of situation and attitude shared by the biblical apostle and the fictional heroine is subtly but effectively underscored through Eliot's use of Dinah's Bible and the custom of sortes biblicae. 7

Whereas Dinah's Bible serves to symbolize and underscore her Christian altruism and Evangelicalism, Adam Bede's Bible serves a different purpose. His Bible is first referred to when Dinah Morris visits Lisbeth Bede, mother of Adam and Seth, after her husband's death by drowning. Dinah's quiet entry into the house startles the old widow, who responds to Dinah's introduction of herself by saying, "I thought ye might be a sperrit. Ye've got a'most the face o' one as is a-sittin' on the grave i' Adam's new Bible." 8

The reference to the angel at the tomb of Christ is apropos, for Dinah does indeed prove herself something of a ministering angel in the presence of death. She tidies the cottage and

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7This biblical-fictional character parallel is discussed at greater length in Chapter VIII. Higdon has noted of Dinah's use of sortes biblicae, "The sortes biblicae characterize Dinah in the same way that witty sayings, misogyny, and John Moore's novels do Mrs. Poyser, Bartle Massey, and Arthur Domithorne. 'Opening the Bible' creates a unique individuality for Dinah as do her Methodist rhetoric and severe manner of dress. Moreover, it underlines her altruistic giving up of her own will. Dinah does not exist in terms of wishing, desiring, and wanting; she exists in terms of giving, doing, and being for others."

8Eliot, III, 155.
tends to Lisbeth's needs; at the same time, she recounts to the old woman the biblical story of the behavior of King David when he was faced with the loss of his child--his prayer and fasting while the child lives, his seeming cessation of grief once the child dies:

Do you remember what David did, when God took away his child from him? While the child was yet alive he fasted and prayed to God to spare it, and he would neither eat nor drink, but lay on the ground all night, beseeching God for the child. But when he knew it was dead, he rose up from the ground and washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes, and ate and drank; and when they asked him how it was that he seemed to have left off grieving now the child was dead, he said, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."9

The story, with its concluding biblical quotation, has a calming effect on 'Thias Bede's widow, who says to Dinah, "Well, ye may do as ye like wi' me: there's a clean cap i' that drawer, an' I'll go i' the back kitchen an' wash my face. An' Seth, thee may'st reach down Adam's new Bible wi' th' picters in, an' she shall read us a chapter."10 Later, as Dinah leaves, Lisbeth again alludes to the similarity of the Methodist maiden to the angel: "She spakes so gentle an' moves about so still. I could be fast sure that pictur was drew for her i' thy new Bible--th' angel a-sittin' on the

9Ibid., pp. 160-61. The story is recorded in II Samuel 12:14-23; the words of King David, which George Eliot quotes accurately, are found in verses 22 and 23.

10Ibid., p. 161.
big stone by the grave."\textsuperscript{11} Thus George Eliot uses Adam's Bible "wi' th' picters in" to strongly fix in Lisbeth's mind--and the mind of the reader--an association between the biblical picture and the angelic young woman.

Much later in the novel, after Hetty Sorrel's trial and Arthur's self-banishment, George Eliot reverts to this early pictorial association. Adam is reading the Bible at home, as he usually does on Sunday morning:

This morning he was reading the Gospel according to St. Matthew. ... And now there was a new leaf to be turned over, and it was a picture--that of the angel seated on the great stone that has been rolled away from the sepulchre. This picture had one strong association in Lisbeth's memory, for she had been reminded of it when she first saw Dinah; and Adam had no sooner turned the page, and lifted the book sideways that they might look at the angel, than she said, "That's her--that's Dinah."

Lisbeth's association of the biblical angel with Dinah becomes in this scene the needed spur moving the mother to reveal to her son Dinah's feeling for him. Dinah's own Bible is used to characterize her as an earnest, ascetic Evangelical; Adam's Bible is likewise used for characterization, for emphasizing Dinah's "angelic" nature. Adam's Bible is also used, however, as a means of effectively linking the first and last portions of the novel.

In addition to their use for characterization and plot unity, the Bibles of Adam Bede may be said to serve--in

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 199.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., IV, 303-304.
altogether different senses—as books of direction or revelation. Dinah's Bible reveals to her, through sortes biblicae, the proper course of action in moments of indecision; Adam's Bible reveals to him, with a bit of maternal prompting, the proper course of action as well. Through biblical word and biblical picture, George Eliot employs her knowledge of the Bible to provide the "revelation" or "direction" needed by Dinah and Adam.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, there is also a Bible of importance—the quarto family Bible of the Tullivers. It first appears in Chapter VIII ("Daylight on the Wreck") of Book Third ("The Downfall"). When Mr. Tulliver comes downstairs after his long illness—a hiatus during which the house has been stripped by creditors of its furnishings—he remarks,

"They've left the big Bible. . . . It's got everything in—when I was born and married—bring it me, Tom."

The quarto Bible was laid before him at the flyleaf, and while he was reading with slowly travelling eyes, Mrs. Tulliver entered the room, but stood in mute surprise to find her husband down already, and with the great Bible before him.¹³

As the somber scene progresses, Mr. Tulliver examines the family records contained in the Bible, notes the brief lives of those on his mother's side of the family, and gloomily prophesies a similar brevity of life for both himself and his sister Gritty.

¹³Ibid., V, 392.
In the next chapter (Chapter IX, "An Item Added to the Family Register"), Mr. Tulliver insists that Tom write in the family Bible, write that he the father will serve Lawyer Wakem honestly for his wife's sake but that he refuses to forgive Wakem and wishes him evil. The chapter concludes with Tulliver's command to his son:

"Now write--write as you'll remember what Wakem's done to your father, and you'll make him and his feel it, if ever the day comes. And sign your name Thomas Tulliver."

"Oh no, father, dear father!" said Maggie, almost choked with fear. "You shouldn't make Tom write that."

"Be quiet, Maggie!" said Tom. "I shall write it." 14

For the father, the book of religion has prompted what Jerome Thale calls "Mr. Tulliver's only religious act," the "curse upon Lawyer Wakem and the promise of revenge which he makes Tom write in the Bible." 15

Later, when Tom learns of Maggie's clandestine meetings in the Red Deeps with Philip Wakem, the son repeats the father's use of the Bible for another binding vow. He insists that his sister place her hand on the book and swear neither to meet Philip Wakem again nor speak to him in private. As the father's vow of vengeance has involved the family Bible, so the son's enforcement of that vow again involves the Bible. To both men the family Bible represents

14 Ibid., p. 403.

religion and tradition. Ironically, the book best summarized by Christ in his injunction to "love the Lord thy God" and "love thy neighbor as thyself"16 becomes to the Tulliver father and son symbolic of hatred and vengeance. Realization of this irony prompts Maggie's objection to Tom's writing in the family Bible.

The irony is made keener through contrast. Maggie herself is closely associated in the novel with another book, one having as its main source and influence the New Testament, especially the Pauline epistles. The book is Thomas à Kempis's De Imitationi Christi, The Imitation of Christ. Tom's rigid, vengeful use of the Bible contrasts with Maggie's faltering, submissive following of the dictums of à Kempis.

With these three Bibles of her early novels, George Eliot accomplishes diverse aims. In The Mill on the Floss, the Tulliver Bible becomes to the men of the family a symbol of vengeance, a symbol made ironic by reversal of its usual fictional function as religious epitome of faith, hope, and charity. A more traditional role is fulfilled by Dinah's Bible in Adam Bede. The book is the Methodist maiden's source of inspiration and action, giving rise to her Evangelical altruism and benevolence. In these contrasting capacities, the Bibles of Dinah and the Tullivers both

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16Mark 12:30-31.
serve as symbols, but symbols of opposite meaning, characterizing the virtue or vice of those who use them. Adam's Bible also serves the purpose of characterization, shedding light both on Adam himself and the "angelic" Dinah. It is also the most direct link between the early and late chapters of the novel. The biblical picture of the early pages serves later as romantic catalyst leading to the union of Adam and Dinah. With the Bibles of Adam Bede, George Eliot deftly makes use of the contents of the two books--Pauline quotations and a scene from the Gospel of Matthew. The Bible in The Mill on the Floss serves as symbol of vengeance.

In later novels George Eliot does not use Bibles per se in any significant way. She does, however, from her early Scenes of Clerical Life onward, refer to the reading of the Bible by various characters. As with the use of Bibles themselves, the references to readers of the Bible and of related religious literature accomplish various fictional purposes.

In "Janet's Repentance," George Eliot demonstrates the wide divergence of effect she is capable of creating through use of such readers. On the one hand, there is her description of the Evangelical Mrs. Linnet's manner of reading religious books: "Wherever there was a predominance of Zion, the River of Life, and notes of exclamation, she turned over to the next page; but any passage in which she saw such promising nouns as 'smallpox,' 'pony,' or 'boots and shoes,'
at once arrested her."\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, an entirely different effect is achieved in the presentation of Mrs. Raynor, long-suffering mother of the maltreated Janet Dempster: "She read her Bible a great deal, and thought she found divine lessons there--how to bear the cross meekly, and be merciful. Let us hope that there is a saving ignorance, and that Mrs. Raynor was justified without knowing exactly how."\textsuperscript{18} With Mrs. Linnet the comic relief is light, but effective. This comic touch is more frequent in George Eliot's novels than is generally noted, and more than once it is the result of someone's mode of reading the Bible--or of applying what he thinks he finds there. At the other extreme is the serious treatment of Mrs. Raynor, the first of George Eliot's many characters who demonstrate admirable uprightness without specific doctrinal affiliation with any group.

The most detailed description of a Bible reader is found in \textit{Adam Bede}. Late in the novel, George Eliot writes of her main character,

\begin{quote}
The book Adam most often read on a Sunday morning was his large pictured Bible. . . . You would have liked to see Adam reading his Bible: he never opened it on a week-day, and so he came to it as a holiday book, serving him for history, biography, and poetry. He held one hand thrust between his waistcoat buttons, and the other ready to turn the pages; and in the course of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}Eliot, II, 38.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 67.
the morning you would have seen many changes in his face. Sometimes his lips moved in semi-articulation—it was when he came to a speech that he could fancy himself uttering, such as Samuel's dying speech to the people; then his eyebrows would be raised, and the corners of his mouth would quiver a little with sad sympathy—something, perhaps old Isaac's meeting with his son, touched him closely; at other times, over the New Testament, a very solemn look would come upon his face, and he would every now and then shake his head in serious assent, or just lift up his hand and let it fall again; and on some mornings, when he read in the Apocrypha, of which he was very fond, the son of Sirach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile, though he also enjoyed the freedom of occasionally differing from an Apocryphal writer. For Adam knew the Articles quite well, as became a good churchman.19

This extended description precedes Lisbeth's linking of the picture with Dinah Morris. The purpose served is primarily characterization, the presentation of details about Adam which George Eliot feels the reader "would have liked to see." Then, too, Adam's engaging in the same act of Bible reading which has already been closely associated in the novel with Dinah Morris is itself a subtle reminder of Dinah even before Lisbeth comments on the angel's picture.

Somewhat in contrast to the biblical openings of Dinah and Adam's Sunday reading—activities which are important to the characterization and plot of the novel—are the lighter, briefer allusions to Bible readers in *Adam Bede*. There is old Martin Poyser, Sr., who "on wet Sundays, or whenever he had a touch of rheumatism... used to read the three first chapters of Genesis"20 instead of attending church services;

19Ibid., IV, 302-303.  20Ibid., III, 270.
and Brimstone, the illiterate Methodist brickmaker who attends Bartle Massey's night school because he "had lately 'got religion,' and along with it the desire to read the Bible." Brimstone serves in a minor way to emphasize the same point made by Dinah Morris and her Bible. To the sincere Methodist of the early nineteenth century, the Bible represented God's word to man. As such, it was to be reverently read and its precepts faithfully followed.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, intense dedication of a different sort marks the attitude of Tom Tulliver and his father toward the family Bible. They respect it as a religious book, but do not read it. Maggie, in contrast, "read . . . eagerly and constantly in her three books, the Bible, Thomas-a-Kempis, and 'The Christian Year' . . . ." Maggie's intense reading and the "biblical" vows of father and son are relieved periodically in the novel by humorous touches, one of which involves examination of the Bible by the beleaguered Mr. Glegg. In the following passage, George Eliot summarizes his perplexity over the outbursts of his shrewish wife:

That a creature made—in a genealogical sense—out of a man's rib, and in this particular case maintained in the highest respectability without any trouble of her own, should be normally in a state of contradiction to the blandest propositions and even to the most accommodating concessions, was a mystery in the scheme of things to which he had often in vain sought a clue in the early chapters of Genesis.

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21 Ibid., p. 338.  
22 Ibid., VI, 37-38.  
23 Ibid., V, 180.
Yet here, as in *Adam Bede*, such comic comment is subordinate to the more serious biblical perusals and pursuits of Dinah and Maggie.

In a later novel, *Felix Holt, the Radical*, greater play is allowed the comic. Although the family tragedy of the Transomes and the Thoreauvian aspirations of Felix Holt occupy center stage, the subordinate setting of Malthouse Yard receives considerable emphasis. The success of these scenes is achieved partly by the comic biblicisms of Rufus Lyon's problematic parishioner, Mrs. Holt. The following quotation exemplifies her method of reading the Bible and applying its precepts: "I well know my duty: and I read my Bible; and I know in Jude where it's been stained with the dried tulip-leaves this many a year, as you're told not to rail at your betters if they was the Devil himself; nor will I; but this I do say..." She goes on, of course, to rail at her betters. In the same scene she twice quotes the Bible and provides her own unique interpretation:

> For the Bible says, the King's favour is towards a wise servant; and it's reasonable to think he'd make all the more account of them as have never been in service, or took wage, which I never did, and never thought of my son doing. . . .

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25 *Proverbs* 14:35.

And what folks can never have boxes enough of to swallow, I should think you have a right to sell. And there's many and many a text for it, as I've opened on without ever thinking; for if it's true, "Ask, and you shall have," I should think it's truer when you're willing to pay for what you have.\(^{27}\)

These passages picture Mrs. Holt as a rather addle-witted Dinah Morris seeking direction. In reality she bears a closer resemblance to Chaucer's Wife of Bath--citing those biblical passages which she thinks support her position and ignoring or claiming incomprehensibility for the rest. Chaucer's wife wishes to justify her five marriages; Mrs. Holt seeks to justify the continued sale of Holt's Elixir, Cathartic Pills, and Cancer Cure. Both the fourteenth-century poet and the nineteenth-century novelist skillfully draw on their biblical knowledge to provide their two viragos with appropriate passages.

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot refers again to the reading of the Bible by a minor character, the farmer Dagley. The drunken Dagley returns to his ramshackle house just in time to encounter his landlord Mr. Brooke. Verbally reckless in his tipsy condition, the irritated tenant berates Brooke for the mismanagement of Tipton Grange. After Dagley's verbal fireworks have subsided and Mr. Brooke has been unceremoniously hastened off the grounds by Dagley's hound Monk, George Eliot concludes the chapter with an observation on the tenant's

mental dimness:

Some . . . may wonder at the midnight darkness of Mr. Dagley; but nothing was easier in those times than for an hereditary farmer of his grade to be ignorant. . . . As to the facility with which mortals escape knowledge, try an average acquaintance in the intellectual blaze of London, and consider what that eligible person for a dinner-party would have been if he had learned scant skill in "summing" from the parish-clerk of Tipton, and read a chapter in the Bible with immense difficulty, because such names as Isaiah or Apollos remained unmanageable after twice spelling. Poor Dagley read a few verses sometimes on a Sunday evening, and the world was at least not darker to him than it had been before.

Dagley, with his rather pathetic attempts at reading the Bible, represents for George Eliot the multitude whose lives are relatively untouched, unshaped, undirected by any type of formal education.

These Bible readers of George Eliot's are used to accomplish varying purposes. The slightly humorous effect produced by Mrs. Linnet and Mr. Glegg rises to higher comic pitch with the zany biblical pronouncements of that doltish prophet Mrs. Holt. George Eliot herself characterizes Mrs. Holt's biblical outlook when she writes, "She, regarding all her trouble about Felix in the light of a fulfilment of her own prophecies, treated the sad history with a preference for edification above accuracy, and for mystery above relevance, worthy of a commentator on the Apocalypse."29

A more serious note sounds with the references to Mrs. Raynor and Mr. Dagley, who both serve to express, through

28Ibid., XIII, 185-86. 29Ibid., XI, 161.
their reading of the Bible, themes common in Eliot's fiction. Mrs. Raynor is the simple sufferer, she who finds solace from sorrow by reading her Bible. Dagley is in his way also a simple sufferer, one of the multitude of mankind with strong back and simple mind to whom the world of learning--the ability to read and comprehend the Bible--will always lie in darkened shadow.

One way, then, that George Eliot effectively employs the Bible in her fiction is through the varied use of Bibles themselves and characters who read the Bible. Dinah's Bible serves to underscore her Evangelicalism; Adam's Bible not only serves to characterize the "angelic" Dinah but also to connect the first and last chapters of the novel; the Tulliver family Bible serves as symbol of vengeance. Bible readers provide both comic relief and serious thematic emphasis.
CHAPTER IV

BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS IN GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS

Many of the fictional passages cited in the preceding chapter contain biblical quotations. Direct quotations from the Bible are found throughout George Eliot's novels. These quotations appear in three ways: as epigraphs, as quotations by characters during dialogue, and as quotations by the author herself.

Eliot's epigraphs were affixed at first to entire novels, later—beginning with *Felix Holt, the Radical*—to each chapter of a novel. Numbered among her prefatory quotations are five epigraphs of biblical origin:

- II Samuel 1:23, epigraph to *The Mill on the Floss*;
- Job 16:4, epigraph to Chapter XXXVII of *Felix Holt, the Radical*;
- Ecclesiasticus 19:10, epigraph to Chapter LXIX of *Middlemarch*;
- Tobit 8:7, epigraph to Chapter LXXIV of *Middlemarch*;
- Book of Wisdom 2:7-8, epigraph to Chapter III of *Daniel Deronda*.

By far the most important of these quotations is that introducing *The Mill on the Floss*: "In their death they were

not divided." Because it prefixes an entire novel rather than a single chapter, and because it is linked so closely to the controversial conclusion of the work (serving not only as opening epigraph but as closing epitaph for Maggie and Tom Tulliver's tombstone), this quotation has received more attention from critics than have any of her other epigraphs. Daniel Deneau, for example, has stated that "to attempt an interpretation of The Mill on the Floss without dwelling on the motto which seals its pages, is very likely to miss or misinterpret its central action. The closing words of the 'Epilogue' linger in mind long after the last page has been turned."²

Although most critics treating The Mill on the Floss follow Deneau's suggestion by dwelling on the meaning and implication of the epigraph—epitaph, many seem unaware that "In their death they were not divided" is biblical in origin. George Eliot does not indicate the source of her quotation, as she usually does in chapter epigraphs. The passage is in fact taken from David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan in the Old Testament, II Samuel 1:17-27, shortly after their deaths in battle at Mount Gilboa. Verse 23 reads, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

The similarity of biblical and fictional situations demonstrates the aptness of the epigraph. The poetic lament for two oft-divided kinsmen is applied to oft-divided fictional kinsmen. As Rowland Collins has observed, "Any reader who recognized the reference to the story of Saul would perhaps be reminded of the triumphant, if also unhappy, reestablishment of the importance of blood ties." A direct analogy can also be drawn between biblical and fictional characters. The father Saul is represented by the father-figure Tom, both being imperious and demanding. The son Jonathan is represented by the subordinate Maggie, both characterized by gentility and grace. In addition, both Jonathan and Maggie strive to remain loyal at the same time to their kinsmen and to those whom the kinsmen find unacceptable—in the biblical situation David, in the fictional situation Philip Wakem. In the Bible, it is David who poetically honors the passing of father and son. In the novel, it is Philip Wakem who at story's end stands at graveside lamenting the passing of brother and sister.

Each of the other four biblical epigraphs is devoted to a chapter rather than to an entire work. All have obviously been carefully selected by George Eliot either to provide fitting summary of the chapters or to indicate the nature of a character or his actions in the chapters.

In Felix Holt, the Radical George Eliot prefaces Chapter XXXVII with Job 16:4—"I also could speak as ye do; if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you." Job has suffered through the initial cycle of speeches by his "comforters" Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Just prior to the passage cited by Eliot, Job has replied heatedly to a second speech by Eliphaz: "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all." The righteous man, suffering but not sinful, finds scant sympathy from his fellows in the biblical account. The fictional situation is analogous. Felix Holt is incarcerated for his well-meaning but abortive attempts to quell the Treby election riot. The minister Rufus Lyon, in canvassing his congregation and community on Felix's behalf, meets with a similar hardness of heart toward the young sufferer; Felix finds himself with the same scarcity of real sympathizers as did Job.

Middlemarch contains two chapter epigraphs from the Bible. Both quotations underscore the actions of the primary characters in those chapters. The first, prefacing Chapter LXIX, is Ecclesiasticus 19:10—"If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee." The chapter is that in which

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5Job 16:1.
6Eliot, XIV, 236.
Raffles relates Bulstrode's unsavoury past to Caleb Garth. That which Raffles readily relates, Caleb is reluctant to repeat. As Bulstrode discovers, Raffles's tongue can be controlled temporarily by bribery, permanently only by death. Caleb Garth, however, breaks ties with Bulstrode but keeps his knowledge of Bulstrode's past to himself. Repeatedly in the chapter Caleb reiterates the philosophy of the epigraph:

"I would injure no man if I could help it," said Caleb; "even if I thought God winked at it." 7

What he has said to me will never pass from my lips, unless something now unknown forces it from me. . . . It is not for me to make your life harder to you. 8

As to speaking, I hold it a crime to expose a man's sin unless I'm clear it must be done to save the innocent. 9

Just as the suffering Felix reflects the suffering Job, so Caleb Garth reflects fully the philosophy of silence and circumspection summarized by the epigraph from Ecclesiasticus.

The second biblical epigraph in Middlemarch is that of Chapter LXXIV, taken from Tobit 8:7—"Mercifully grant that we may grow aged together." 10 As George Eliot indicates, the passage is part of a marriage prayer, that of Tobias and Sara. The fictional application of the verse constitutes one of the more moving passages in Eliot's novels, the reaction of Mrs. Bulstrode to her husband's concealment of events from her and to his fall from community favor. She

7 Ibid., p. 239. 8 Ibid., p. 240.
discovers that Raffles is dead, that her husband was directly involved in the events leading to that death, and that the suspicious nature of the death coupled with the discovery of Bulstrode's sordid past has resulted in his public disgrace. The distraught wife is faced with a marital crisis: "A new searching light had fallen on her husband's character, and she could not judge him leniently; the twenty years in which she had believed in him and venerated him by virtue of his concealments came back with particulars that made them seem an odious deceit." Bulstrode fears alienation from his wife, fears that "perhaps he should never see his wife's face with affection in it again." He is mentally praying, as it were, the prayer of Tobias: "Mercifully grant that we may grow aged together." And as the prayer of the young Tobias on his wedding night was affirmatively answered, so was that of the aged Nicholas Bulstrode affirmatively answered after twenty years of marriage. At chapter's end his wife confronts him, determined despite disappointment to "espouse his sorrow, and say of his guilt, I will mourn and not reproach":

He raised his eyes with a little start and looked at her, half-amazed for a moment: her pale face, her changed, mourning dress, the trembling about her mouth, all said, "I know"; and her hands and eyes rested gently on him. He burst out crying and they cried together, she sitting at his side. They could not yet speak to

11 Ibid., pp. 319-20.  
12 Ibid., p. 321.  
13 Ibid., p. 320.
each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which had brought it down on them. His confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 321-22.}

Thus the biblical marriage prayer prefacing the chapter is fictionally answered by George Eliot.

The last epigraph to be noted is that preceding Chapter III of Eliot's final novel, Daniel Deronda: "Let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered."\footnote{Ibid., xv, 25.} This \textit{carpe diem} sentiment is taken from The Book of Wisdom 2:7-9; the entire passage reads,

\begin{quote}
Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us: Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered: Let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place: for this is our portion, and our lot is this.
\end{quote}

The epigraph's application is to the supercilious Gwendolen Harleth, shown in the chapter installing herself as queen of Offendene, ruler not only of her mother and sisters but of her uncle as well. Her calculated supplications for a horse, the desire of the moment, the "flower of the spring," prove successful. The "rosebuds" of fortune which she enjoys, however, do indeed quickly wither with the wintry onslaught of family financial misfortune.

In a study of George Eliot's epigraphs, David Leon Higdon points out that they each "have an organic function in her
novels."\textsuperscript{16} This is certainly true of her biblical epigraphs. They grow out of the fictional situations, and enlighteningly reflect upon them, especially to the reader familiar with the biblical context of each quotation who can perceive the intended authorial underscoring of the fictional by quotation of the biblical.

In addition to such quotations in epigraph form, there are quotations within the texts of George Eliot's novels. Some are quotations by characters, others are by the author herself.

The majority of these biblical quotations are found in a single novel, \textit{Adam Bede}. Most are either spoken by Dinah Morris or by other characters when they speak to or about the Methodist heroine. Before Dinah's sermon on the green in Chapter II, the Bible is quoted in two rather different allusions to her. First, Wiry Ben Cranage chides Seth Bede, ardent admirer of the maiden preacher: "What'll she take for her text? Happen ye can tell me, Seth, if so be as I shouldna come up i' time for 't. Will't be,--What come ye out for to see? A prophetess? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophetess--a uncommon pretty young woman."\textsuperscript{17} To Ben, the Methodist assembly is a joking matter; not so to Joshua Rann, village shoemaker and staunch Churchman:

\textsuperscript{16}Higdon, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{17}Eliot, III, 8. The passage Ben parodies is Matthew 11:9.
"Old Joshway," as he is irreverently called by his neighbours, is in a state of simmering indignation; but he has not yet opened his lips except to say, in a resounding bass undertone, like the tuning of a violoncello, "Sehon, King of the Amorites: for His mercy endureth for ever; and Og the King of Basan: for His mercy endureth for ever," --a quotation which may seem to have slight bearing on the present occasion; but, as with every other anomaly, adequate knowledge will show it to be a natural sequence. Mr. Rann was inwardly maintaining the dignity of the Church in the face of this scandalous irruption of Methodism, and as that dignity was bound up with his own sonorous utterance of the responses, his argument naturally suggested a quotation from the psalm he had read the last Sunday afternoon.18

Both Ben's parody and Joshua's polemics are directed at the forthcoming sermon by Dinah Morris, a sermon itself interlaced with quotations and close paraphrases of Scripture.

Dinah begins with a prayer in which she alludes to the story of the Samaritan woman at the well as recorded in John 4:6 and subsequent verses. During the sermon itself, Dinah quotes in order the following passages, repeating one quotation three times for emphasis:

Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.19

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.20

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.21

I came to seek and to save that which was lost.22

22Ibid., p. 34. Luke 19:10. See also Matthew 18:11.
I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.  

How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!  

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.  

My God, my God! . . . why hast Thou forsaken me?  

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.  

Come to me that you may have life.  

Depart from me into everlasting fire!  

Simply reading through these quotations provides the outline of Dinah's message. She emphasizes that Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor, that his gospel was one of seeking and saving the lost from sin, giving them life. She especially emphasizes Christ's forgiveness by three times quoting Luke 23:34. At the outset of her sermon, Dinah had appealed to Christ through prayer to make his presence felt by those listening:

Lord! Thou art with thy people still: they see Thee in the night-watches, and their hearts burn within them.

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28 Ibid. John 5:40.  
as Thou talkest with them by the way. And Thou art near to those who have not known Thee: open their eyes that they may see Thee—see Thee weeping over them, and saying, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life"—see Thee hanging on the cross and saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; see Thee as Thou wilt come again in Thy glory to judge them at the last. Amen.\textsuperscript{30}

Having set before her hearers this picture of the solicitous, forgiving Savior, Dinah proceeds to preach of Christ's care for the poor. As she concludes, she reverts to her initial image and quotation:

Ah! what pain! His lips are parched with thirst, and they mock him still in this great agony; yet with those parched lips he prays for them, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." . . . All this he bore for you! For you—and you never think of him; for you—and you turn your backs on him; you don't care what he has gone through for you. Yet he is not weary of toiling for you: he has risen from the dead, he is praying for you at the right hand of God—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And he is upon this earth too; he is among us; he is there close to you now; I see his wounded body and his look of love.\textsuperscript{31}

Dinah strives, successfully, to force the listening villagers into comparing themselves—with their disregard and lack of concern for Christ—with those who through ignorance crucified him. By refusing to respond to his gospel, she insists, the villagers crucify him afresh. In this way, through repeated use of Christ's image and his words, Dinah pricks the consciences of her hearers.

Summarizing Dinah Morris's message and analyzing its effect, George Creeger has written that "Dinah speaks

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 30. \textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 38-39.
eloquently, both in prayer and sermon, of the evil in men's lives, of the misery consequent upon sin and self-indulgence, and finally of the possibility of redemption through love which turns all things to good. . . ." 32 The essence of this eloquence lauded by Creeger is Dinah's straightforward, continual quotation of the Bible, her stating the message of redemption in the words of the Redeemer. Another critic has remarked of George Eliot herself that the sermon in Adam Bede is "representative in the highest degree of her deep religious nature and her keen homiletic instinct." 33 The depth of that religious nature and the keenness of that homiletic instinct are in no way more ably or fully shown than in the spiritual pungency and rhetorical effectiveness of the biblical passages selected by George Eliot for quotation in Dinah's sermon.

Shortly after the sermon, quotations from the Bible appear again as Dinah Morris and Seth Bede discuss the possibility of marriage. Seth urges his suit by citing St. Paul's approval of marriage: "And it seems to me there's more texts for your marrying than ever you can find against it. For St. Paul says as plain as can be . . . , 'I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to

32 "An Interpretation of Adam Bede," ELH, 23 (Sept. 1956), 220.

the adversary to speak reproachfully..."  

In responding, Dinah cites a verse from another of St. Paul's epistles: "As God has distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk." She perseveres in her Pauline asceticism until late in the novel when Adam Bede convinces her that marriage is not incompatible with religious devotion and dedication.

Dinah's monastic mode of life is likewise assailed by her Aunt Poyser. Speaking of the niece after she departs for Snowfield, Mrs. Poyser grumbles,

She provoked me past bearing sometimes; and, as I told her, she went clean again 'the Scriptur' for that says, "Love your neighbour as yourself"; "but," I said, "if you loved your neighbour no better nor you do yourself, Dinah, it's little enough you'd do for him. You'd be thinking he might do well enough on a half-empty stomach."  

Here Mrs. Poyser affectionately criticizes Dinah's conduct in biblical terms, just as Ben Cranage, Joshua Rann, and Dinah's fellow Methodist Seth referred to her with such quotations. Throughout the novel, her presence prompts such reaction by various characters.

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37 One quotation not prompted by Dinah is George Eliot's reference to Philippians 4:7 as she describes Thias Bede's funeral service: "Then came the moment of the final blessing, when the for-ever sublime words, 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' seemed to blend with the calm afternoon sunshine that fell on the bowed heads of the congregation..." Ibid., p. 292.
As with Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, so in other novels quotations seem prompted by the presence of a character closely linked in some way to the Bible: Edgar in the early "Janet's Repentance," Savonarola and Romola herself in *Romola*, Rufus Lyon in *Felix Holt, the Radical*, the Jews in *Daniel Deronda*.

With *Romola* dominated by the priest Savonarola and the "madonna" Romola, biblical imagery and phraseology are frequent; direct quotations, however, seldom appear. Regarding a sermon of Savonarola's delivered at the time the French army was entering Italy, George Eliot notes that

> he had preached in the Cathedral of Florence from the text, "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth." He believed it was by supreme guidance that he had reached just so far in his exposition of Genesis the previous Lent; and he believed the "flood of water"—emblem at once of avenging wrath and purifying mercy—to be the divinely-indicated symbol of the French army.38

This sermon the author only alludes to; later, she presents an entire sermon, demonstrating as she had with Dinah Morris her "keen homiletic instinct."39 Although the address is replete with biblical phrases, the Catholic priest does not quote directly from the Bible as had his Methodist counterpart in *Adam Bede*.

More frequent are the quotations in *Felix Holt, the*. 

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38Ibid., VIII, 306-7. The quotation is from Genesis 6:17.
39Chapman, p. 306.
Radical. The initial quotation, in the "Author's Introduction," provides George Eliot with the opportunity to aim a lightly satiric barb at her countrymen for their resistance to change, as well as for their biblical naïveté:

The parson having one Sunday preached from the words, "Break up your fallow ground," the people thought he had made the text out of his own head, otherwise it would never have come "so pat" on a matter of business; but when they found it in the Bible at home, some said it was an argument for fallows (else why should the Bible mention fallows?), but a few of the weaker sort were shaken, and thought it was an argument that fallows should be done away with, else the Bible would have said, "Let your fallows lie"; and the next morning the parson had a stroke of apoplexy, which, as coincident with a dispute about fallows, so set the parish against the innovating farmer and the rotation of crops that he could stand his ground no longer, and transferred his lease.40

This quotation is prompted by mention of a parson and his sermon. In Chapter IV another parson prompts another quotation. The preacher is Rufus Lyon, whose sermon preparation opens the chapter:

He was meditating on the text for his Sunday morning sermon, "And all the people said, Amen"—a mere mustard-seed of a text, which had split at first only into two divisions: "What was said," and "Who said it"; but these were growing into a many-branched discourse, and the preacher's eyes dilated, and a smile played about his mouth till, as his manner was, when he felt happily inspired, he had begun to utter his thoughts aloud in the varied measure and cadence habitual to him, changing from a rapid but distinct undertone to a loud emphatic rallentando.

"My brethren, do you think that great shout was raised in Israel by each man's waiting to say 'amem' till his neighbours had said 'amem'? Do you think there will ever by a great shout for the right—the shout of a nation as of one man, rounded and whole, like the voice

40Eliot, X, 8. The parson's text is found in Jeremiah 4:3 and Hosea 10:12.
of the archangel that bound together all the listeners of earth and heaven—if every Christian of you peeps round to see what his neighbours in good coats are doing, or else puts his hat before his face that he may shout and never be heard? But this is what you do: when the servant of God stands up to deliver his message, do you lay your souls beneath the Word as you set out your plants beneath the falling rain? No; one of you sends his eyes to all corners, he smothers his soul with small questions: 'What does Brother Y think? 'Is this doctrine high enough for Brother Z?' 'Will the church members be pleased?' And another—"\[1\]

Here Lyon breaks off with the entrance of his servant, although he has just begun to earnestly exercise his homiletic wings in anticipation of soaring to oratorical heights.

The problem presented to him by the servant Lyddy is Mrs. Holt. She is vexed by the incomprehensible behavior of her son Felix, and turns in frustration to the minister for assistance. Rufus Lyon's subsequent conference with Felix produces yet another direct quotation of the Bible, this one monitory: "But your mother is advanced in years; she needs comfortable sustenance; you have doubtless considered how you may make her amends? 'He that provideth not for his own—' I trust you respect the authority that so speaks."\[42\]

Thus in Felix Holt, the Radical there is an obvious tongue-in-cheek quotation by George Eliot, a homiletic preparation

\[41\]Ibid., pp. 73-74. The text as cited is apparently from I Chronicles 16:36—"And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

\[42\]Ibid., p. 89. The "authority so speaks" in I Timothy 5:8—"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."
taken seriously by Rufus Lyon but seen with a tinge of amusement by the reader, and a typical ministerial admonition braced with biblical support.

Other biblical quotations are sprinkled among the various novels. In Daniel Deronda, the Jew Mordecai praises his mother with lines from Proverbs 31: "She was a mother of whom it might have come—yea, might have come to be said, 'Her children arise up and call her blessed.'" Later Hans Meyrick, frustrated admirer of Mirah Lapidoth, remarks of the Jewish maiden, "While her brother's life lasts I suspect she would not listen to a lover, even one whose 'hair is like a flock of goats on Mount Gilead'—and I flatter myself that few heads would bear that trying comparison better than mine." With these two quotations George Eliot again demonstrates her aptness at selecting meaningful biblical passages to enrich her fiction. Mordecai's appreciative filial quotation comes from one of the better-known chapters of the Old Testament, that describing the virtuous woman. The reader familiar with the passage recalls through Eliot's suggestion an entire chain of attributes ascribed to the ideal Jewish wife and mother. Hans's quotation from the

\[43\text{Ibid., XVI, 384-85. The quotation is from Proverbs 31:28.}\]

\[44\text{Ibid., XVII, 148. The quotation is from the Song of Solomon 4:1—'Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead'; the comparison is repeated in 6:5.}\]
Song of Solomon is equally apropos—the would-be lover of the young Jewess quoting from the supreme love poem of the Hebrews.

This same complementing of the fictional situation with a pertinent biblical quotation is employed in Middlemarch when George Eliot writes of Mrs. Garth, "She was unpleasantly conscious that she had been on the verge of speaking as 'one of the foolish women speaketh'—telling first and entreating silence after."\(^4\)\(^5\) What Mrs. Garth fears is her husband's reprimand for mentioning to Fred Vincy that Farebrother loves her daughter Mary, for speaking when she should have remained silent. The quotation from Job introduced by the author is a portion of the suffering patriarch's rebuke of his wife, who has just spoken out of turn by counseling him to "curse God, and die."\(^6\) To Mrs. Garth, her outburst has been just as untimely, and George Eliot has exactly the appropriate quotation to fit the moment.

In the early "Janet's Repentance," George Eliot's use of a biblical passage differs somewhat from other instances noted. She begins routinely enough, by citing a passage pertinent to her discussion: "It was probably a hard saying to the Pharisees, that 'there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons

\(^5\)Job 2:9.
that need no repentance.  "47 She then comments negatively on what amounts to Benthamism, the greatest good of the greatest number, after which she summarizes by returning to her biblical verse:

And so it comes to pass that for the man who knows sympathy because he has known sorrow, that old, old saying about the joy of angels over the repentant sinner out-weighing their joy over the ninety-nine just, has a meaning which does not jar with the language of his own heart. It only tells him, that for angels too there is a transcendent value in human pain, which refuses to be settled by equations; that the eyes of angels too are turned away from the serene happiness of the righteous to bend with yearning pity on the poor erring soul wandering in the desert where no water is; that for angels too the misery of one casts so tremendous a shadow as to eclipse the bliss of ninety-nine. 48

Nowhere in her fiction does George Eliot more strongly insist on the essential importance of the individual man, the importance of "the misery of one." In her repudiation of the statistical serenity of Benthamism, the "bliss of ninety-nine," George Eliot both quotes the Bible and provides commentary on the selected verse.

Although in her novels George Eliot does not often quote directly from the Bible, such quotations as there are prove effective in a variety of ways. Her biblical epigraphs, especially that to The Mill on the Floss, serve as organic explications of the prefaced passages. Her quotations in Dinah Morris's sermon and her homiletic expansion of Rufus

47 Eliot, II, 192. George Eliot seems here to be quoting Luke 15:7 Johnsonian fashion--from memory--because the wording is not verbatim that of the King James Version.

48 Ibid., p. 193.
Lyon's mustard-seed text go far toward demonstrating a "keen homiletic instinct." Biblical quotations effectively sharpen the characterization of Dinah Morris, Seth Bede, Rufus Lyon, and others. Quotations by such characters as Wiry Ben Cranage and Joshua Rann lend to the humor of the novels; George Eliot herself uses the Bible in much the same fashion when she quotes and comments amusingly on "Break up your fallow ground." She also quotes and comments with serious intent, as in her insistence on the "transcendent value in human pain, which refuses to be settled by equations." In short, her biblical quotations are few but effective; they are invariably chosen to illuminate, complement, and enhance the fictional passages in which they appear.

49 Chapman, p. 306.
CHAPTER V

GEORGE ELIOT'S USE OF BIBLICAL PHRASEOLOGY

"It sounds like a tex',"¹ says Lisbeth Bede of a certain nonbiblical quotation favored by her son Adam. Her recognition of what she considers biblical phrasing is an experience common to any close reader of George Eliot's fiction. Although verbatim quotations are relatively few, quite often one detects "recurrent Biblical overtones."² Of these various overtones, one of the most frequently recurring is the biblical phrase, what C. S. Lewis has referred to as the "embedded quotation."³ To a certain extent, any writer will unconsciously employ King James phrasing, so pervasive has the literary and linguistic influence of the Authorized Version been. With George Eliot, however, as with authors like Milton and Bunyan, use of such phraseology extends beyond


³Lewis defines an "embedded quotation" as "sentences or phrases from the Authorised Version artfully worked into an author's own language so that an ignorant reader might not recognize them." He goes on to note, "Our literature is full of this, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries...." The Literary Impact of the Authorised Version (London: The Athlone Press, 1950), p. 13.
the common range to indicate an author intimately familiar with the Bible, one capable of employing its phrases artfully and often.

The biblical phrases appearing in Eliot's fiction serve basically the same purposes as biblical quotations. They are used for characterization; they appear in epigraphs and chapter headings; they are employed in authorial explication; and they are used for poetic or aesthetic effect.

The most frequent use of biblical phraseology is for purposes of characterization. In *Felix Holt, the Radical*, for example, after an exasperating interview with Mrs. Holt, Rufus Lyon fumes in scriptural strains:

> This woman has sat under the Gospel all her life, and she is as blind as a heathen, and as proud and stiffnecked as a Pharisee; yet she is one of the souls I watch for. 'T is true that even Sara, the chosen mother of God's people, showed a spirit of unbelief, and perhaps of selfish anger; and it is a passage that bears the unmistakable signet, "doing honour to the wife or woman, as unto the weaker vessel." For therein is the greatest check put on the ready scorn of the natural man.¹

The combination of biblical quotation, phraseology, and allusion is typical of George Eliot's ability to provide, from her own knowledge of the Bible, convincing dialogue for clerical characters. Later Lyon remarks of Felix Holt, "I discern in him a love for whatsoever things are honest and true, which I would fain believe to be an earnest of further

¹Eliot, X, 82. Sara laughed in Genesis 18:12 at the prophecy; the quotation concerning women as weaker vessels is from I Peter 3:7.
endowment with the wisdom from on high." Again, he chides his sulky servant,

Lyddy, . . . if you are wrestling with the enemy, let me refer you to Ezekiel the thirteenth and twenty-second, and beg of you not to groan. It is a stumbling-block and offence to my daughter; she would take no broth yesterday, because she said you had cried into it. Thus you cause the truth to be lightly spoken of, and make the enemy rejoice. If your face-ache gives him an advantage, take a little warm ale with your meat--I do not grudge the money.

With Evangelicals like Lyon, biblically saturated speech is a means toward the end of realism, George Eliot's self-proclaimed fictional raison d'être. Her works abound with characters whose lives are lived in close contact with the Bible and whose thought and speech should and do reflect that closeness.

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5 Ibid., p. 104. The principal threads in this biblical tissue come from Philippians 4:8 and James 3:17--"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"; "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

6 Ibid., pp. 74-75. Rufus's reference to "wrestling with the enemy" suggests Ephesians 6:12, "stumbling-block and offence" Romans 9:33, "make the enemy rejoice" Lamentations 2:17 as well as several passages in Psalms--Psalms 30:1, 35:19, 89:42. The recommending of ale for physical discomfort brings to mind Paul's similar prescription in I Timothy 5:23--"Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

7 She sets forth this ideal of realism in Chapter XVII of Adam Bede, "In Which the Story Pauses a Little."
Another example is Dinah Morris, whose presence almost always guarantees the presence of biblical elements. In *Adam Bede* the author writes of the Bede household, after Dinah has come to comfort the mourners, "And so there was earnest prayer--there was faith, love, and hope pouring itself forth that evening in the little kitchen." Even when not preaching, Dinah constantly speaks in King James phrases. When describing Methodist ways to Adolphus Irwine she comments, "But we are not without discipline and correction to put a check upon these things. There's a very strict order kept among us, and the brethren and sisters watch for each other's souls as they that must give account. They don't go every one his own way and say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'" Dinah's mode of watching for other souls, within and without the Methodist fold, is quietly benign. Some of her brethren, however, take an opposite approach. Joshua Rann complains to Parson Irwine about Will Maskery, the Methodist wheelwright, "He's got tongue enough to speak disrespectful about 's neebors, for he said as I was a blind Pharisee;--a-usin' the Bible in that way to find nicknames for folks as are his

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8 Eliot, III, 162. I Corinthians 13:13--"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

9 Ibid., p. 126. The "watch for each other's souls" comes from Hebrews 13:17--"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." "Am I my brother's keeper?" is a quotation of Genesis 4:9.
elders an' betters! . . . An' he said as our Christmas singin' was no better nor the cracklin' o' thorns under a pot.\(^\text{10}\)

Joshua concludes of Will's biblical barbs,

> It turns a man's stomach t' hear the Scripture misused i' that way. I know as much o' the words o' the Bible as he does, an' could say the Psalms right through i' my sleep if you was to pinch me; but I know better nor to take 'em to say my own say wi'. I might as well take the Sacrament-cup home and use it at meals.\(^\text{11}\)

Both Dinah's seraphic and Will's splenetic comments are laced with phrases from the Bible, in keeping with the typical turn-of-the-century Methodist's saturation with the Bible and his habit of expressing himself in biblicisms.

Other characters who both engage in biblically tinged dialogue and who are described in biblical phrases include Mr. Jerome in _Scenes of Clerical Life_,\(^\text{12}\) the Lantern Yard brethren in _Silas Marner_,\(^\text{13}\) the Dominican priest Savonarola

\(^{10}\)Ibid., pp. 81, 83. The "blind Pharisee" phrase is used repeatedly by John the Baptist and Christ in their preaching and teaching; in his "cracklin' o' thorns" aspersion Will is paraphrasing Ecclesiastes 7:6--"For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity."

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 83.

\(^{12}\)"In his boyish days he had been thrown where Dissent seemed to have the balance of piety, purity, and good works on its side, and to become a Dissenter seemed to him identical with choosing God instead of mammon." Ibid., II, 89. Compare Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13--"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

\(^{13}\)"On this William exhorted his friend to confess, and not to hide his sin any longer." Ibid., VII, 15. Although no single passage parallels this comment, the phraseology--"exhorted," "confess," "hide his sin"--has biblical overtones. The term "exhort" is a favorite of the Apostle Paul in his epistles.
in *Romola*, 14 Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*, 15 and Deronda in *Daniel Deronda*. 16 Each character is associated in some way with the Bible, and the realistic touch provided by biblical dialogue and description is a necessary ingredient for plausible characterization.

On two occasions in *Middlemarch*, however, George Eliot employs biblical paraphrase where it is not required by the nature of the characters. First with Mary Garth, then with Mary's father Caleb, Eliot infuses a biblical touch to create a special effect. Of Mary she writes,

> If you want to know more particularly how Mary looked, ten to one you will see a face like hers in the crowded street to-morrow, if you are there on the watch: she will not be among those daughters of Zion who are haughty, and walk with stretched-out necks and wanton eyes, mincing as they go: let all those pass, and fix your eyes on some small plump brownish person of firm but quiet carriage, who looks about her but does not suppose that anybody is looking at her.17

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14 One brief example is George Eliot's reference to "the evidence of the Frate's mental state after he had had thus to lay his mouth in the dust." Ibid., IX, 419. Compare Lamentations 3:29--"He putteth his mouth in the dust. . . ."

15 Fearing public discovery of his concealed past, Bulstrode wonders if he is "after all to become a mere stone of stumbling and a rock of offence?" Ibid., XIII, 376. Compare Romans 9:33--"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence. . . ."

16 "It was a delight to have rescued this child acquainted with sorrow, and to think of having placed her little feet in protected paths." Ibid., XVI, 147. Here the tone is biblical without being directly analogous to a specific passage. The phrase "acquainted with sorrow" approximates Isaiah 53:3, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . ." This messianic passage is particularly pertinent in Eliot's discussion of Mirah's "salvation."

17 Ibid., XIII, 200.
The passage paraphrased--almost quoted--is Isaiah 3:16--
"Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are
haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes,
walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with
their feet. . . ." This verse is the initial one in a lengthy
and detailed condemnation directed at the vain "daughters of
Zion," Isaiah 3:16-26. The chain of negative details in-
evitably leads the reader familiar with the biblical passage
to think of Rosamond Vincy, against whom George Eliot sets
Mary Garth as positive counterpart.

A few pages later, the author also links the father to
the Bible:

"The soul of man," said Caleb, with the deep tone
and grave shake of the head which always came when he
used this phrase--"the soul of man, when it gets fairly
rotten, will bear you all sorts of poisonous toadstools,
and no eye can see whence came the seed thereof."

It was one of Caleb's quaintnesses that in his dif-
ficulty of finding speech for his thought, he caught, as
it were, snatches of diction which he associated with
various points of view or states of mind; and whenever
he had a feeling of awe, he was haunted by a sense of
Biblical phraseology, though he could hardly have given
a strict quotation.18

These "snatches of diction" from the Scriptures in Caleb's
more serious moments provide an effective individualizing
trait for a man who himself holds the Bible in high esteem.
When this treatment of father and daughter is considered in
conjunction with the biblical quotations noted in Chapter IV
which George Eliot applies to Caleb and his wife,19 it

becomes apparent that the Bible is a major basis for the characterization of the Garth family.

A particular type of characterization employing biblical phraseology which appears at times in the novels is what might be termed two-dimensional or double description. In such passages a character will speak of another person in words that underscore his own personality but at the same time lend strongly to the characterization of the one alluded to. Two such passages already cited are Rufus Lyon's comments on Mrs. Holt and on her son Felix. The biblically phrased observations attest to the minister's own closeness to the Bible; they also, however, set forth descriptions of mother and son which the author seems to invite the reader to share. Mrs. Holt is indeed "blind," "proud," "stiffnecked," and Pharisaical, although in a rather comical way. Of more importance is the description of Felix, the novel's central character: "I discern in him a love for whatsoever things are honest and true, which I would fain believe to be an earnest of further endowment with the wisdom that is from on high."20 The borrowings from Philippians 4:8 and James 3:17 are important in Eliot's portrayal of the young radical as one who loves honesty, truth, and wisdom. To the reader familiar with the biblical passages used, however, there is added richness in George Eliot's description: in each verse there is a list of virtues

20Eliot, X, 104.
which the author quite likely wishes to be associated with her hero. In Philippians, Paul adjures his brethren to think on things "honest," "just," "lovely," and "of good report." In James, the "wisdom from above" is described as "pure," "peaceable," "gentle," "easy to be intreated," "full of mercy and good fruits," "without partiality," and "without hypocrisy." As the conscious artist that she is, surely George Eliot intends that the reader see in Lyon's comment not only a passage appropriately biblical, but one shedding greater light on Felix, through its submerged suggestiveness, than on the minister himself.

George Eliot employs this technique more with Rufus Lyon than with any other character. As he has positively described Felix, so he negatively assesses Christian, the servant of Philip Debarry who figures so strongly in the familial theme: "I confess his presence and speech are to me as the jarring of metal. He bears the stamp of one who has never conceived aught of more sanctity than the lust of the eye and the pride of life." 21

One further example of this technique is the reaction of Dinah Morris to the entrance of Adolphus Irvine into the Hall Farm: "What a well-favoured countenance! Oh that the good seed might fall on that soil, for it would surely

21Ibid., XI, 27-28. I John 2:16---"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."
flourish." The passage typifies Dinah, both in biblical utterance and in Evangelical narrowness of belief—the churchman Irwine is somehow not among the elect. At the same time, it stresses the excellent mettle of the minister who produces "an hundredfold" of good works in the novel.

Somewhat akin to this double characterization is George Eliot's use of phrases to suggest an explicit parallel between her fictional character and a biblical one. The more notable and sustained instances will be discussed in Chapter VIII, but an indication of the importance of phrases from the Bible in this process should be made at this point. In Chapter XXX of Adam Bede, George Eliot closes Dinah's letter to Seth with an ultra-Pauline touch: "I have not skill to write the words so small as you do, and my pen moves slow. And so I am straitened, and say but little of what is in my mind. Greet your mother for me with a kiss. She asked me to kiss her twice when we parted." The modeling of Dinah's epistolary conclusion closely after that of Paul in his New Testament epistles invites a comparison between the first-century apostle and the nineteenth-century Methodist.

22Ibid., III, 124. The allusion is to Matthew 13:3-9 (explained by Jesus to his disciples in 13:18-23), the parable of the sower and the seed.

23Ibid., IV, 57. Compare Galatians 6:11--"Ye see how large a letter I have written [Revised Standard Version translates "See with what large letters I am writing..."] unto you with mine own hand"; Romans 16:16--"Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you."

24The character parallel is analyzed in Chapter VIII.
Occasionally the comparison is an ironic one. In *Felix Holt, the Radical*, George Eliot writes of Mrs. Transome that "she kept all these things hidden in her heart and went out in the autumn sunshine to overlook the alterations in the pleasure-grounds very much as a happy woman might have done." Her unhappiness is the result of disappointment in her son Harold and his disregard for her, coupled with regret over the affair with Jermyn which led to Harold's birth. The phrase "kept all these things hidden in her heart" subtly suggests a parallel with another mother—Mary, mother of Christ. The Gospel of Luke relates that Mary "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart," and again that "his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." Two mothers, two sons, with maternal anxiety displayed by both. The parallel is fashioned into ironic commentary, however, by the obvious contrast in maternal natures: the conception by divine sanction of a savior on the one hand, on the other the conception of a bitterly disappointing child, a conception tinged by the mundane taint of marital infidelity.

Another instance of such ironic authorial commentary via an aptly chosen phrase from the Bible is in Godfrey Cass’s reaction to the death of Eppie’s mother in *Silas Marner*: "He

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25 Eliot, X, 162.
felt a reformed man, delivered from temptation. . . ."28 The last phrase, "delivered from temptation," seems wryly ironic in its closeness to the passage from Christ's model prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. . . ."29 Godfrey's deliverance is based not on the successful resistance of temptation but on the death of a woman whose demise he desired. His situation is in marked contrast to the prayerful purity and piety enjoined by Christ.

There are, then, in George Eliot's use of biblical phraseology for purposes of characterization, various authorial touches. Realism is provided in the dialogue of Eliot's Evangelicals and other biblically influenced characters. Sometimes, as with Will Maskery in _Adam Bede_, the effect is that of muted comedy. Coupled on occasion with this dialogue is an indirect characterization: the biblical phrases used by a character contribute to his own portrait while at the same time contributing to the portrait of the one spoken about. A still more sophisticated or subtle type of characterization is that in which the phraseology selected by Eliot invites the reader to view the fictional situation as parallel in some significant way to the biblical situation suggested—sometimes, as just noted, with ironic effect.

28 Eliot, VII, 197.

The use of phrases to create or suggest parallels bridges the gap or crosses the line between the incidental biblical usage and the integral one, moves from the realm of the superficial to the essential. Such employment of phraseology from the Bible is not limited to characterization.

In Romola, for instance, there appears this passage:

At the close of 1492, the year in which Lorenzo de' Medici died and Tito Melema came as a wanderer to Florence, Italy was enjoying a peace and prosperity unthreatened by any near and definite danger. There was no fear of famine, for the seasons had been plenteous in corn and wine and oil; new palaces had been rising in all fair cities, new villas on pleasant slopes and summits; and the men who had more than their share of these good things were in no fear of the larger number who had less. 30

Of this brief segment of the novel Carole Robinson has remarked, "The biblical language of the . . . passage seems an invitation to read it as a parable. . . ." 31 The same may be said of several passages from the novels. Two of the most obvious are Romola's symbolic sea voyage from Florence, followed by the rescue and restoration of a plague-ridden village before her eventual return, and the tale of St. Ogg, the son of Beorl, in The Mill on the Floss--both replete with biblical phraseology. In the latter passage, for example, a passage concerned with the Blessed Virgin and the Christ child, George Eliot begins by referring to her "private hagiographer," and


in the story itself there are recorded such phrases as "And it came to pass," "Wherefore dost thou," "Tarry till the morning," "so shalt thou be wise and not foolish," "with exceeding beauty," "thou art blessed," "thou didst not," "many were saved," and "behold." The parabolic tone of the tale is largely achieved by these biblical phrases.

Another use of biblical phrases is in epigraphs. In her first long novel, George Eliot prefaces Adam Bede with the following quotation from Wordsworth:

So that ye may have Clear images before your gladdened eyes Of Nature's unambitious underwood. And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when I speak of such among the flock as swerved Or fell, those only shall be singled out Upon whose lapse, or error, something more Than brotherly forgiveness may attend.

Significantly enough, Wordsworth's speaker in these lines is a clergyman, and the language--the references to the straying sheep, the "flock," swerving from the flock, "lapse," "error," "brotherly forgiveness"--strongly suggests pastoral imagery associated with Christ and his followers in the New Testament. The straying sheep of the novel is Hetty Sorrel; the redeemer or concerned shepherd, Dinah Morris.

As this prefatory quotation hints of an intended Bible-novel parallel in Adam Bede, so the titles of the individual books in The Mill on the Floss suggest a closeness both to


33 Ibid., III, v. The quotation is from The Excursion, VI, 651-58.
the Bible itself and to that seventeenth-century biblical allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*:

Book First: Boy and Girl
Book Second: School-Time
Book Third: The Downfall
Book Fourth: The Valley of Humiliation
Book Fifth: Wheat and Tares
Book Sixth: The Great Temptation
Book Seventh: The Final Rescue. 34

This division of the Tulliver children's lives into seven periods, seven being among the sacred and symbolic numbers of the Bible, is perhaps in itself significant. Of greater significance is the biblical and Bunyanesque nature of the title phrases. They strongly suggest a religious pilgrimage or progress from childhood through a series of spiritual trials to "The Final Rescue" whereby a higher plane is attained. The close association of Maggie with *The Imitation of Christ* and the novel's closing fictional parallel with the biblical deluge further stress the close alignment between novel and Bible initially suggested by the book titles. Preceding even the titles is the Old Testament quotation which both opens and closes the novel: "In their death they were not divided."

Later works contain similar biblical phrasing in epigraph

34 Ibid., V, xi-xii; VI, vii-viii.
form, but nothing so extensive as found in the novels of Hayslope and Dorlcote Mill. Chapter LIV of Romola is entitled "The Evening and the Morning,"\(^\text{35}\) the phrase being that repeatedly used in Genesis 1--"And the evening and the morning were the first day." In Romola the evening occurrence is Romola's visit to Bernardo del Nero to warn him against traitors; the morning occurrence is the brief appearance outside Florence of Piero de' Medici with his thirteen hundred men. Neither event seems to suggest deeper biblical meaning or parallel. Somewhat stronger, perhaps, are the scriptural-sounding titles given to Book VI and Book VIII of Daniel Deronda: "Revelations" and "Fruit and Seed." In the former book Deronda discovers his parentage, heritage, and mission; the latter book, the concluding section of the novel, bears out its title in typical George Eliot fashion, with the main characters finally reaping as they have formerly sowed.

George Eliot also uses biblical phrases in passages of analysis or commentary. Some of these passages spring from or are closely linked to characterization: "You might have found here and there a Wesleyan to whom Methodism was the vehicle of peace on earth and good-will to men."\(^\text{36}\) One step removed from this integration of a biblical phrase into

\(^{35}\text{Ibid., IX, vi.}\)

\(^{36}\text{Ibid., II (Adam Bede), 24. Compare Luke 2:14.}\)
the description of a religious group is the observation the author makes about the minister Rufus Lyon in *Felix Holt, the Radical*: "He was striving to purify his feeling in this matter from selfish or worldly dross—a striving which is that prayer without ceasing, sure to wrest an answer by its sublime importunity."\(^{37}\) The particular inner turmoil described is that of a specific character, yet the observation has general application. The same sort of observation or explanation can be found throughout the novels. Going beyond the specific situation, the author often makes a general didactic pronouncement, one frequently couched in or based on some phrase from the Bible: "Still—if I have read religious history aright—faith, hope, and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with a sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank Heaven! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings."\(^{38}\)

Even when there is no readily identifiable biblical word or phrase, the tone, intention, and effect of George Eliot's didacticism bring the Bible to mind. An example is the following comment on Maggie Tulliver's townsmen:

\(^{37}\)Ibid., XI, 177. I Thessalonians 5:17—"Pray without ceasing." The reference to "sublime importunity" recalls Christ's parable stressing perseverance in prayer, Luke 11: 5-10. Verse 8 reads, "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

\(^{38}\)Ibid., III (Adam Bede), 50. See I Corinthians 13:13.
To have taken Maggie by the hand and said, "I will not believe unproved evil of you; my lips shall not utter it; my ears shall be closed against it; I, too, am an erring mortal, liable to stumble, apt to come short of my most earnest efforts; your lot has been harder than mine, your temptation greater; let us help each other to stand and walk without more falling";--to have done this would have demanded courage, deep pity, self-knowledge, generous trust--would have demanded a mind that tasted no piquancy in evil-speaking, that felt no self-exaltation in condemning, that cheated itself with no large words into the belief that life can have no moral end, any high religion, which excludes the striving after perfect truth, justice, and love towards the individual men and women who come across our own path. 39

George Eliot's wording here is not explicitly biblical, although "my lips shall not utter it; my ears shall be closed against it" approximates such passages as Job 27:4 and Isaiah 33:15-16. It is beyond question, however, implicitly biblical in monitory tone and moral intent.

In addition to passages reflecting biblical influence through didactic moralizing, there are passages in which George Eliot recasts an obvious thought from the Bible in her own words. When she writes, "See to it, friend, before you pronounce a too hasty judgment, that your own moral sensibilities are not of a hoofed or clawed character," she is simply recasting the thought of Christ concerning the

39 Ibid., VI, 361-62.
40 "My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit."
41 "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high. . . ."
42 Ibid., II ("Janet's Repentance"), 117-18.
mote and beam as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount,\footnote{Matthew 7:3-5: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."} or as summarized in his comment concerning the proposed stoning of the adulterous woman, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."\footnote{John 8:7.} A similar restatement of Jesus' teaching is the following:

People who live at a distance are naturally less faulty than those immediately under our own eyes; and it seems superfluous, when we consider the remote geographical position of the Ethiopians, and how very little the Greeks had to do with them, to inquire further why Homer calls them "blameless."\footnote{Eliot, V (The Mill on the Floss), 309. The juxtaposition of biblical thought and classical allusion in this passage serves as reminder that George Eliot drew from many literary sources. Although this study highlights or underscores the biblical element in her fiction, the Bible is only one color in the spectrum of her literary sources—although perhaps the most vivid tint.}

Although less specific, Christ's version is by far the more concise: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."\footnote{Matthew 13:57.}

George Eliot not only restates familiar biblical thoughts in her own words but also occasionally contributes her bit of wisdom to fill a biblical void: "Solomon's Proverbs, I think, have omitted to say, that as the sore palate findeth grit, so..."
an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendoes."

Perhaps even more interesting is George Eliot's modification or qualification of a scriptural dictum. She expresses mild disagreement with Genesis 2:18 ("And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.") when she writes of Rufus Lyon's daughter, "In the ages since Adam's marriage, it has been good for some men to be alone, and for some women also. But Esther was not one of these women: she was intensely of the feminine type, verging neither towards the saint nor the angel." The appropriateness of the reference is again striking: the passage alluded to is that in which woman is created as a "help meet" for man; in the fictional situation, George Eliot is in the process of creating a help meet for Felix Holt, is moving toward the marriage of the young couple.

At times, the aphoristic quality of George Eliot's observations brings to mind Old Testament wisdom literature. Any one of her novels provides ample evidence of the aphoristic aptness of this Victorian Solomon or Koheleth. Romola, for instance, yields the following illustrations:

It is easier and pleasanter to recognize the old than to account for the new."

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\(^{47}\) Eliot, XIII (Middlemarch), 42. This is written of Lydgate just before Farebrother makes a passing comment about resisting the sirens—the very thing which Lydgate is trying to do.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., XI, 274. 

\(^{49}\) Ibid., VIII, 5.
It is the way with half the truth amidst which we live, that it only haunts us and makes dull pulsations that are never born into sound.  

Hard speech between those who have loved is hideous in the memory, like the sight of greatness and beauty sunk into vice and rags.

As a strong body struggles against fumes with the more violence when they begin to be stifling, a strong soul struggles against phantasies with all the more alarmed energy when they threaten to govern in the place of thought.

The relative greatness of men is not to be gauged by their tendency to disbelieve the superstitions of their age.

Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest.

There is no kind of conscious obedience that is not an advance on lawlessness...

To the common run of mankind it has always seemed a proof of mental vigour to find moral questions easy, and judge conduct according to concise alternatives.

Who shall put his finger on the work of justice, and say, "It is there"? Justice is like the kingdom of God—it is not without us as a fact, it is within us as a great yearning.

George Eliot herself makes each of these observations. Her characters also demonstrate the same trait. Bardo remarks that "in the vain laughter of folly wisdom hears half its applause," and Bernardo del Nero comments in half-humorous

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50 Ibid., IX, 47.
52 Ibid., p. 52.
54 Ibid., p. 194.
56 Ibid., p. 346.
58 Ibid., VIII, 184.
51 Ibid., p. 49.
53 Ibid., p. 115.
55 Ibid., p. 195.
57 Ibid., p. 383.
wistfulness to Romola, "Old men's eyes are like old men's memories; they are strongest for things a long way off." In epigrammatic passages like these, George Eliot approximates the Bible either through the short, pithy nature of the comment or through incorporation of biblical phrases and thoughts.

Another use of the biblical phrase, infrequent but telling in its effect, is in passages primarily poetic. Here the wording from the Bible simply enriches the aesthetic effect. There is, for example, an incorporation of phrasing from Psalms 55:17 in this description from Romola: "The sunlight and shadows bring their old beauty and waken the heart-strains at morning, noon, and eventide..." In another passage, this one thematic as well as poetic, George Eliot writes, "As our thought follows close in the slow wake of the dawn, we are impressed with the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history--hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death." Something of the same descriptive poetic touch can be seen in Felix Holt, the Radical when Eliot refers to "the breath of the...

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59 Ibid., p. 411.
60 Ibid., p. 11. Psalms 55:17--"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear me."
61 Ibid., p. 2. Compare Genesis 8:22--"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."
manufacturing town, which made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon. . . ." 62 Although here the biblical thread is so interwoven as to almost escape notice, George Eliot seems to be modeling the sentence on Exodus 13:21-22: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

Aside from these various uses of the biblical phrase—for characterization, for epigraph, for explication, for description—there are phrases which recur so frequently and in such diverse usages that they may be said to have passed from a biblical borrowing to a basic trait or characteristic of George Eliot's prose style. Perhaps the most notable of these constructions is "What have/had I to do with . . . .," a construction she uses repeatedly to denote total disparity of persons or perspectives. In the Gospel of Mark, the "unclean spirit" within the Gadarene demoniac addresses Christ with this greeting: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" 63 The complete alienation expressed

62 Ibid., X, 6.

is adapted by George Eliot and appropriated to many situations. In Romola alone, for instance, these passages appear:

What had the words of that vision to do with her real sorrow?  

What have you to do with carnivals now you are an old woman with two children?  

What have I to do with your arguments?  

In the first passage, George Eliot is presenting Romola's reaction to her brother's vision; in the second passage, Tito Melema is addressing his mistress Tessa; in the last passage, Romola is arguing with her husband Tito. Thus the construction is used both to denote the serious mental and spiritual turmoil of Romola and the flippant teasing of Tito. The same phrase is later used by Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda when he remarks to Lush, "What in the name of nonsense have I to do with Miss Arrowpoint and her music?"  

The construction is among the most frequently recurring in George Eliot's fiction and appears in highly diverse situations.  

These, then, are the ways in which George Eliot effectively employs biblical phrases in her novels. She uses phrases from the King James Version with great frequency in creating the realistic dialogue of her Evangelical and other
Bible-oriented characters. At times she uses such phrases to create a comic or ironic effect. She suggests by a phrase significant parallels between biblical and fictional characters or situations. Biblical phrases are used both for epigraphs and for book divisions of novels. In explication, she frequently uses phrases or suggests thoughts from the Bible. She recasts and qualifies biblical passages. She weaves poetic phrases from the Bible into descriptive passages.

As with her direct quotations, these varied uses reflect close acquaintance with the Bible and artistic skill in using that biblical knowledge for fictional embellishment.
CHAPTER VI

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN ELIOT'S FICTION

George Eliot prefaced Chapter XXI of Daniel Deronda with the following epigraph:

It is a common sentence that Knowledge is power; but who hath duly considered or set forth the power of Ignorance? Knowledge slowly builds up what Ignorance in an hour pulls down. Knowledge, through patient and frugal centuries, enlarges discovery and makes record of it; Ignorance, wanting its day's dinner, lights a fire with the record, and gives a flavour to its one roast with the burnt souls of many generations. Knowledge, instructing the sense, refining and multiplying needs, transforms itself into skill and makes life various with a new six days' work; comes Ignorance drunk on the seventh, with a firkin of oil and a match and an easy "Let there not be"--and the many-coloured creation is shivered up in blackness. Of a truth, Knowledge is power, but it is a power refined by scruple, having a conscience of what must be and what may be; whereas Ignorance is a blind giant who, let him but wax unbound, would make it a sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good, and turn all the places of joy dark as a buried Babylon. And looking at life parcel-wise, in the growth of a single lot, who having a practised vision may not see that ignorance of the true bond between events, and false conceit of means whereby sequences may be compelled--like that falsity of eyesight which overlooks the gradations of distance, seeing that which is afar off as if it were within a step or a grasp--precipitates the mistaken soul on destruction?

The style and content of this passage owe much to the Bible. Biblical phraseology--"who hath duly considered," "of a truth,"

"afar off," "Let there not be"--attests to the epigraph's scriptural source. Knowledge's six-day creation and Ignorance's seventh-day destruction bring to mind the Genesis account of God's creation of the earth and institution of the Sabbath. When Ignorance is referred to as "a blind giant who, let him but wax unbound, would make it a sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good . . . ," the allusion is to the death struggle of Samson and his destruction of the Philistine temple as recorded in Judges.

Old Testament allusions are more than once employed in the chapter epigraphs of Daniel Deronda. Another instance occurs in the first paragraph of the epigraph to Chapter XXII:

Among the heirs of Art, as at the division of the promised land, each has to win his portion by hard fighting: the bestowal is after the manner of prophecy, and is a title without possession. To carry the map of an ungotten estate in your pocket is a poor sort of copyhold. And in fancy to cast his shoe over Edom is little warrant that a man shall ever set the sole of his foot on an acre of his own there.

The biblical passage to which Eliot is alluding is Psalms 60:6-8, in which the future glory of Israel and the subjugation of her enemies is the topic: "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my

\[2\] Ibid., p. 359.
The events of the chapter demonstrate the appropriateness of the allusion. Herr Klesmer, the Jewish musician, candidly tells Gwendolen Harleth that she is unfit for a stage career. The praise lavished on Gwendolen and her acting ability by the gentry, Klesmer affirms, is "a title without possession"; to prove herself a talented actress, to earn a living in that way, requires more than Gwendolen's naive faith in her own success, more than simply casting one's shoe over Edom. That the chapter in which a Jewish character chastises the heroine should be prefaced by an Old Testament allusion summarizing the event is an indication of George Eliot's aptness in using the Bible.

Two other examples of biblical allusions in the chapter epigraphs of Daniel Deronda are found in the author's quotations from other writers. Chapter XIX begins with a sentence from Laurence Sterne's Sentimental Journey: "I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and say, '"Tis all barren'; and so it is: and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruits it offers." The significance of the casting of one's shoe over a land was "a symbolical act to proclaim entrance into possession of it." William R. Taylor and W. Stewart McCullough, "The Book of Psalms: Exegesis," in The Interpreter's Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), IV, 316. The act of casting one's shoe is further clarified in Ruth 4:7-10.

Eliot, XV, 293.
of traveling "from Dan to Beersheba" lies in Dan's location in the far northern section of Palestine, Beersheba's location in the distant south. Hence to travel from one point to the other is to traverse all Palestine, or, more generally, to cover an entire area. Since this chapter treats Deronda's indecision about seeking Mirah Lapidoth's lost mother and brother, the epigraph is apropos. Deronda is trying to decide whether figuratively to traverse all Palestine, to "travel from Dan to Beersheba," to seek more knowledge about Jews in general and Mirah's kindred in particular. Through her epigraph George Eliot hints that it will be a fruitful pursuit.

The other quotation is from Heine's Gestandnisse, and precedes Eliot's Chapter LXIII:

Moses, trotz seiner Befeindung der Kunst, dennoch selber ein grosser Kunstler war und den wahren Kunstlergeist bei ihm, wie bei seinen aegyptischen Landeuten, nur auf das Colossale und Unverwustliche gerichtet. Aber nicht wie die Aegypten formirte er seine Kunstwerke aus Backstein und Granit, sondern er baute Menschenpyramiden, er meisselte Menschen Obelisken, er nahm einen armen Hirtenstamma und Schuf daraus ein Volk, das ebenfalls den Jahrhunderten trotzen sollte . . . er Schuf Israel.

In this chapter, George Eliot fashions Deronda into a modern

5 The phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" is found only in the Old Testament. Its meaning is clear in II Samuel 24:2--"For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people." See also Judges 20:1, I Samuel 3:20, II Samuel 3:10, II Samuel 17:11, II Samuel 24:15, I Kings 4:25, I Chronicles 21:2, and II Chronicles 30:5.

6 Eliot, XVII, 289.
Moses who will undertake the rebuilding of Israel. Deronda says to Mordecai, "Since I began to read and know, I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude--some social captainship, which would come to me as a duty, and not be striven for as a personal prize. You have raised the image of such a task for me--to bind our race together in spite of heresy." 7

Only in George Eliot's Zionist novel do biblical allusions appear in epigraph form. These references exclusively to the Old Testament underscore the Judaic subject matter in a subtle but effective way. The creation of an earthly paradise, the highlighting of the Jewish leaders Moses and Samson, the possession of the promised land and the numbering of its inhabitants--these allusions in epigraphs point to the messianic mission of Deronda and his desire to reestablish the Jewish homeland.

One use by George Eliot of biblical allusions, then, is in illuminating the Jewish element of Daniel Deronda. In addition, they are used as aids in description, narration, authorial commentary, comic relief, and characterization.

Descriptive passages are frequent in George Eliot's fiction, passages such as those describing the village, the village green, and the surrounding countryside in Chapter II

7Ibid., pp. 298-99.
of Adam Bede. An earlier example is the description of the forest in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story"; here this brief allusion appears as embellishment: "The golden sunlight beamed through the dripping boughs like a Shechinah, or visible divine presence, and the birds were chirping and trilling their new autumnal songs so sweetly, it seemed as if their throats, as well as the air, were all the clearer for the rain. . . ."\(^8\)

As in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," the beatific splendor of external nature contrasts sharply with the tempestuous inward state of the central figure:

Caterina moved through all this joy and beauty like a poor wounded leveret painfully dragging its little body through the sweet clover-tufts--for it, sweet in vain. Mr. Bate's words about Sir Christopher's joy, Miss Assher's beauty, and the nearness of the wedding, had come upon her like the pressure of a cold hand, rousing her from confused dozing to a perception of hard, familiar realities.\(^7\)

As in this descriptive passage, so in narrative passages as well there appear at times brief biblical allusions. In relating Hetty Sorrel's return journey following her fruitless search for Arthur Donnithorne in Adam Bede, George Eliot notes that part of the trip was made "by the help of a return

\(^8\)Ibid., I, 213. "Shekinah" is defined as "the word used in the Targums and rabbinic writings as a circumlocution to express the reverent nearness of God to his people. The word is not found in the Bible, but it is rooted in the OT, which frequently speaks of God's presence on earth, and is reflected in the NT, especially in the belief that God came to dwell in the flesh of Jesus Christ." George Arthur Buttrick et al., eds., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV, 317.

\(^9\)Eliot, I, 213.
chaise, with a drunken postilion,—who frightened her by driving like Jehu the son of Nimshi, and shouting hilarious remarks at her, twisting himself backwards on his saddle. . . . "\(^{10}\) Since Hetty herself is not likely to have known who Jehu was, and since the pertinence of the reference seems to extend no further than the analogy of spirited, reckless driving, it seems reasonable to surmise that George Eliot employs such references based on her perception of a specific biblical-fictional parallel and on her general delight in introducing biblical references into her fiction.

More frequent than the use of allusions in description and narration is their use in authorial commentary. The pause to analyze a character or situation or to moralize, a characteristic familiar to every reader of Eliot's novels, is a pause sometimes punctuated with biblical allusions. When at the very end of *Felix Holt, the Radical*, George Eliot makes her final observations concerning her characters, she does so with such an allusion:

> Whether the farmers are all public-spirited, the shopkeepers nobly independent, the Sproxton men entirely sober and judicious, the Dissenters quite without narrowness or asperity in religion and politics, and the publicans all fit, like Gaius, to be the friends of an apostle—these things I have not heard, not having correspondence in those parts.\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\) *Ibid.*, IV, 123. II Kings 9:20—"And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously."

Here the publicans and Gaius form the last link in a chain of parallelism. In concluding her novel, George Eliot turns to the Bible for a clinching analogy, one which perhaps draws a final parallel between the biblical apostles and her fictional apostle Felix Holt.

On occasion George Eliot's observations resemble sermons in form. The author makes her point and then follows it, preacher-fashion, with a biblical illustration. Referring to the future of Daniel Deronda, she observes,

To glory in a prophetic vision of knowledge covering the earth, is an easier exercise of believing imagination than to see its beginning in newspaper placards, staring at you from a bridge beyond the cornfields; and it might well happen to most of us dainty people that we were in the thick of the battle of Armageddon without being aware of anything more than the annoyance of a little explosive smoke and struggling on the ground immediately about us.\(^{12}\)

An allied allusion to this of our unwitting presence at Armageddon is that in Daniel Deronda to the sudden cataclysmic impact of events which make themselves felt in our lives:

There comes a terrible moment to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind, which have lain aloof in newspapers and other neglected reading, enter like an earthquake into their own lives—when the slow urgency of growing generations turns into the tread of an invading army or the dire clash of civil war, and grey fathers know nothing to seek for but the corpses of their blooming sons, and girls forget all vanity to make lint and bandages which may serve for the shattered limbs of their betrothed husbands. Then it is as if the Invisible Power that

\(^{12}\text{Ibid., XVI, 151. The term "Armageddon" is found only in Revelation 16:16. It is "a word . . . designating the scene of the last struggle of the forces of good and evil against each other." Buttrick et al., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I, 226.}\)
has been the object of lip-worship and lip-resignation becomes visible, according to the imagery of the Hebrew poet, making the flames his chariot, and riding on the wings of the wind, till the mountains smoke and the plains shudder until the rolling fiery visitation. Often the good cause seems to lie prostrate under the thunder of unrelenting force, the martyrs live reviled, they die, and no angel is seen holding forth the crown and the palm branch. Then it is that the submission of the soul to the Highest is tested, and even in the eyes of frivolity life looks out from the scene of human struggle with the awful face of duty, and a religion shows itself which is something else than a private consolation.\textsuperscript{13}

In her reference to "the imagery of the Hebrew poet," George Eliot does not seem to have any single passage in mind, but rather combines characteristics repeatedly referred to in various descriptions of God's visitation of wrath upon mankind.\textsuperscript{14}

Briefer examples of Eliot's use of the Bible for an illustration to stress a point include her discussion in \textit{Middlemarch} of Rigg Featherstone's surprising disdain for his inherited estate of Stone Court: "Every one had expected that Mr. Rigg Featherstone would have clung to it as the Garden of Eden. . . . But how little we know what would make paradise for our neighbours!"\textsuperscript{15} Another biblical allusion that illuminates an authorial dictum appears in the following quotation, a comment reminiscent of Emerson's poem "Days": "The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only

\textsuperscript{13}Eliot, XVII, 375.

\textsuperscript{14}See, for example, Psalms 104:1-9, 32; II Samuel 22:7-18; Psalms 144:5-8; Isaiah 17:12-13.

\textsuperscript{15}Eliot, XIII, 367.
know them when they are gone."16 A third example is the reference to Hazael in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. Pausing to consider the grasping and ultimately ruinous ambition displayed by the lawyer Jermyn, Eliot concludes her discussion, makes her final point, by alluding to an Old Testament story of greed:

The Hazael's of our world who are pushed on quickly against their preconceived confidence in themselves to do doglike actions by the sudden suggestion of a wicked ambition are much fewer than those who are led on through the years by the gradual demands of a selfishness which has spread its fibres far and wide through the intricate vanities and sordid cares of an everyday existence.17

Like Jermyn, most men are gradually molded into attitudes

16 Ibid., II ("Janet's Repentance"), 63. The allusion is to Genesis 18, where the angels' visit to Abraham and Sarah is recorded. Compare also Hebrews 13:2--"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

17 Ibid., XI, 225. The account of Hazael's greed is found in II Kings 8:7-15. King Benhadad of Syria, seriously ill, sends Hazael to inquire of Elisha whether he will die or regain his health. "And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria. So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldst surely recover. And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead." (Verses 10-15)
and acts of selfishness and dishonor rather than being prompted to evil through "the sudden suggestion of a wicked ambition," like the Shakespearean Macbeth or the biblical Hazael. Here, through use of the biblical allusion, George Eliot asserts that man's response to any problem is based on ingrained attitude and habit—the everyday as determinant of the emergent.

In most cases George Eliot will first express her idea and then follow it with an allusion. The reverse approach, wherein the biblical framework is laid first and the thought of the author then constructed upon it, occurs at the beginning of Chapter XXXV in *Middlemarch*. The event of interest is the reading of Peter Featherstone's will, which gives rise to George Eliot's observation concerning "Christian Carnivora":

> When the animals entered the Ark in pairs, one may imagine that allied species made much private remark on each other, and were tempted to think that so many forms feeding on the same store of fodder were eminently superfluous, as tending to diminish the rations. (I fear the part played by the vultures on that occasion would be too painful for art to represent, those birds being disadvantageously naked about the gullet, and apparently without rites and ceremonies.)

The same sort of temptation befell the Christian Carnivora who formed Peter Featherstone's funeral procession; most of them having their minds bent on a limited store which each would have liked to get the most of.  

In these passages where biblical allusion strengthens or underscores the author's own observation, George Eliot

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makes effective use of varied references—Gaius, Armageddon, the "imagery of the Hebrew poet," Eden, Hazael, and Noah's Ark.

On a few occasions in Eliot's fiction, allusions are made to the Bible itself. Martin Poyser in Adam Bede, for instance, referring to a picture which supposedly represents French soldiers and their treatment at the hands of the English army, comments, "Why, that pictur was made afore Christmas, and yit it's come as true as th' Bible." More frequently, however, the aim of these allusions is to make gentle fun of a character's biblical ignorance, or ignorance in general. In Middlemarch, George Eliot relates that the mansion newly purchased by Edwin Larcher was "furnished indeed with such large framefuls of expensive flesh-painting in the dining-room, that Mrs. Larcher was nervous until reassured by finding the subjects to be Scriptural." The subjects may indeed have been scriptural, but one suspects on Mrs. Larcher's part the same gullibility as that displayed by Maggie Tulliver's uncle when he purchased "a print of Ulysses and Nausicaa, which Uncle Pullet had bought as a 'pretty Scripture thing'. . . ."

19 Ibid., III, 296.
20 Ibid., XIV, 101.
21 Ibid., V, 136.
Another reference to the Bible in the same light vein is George Eliot's observation in Middlemarch concerning the unpopular banker Bulstrode's subdued manner of speaking: "There seems to be no reason why a loud man should not be given to concealment of anything except his own voice, unless it can be shown that Holy Writ has placed the seat of candour in the lungs."22

Far more frequent, however, than humorous allusions to the Bible itself are allusions of a light or comic sort to biblical characters or events, especially to those of the Old Testament. Genesis, with its account of creation and man's Edenic existence followed by the fall, has always proved a favorite source for English authors, Milton's Paradise Lost being one outstanding example. George Eliot's treatments of Eden and related Genesis material are multifarious. Sprinkled among these uses are a handful of humorous touches. Uncle Glegg's harried study of the Genesis account of woman's creation has been noted. Also in The Mill on the Floss George Eliot alludes to "the old books, Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich" as "that wrinkled fruit of the tree of knowledge."23 In one of her earliest works, "Janet's Repentance," she describes with Chaucerian candor—realistically but with charitable tolerance—the extent of religious conversion among

22 Ibid., XII, 175.
23 Ibid., VI, 37.
the Milby villagers, noting that "the old Adam, with the pertinacity of middle age, continued to tell fibs behind the counter, notwithstanding the new Adam's addiction to Bible-reading and family prayers." 24

George Eliot's humorous allusions are not limited to Adam, Eve, and Eden. She records in *Felix Holt, the Radical* the following bit of dialogue:

"Never mind. It's mine into the bowels of the earth and up to the sky. I can build the Tower of Babel on it if I like--eh, Mr. Nolan?"

"A bad investment, my good sir," said Mr. Nolan, who enjoyed a certain flavour of infidelity in this smart reply, and laughed much at it in his inward way. 25

Light use is also made of Pharaoh, Moses, and the Jewish departure from Egypt as recorded in Exodus. In *Adam Bede*, Mrs. Poyser berates Squire Donnithorne's landlordly negligence in graphic terms:

See if he likes to live in a house wi' all the plagues o' Egypt in 't--wi' the cellar full o' water, and frogs and toads hoppin' up the steps by dozens--and the floors rotten, and the rats and mice gnawing every bit o' cheese, and runnin' over our heads as we lie i' bed till we expect 'em to eat us up alive--as it's a mercy they hanna eat the children long ago. 26

Mrs. Poyser's amusing references to the Bible, present throughout the novel, seem intended by George Eliot to offset Dinah's Evangelical sobriety and more somber use of the Bible.

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24Ibid., II, 111.

25Ibid., X, 308. The scattering of mankind from the Tower of Babel is recorded in Genesis 11.

26Ibid., IV, 83. The visitation of the ten plagues upon Pharaoh is recorded in Exodus 7-12.
In essence, Mrs. Poyser plays something of a comic Martha to Dinah's pensive Mary.

Other humorous Old Testament allusions, in addition to those drawn from Genesis and Exodus, include references to both prophetic and poetic writings. In "Janet's Repentance," the Evangelical Mr. Dunn is concerned that his religious fervor may have unfavorable effects on his draper's trade. His anxiety . . . was but slightly mitigated by the parallel his wife suggested between his own case and that of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, who were thrust into a burning fiery furnace. For, as he observed to her the next morning, with that perspicacity which belongs to the period of shaving, whereas their deliverance consisted in the fact that their linen and woolen goods were not consumed, his own deliverance lay in precisely the opposite result.27

Again, in the "Author's Introduction" to Felix Holt, the Radical, George Eliot describes her fictional coachman as one of prophetic appearance and utterance:

He now, as in a perpetual vision, saw the ruined country strewn with shattered limbs, and regarded Mr. Huskisson's death as a proof of God's anger against Stephenson. "Why, every inn on the road would be shut up!" and at that word the coachman looked before him with the blank gaze of one who had driven his coach to the outermost edge of the universe, and saw his leaders plunging into the abyss. Still he would soon relapse from the high prophetic strain to the familiar one of narrative.28

This comic prophet passing through the initial chapter of Felix Holt contrasts with steadfastly somber prophetic characters such as Savonarola in Romola and Mordecai in Daniel

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27Ibid., II, 107-8. The biblical story is found in Daniel 3:12-30.

28Ibid., X, 9.
Deronda. With these "prophets," as with Dinah and Mrs. Poyser, Eliot's serious uses of biblical phrase, quotation, and allusion are balanced by her humorous touches. Even the book of Job, for all its religious and dramatic intensity, is employed lightly as well as seriously. Serious uses of the book include a suggested parallel between the patient patriarch of the Bible and Caleb Garth of Middlemarch, as well as a parallel between their wives. 29 In a much lighter vein, she alludes in "Brother Jacob" to Job 41:1-2. There Job is asked, "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lewest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?" George Eliot responds with an indirect affirmation, noting the degree of control over whales, men, or whatever, which results: "We know how easily the great Leviathan may be led, when once there is a hook in his nose or a bridle in his jaws." 30

Less frequent than these many allusions to the Old Testament—to characters and events from Genesis and Exodus, to prophets, to poetic books—are the humorous allusions to the New Testament. Aside from notable exceptions such as Dinah Morris's sermon, based exclusively on quotations from the Gospels, George Eliot draws quotations, phrases, and

29 See Chapter IV, pp. 51-52, 65.
allusions--both for serious and for humorous use--more frequently from the Old Testament than from the New Testament. Among the few humorous touches drawn from the New Testament is her tongue-in-cheek allusion in *Felix Holt, the Radical*:

"The more unanswerable reasoners urged that Treby had prospered without baths, and it was yet to be seen how it would prosper with them; while a report that the proposed name for them was Bethesda Spa, threatened to give the whole affair a blasphemous aspect." 31 Another New Testament allusion, which begins with a humorous touch but shifts to more serious intent, is the following reference in *The Mill on the Floss*:

Maggie actually forgot that she had any special cause of sadness this morning, as she stood on a chair [in Luke the miller's house] to look at a remarkable series of pictures representing the Prodigal Son in the costume of Sir Charles Grandison, except that, as might have been expected from his defective moral character, he had not, like that accomplished hero, the taste and strength of mind to dispense with a wig. 32

The humor of the wig is displaced by Maggie's consideration of the Prodigal's "defective moral character" and the uneasy feeling that there is a parallel between the biblical son's behavior and her own conduct toward her mother and brother.

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31 Ibid., X, 64. The healing waters of the pool at Bethesda are referred to in John 5:2-4 (Later versions such as the Revised Standard omit verse 4): "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 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 whatsoever disease he had."

32 Ibid., V, 42.
Far more frequent than the use of biblical allusions in epigraphs, in description, in narration, or in creating a humorous effect is their use in characterization. At times, obviously, use for comic effect and for characterization become one. Perhaps the best example is George Eliot's presentation of Mrs. Holt in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. The garrulous old woman's primary topics of conversation are her patent medicines and her son, and she alludes to the Bible in discussing both. Early in the novel she complains, "And when everybody gets their due, and people's doings are spoke of on the housetops, as the Bible says they will be, it'll be known what I've gone through with those medicines."  

Much later, when Felix has been cast in jail, she is still complaining: "For it's not to be thought but what the great people could get him off if they would; and it's very hard with a King in the country and all the texts in Proverbs about the king's countenance, and Solomon and the live baby--" As with the fictional serious-comic contrasts already noted, Mrs. Holt's religious dimwittedness provides a comic counterpart to Silas Marner's tragically blighting...

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33 Ibid., X, 81. The "Bible says they will be" in Luke 12:3--"Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

34 Ibid., XI, 179. Mrs. Holt probably has in mind such "texts in Proverbs" as Proverbs 16:15--"In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain." The account of "Solomon and the live baby" is found in I Kings 3:16-28.
religious ignorance. Her Evangelical idiocy is harmless and entertaining, but Silas's limited religious vision and his wholehearted acceptance of sortilege lead to long years of sorrow and solitude.

A similar instance, wherein humor is combined with characterization, is the comment made by the cleric Farebrother in Middlemarch. Speaking to Lydgate, Farebrother says,

You don't know what it is to want spiritual tobacco—bad emendations of old texts, or small items about a variety of Aphis Brassicae, with the well-known signature of Philomicron, for the Twaddler's Magazine; or a learned treatise on the entomology of the Pentateuch, including all the insects not mentioned, but probably met with by the Israelites in their passage through the desert; with a monograph on the Ant, as treated by Solomon, showing the harmony of the Book of Proverbs with the results of modern research.35

Here the mildly humorous allusion to the Bible seems to be not so much for comic intent per se as for its underscoring of Farebrother's basic geniality. At the same time, the comment seriously suggests his problem of vocational maladjustment. Clergyman by virtue of a combination of uncontrollable circumstances, the mild-mannered minister is at heart very much the inquisitive scientist, as his remarks repeatedly intimate.

When using allusions for characterization, George Eliot sometimes employs them only once to suit a specific occasion or to stress a particular point; at other times, she repeats certain allusions or increases their frequency to convey basic

35Ibid., XII, 248-49.
character traits. In short, sometimes allusions are used for incidental characterization, sometimes for integral characterization.

The incidental allusions are by definition brief or passing, but often attest, through their appropriateness, to George Eliot's overall grasp of biblical detail and her ability to marshal her knowledge effectively in her fiction. Although no profound knowledge or astuteness is required to lightly allude to the young Job Tudge in *Felix Holt, the Radical* as a "patient man," or to the outsized Bill Powers in "Janet's Repentance" as "a plethoric Goliath," a close biblical familiarity seems apparent in Eliot's reference to Tom Tulliver and his loquacious companion Bob Jakin: "Tom, doubtful of his uncle's impression, began to wish he had not brought this singular Aaron for mouthpiece. . . ." Close acquaintance with the Bible is likewise demonstrated in the following allusion-commentary:

And if Solomon was as wise as he is reputed to be, I feel sure that when he compared a contentious woman to a continual dropping on a very rainy day, he had not a

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36 Ibid., X, 324. Binding up the child's finger, Felix Holt comments, "There, Job--thou patient man--sit still if thou wilt. . . ."

37 Ibid., II, 51. George Eliot goes on in the same sentence to say of Powers that he issued forth "like the enunciator of the ancient myth, [to] make the assemblage distinctly conscious of the common sentiment that had drawn them together."

38 Ibid., VI, 69. In Exodus 7:1, God designates Aaron as Moses' spokesman; Moses had earlier appealed to God, in Exodus 4:10, "I am not eloquent, . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."
vixen in his eye—a fury with long nails, acrid and selfish. Depend upon it, he meant a good creature, who had no joy but in the happiness of the loved ones whom she contributed to make uncomfortable, putting by all the tid-bits for them, and spending nothing on herself. Such a woman as Lisbeth [Bede], for example. . . .39

Perhaps even these less familiar references do not pass beyond the biblical knowledge of the average reader. But when Edgar Tryan responds to an invitation to eat with, "Not anything, my dear Mrs. Linnet, thank you. You forget what a Rechabite I am,"40 the allusion may send many curious readers to their concordances. Jeremiah 35:1-19 (the entire chapter) reveals that Rechabites were Old Testament ascetics who did not partake of wine. Since Mrs. Linnet's invitation had been to partake of wine, water, and biscuit, the appropriateness of the obscure allusion is evident.

With Edgar Tryan in "Janet's Repentance" one passes from the incidental allusion such as that applied to Lisbeth Bede or Bob Jakin to the integral biblical allusion, to the studied effort on George Eliot's part to use quotations, phrases, and allusions to contribute to and suggest a character interpretation in biblical terms.

To oversimplify somewhat, such allusions are used with two types of characters: first, the clerics such as Edgar

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39Ibid., III, 57-8. Proverbs 27:15—"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." See also Proverbs 19:13, "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping."
40Ibid., II, 49.
Tryan, Dinah Morris, Rufus Lyon, and Savonarola, whose vocations make such allusions automatically pertinent; second, characters such as Adam Bede, Felix Holt, Romola, Dorothea Brooke, and Daniel Deronda, whose actions and attitudes emphasize such essentially biblical themes as conversion, redemption, or evangelization.

Earliest in George Eliot's long line of clerical characters is Amos Barton, the befuddled but well-meaning minister of Shepperton in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," first of George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Time and again the author sketches in the details of Amos's portrait with apt allusions:

Dissent, he considered, would have its head bruised in Shepperton...41

The wisdom of the serpent, Mr. Barton considered, was one of his strong points.42

We read [in Joshua 6], indeed, that the walls of Jericho fell down before the sound of trumpets; but we nowhere hear that those trumpets were hoarse and feeble. Doubtless they were trumpets that gave forth clear ringing tones, and sent a mighty vibration through brick and mortar. But the oratory of the Rev. Amos resembled rather a Belgian railway horn, which shows praiseworthy intentions inadequately fulfilled.43

41Ibid., I, 21. The allusion is to Genesis 3:15, the cursing of the serpent for tempting Adam and Eve: "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

42Ibid. The allusion is to Jesus' exhortation to the apostles, Matthew 10:16—"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

43Ibid., P. 31.
This very morning, the first lesson [at the workhouse] was the twelfth chapter of Exodus, and Mr. Barton's exposition turned on unleavened bread. Nothing in the world more suited to the simple understanding than instruction through familiar types and symbols! But there is always this danger attending it, that the interest or comprehension of your hearers may stop short precisely at the point where your spiritual interpretation begins. And Mr. Barton this morning succeeded in carrying the pauper imagination to the dough-tub, but unfortunately was not able to carry it upwards from that well-known object to the unknown truths which it was intended to shadow forth.44

Largely through use of such allusions, George Eliot presents Amos Barton as a pathetically ineffective, semi-comical minister, a cleric comparable to the bumbling Mrs. Holt. Amos, the eager but oft-erring ecclesiastic, is given by George Eliot an angelic45 mate to ease his daily trials and tribulations.

Whereas passages used in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" underscore the quixotic nature of the protagonist, those appearing in "Janet's Repentance," another of the Scenes of Clerical Life, emphasize the apostolic fervor of the Evangelical Edgar Tryan. In commenting on Tryan's pastoral assistance to Janet Dempster,

44Ibid., pp. 35-36.

45Near the end of the tale, after Milly Barton's death, George Eliot uses a biblical allusion to express Amos's feeling for his wife: "Milly's memory hallowed her husband, as of old the place was hallowed on which an angel from God had alighted." Ibid., P. 106. The allusion is perhaps to Exodus 3:5; here Moses is spoken to as he approaches the burning bush: "And he ["the angel of the Lord"--verse 2] said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."
George Eliot refers to him as "the heaven-sent friend who had come to her like the angel in the prison, and loosed her bonds, and led her by the hand till she could look back on the dreadful doors that had once closed her in."\(^46\)

Closely akin to Tryan is Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*. Dinah is essentially the Evangelical preacher, the Christian bent above all else on proclamation of the gospel--through word and deed--to her fellow men. George Eliot selects allusions which emphasize Dinah's missionary spirit. Standing and preaching on the village green, Dinah alludes to the story of Jesus teaching the Samaritan woman at the well. When she first sees Parson Irwine, she thinks, "What a well-favoured countenance! Oh that the good seed might fall on that soil, for it would surely flourish."\(^47\) Shortly after, she explains to the churchman her compulsion to preach and defends her ministry: "I think, sir, when God makes His presence felt through us, we are like the burning bush: Moses never took any heed what sort of bush it was--he only saw the brightness

\(^46\) *Ibid.*, II, 245. The allusion seems to be to Acts 12: 1-11. Peter is freed from prison at night by "the angel of the Lord" (verse 7). Two similar instances are found in Acts 5:17-20 and Acts 16:23-26. In the former account, the apostles are miraculously freed from prison; in the latter, Paul and Silas are freed by "a great earthquake" (verse 26) from a Philippian prison and subsequently convert the jailer to Christianity.

\(^47\) *Ibid.*, III, 124. The allusion is to Christ's parable of the sower and the seed; see Matthew 13:3-9, Mark 4:3-8, Luke 8:4-8.
As with Irwine, so in her relationship with other characters Dinah is characterized in part through biblical allusions. She seeks to dispel the crotchety, grieving Lisbeth Bede's hostility by citing a biblical parallel:

If you had a table spread for a feast, and was making merry with your friends, you would think it was kind to let me come and sit down and rejoice with you, because you'd think I should like to share those good things; but I should like better to share in your trouble and your labour, and it would seem harder to me if you denied me that. You won't send me away?

This penchant of Dinah's for sacrifice, for sustaining others in time of hardship, earns for her an affectionate reprimand from her Aunt Poyser.

"I never saw the like to you, Dinah," Mrs. Poyser was saying, "when you've once took anything into your head: there's no more moving you than the rooted tree. You may say what you like, but I don't believe that's religion; for what's the Sermon on the Mount about, as you're so fond o' reading to the boys, but doing what other folks 'ud have you do? But if it was anything unreasonable they wanted you to do, like taking your cloak off and giving it to 'em, or letting 'em slap you i' the face, I dare say you'd be ready enough: it's only when one 'ud have you do what's plain common sense and good for yourself, as you're obstinate th' other way."

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48 Ibid., p. 129. The account of Moses and the burning bush is found in Exodus 3.

49 Dinah's allusion to the feast seems to be a reference to Christ's parable of the great supper, Luke 14:16-24. The idea she expresses is found in such passages as Romans 12:15--"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

50 Eliot, IV, 268. The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7.
Dinah's biblical allusions, together with those of others, contribute significantly to her characterization.

Eliot uses the same technique in fashioning that eccentric ecclesiastic Rufus Lyon in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. One of Lyon's most delightful traits is in his citing of a biblical parallel for almost everything that he either approves or disapproves. A notable example of this clerical quirk is in his first encounter with the gruff young idealist Felix Holt. During their conversation, Lyon repeatedly alludes to the Bible in countering the candid comments of the novel's protagonist. When Felix says that he means to stick to the class to which he belongs, to "people who don't follow the fashions,"\(^5\) Rufus responds, "Well, well . . . , it is true that St. Paul exercised the trade of tent-making, though he was learned in all the wisdom of the Rabbis."\(^5\) Lyon qualifies his approval somewhat by noting that "The ring and the robe of Joseph were no objects for a good man's ambition, but they were the signs of that credit which he won by his divinely-inspired skill, and which enabled him to act as a savior to his brethren."\(^5\) When the conversation turns to

\(^5\)Ibid., X, 90.

\(^5\)Ibid. The allusion is to Acts 18:3--"And because he [Paul] was of the same craft, he abode with them [Aquila and Priscilla], and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 91. The allusion is to Genesis 41:42-43--"And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt."
the question of church and state, the isolation or interrelatedness of politics and religion, Lyon stoutly—and of course biblically—defends his position:

I have had much puerile blame cast upon me because I have uttered such names as Brougham and Wellington in the pulpit. Why not Wellington as well as Rabshakeh? Why not Brougham as well as Balaam? Does God know less of men than He did in the days of Hezekiah and Moses?—is His arm shortened, and is the world become too wide for His providence?  

The encounter gives the recklessly forthright Felix ample opportunity to exercise his blunt bareness of expression. Rather than being offended, Rufus Lyon commends such candor: "It is good that you should use plainness of speech, and I am not of those who would enforce a submissive silence on the young, that they themselves, being elders, may be heard at large; for Elihu was the youngest of Job's friends, yet there was a wise rebuke in his words; and the aged Eli was taught by a revelation to the boy Samuel." Shortly afterward, when Felix chooses to speak ambiguously rather than straightforwardly, the puzzled minister again reacts by citing

54 Ibid., p. 92. Rabshakeh was the spokesman sent by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, to speak to Hezekiah about surrender; the account is found both in II Kings 18 and Isaiah 36. The story of Balaam is recorded in Numbers 22-24. Lyon's closing query concerning God's arm being shortened is probably an allusion to Isaiah 59:1—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. . . ."

55 Ibid., p. 93. Elihu's words of reproof to Job are found in Job 32-37. The revelation to Samuel is found in I Samuel 3. Much later in the novel, Rufus tempers his approval somewhat: "and I would caution my young friend against a too great hastiness of words and action. David's cause against Saul was a righteous one; nevertheless not all who clave unto David were righteous men." Ibid., p. 264.
biblical precedent or parallel: "I trust you are putting a riddle to me, young man, even as Samson did to his companions." The minister's alluding to biblical parallels is a basic trait, one which merits praise for George Eliot both in its effectiveness and in her own deftness at supplying such allusions. Rufus Lyon both demonstrates his own outlook and suggests—by comparing Felix with such noteworthy figures from Scripture as the Apostle Paul, Joseph, Elihu, Samuel, David, and Samson—a series of significant character parallels.

In Romola, the allusions to the Florentine priest Savonarola are largely prophetic or messianic. For instance, George Eliot relates that "sometimes he saw himself taking a glorious part in that revolt [against ecclesiastical corruption], sending forth a voice that would be heard through all Christendom, and making the dead body of the church tremble into new life, as the body of Lazarus trembled when the Divine voice pierced the sepulchre. . . ." Describing Savonarola as he speaks, George Eliot stresses this same prophetic zeal: "Fra Girolamo did not move, except with the ordinary action accompanying speech. The speech was bold and firm, perhaps somewhat ironically remonstrant, like that of

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56 Ibid., p. 104. Samson's riddle is recorded in Judges 14.
57 Ibid., IX, 223. The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead is set forth in John 11.
Elijah to the priests of Baal, demanding the cessation of these trivial delays."58

George Eliot again relieves the religious intensity of Savonarola with humor, just as the serious biblical proclamations of Rufus Lyon are offset by the hilarious biblical misapplications of Mrs. Holt in *Felix Holt, the Radical*, just as the sermonizing of Dinah Morris finds its comic counterpart in the scriptural quips of Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede*. Savonarola—prophet, priest, and oracle—has as comic counterpart in *Romola* the secular oracle Nello the Barber, who himself frequently refers to the Bible. Some of his comments are general ones, such as the following: "But if you talk of portents, what portent can be greater than a pious notary? Balaam's ass was nothing to it."59 Others are aimed specifically at Savonarola himself, thereby providing counter-commentary to the biblical prophesyings of the Dominican. Using a messianic allusion of the same type Savonarola himself uses, Nello slightly twists the emphasis to provide negative commentary on the character and reputation of the priest: "And according to him [Fra Menico], your Fra Girolamo, with his visions and interpretations, is running after the wind of Mongibello, and those who follow him are like to have the fate of certain swine that ran

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58Ibid., pp. 361-362. Elijah's confrontation with the priests of Baal is found in I Kings 18.

59Ibid., p. 27. The appearance of the angel first to Balaam's ass, then to Balaam himself, is recorded in Numbers 22.
headlong into the sea—or some hotter place." Here the association is not that of Savonarola with Christ, the healer of the Gadarene demoniacs, but with the demon-infested swine.

In Romola, George Eliot's aim is to paint a prophetic portrait; the aim in Middlemarch with the scholarly Casaubon is to emphasize his muddling futility and the inefficacy of his "Key to all Mythologies." In keeping with Casaubon's supposed scholarship and detailed research, the barbs George Eliot aims at him take the form of satiric references to mythology or the Bible. On one occasion, for instance, George Eliot writes that "after politely welcoming Mrs. Cadwallader" Casaubon "had slipped again into the library to chew a cud of erudite mistake about Cush and Mizraim."  

Biblical allusions used to characterize ecclesiastics, with their biblical training and religious vocation, seem in themselves an almost automatic device. Even so, the degree and variety of the allusions merits attention and praise. Allusions to such figures as Hazael, Rechabites, Rabshakeh, and Cush and Mizraim suggest a biblical depth on George Eliot's part perhaps surpassing that of other major Victorian novelists. In addition, her ability to create varied allusions pertinent to the messianic Edgar Tryan, the

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60 Ibid., p. 29. The allusion is to the headlong rush of the Gadarene swine into the sea (Matthew 8 and Mark 5).

61 Ibid., XIII, 79. Cush and Mizraim are two of the sons of Ham listed in Genesis 10:6.
prophetic Savonarola, and the desiccated researcher Casaubon suggests a complete command of her source and an ability to judiciously select telling references.

Although primarily used with ecclesiastics, characterization by means of allusion is also an important ingredient in the creation of central figures, both male and female.

Dorothea Brooke is presented at the beginning of Middlemarch as quite the religious young woman, sternly ascetic and humanitarian. Her Christian outlook is stressed by Eliot through Dorothea's allusions to the New Testament. For instance, she comments on her mother's jewels: "It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of Saint John. They look like fragments from heaven." Later, defending her pet project of building cottages for the Tipton tenants, Dorothea satirically remarks, "I think, instead of Lazarus at the gate, we should put the pigsty cottages outside the park-gate." Throughout the novel, George Eliot continues to make biblical allusions. After her marriage to Casaubon, Dorothea is forced to play the penitent prodigal: "But you do forgive me?" said Dorothea, with a quick sob. In her need for some manifestation of feeling she was ready to exaggerate her own

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62 Ibid., XII, 14.

63 Ibid., p. 41. The account of Lazarus and the rich man is found in Luke 16:19-31.
fault. Would not love see returning penitence afar off, and 
fall on its neck and kiss it?"64 This religious devotion or 
dedication which marks her relationship with her older hus-
band is carried forward to her relationship with the younger 
Ladislaw in the latter part of the novel. At one point she 
thinks Ladislaw has deserted her in favor of Rosamond Lyd-
gate. George Eliot again conveys Dorothea's feeling through 
allusion: "There were two images--two living forms that tore 
her heart in two, as if it had been the heart of a mother 
who seems to see her child divided by the sword, and presses 
one bleeding half to her breast while her gaze goes forth in 
agonies towards the half which is carried away by the lying 
woman that has never known the mother's pang."65 Here the 
figure seems inept, since Ladislaw is pictured as an infant 
child. Elsewhere, however, the allusions used to describe 
the growing love between Ladislaw and Dorothea are more effec-
tive. Rosamond Lydgate notes that Ladislaw is a "devout 
worshipper"66 of Dorothea, and Ladislaw himself exclaims, 
"What I care more for than I can ever care for anything else

64Ibid., p. 304. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, 
Luke 15:11-32, the son's return and the father's initial re-
action are recorded in verse 20: "And he arose, and came to 
his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father 
saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, 
and kissed him."

65Ibid., XIV, 373. The "lying woman" is Rosamond Lydgate, 
the "child divided" is Will Ladislaw. The allusion is to the 
dispute between two harlots which Solomon resolved by threat-
ening to divide the child, I Kings 3:16-28.

is absolutely forbidden to me--I don't mean merely by being out of my reach, but forbidden me, even if it were within my reach, by my own pride and honour--by everything I respect myself for. Of course I shall go on living as a man might do who had seen heaven in a trance." The allusion seems to be to the Apostle Paul's comment in II Corinthians 12:2-4:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

This presentation of Dorothea largely in biblical terms of fervent humanitarian, prodigal, and worshipped object is one of many instances in which George Eliot creates a certain biblical aura about a heroine by means of allusions.

Another example is Janet Dempster. She is presented as the straying sheep of Christ's parable: "Mrs. Raynor [Janet's mother] had been reading about the lost sheep, and the joy there is in heaven over the sinner that repenteth. Surely the eternal love she believed in through all the sadness of her lot, would not leave her child to wander farther and farther into the wilderness till there was no turning. . . ." The "redeemer" who reclaims her is Edgar Tryan.

67 Ibid., XIV, 148.
The same technique is used much later in *Daniel Deronda* when Mirah Lapidoth recounts the unsavory nature of her earlier life to Deronda in terms of persecution in a fiery furnace.\(^6^9\) The description is reminiscent of the biblical furnace in the Book of--naturally--Daniel. Moreover, Mrs. Meyrick observes of Mirah that she "is anxious not to eat the bread of idleness, but to work, like my girls."\(^7^0\) The "bread of idleness" phrase is taken from Proverbs 31:27—the same chapter describing the virtuous Jewish woman that Mordecai quotes in praise of his mother. This depiction of the young Jewess through allusions to the Old Testament is the same specialized treatment that George Eliot accords her clergymen, selecting her allusions to create the type of character intended.

Maggie Tulliver, although she eventually blossoms into feminine sainthood through the influence of *The Imitation of Christ* and her own experience, begins as something less than saintly. As a child, Maggie is given to occasional devilish responses to crises in her life, as is exemplified by the treatment afforded her doll: "Three nails driven into the head commemorated as many crises in Maggie's nine years of

\(^{6^9}\) Mirah tells Deronda that her life "was no better than a fiery furnace" (Ibid., XV, 310); and again, "What could I do? This life seemed to be closing in upon me with a wall of fire--everywhere there was scorching that made me shrink" (Ibid., p. 317).

\(^{7^0}\) Ibid., XVI, 123.
earthly struggle; that luxury of vengeance having been suggested to her by the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old Bible." 71 This demonic impulse which alternates with the angelic in young Maggie is elsewhere referred to or described with one of George Eliot's favorite allusions: "Poor Maggie sat down again, with the music all chased out of her soul, and the seven small demons in again." 72 The allusion is repeated when Eliot writes, "To account for this unprecedented apparition in Aunt Pullet's parlour, we must return to the moment when the three children went to play out of doors, and the small demons who had taken possession of Maggie's soul at an early period of the day had returned in all the greater force after a temporary absence." 73

Maggie Tulliver begins demonically but alters her life in response to The Imitation of Christ; Gwendolen Harleth likewise begins as a rebel but becomes a devout disciple of Daniel Deronda. Gwendolen's early self-centeredness is stressed through an Old Testament allusion: "Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat, and in a general decampment was to have

71Ibid., V, 37. The allusion is to Judges 4:21.
73Ibid., p. 146.
her silver fork kept out of the baggage." Later, Gwendolen undergoes the same sort of conversion experienced by Janet Dempster, Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and other Eliot heroines.

One figure who stands apart in defying classification with other Eliot women is Lady Transome in Felix Holt, the Radical. Here there is no dramatic conversion, only a stoic endurance of the bitter harvest reaped from former actions. She has borne a child by a man other than her husband, and that son has relegated her to minor status in his life. The bitter taste of her marriage to an inferior man, her infidelity, her waning influence over her former lover and over her son is followed by the hateful dregs of public discovery of her secret. The portrayal of this proud but unhappy woman is in part achieved by use of allusions. George Eliot observes, for instance, that "She had never seen behind the canvas with which her life was hung. In the dim background there was the burning mount and the tables of the law; in the foreground there was Lady Debarry privately gossiping

74 Ibid., XV, 53. The allusion is to Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41; Joseph interprets the dream beginning in verse 25. The "silver fork" suggests the "silver cup" of Joseph which was placed in his brother Benjamin's sack, Genesis 44:2.

75 The ironic parallel drawn by Eliot between this mother and the mother of Christ was noted in Chapter V, p. 78.
about her and Lady Wyvern finally deciding not to send her invitations to dinner. 76 Although the actions of Mrs. Transome's neighbors gall her aristocratic pride, she stoically withstands social ostracization. When Esther Lyon visits her for a time, Mrs. Transome acted the part of hostess as she performed her toilet and went on with her embroidery: these things were to be done whether one were happy or miserable. Even the patriarch Job, if he had been a gentleman of the modern West, would have avoided picturesque disorder and poetical laments; and the friends who called on him, though not less disposed than Bildad the Shuhite to hint that their unfortunate friend was in the wrong, would have sat on chairs and held their hats in their hands. The harder problems of our life have changed less than our manners; we wrestle with the old sorrows, but more decorously. 77

The modern decorum concealing these old sorrows does not, however, prevent Esther from detecting Mrs. Transome's concealed sorrow. George Eliot vividly conveys the internal turmoil which belies the placid environment at Transome Court and the gradual, involuntary revelation of that concealed conflict by the proud woman:

The sense that Mrs. Transome was unhappy affected Esther more and more deeply as the growing familiarity which relaxed the efforts of the hostess revealed more and more the threadbare tissue of this majestic lady's life. Even the flowers and the pure sunshine and the sweet waters of Paradise would have been spoiled for a

76Ibid., XI, 202. The reference to the "burning mount and the tables of the law" is an allusion to Moses' reception of the ten commandments on Mount Sinai; see Exodus 24:12-18. The significance perhaps lies in Mrs. Transome's transgression of the seventh commandment.

77Ibid., p. 203. Bildad's initial reproach of Job is in Job 8.
young heart, if the bowered walks had been haunted by an Eve gone grey with bitter memories of an Adam who had complained, "The woman . . . she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." 

This allusion aptly summarizes Mrs. Transome's experience and outlook, and deftly underscores the theme of paradise lost. George Eliot often illustrates in her fiction the idea that man's transgressions result in lifelong suffering for himself and others. Nowhere in her novels is the theme treated more effectively than with this "Eve gone grey with bitter memories."

Many of George Eliot's male characters, as well as her women, owe their effectiveness at least partly to the author's use of the Bible. Adam Bede, Felix Holt, and Daniel Deronda are three outstanding examples.

The name Adam itself, when linked with Seth in the opening chapter of Adam Bede, strongly suggests a conscious authorial analogy with the opening chapters of the Old Testament. The fact that Adam is a carpenter further suggests analogy with that new Adam who is the subject of the beginning books of the New Testament. The seed of suggestion thus planted at the novel's beginning is cultivated periodically throughout Adam Bede. In his relationship with Hetty, Adam is compared by Seth to Jacob:

It's a deep mystery--the way the heart of man turns to one woman out of all the rest he's seen i' the world,

78 Ibid., pp. 318-19. The ellipsis is that of George Eliot, who is quoting Genesis 3:12.
and makes it easier for him to work seven year for her, like Jacob did for Rachel, sooner than have any other woman for th' asking. I often think of them words, "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her." 79

A second slight suggestion of the Jacob-Rachael parallel comes much later in the novel, when the piece for which Miss Lyddy has Adam build a frame is described as "very fine needlework, Jacob and Rachel a-kissing one another among the sheep, like a picture..." 80 Another example of biblical material contributing to the characterization of Adam and to the thematic development of the novel appears in Chapter LIV. George Eliot concludes a brief treatise on Adam's sorrow with this comment:

It is not ignoble to feel that the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain: surely it is not possible to feel otherwise, any more than it would be possible for a man with cataract to regret the painful process by which his dim blurred sight of men as trees walking had been exchanged for clear outline and effulgent day. 81

As Bernard Paris has pointed out, "George Eliot's analogy connects Adam's moral development with a clarification of vision. The analogy refers to the story of Jesus curing the blind man and suggests... the religious nature (in a Feuerbachian


80 Ibid., pp. 351-52.

81 Ibid., IV, 348. The healing of the blind man by Christ is recorded in Mark 8:22-26 (verse 24: "And he looked up, and said, 'I see men as trees, walking.'"
sense, of course) of Adam's experience." What Paris sees as "Feuerbachian, of course" is secondarily Feuerbachian, primarily biblical. While the treatment of the material may be in the Feuerbachian vein of the religiously symbolic and psychological, the material itself is ultimately biblical, and its use springs more from George Eliot's study of the Bible than from her study of German theology. Through skillful use of allusions, George Eliot links Adam with the patriarch Jacob, with the Adam of Genesis, and with the new Adam of the Gospels--Jesus Christ. She also conveys the significance of sorrow and its regenerative effect upon Adam by alluding to the biblical miracle whereby a blind man came to see.

In Felix Holt, the Radical Felix is pictured as something of a secular apostle, and the parallels drawn by Rufus Lyon between Felix and various biblical figures definitely further that emphasis. In addition, George Eliot describes Felix's chief antagonist, Harold Transome, as a fictional antichrist. Transome is said to impress Lyddy, Rufus Lyon's servant, as a "fine gentleman . . . whose thick topknot of wavy hair, sparkling ring, dark complexion, and general air of worldly exaltation unconnected with chapel, were painfully

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suggestive . . . of Herod, Pontius Pilate, or the much-quoted Gallic." The association of Transome with the New Testament opponents of Christ and Christianity strengthens the presentation of Felix as a secular version of Christ or Paul.

In *Daniel Deronda*, the Zionist theme is stressed through use of Old Testament allusions in epigraphs and in describing Gwendolen Harleth's haughtiness. Additional allusions from the Old Testament contribute to the creation of various male figures as well, while further emphasizing Zionism at the same time. Hans Meyrick, for instance, describes to Deronda the ailing Mordecai's reaction to his newly-found sister: "It is pretty, though, to see the change in him if Mirah happens to come in. He turns child suddenly--his age usually strikes one as being like the Israelitish garments in the desert, perhaps near forty, yet with an air of recent production."

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83 Eliot, XI, 180. Herod "slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" in an attempt to slay the Christ child, Matthew 2:16; Pontius Pilate, although personally unable to find fault with Christ's behavior, was "willing to content the people, [and] released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified," Mark 15:15; Gallio, "deputy of Achaia," refuses in Acts 18:12-17 to intervene on Paul's behalf in his persecution by the Jews because he "cared for none of these things."

84 Ibid., XVII, 114. See Deuteronomy 8:4 and 29:5. On other occasions, Hans's comic allusions are drawn from the New Testament. He writes to Daniel Deronda concerning a man who told him how bad his painting was, "Such was my ingratitude and my readiness at composition, that even while he was speaking I inwardly sketched a Last Judgement with that candid friend's physiognomy on my left" (Ibid., p. 116). Compare Matthew 25:31-46.
This comment by Hans, along with similar remarks of others, closely links the mystic Mordecai with the prophets of the Old Testament. Deronda, in the early stages of his acquaintance with the consumptive scholar, sees Mordecai as lacking in those traits ascribed to the Jewish heroes of old; he thinks of him as "that modern Ezra, who was certainly not a leader among his people." Mordecai himself strengthens this Old Testament association. When describing his club to Deronda he says, "It is called 'The Philosophers.' They are few--like the cedars of Lebanon--poor men given to thought."

Even more than with the prophetic Mordecai, George Eliot goes to great lengths to draw an analogy between Daniel Deronda and biblical deliverers. Deronda is pictured in his relationship with Mordecai as an Old Testament messiah; in his master-disciple relationship with Gwendolen, he is treated more as the New Testament messiah, Christ. Biblical allusion, though a minor technique in this presentation, on at least one occasion conveys the intended association. When discussing Deronda's failure to apply himself diligently to any one vocational pursuit, George Eliot writes, "He had not set about one function in particular with zeal and steadiness. Not an admirable experience, to be proposed as an

85 Ibid., XVI, 157.
86 Ibid., p. 354. The cedars of Lebanon are referred to in such Old Testament passages as Judges 9:15, Psalms 104:16, Isaiah 2:13, Isaiah 14:8, and Ezekiel 27:5.
ideal; but a form of struggle before break of day which some young men since the patriarch have had to pass through with more or less of bruising if not laming."^87

In summary, George Eliot uses biblical allusions as she uses biblical quotations and paraphrases. She occasionally alludes to the Bible itself, but much more often alludes to specific figures or passages. These allusions appear in chapter epigraphs, especially in the Zionist novel *Daniel Deronda*; they are used effectively but rather infrequently in narration, description, and authorial commentary; they are employed to create comic effect; and they are frequently used as a method of characterization, both with clerical and nonclerical characters.

In using allusions in these various ways, George Eliot exhibits a fondness for certain biblical characters and situations. She more than once reverts to the same allusion, so much so in some instances that the passages seem quite obviously among her favorites. She seems particularly attracted to the book of Genesis, especially the first few chapters concerned with the Garden of Eden; with Old Testament poetic books such as Job; with Old Testament characters such as the all-wise Solomon; and with certain parables of Christ—the account of the unclean spirit's departure and return, the

^87Ibid., p. 129. The patriarch is Jacob, and the "struggle before break of day" is his encounter with an angel as recorded in Genesis 32:24-32.
lessons involving sowing and reaping, and the tale of the prodigal son. Many of the passages drawn from these favorite sources have already been noted in the course of this chapter; others not yet cited provide even further proof of their preeminence in George Eliot's mind.

Just as Maggie Tulliver's Uncle Glegg read repeatedly the first chapters of Genesis, so apparently did George Eliot, and that reading reflects itself in her choice of allusions. References to paradise or Eden itself include, in addition to that of Uncle Glegg's reading, allusions in both "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and The Mill on the Floss to the fruit of the tree of knowledge: in the former, the allusion is to "that dangerous fruit of the tree of knowledge--innovation, which is well known to open the eyes, even in an uncomfor-
able manner"; in the latter, the reference is to the works which Tom Tulliver is forced to study, "the old books, Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich--that wrinkled fruit of the tree of know-
ledge. . . ." The allusions to paradise itself include the comment in Middlemarch concerning Rigg Featherstone's surprising lack of interest in Stone Court, which was not his paradise, although it would have been that of most people in the community. A more extended and more effective allusion is that referring to Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt, the Radical as an "Eve gone grey with bitter memories."

88Ibid., I, 128. 89Ibid., VI, 37.
Another of George Eliot's repeated borrowings from the Old Testament, one not previously noted, is the allusion to "bitter bread" or "bitter herbs." In Exodus 12, when the Passover is instituted, one stipulation is that the Jews "shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." Alluding—perhaps unwittingly—to this biblical feast, Martin Poyser toasts young Arthur Donnithorne at his birthday feast: "You speak fair an' y' act fair, an' we're joyful when we look forward to your being our landlord, for we b'lieve you mean to do right by everybody, an' 'ull make no man's bread bitter to him if you can help it." The juxtaposition of the bitter bread of the Passover Feast with the supposedly sweet bread of the birthday feast, bread which has in reality already been made bitter by Arthur's involvement with Poyser's niece Hetty, is a deft touch of irony. George Eliot heightens the irony when Martin Poyser says to his niece, "It'll serve you to talk on, Hetty, when you're an old woman—how you danced wi' th' young Squire the day he come o' age." Late in the novel, after the death of Hetty's infant and her trial, Martin Poyser laments, "She's made our bread bitter to us for all our lives to come..."

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90 Exodus 12:8; see also Numbers 9:11.  
91 Eliot, III, 382.  
92 Ibid., p. 419  
93 Ibid., IV, 181.
One later instance of this same allusion is in Daniel Deronda, when Eliot writes of Gwendolen Harleth and marriage, "Of course marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs—a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead."94

George Eliot also makes repeated use of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. She seems especially fond of using Job and Solomon as illustrations. Job appears in Felix Holt's reference to the child Job Tudge as a "patient man," as well as in the fuller comparison of Job's sorrows to the sorrows of Mrs. Transome. In earlier chapters, there were noted the quotations from Job with reference both to Caleb Garth and to his wife in Middlemarch.95 Solomon is equally represented: there is the comment concerning Dorothea and Rosamond as the two mothers with the severed child, there is the paralleling of Solomon's contentious woman with Lisbeth Bade, there is Mrs. Holt's reference to Solomon and the live baby, and there is George Eliot's own contribution to the lore of the Jewish king: "Solomon's Proverbs, I think, have omitted to say, that as the sore palate findeth grit, so an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendoes."96

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94 Ibid., XV, 50.  
95 See pp. 51-52, 65.  
96 Eliot, XIII, 42.
Turning from the Old Testament to the New, one finds what is perhaps George Eliot's most notable biblical allusion, notable in frequency, in variety, and in effectiveness. This is the reference to Christ's parable concerning the departure and return of the unclean spirit as found in Matthew 12:43-45:

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.97

The account of the departure and re-entry of evil spirits into man seems to have made a singular impression upon George Eliot, so much so that she employs it repeatedly, in various ways, in her fiction. The first appearance of the allusion, already noted, is in The Mill on the Floss where young Maggie Tulliver is dispossessed and then repossessed by the demonic spirits which prompt her to violent outbursts. In Silas Marner, George Eliot again employs the passage, this time to describe the mentally troubled Godfrey Cass: "Godfrey Cass was fast becoming a bitter man, visited by cruel wishes, that seemed to enter, and depart, and enter again, like demons who had found in him a ready-garnished home."98

98 Eliot, VII, 46.
"cruel wishes" which enter and leave are the intermittent desires for the death of his wife Molly, whom he has secretly married and wishes to be rid of. Another example is found in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. Here the allusion is a passing one, uttered by Felix himself: speaking of the possibility of drunken men causing trouble on election day, he says, "There's a great number of heavy fellows in the town. If they go and drink more, the last end may be worse than the first."\(^{99}\) Here the emphasis is not so much on the demonic urges which characterize Maggie Tulliver and Godfrey Cass as on Felix's reiteration of the words of Christ. The comment by Felix furthers Eliot's purpose of presenting him as secular counterpart to biblical characters. The final allusion to this passage is in *Middlemarch*, in George Eliot's analysis of the fate of the disillusioned physician Lydgate and other dispirited men of former aspiration like him:

> The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; for perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly.\(^{100}\)

These various uses of a single passage—for delineation of a mental state in a girl of strong spirits and in a man of troubled conscience, for drawing a parallel between biblical

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\(^{99}\)Ibid., XI, 105.  
\(^{100}\)Ibid., XII, 207.
and fictional speakers, and for illustration of how pathetically commonplace a man may become in contrast to the fiery zealot he was as a younger man—demonstrate decisively how the biblical allusion, like the biblical quotation and the biblical phrase, is used with ease and effectiveness by George Eliot to suit her purpose of the moment and to enhance her fiction.
CHAPTER VII

BIBLICAL SYMBOLISM IN ELIOT'S FICTION

The picture of Mary Ann Evans surrounded by artistic representations of Christ and sitting at her desk translating Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* is a familiar one in Victorian literary and theological history: "She had a cast about 20 inches high of Thorwaldsen's *Risen Christ* standing in her study, and on the wall an engraving of Delaroche's *Christ*, which she had once thought of using for a frontispiece."¹ As Martin Svaglic has observed, "There is hardly a more graphic symbol [of the spiritual history of the nineteenth century] than the image of this intensely serious young intellectual lifting her eyes in sorrow from her careful translation of Strauss's creed-wrecking *Leben Jesu* and fixing them intently on the crucifix she kept before her."² The scene fitly represents the earnestness of an age which with one hand clung tenaciously to old ways and ideas and with the other grasped at scientific and theological innovation and discovery.

George Eliot's habit of translating with the crucifix literally before her seems, in a figurative sense, to have


carried over to her writing of fiction, perhaps especially in her use of symbols. So frequently are her symbols biblical in origin, so frequently does the Christian cross itself appear, that one imagines George Eliot doing as Mary Ann Evans had done, "lifting her eyes . . . and fixing them intently on the crucifix." The purpose of this chapter is to identify these biblical symbols, demonstrate their nature and frequency, and ascertain their artistic uses.

An essential preliminary is a basic definition of "symbolism." The definition assumed will be that of Peter Garrett: "'Symbolism' . . . means not a theoretical outlook but the use of symbols, which, as they appear in the novel, I take to be images, objects, events, or complexes of these which are both literal and suggestive of further, usually more abstract, meaning." Although Garrett's definition is minimal, more elaborate definitions often obstruct or impede rather than assist. As W. J. Harvey observes,

Such definitions generally involve long and rather arid stretches of theoretical criticism which often lead us away from whatever particular work we are discussing. Recurrent images may cumulatively attach a symbolic significance to the literal source of those images; thus we should be justified in talking about river-symbolism in The Mill on the Floss. But a symbol does not need this imagistic backing; a scene, character or incident may become symbolic simply by the author's treatment of it or by its place in the context of the total work. As such it may be local or it may be recurrent, pervasive and even basic to the meaning of the novel. Casaubon's

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The house in Middlemarch is a recurrent symbol, the river in The Mill on the Floss is pervasive, the gold in Silas Marner is basic. . . 4

The examples which Harvey cites are all objects; but, as Garrett and Harvey both note, and as George Eliot's novels demonstrate, characters, actions, and situations may likewise function symbolically.

George Eliot's fiction is not, however, heavily laden with symbols. They are present in all her novels, but not so dominant as to make of her work the type of suggestive, ambiguous, multilevel allegory found in the writings of such nineteenth-century authors as Melville and Hawthorne and in such twentieth-century writers as Joyce and Kafka. Her novels are, as Calvin Bedient notes, only "moderately . . . self-conscious and aesthetically intricate." 5 The reason for the subordination of symbols in Eliot's fiction has been pointed out both by Peter Garrett and by Jerome Thale. The former rightly remarks that

This subordination of symbolism is required by the fundamental moral purpose underlying George Eliot’s realism, a purpose which is also served by her use of the omniscient narrator and her conceptual framework. The essentially clear and authoritative terms in which meaning is framed and the open channel which the narrator’s commentary provides for directly conveying this meaning reduce the importance of the indirect, suggestive techniques of symbolism, again directing the primary


emphasis toward the realistic human and social drama.6

Garrett's evaluation is reinforced by Thale, who observes that Eliot's attempt to utilize in fiction the resources of poetry never leads to the abandonment of her basic method of full presentation. She was unwilling to dissolve the realism of her kind of novel to make it reach beyond an image of the real world. However strong her symbolic and imagistic tendencies, they, like everything else in her art, subserved a vision whose total effort was towards balance and centrality and whose method demanded a full and immediate contact with the presented world.7

It is, then, George Eliot's predominant realism and didacticism which relegate symbolism to secondary status. When Eliot does employ symbols, as she herself remarks in another context, the purpose is that of "instruction through familiar types and symbols."8

Domination of the symbolic by the didactic and realistic is, fittingly enough, characteristic of the Bible itself. According to James Brown,

In the sacred writings imagery is not simply a literary device employed for its own sake, nor a mere overflow of an abounding vitality and of a teeming imagination. Even when not consciously didactic and expository of religious ideals it is the expression of an emotion

6Garrett, p. 42. He goes on to say (p. 66) that "Symbolism thus remains a reinforcement, though a highly powerful one, as it always does in the successful achievement of George Eliot's realism. Scenes remain primarily the arena of a realistic human, not a symbolic, drama."


whose origin is religious. Hebrew nature-poetry, in particular, is not the outcome of absorption or preoccupation with Nature for its own sake.\textsuperscript{9}

In George Eliot's novels as in the Bible, imagery or symbolism serves as poetic means to a didactic or realistic end.

George Eliot's biblical symbols may, for the sake of analysis, be divided into those drawn from the Old Testament and those drawn from the New Testament. From the Old Testament, there recur in Eliot's writings symbols of Eden, of the flood, of the wilderness and the promised land; from the New Testament, there appear symbols of temptation, of conversion, and--standing preeminent among George Eliot's biblical images--the cross.

There appear in at least three of Eliot's novels scenes and authorial comments about those scenes which unmistakably are based on Eden. In \textit{Romola}, Chapter X ("Under the Plane Tree"), there appears the following paragraph:

So it came to pass that they found a great plane tree not far outside the gates, and they sat down under it, and all the feast was spread out on Tessa's lap, she leaning with her back against the trunk of the tree, and he stretched opposite to her, resting his elbows on the rough green growth cherished by the shade, while the sunlight stole through the bows and played about them like a winged thing. Tessa's face was all contentment again, and the taste of the apricots and sweetmeats seemed very good.\textsuperscript{10}

The details of the scene suggest the biblical Eden: the innocent young man and woman, the placid natural setting, the


\textsuperscript{10}Eliot, VIII, 160.
plentiful food from nature, the concentrated biblical phraseology—"So it came to pass that," "seemed . . . good," and the linking of clauses with and after the manner of the King James Version.  

The scene's symbolic significance is further stressed by Eliot's explicit comment shortly after: "The fretted summer shade, and stillness, and the gentle breathing of some loved life near—it would be paradise to us all, if eager thought, the strong angel with the implacable brow, had not long since closed the gate." 

The scene of Edenic innocence with Tito and Tessa is repeated, in somewhat different terms, with Tito and Romola. In Tito's relationship with each woman, his mistress and his wife, there exists a prelapsarian or idyllic state of happiness preceding his decline and fall. With each woman, Edenic imagery is used to represent that state. In Tessa's case, it is the scene under the tree; with Romola, it is an object, the triptych which Tito designs for her as a wedding present. The device on the outside is fashioned after an Ovidian tale of Bacchus with Ariadne by his side. Tito refers to the figures early in his marriage to Romola as "those pretty symbols of our life together." Later, when the disillusioned Romola prepares to abandon Florence and her husband,

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11 Six times in Genesis 1 the phrase "saw that it was good" or a close variant occurs; of the thirty-one verses in the chapter, twenty-nine begin with and.

12 Eliot, VIII, 162.

13 Ibid., p. 295.
she looks upon the figures differently:

The triumphant Bacchus, with his clusters and his vine-clad spear, clasping the crowned Ariadne; the Loves showering roses, the wreathed vessel, the cunning-eyed dolphins, and the rippled sea: all encircled by a flowery border, like a bower of paradise. Romola looked at the familiar images with new bitterness and repulsion: they seemed a more pitiable mockery than ever on this chill morning, when she had waked up to wander in loneliness.¹⁴

Obviously, the triptych is primarily classical rather than biblical; however, there are strong suggestions of the Eden story in Eliot's reference to the "bower of paradise" and in Romola's waking to "wander in loneliness." The symbolic triptych first represents to Romola paradisiac joy and innocence; later it symbolizes paradise lost.

The functions of these two symbols in Romola are the same: both symbolic scene and symbolic object represent the carefree simplicity, the purity and innocence of young love.

In Adam Bede, the same symbol of Eden appears in Eliot's treatment of Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel. Commenting on their affection for each other, George Eliot remarks,

Poor things! It was a pity they were not in that golden age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eyeing each other with timid liking, then given each other a butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. Arthur would have gone home to his silk-curtained cot, and Hetty to her home-spun pillow, and both would have slept without dreams, and tomorrow would have been a life hardly conscious of a yesterday.¹⁵

In effect, George Eliot rather melodramatically laments that

¹⁴Ibid., IX, 57.
¹⁵Ibid., III, 185.
the pair is no longer in a paradise of youthful innocence.
Since they are not, they err from the prescribed code of their Loamshire Eden, just as Adam and Eve had fallen, and are, as a result, expelled from their bower for defying the "Thou shalt not" dictated not by God but by duty and society—Hetty is exiled, and Arthur departs in self-exile. As Knoepflmacher observes in a different context, "It is Hetty and Arthur who must thread their solitary way outside of Eden." Here there is no readily identifiable symbolic scene or object to suggest this Edenic interpretation of the careers of Arthur and Hetty. Rather, the suggestive hint is made by George Eliot, and the reader himself is invited to extend the symbolic analogy.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Edenic symbolism appears twice. The first instance is in Chapter VII ("The Golden Gates are Passed"), the concluding chapter of Book II. At the chapter's beginning George Eliot observes, "The promise [Maggie Tulliver's childhood promise to Philip Wakem to kiss him the next time they met] was void, like so many other sweet, illusory promises of our childhood; void as promises made in Eden before the seasons were divided, and when the starry blossoms grew side by side with the ripening peach—impossible to be fulfilled when the golden gates had been passed." Within the

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16 U. C. Knoepflmacher, *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 91. For a different view of the Edenic element in Adam Bede, see p. 7 and pp. 90-91 in Knoepflmacher. He argues that the Adam and Eve of the novel are Adam and Dinah rather than Arthur and Hetty, and that George Eliot's treatment is that of the fortunate fall as set forth in her prototype, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

17 Eliot, V, 278.
chapter itself, the author relates the misfortunes which be-
fall the Tulliver family as a result of their losing the
lawsuit over the mill. Then at chapter's end, she reverts
to the Edenic image in discussing Tom and Maggie: "They had
gone forth together into their new life of sorrow, and they
would never more see the sunshine undimmed by remembered
cares. They had entered the thorny wilderness, and the
golden gates of their childhood had for ever closed behind
them." One critic, Burns, describes this passage as Mil-
tonic; another, Knoepflmacher, suggests that "In The Mill
on the Floss, Tom and Maggie Tulliver are also forced to 'go
out of the garden,' . . . : their exile from the 'golden
gates of their childhood' into the 'thorny wilderness' of
maturity is fraught with tragic consequence." This is es-
sentially the same use of Edenic symbolism as in Romola and
Adam Bede: the childlike innocence--either in years or in
experience--of Tito and Tessa, Tito and Romola, Arthur and
Hetty, is akin to that of Tom and Maggie. They all dwell, as
it were, in paradise, but in a paradise from which they are
eventually banished because of human weakness, their own or
that of others. In Eliot's novels, characters such as Tom

18Ibid., p. 287.

19John Sandidge Burns, "The Wider Life: A Study of the

20U. C. Knoepflmacher, Religious Humanism and the Vic-
torian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler
and Maggie must advance from a chronological or spiritual childhood to spiritual or moral maturity, just as Adam and Eve did in Eden. The process proves a painful one.

The second occurrence in *The Mill on the Floss* of a symbolic Eden is in Book VI, "The Great Temptation." The suggestiveness of the title is reinforced by the title of Chapter I, "A Duet in Paradise." True to these headings, the chapter presents Edenic analogies. As Lucy Deane and Stephen Guest practice playing and singing "The Creation," Lucy alludes to Philip Wakem. Stephen responds, "Oh, pooh! He is the fallen Adam with a soured temper. We are Adam and Eve unfallen, in Paradise." The parallel between the biblical and fictional characters is drawn explicitly by chapter headings, by the title of the musical selection, and by the overt, rather playful comments of Lucy and Stephen. If consistently drawn the analogy makes of Maggie Tulliver, when in the next chapter she comes to visit, a temptress entering the garden of innocence, the agent of evil in this blissful idyllic state. W. J. Harvey suggests such an interpretation:

The reader, when he comes to this, cannot but recollect the other paradise in the book, the Eden of childhood from which, at the very end of the second Book, Tom and Maggie are expelled. . . . Such a recollection will strengthen the reader's impression—derived from a view of the innocent Lucy and the sophisticated Stephen—that this second paradise is also a very precarious state, that the whole situation is delicately poised before the forthcoming visit of Maggie.22

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21Elliot, VI, 150.  
22Harvey, p. 138.
Although Maggie is the temptress to the extent that her presence precipitates Stephen's advances, it is he much more than she who assumes the role of seducer or tempter. The rather mindless Lucy, a pale and nonparticipating Eve, is to some extent replaced in Eden by Maggie as the one who undergoes "the great temptation."

Eliot's artistic awkwardness wherein Lucy plays no active part, Stephen plays both Adam and tempter, and Maggie is first temptress and then Eve, is rectified somewhat by the repeated suggestion of Eden in Chapter X of the same Book VI. Here Stephen and Maggie are in a garden setting, and he yields to an overpowering impulse to kiss her. In describing Maggie's feeling, George Eliot furthers the symbolic suggestiveness by her biblical description of the young woman's inner turmoil and sense of error: "A horrible punishment was come upon her for the sin of allowing a moment's happiness that was treachery to Lucy, to Philip, to her own better soul."23 The scene of moral struggle and the fall of both Maggie and Stephen seems more aesthetically effective than the earlier blandness of Stephen and Lucy. To some extent, the later scene is an

23Eliot, VI, 265.

24Of the passage in Book VI, Chapter 1, Reva Stump has observed, "There is a decided note of falseness about this paradise. George Eliot leads the reader to suspect that if Stephen is the unfallen Adam it is because he is too unenergetic and uncaring to have become involved in life's struggles. . . . He and Lucy temporarily assume the role of the unfallen Adam and Eve, but they are only play acting." Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1959), p. 106.
ironic reflection of the earlier one. The two scenes together may be taken to represent the stages in man's eventual egress from Eden: first naive innocence, then complex conflicts of duty and desire. Desire wins a temporary victory, but man suffers afterwards for his lapse from the standard of duty and self-immolation. Shortly after the scene with Stephen in the garden, Maggie laments,

Oh, it is difficult--life is very difficult! It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling;--but then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us--the ties that have made others dependent on us--and would cut them in two. If life were quite easy and simple, as it might have been in Paradise, and we could always see that one being first towards whom . . . I mean, if life did not make duties for us before love comes, love would be a sign that two people ought to belong to each other. But I see--I feel it is not so now: there are things we must renounce in life; some of us must resign love. Many things are difficult and dark to me; but I see one thing quite clearly--that I must not, cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too. And they would live in me still, and punish me if I did not obey them. I should be haunted by the suffering I had caused.25

The explicit allusion to paradise is noteworthy, as is the stress on renunciation--a doctrine which Maggie gleans from The Imitation of Christ.

A second biblical symbol, akin to that of Eden, is the Old Testament flood. The Eden narrative recounts man's innocence, fall, and expulsion from the garden. In the account of the deluge, righteous man is saved, wicked man perishes by

25Elliot, VI, 276-77.
water. The flood cleanses, as it were, the world of human sinfulness. In The Mill on the Floss, the fictional parallel with the biblical flood is apparent. As Reva Stump has noted,

This parallel seems justified by echoes in the book of the Biblical story. When Bob and Tom discuss "the big flood" of long ago, Tom tells Bob that when he is a man he will build a boat "like Noah's ark". The flood is referred to as "that awful visitation of God", and George Eliot's phrase, "the feeble generations whose breath is in their nostrils", is a deliberate echo of Genesis 7:22: "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life.".

The flood is also justified as a culmination of the river imagery which pervades the novel.

What is not clear is how George Eliot intended the fictional conclusion, with its destructive deluge, to be interpreted symbolically and thematically. In the biblical account it is the wicked of the earth who perish; in the fictional account, Tom and Maggie perish. Obviously there is no direct parallel intended between those destroyed in the biblical flood and those who perish in the fictional one, just as there is no parallel between the survivors of the two catastrophes. In fact, Stump suggests that the flooding of the Floss and the

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26 Stump, p. 224, fn. 8.

27 Daniel Deneau suggests that the river imagery may have as its source the Bible, and specifically suggests Ecclesiastes 1:3-10. "From 'Amos Barton' to Daniel Deronda: Studies in the Imagery of George Eliot's Fiction," Diss. Notre Dame 1959, pp. 256-57.

28 Typical of critical reaction to the enigmatic flooding of the Floss is Knoepflmacher's allusion to "George Eliot's uneasy invocation of a biblical deluge." George Eliot's Early Novels, p. 233.
deaths of the Tulliver brother and sister constitute "an ironic reversal of the Noah story" in which the good die young and the wicked survive: "the people of St. Ogg's are themselves divided, separated by their narrowness and lack of vision from that which is 'congruous with the mystery of the human lot.'" Perhaps a fitter term for the survivors than "wicked" is "ignorant." Stump suggests that the flood and the resulting deaths of the central figures in the novel have had something of an enlightening effect on the survivors:

Dorlcote Mill has been reconstructed and the tombstone on Mr. Tulliver's grave has been put back in place. We are told that much later Lucy and Stephen are reunited, and we know that they are wiser than before. Philip's vision has been greatly enlarged, and Mrs. Glegg has reaffirmed the best in the Dodson code of morality. What will come of these changes, George Eliot does not choose to prophesy.

It would seem, however, that in some sense George Eliot intends that Tom and Maggie be seen as counterparts of Noah and his family, although the young brother and sister do perish. In keeping with this view, as well as in keeping with the current wont of Eliot critics, George Levine interprets the fatal flood in rather subtle Feuerbachian terms. He points out that "within the system of Feuerbachian thought, the death by water makes good symbolic sense," then explains why:

29 Stump, p. 135.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., pp. 134-35.
Water, for Feuerbach, is the sacrament which symbolically asserts man's dependence on nature; the flood serves to remind man of this. Curiously, in water "the scales fall from [man's] eyes: he sees and thinks more clearly," and at the same time "human mental activity is nullified." Both these effects of water operate in The Mill on the Floss. With Stephen Maggie falls into oblivion as she floats downstream; by contrast, with Tom the scales fall from her eyes as she reflects: "what quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs" (Bk. VII, ch. V). Here, appropriately, Maggie not only "sees and thinks more clearly," but she is forced to these reflections by the power of Nature over the merely "artificial." And, of course, in the death which follows, consciousness is nullified, but only after, by symbolically crying "Maggie," Tom avers the love which dominated in the natural state of childhood. The death is a purification of both Maggie and Tom: "To purify oneself," as Feuerbach says, "to bathe, is the first, though the lowest of virtues."\(^3\)

Although in the main Levine's interpretation may be valid, it seems simpler—and more in keeping with George Eliot's moderate degree of symbolic sophistication—to interpret the fictional deluge as the New Testament interprets the Old Testament deluge:

when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.\(^3\)


\(^3\)1 Peter 3:20-21.
This passage suggests that a good conscience rather than physical cleansing is the key to a proper interpretation of the symbolism, and to that extent negates Levine's stress on Feuerbachian cleansing or purification per se. At the same time, if one follows this biblical suggestion in interpreting the fictional flood, one is led to include Maggie's baptismal experience in her room even as the waters are rising. During the three days' rain Maggie has undergone an intense spiritual struggle, emerging from this turmoil to a deeper, more meaningful dedication to duty and renunciation as she had learned it from Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. The cleansing of conscience, suggested in the passage from I Peter as the essence of baptism, culminates in that very act of immersion in water. Although with Tom the process is greatly abbreviated, he too undergoes the same baptismal regeneration. He experiences "a new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in life, that had lain beyond his vision."34 His conversion is signified by the cry of "Magsie," just as that of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts is signified by his confession of belief in Christ prior to baptism.35

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34 Eliot, VI, 385.

35 Acts 8:35-38: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."
the biblical motto "In their death they were not divided" is then essentially a spiritual one. Tom and Maggie, through their trials and finally in their struggle to survive, win through to new belief and dedication. Their baptism symbolizes neither Christian conversion as in the New Testament nor extended physical life as in the Old Testament, but dedication to each other and—at least in Maggie's case—to their fellow men. That they die is, symbolically at least, irrelevant. What is relevant is that the symbolic flood is the climax of symbolic baptism in *The Mill on the Floss*. As Jerome Buckley has observed of the death scene, "the symbolic and the real blend skillfully into a unified impression."36

One other symbol drawn from the Old Testament is that of the contrast between the wilderness of the forty years' wanderings and the promised land "flowing with milk and honey."37 In a sense, the wilderness-promised land image is simply a modification of the Eden image with the order reversed: paradise was a state of bliss from which man was cast into an unfriendly world, the promised land was an Edenic haven sought as refuge from suffering in a barren wilderness. George Eliot fictionally employs the symbol in at least three works: "Janet's Repentance," *Adam Bede*, and *Silas Marner*.

In "Janet's Repentance" the basic contrast common to all

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37 *Exodus* 3:8.
three novels is set forth in a discussion between Edgar Tryan, the Evangelical minister, and Mr. Jerome, a benign disciple:

"What a nice place you have here, Mr. Jerome! I've not seen anything so quiet and pretty since I came to Milby. On Paddiford Common, where I live, you know, the bushes are all sprinkled with soot, and there's never any quiet except in the dead of night."

"Dear heart! dear heart! That's very bad—and for you, too, as hev to study. Wouldn't it be better for you to be somewhere more out i' the country like?"

"Oh no! I should lose so much time in going to and fro; and besides, I like to be among the people. I've no face to go and preach resignation to those poor things in their smoky air and comfortless homes, when I come straight from every luxury myself. There are many things quite lawful for other men, which a clergyman must forego if he would do any good in a manufacturing population like this." 38

There is in the passage a touch of Wordsworthian rusticity, a praising of prosperous nature at the expense of urban clamor and squalor. The religious tinge provided by Tryan's presence and attitude, however, carries it out of the poetic domain of Wordsworth and into the prose domain of Eliot. Tryan suggests that the manufacturing district of Paddiford Common is a sort of wilderness—spiritual as well as literal—in which most men wander, and in which he as clergyman is compelled to abide so as to minister effectively to the needs of his fellow men. The biblical parallel is strongly hinted through George Eliot's setting the scene at Mr. Jerome's residence, primarily in his fruitful garden. The contrasting scenes of

38 Eliot, II, 90.
wilderness and land of plenty which are presented in "Janet's Repentance" are repeated in *Silas Marner* and in *Adam Bede*.

In *Silas Marner* the cramped existence—literally and spiritually cramped—of Lantern Yard brings Silas to a state of deep despair and negation. He deserts this religious and industrial wilderness for Raveloe, a land of plenty. George Eliot describes Silas's new setting in terms of lushness and easy prosperity:

> And what could be more unlike that Lantern Yard world than the world in Raveloe?—orchards looking lazy with neglected plenty; the large church in the wide church-yard, which men gazed at lounging at their own doors in service-time; the purple-faced farmers jogging along the lanes or turning in at the Rainbow; homesteads, where men supped heavily and slept in the light of the evening hearth, and where women seemed to be laying up a stock of linen for the life to come.39

Thomson points out that "These details are shrewdly calculated to penetrate the merely visual differentia of the two places and to reveal their intrinsic spiritual opposition."40 His view is corroborated by that of Liebman, who concludes that "the village is nothing short of paradise."41 The geographical contrast both in *Silas Marner* and later in *Adam Bede*, David Carroll suggests, reflects a contrast of another sort:

> Silas flees to Raveloe and isolation. The change from Lantern Yard to Raveloe with its "orchards looking

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39 Ibid., VII, 20.

40 Fred C. Thomson, "The Theme of Alienation in *Silas Marner*," *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 20 (June 1965), 77.

lazy with neglected plenty," and its "purple-faced farmers" (Chap. II), is very similar in its moral geography to the change from Stoniton to Hayslope in Adam Bede. The danger at Stoniton and Lantern Yard is that essentially human relationships will be jeopardized by an excessive and perverted otherworldliness.  

But in Silas Marner it is not the retreat to Raveloe, the land of plenty, which in itself heals Marner's spiritual wounds. It is response not to God, as in the Bible, nor to nature, as in Wordsworth, but to man, as it always is in Eliot's fiction. The little child leads the bitter old weaver back to a meaningful existence of service, as Tryan leads Janet Dempster and as Dinah Morris will lead the inhabitants of Stoniton.

It is in Adam Bede that the symbolic contrast of barren and fruitful regions is most fully developed. Early in the novel the contrast is set forth by the author:

That rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged lies close to a grim outskirt of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills as a pretty blooming sister may sometimes be seen linked in the arm of a rugged, tall, swarthy brother; and in two or three hours' ride the traveller might exchange a bleak treeless region, intersected by lines of cold grey stone, for one where his road wound under the shelter of woods, or up swelling hills, muffled with hedgerows and long meadow-grass and thick corn; and where at every turn he came upon some fine old country-seat nestled in the valley or crowning the slope, some homestead with its long length of barn and its cluster of golden ricks, some grey steeple looking out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles.  


The affinity of Hayslope and Stonyshire to the Old Testament wilderness and promised land is stressed repeatedly. Shortly after the passage just cited, Dinah Morris describes Snowfield in Stonyshire as "a bleak and barren country . . . , not like this land of Goshen you've been used to."\textsuperscript{44} Again, as Adam and Seth Bede bear their father's coffin to Sproxton, George Eliot refers to Hayslope's "fresh youth of the summer morning, with its Eden-like peace and loveliness."\textsuperscript{45}

Additional reinforcement is given the biblical-fictional analogy in later statements by Dinah Morris. Talking to Parson Irwine, she describes Loamshire, the district to which Hayslope belongs, as "this country, which to be sure is a good land, wherein they eat bread without scarceness."\textsuperscript{46} The phrasing of Dinah's comment is very close to that found in Deuteronomy 8:9--"a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness." The biblical chapter is mainly devoted to a contrast of the land of plenty to which God has led the children of Israel with the barren wilderness through which they have come. In Dinah's same dialogue with Irwine, she contrasts the spiritual needs of the people in these regions:

\begin{quote}
But I've noticed, that in these villages where the people lead a quiet life among the green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word, as different as can be from the great towns, like Leeds,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{46}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 125.
where I once went to visit a holy woman who preaches there. It's wonderful how rich is the harvest of souls up those high-walled streets, where you seemed to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened with the sounds of worldly toil. I think maybe it is because the promise is sweeter when this life is so dark and weary, and the soul gets more hungry when the body is ill at ease.47

The inverse relationship between natural and material wealth and spiritual want, the same as that expressed earlier in both "Janet's Repentance" and Silas Marner, is essentially conveyed in biblical terms of wilderness and land of plenty. George Eliot brings together both the basic symbolism inherent in such passages and her intended interpretation of them when she has Adam observe as he walks to Oakbourne to see Dinah,

I'd rather go south'ard, where they say it's as flat as a table, than come to live here; though if Dinah likes to live in a country where she can be the most comfort to folks, she's i' the right to live o' this side; for she must look as if she'd come straight from heaven, like th' angels in the desert, to strengthen them as ha' got nothing t' eat.48

Dinah's belief is that succor from life's distresses and impoverishment is to be found in Christ. It is the same conviction as that of Edgar Tryan and the young Silas Marner. But Eliot, while permitting Tryan and Dinah Morris to preach and pursue their Evangelical Christian convictions, stresses that it is not really their Christian otherworldliness that is to be sought, but a proper attitude toward self and others. To revert to Carroll's summary of Eliot's message, "The danger

47Ibid., p. 130.
48Ibid., IV, 149-50.
at Stoniton and Lantern Yard is that essentially human relationships will be jeopardized by an excessive and perverted otherworldliness, the danger at Raveloe and Hayslope that of "materialism and a more obvious kind of egoism." 49

In "Janet's Repentance," Edgar Tryan leads Janet Dempster to abandon her bitter despair; in Silas Marner, Silas falls victim to isolation in a spiritual wilderness from which Eppie leads him forth to renewed communion with his fellow men. The same is true of Adam Bede, who by suffering wins through to sympathy and tolerance from his former state of egoism. In each of these novels the symbolism is that of the biblical wilderness and promised land, but the treatment by Eliot is—as with the symbolic flood in The Mill on the Floss—entirely for her own thematic comments. Whereas in the biblical account the land flowing with milk and honey represents a spiritual as well as a physical haven, in Eliot's fictional treatment the promised land and the wilderness both pose potential threats to man's happiness. That happiness, as Edgar Tryan and Dinah Morris know, and as Silas Marner and Adam Bede discover, hinges on a sympathetic appreciation and serving of one's fellow man.

In addition to Old Testament symbols, there are in George Eliot's writings several symbols drawn from the New Testament and based in some way on the person or preachings of Jesus

49 Carroll, pp. 173-74.
Christ. Among these are topical occurrences of pastoral and ceremonial symbolism, as well as recurring images of temptation, of conversion, and of the cross.

A pastoral scene is found in *Adam Bede*. Early in the novel, Dinah Morris speaks of Hetty as a "poor wandering lamb." Later, when the hapless Hetty has made her journey in search of Arthur and is returning home, she spends the night in a sheepfold. Her destitute condition, the close association with the sheep and sheepfold, her discovery by a shepherd, and the approaching birth of her child suggest an analogy with the biblical nativity scene. As Knoepflmacher observes, however, "The sheep, the humble surroundings, and, above all, her approaching motherhood are meaningless to Hetty. They merely accentuate her narcissism." The irony of the nativity symbolism is intensified by Hetty's desertion of her newborn infant and by its death. In this sheepfold scene Hetty briefly becomes an ironic fictional madonna.

A second symbolic link with the birth of Christ occurs in *Silas Marner*. Here the association is with the Christmas season. George Eliot relates that "about the Christmas of that fifteenth year, a second great change came over Marner's life, and his history became blent in a singular manner with the life of his neighbours." This "great change" is the

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50 Eliot, III, 44.
51 Knoepflmacher, *Religious Humanism*, p. 36.
52 Eliot, VII, 30.
coming of a child who redirects his life. Although Eppie does not come to Silas on Christmas Day but on New Year's Eve, the parallel between the appearance of the savior children in the Christmas season seems apparent. In a fictional sense different from the biblical one, the messianic child will serve as means of salvation for the embittered weaver of Raveloe. As David Carroll suggests,

Eppie comes to free Silas from the bondage of his man-made web and reintroduce him to the vital complexity of the web of life. George Eliot suggests this by linking the moment of Silas' regeneration with the annual regeneration of Raveloe society. He discovers Eppie and takes her to the Red House on New Year's Eve as Raveloe is performing its ritual of rebirth. . . .

Here again, the symbol drawn from the Bible is applied in Eliot's own way to accomplish her intended artistic effect.

More extensive than these brief symbolic allusions to the birth of Christ are the symbolic scenes of temptation based on biblical prototypes. George Eliot's most extended use of such temptation scenes is in The Mill on the Floss. As Maggie Tulliver is a central figure in the Eden and flood symbolism, so she is also central to the scenes of temptation. To some extent this temptation symbolism is an extension of the Edenic imagery in Book VI, but there seems overall a stronger link between Eliot's first temptation scene and the temptation of Christ by Satan in the wilderness.

The scene occurs in the Red Deeps between Maggie and

53Carroll, p. 183.
Philip Wakem. For some time Maggie has been strongly under the influence of Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, and in keeping with the pious monastic's insistence on resignation and renunciation, she keeps her distance from Philip. He, however, sees her renunciation as a mistake, as cultural, social, and personal suicide. Maggie responds to his urgings to continue their clandestine meetings, "But, dear Philip, I think we are only like children, that some one who is wiser is taking care of. Is it not right to resign ourselves entirely, whatever may be denied us? I have found great peace in that for the last two or three years--even joy in subduing my own will." Philip's reply is a spirited contradiction of her view:

Yes, Maggie... and you are shutting yourself up in a narrow self-delusive fanaticism, which is only a way of escaping pain by starving into dulness all the highest powers of your nature. Joy and peace are not resignation: resignation is the willing endurance of a pain that is not allayed—that you don't expect to be allayed. Stupefaction is not resignation: and it is stupefaction to remain in ignorance—to shut up all the avenues by which the life of your fellow men might become known to you. I am not resigned: I am not sure that life is long enough to learn that lesson. You are not resigned: you are only trying to stupefy yourself.

To this Maggie objects, "Philip, how dare you shake me in this way? You are a tempter." George Eliot sides primarily with her heroine by commenting on Philip's "subtle efforts to overcome Maggie's true prompting against a concealment that

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54 Eliot, VI, 89-90.
55 Ibid., p. 90.
56 Ibid., p. 92.
would introduce doubleness into her own mind, and might cause new misery to those who had the primary natural claim on her." 57

The isolated meeting of the two in the rough natural setting of the Red Deeps, the close association of Maggie with The Imitation of Christ, her spirit of renunciation, Philip's attempts to lure her from asceticism by dangling before her the cultural beauties and pleasures of the world, her labelling of Philip as a tempter—all these details suggest that George Eliot is constructing a fictional counterpart to the temptation of Christ by Satan in the wilderness. As Burns observes,

The scenes with Philip in Book V, except the last one, are presented as a series of temptations with Philip in the role of tempter, who holds out to Maggie a revival of those dreams of warm human companionship and who promises "an opening in the rocky wall which shut in the narrow valley of humiliation" to some of the "memory-haunting delights" of music and literature. 58

Philip temporarily lures her from her solitary renunciation, but she returns to it at novel's end with a deeper understanding of Kempis's concept of spiritual sacrifice.

Also drawn from the New Testament are George Eliot's treatments of symbolic conversion. Several critics have commented on these conversions and the use of specifically Christian symbolism. Citing a few instances of dramatic and symbolic character change, Liebman notes,

Adam experiences that "unspeakable suffering" that "may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state". . . . Tom experiences "a new revelation

57 Ibid., p. 94.
58 Burns, p. 193.
to his spirit, of the depths in life, that had lain beyond his vision". . . . Silas is similarly "reawakened" and feels his soul "unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness". . . . Romola has "a new baptism" when she applies to the plague-stricken children the doctrine which she has learned from Savonarola. 59

Common to these conversions as well as others is what Burns terms "despair preceding conversion"; discussing "Janet's Repentance," he observes that

George Eliot's scene of the dark, empty street to suggest the state of spiritual isolation and the intense suffering that precedes Janet's conversion is reminiscent of similar scenes in the spiritual autobiographies [which Burns had discussed in his second chapter]: Saul on the road to Damascus, Augustine in the garden, Bunyan in the fields outside Bedford, Wesley and Wilberforce alone in their rooms. Such scenes appear in all George Eliot's novels when she portrays this despair preceding conversion: Romola on the road outside Florence, Hetty Sorrel in the dark fields and later in her cell, Arthur Donnithorne in his dressing-room, Maggie Tulliver in her dark room at Bob Jakin's, Dorothea Brooke in her room as she looks at the blank whiteness of the winter landscape, Gwendolen Harleth in her hotel room in Genoa. 60

Burns has also observed that "despair may be the most common experience suffered by George Eliot's heroines, but it is always portrayed as part of a larger religious experience of spiritual progress toward conversion or salvation." 61 The link between George Eliot's fictional conversions and those of Christian tradition is also noted by Ian Adam, who extends the analogy beyond the state of despair to include all basic points of a distinctly Christian--and biblical--pattern: "It

59 Liebman, p. 22.
60 Burns, pp. 102-3.
61 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
is true that the conversions are humanist, with the characters directing their attention to man and not to God, but the pattern of change is Christian: the guiding minister, the lonely self-scrutiny, the moments of decisive choice that we see in orthodox form in Moll Flanders or George Eliot's own 'Janet's Repentance' have their secular counterparts in all the fiction.62 These "secular counterparts" are treated by Eliot in terms of baptism, with that baptism being symbolically expressed sometimes with water, sometimes as escape from prison, sometimes as communion, and sometimes as a journey or pilgrimage.63


63 Although not dealing specifically with the symbolic, Mark Schorer elaborates in an allied discussion on George Eliot's metaphors of "muted apocalypse" and the steps of illumination, revelation, fulfillment, and expectation in George Eliot's "pattern of a classic religious experience":

"At the end of this grand vista are the metaphors of what I have called the 'muted' apocalypse. The frequency with which George Eliot uses the words up, high, and higher in metaphorical contexts is equalled only, perhaps, by her use of the word light, until one feels a special significance in 'giving up' and in all the faces that beam, all the ideas that flash across the mind, and all the things that are all the time being 'taken' in that light or this light. Fire plays a perhaps predictably important metaphorical role, and, together with light, or alternating with it, usually accompanied or is implied by those frequent metaphors in which things are gloriously transformed, transfused, or transfigured. Treating this complex of figures as I do, as a kind of apocalyptic drama which of course does not exist in the novel as such, but surely does in the imagination of George Eliot, we have, now, at the moment before climax, all those metaphors involving ideas of veneration and adoration, or worshipful awe; these, in my fictitious series, are immediately followed by the climax itself, which is contained in endless use of the word 'revelation' and figurative developments from it."
Prison imagery occurs primarily in "Janet's Repentance."
The allusion to the New Testament story of Peter's release from bonds and prison as recorded in Acts 12:4-11 was pointed out in Chapter VI. There are in the story additional enclosure or prison images which cling together with greater

Perception, in this novel, is indeed thought of as revelation, and minds and souls are always 'opening' to the influx. Things are many times 'manifested' or 'made manifest,' as if life were a perpetual epiphany. If perception is not a 'revelation,' it is a 'divination,' and for the ordinary verb, 'to recognize,' George Eliot usually prefers to use 'to divine.' It is here that we come upon her unquestionably favorite word, and the center of her most persistent metaphors. For the word 'sight' or 'feeling' she almost always substitutes the more portentous word 'vision.' Visions are of every possible kind, from dim to bright to blinding, from testing to guiding. The simplest sight of the physical detail may be a vision; every insight is of course a vision, usually an inward vision.

The experience now subsides. If perception is revelation, then it is, secondarily, nourishment, and the recurrence of metaphors in which perception is conceived as spiritual food and drink, and of all the metaphors of fullness, filling, and fulfilment, is perhaps predictable. It is likewise energizing, in various figurative ways, and in moments of climactic understanding, significantly, a charge of electricity flows through the human organism.

Illumination, revelation, fulfilment. One step remains in this pattern of a classic religious experience: that is expectation. Metaphors of expectation are everywhere; I will represent them in their most frequent form, a phrase so rubbed by usage that it hardly seems metaphorical at all. It is to 'look forward,' and it appears on nearly every page of Middlemarch, a commonplace there too, yet more than that: it is the clue to the whole system of metaphor I have sketched out: it is the clue to a novel, the clue to a mind." "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" Kenyon Review, 11 (Autumn 1949), 554-55.

64 See p. 116.

65 These images are noted by Daniel Deneau in his "Imagery in the Scenes of Clerical Life," Victorian Newsletter, No. 28 (1965), 18-22.
meaning, with an added symbolic dimension, when seen as fibers in a biblical thread running through the novel. In Janet's interview with Tryan shortly after she has been cast out by her husband, the Evangelical minister tells her that "as soon as we submit ourselves to his will . . . it is as if the walls had fallen down that shut us out from God." 66 Prison symbolism is extended and emphasized by George Eliot when she relates that "A door had been opened in Janet's cold dark prison of self-despair, and the golden light of morning was pouring in its slanting beams through the blessed opening." 67 Conversely, whereas Janet has been freed by Tryan as the imprisoned Peter was freed by the angel, her drunken husband is "imprisoned in misery . . . deaf for ever to the sounds of love and forgiveness. His sins had made a hard crust round his soul. . . . " 68 Developing still further the image based on the biblical scene, George Eliot describes Janet Dempster's period of recuperation and recovery from alcoholism: "The prisoner feels where the iron has galled him, long after his fetters have been loosed." 69

This entire process, pictured symbolically as a biblical release from fetters by an angel, is linked by George Eliot with baptism. The suffering of Janet at the hands of her husband; her night of sorrow and despair; the sympathetic solace

67 Ibid., p. 189.  
68 Ibid., p. 205.  
69 Ibid., p. 233.
provided by Tryan; the resulting conversion to a new and more meaningful view of life—the process or pattern is a familiar one in Eliot's fiction. During the period of recovery, Janet has a quietly meditative dialogue with Tryan as he accompanies her home one evening. George Eliot writes of the experience, "That walk in the dewy starlight remained forever in Janet's memory as one of those baptismal epochs, when the soul, dipped in the sacred waters of joy and peace, rises from them with new energies, with more unalterable longings." The baptismal regeneration of Janet Dempster begins with a symbolic imprisonment and ends with an open walk in the starlight.

A walk, journey, or pilgrimage itself becomes, in other novels, the primary rather than the secondary symbol of conversion. The evening walk by Janet is the culmination of a process largely complete. With Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede, however, the journey in search of Arthur Donnithorne becomes a fearful, futile wandering which eventually leads to expulsion from her country, further wandering, and death during the attempted journey home. Here the symbolism is derived primarily from Genesis. Hetty is the fallen woman cast from the garden; Arthur, too, undergoes a penitential pilgrimage to atone for his wrongs. As Reva Stump has observed,

Both he and Hetty have sinned against the community as well as against themselves. Thus their isolated wandering is a fitting penance they must do before they are spiritually ready to be returned to the community. From

70 Ibid., p. 229.
the first they have both been wanderers in the sense that they have allowed themselves to drift into a wrong course of action; it is therefore fitting that they now become wanderers who, like the Ancient Mariner, must do penance for their sins. 71

A more obvious analogy than that of the Ancient Mariner is that of Adam and Eve—dwellers in paradise who, through their sins, suffer banishment into an unsympathetic world, there to expiate their wrongs. Although the expulsion symbolism comes from Genesis, the symbolic emphases are in part those of the New Testament: Hetty as straying lamb, Hetty as ironic madonna.

Another symbolic journey of conversion is that of Romola when she leaves Florence. No longer able to tolerate the duplicity of her husband Tito, Romola abandons the city disguised as a nun. In an otherworldly sequel more characteristic of Hawthorne's heavily symbolic romances than of George Eliot's normal realism, the heroine arrives at the seaside, puts to sea in a boat, and awaits death. "Instead of bringing her to death," however, "it had been the gently lulling cradle of a new life. And in spite of her evening despair she was glad that the morning had come to her again; glad to think that she was resting in the familiar sunlight rather than in the unknown regions of death." 72 George Eliot explicitly notes that "the experience was like a new baptism to Romola." 73

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71 Stump, p. 55.  
72 Eliot, IX, 385.  
73 Ibid., p. 398.
Cast ashore at a plague-ridden village, Romola freely devotes herself to serving the sick, and becomes to all the villagers a model madonna. Eventually, her work in the village finished and her lesson of sympathy and service thoroughly learned, she returns to Florence. Deneau, in commenting on the importance of the village scenes, states that during this period, and through this service,

Romola truly receives a "new baptism," and the baptismal waters are those of the ever-important sympathy, the religious principle of the universe. Romola's conversion is from an egocentric to a "humanistic" view of the world, from a religion based on personal love to a religion of humanity. But in her journey she never discovers Bethlehem or Calvary.74

What Deneau is suggesting is that here, as elsewhere, George Eliot employs patently biblical material but chooses to preach her own gospel with it. As Jerome Buckley observes of Romola, "From her calculated 'death-by-water' comes her earthly redemption, her self-dedication to the struggles of an Italian Renaissance community. . . ."75

The conversion or baptismal experience of Romola involves the symbolic use of water, and Maggie's immersion beneath the waters of the Floss symbolicallyseals by literal baptism her spiritual rebirth. The Christian significance or framework of that rebirth is summarized by Reva Stump:

It is after she has visited Dr. Kenn for the last time and returned hopeless, weary, and joyless to her room

74Deneau, "From 'Amos Barton' to Daniel Deronda," p. 166.
75Buckley, pp. 101-2.
that the rains come. Three days it rains and three days Maggie sits in her lonely room, with a window darkened by the clouds and the driving rain, thinking of that future, and wrestling for patience. . . . The overtones of Christian symbolism merge with the vision imagery. Maggie has undergone temptation; she has been judged and surely in a sense crucified by "the world's wife" and by her own kin. Now "she must begin a new life. . . ." It is by accepting this new life and renouncing the old that she undergoes spiritual rebirth. The three days are, I believe, intended to suggest--merely to suggest and certainly not in any exact way--the three days between crucifixion and resurrection. 76

The fictional details of Maggie's trial and death suggest the account of Christ's suffering and sacrificial death, and merge with the deluge in a series of events rich in symbolic suggestion.

The same may be said of another passage in George Eliot's fiction, the symbolic supper in Adam Bede. The scene in Chapter XLII is the climactic point of Adam Bede's experience, the conversion or baptism which virtually all Eliot characters of the first magnitude undergo. As prelude to Adam's conversion, George Eliot sets the religious tone of the chapter by noting that

Deep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. The yearning memories, the bitter regret, the agonized sympathy, the struggling appeals to the Invisible Right--all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim, sleepy existence, and he had only now awaked to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that

men should suffer; as if all that he had himself endured and called sorrow before was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless a great anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity. 77

Eliot chooses to dramatize or demonstrate this "baptism of fire" by means of Adam's symbolic communion.

As Adam awaits in his upper room the outcome of Hetty Sorrel's trial, the schoolmaster Bartle Massey enters with bread and wine. Adam at first refuses to partake. Shortly after, as he and Massey converse, Adam drinks. He then determines to accompany the schoolmaster back to court: "I'll stand by her--I'll own her--for all she's been deceitful. They oughtn't to cast her off--her own flesh and blood. We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes: I'll never be hard again." 78 Immediately after the renunciation of his earlier hardness and his espousal of sympathy, he is again offered sustenance by Bartle:

"Take a bit, then, and another sup, Adam, for the love of me. See, I must stop and eat a morsel. Now you take some."

Nerved by an active resolution, Adam took a morsel of bread, and drank some wine. He was haggard and unshaven, as he had been yesterday, but he stood upright again, and looked more like the Adam Bede of former days. 79

77 Eliot, IV, 199.
78 Ibid., pp. 203-4.
79 Ibid., p. 204.
Adam's partaking of bread and wine is, as critics have noted, the external token of his regenerative baptism produced by deep suffering. Perhaps the most apt analysis is that of Reva Stump:

When we remember that the first communion was celebrated in an "upper room," the symbolic significance of this scene is clarified by what follows. . . . Thus Bartle Massey invites Adam to partake of the communion which is to serve as the rite of confirmation following his baptism. The details are indeed most subtle. That the wine has been provided by Mr. Irwine, who as rector of the parish is Adam's spiritual guide, symbolically suggests that it is sacramental. But significantly it is proffered by Bartle Massey, who, we remember, has observed that Adam has "a bit of old lame Bartle" inside him and who has himself undergone his baptism by fire. Nor is this a mere invitation to Adam to eat and drink, but rather to "drink a drop with me, my lad--drink with me." The simple repetition of the phrases suggests the ritualistic, as does the fact that Bartle has risen and remains standing. This is a communion in the sense that it is a sharing of the "cup" of sorrow. The word cup, one of whose connotations is that which is to be endured and suffered, is commonly used to refer to the eucharist. In addition to indicating Bartle's desire to share, the statement "I must have a bit and a sup myself" implies his own very human need for sustenance and suggests that he hopes by example to instruct Adam in the ritual where-with sustenance may be obtained.  

Stump goes on to note that "The symbols and the ritual are Christian, but the religion is the religion of humanity. It is 'for the love of me'--that is, man--and not for the love of God that Adam takes communion." Most contemporary critics commenting on this scene, perhaps especially Knoepflmacher, insist on the Feuerbachian influence on this

80Stump, pp. 48-49.
81Ibid., p. 50.
The fact remains, however, that the material is essentially biblical, not Feuerbachian, and was familiar to George Eliot long before she encountered Feuerbach. The symbolic and humanistic treatment of that material—the preaching of what Stump and others have called "the religion of humanity"—is what may be rightly termed Feuerbachian.

In George Eliot's presentations of symbolic baptism, there is the suggestion that intense suffering is the required medium for conversion, regardless of the symbolic expression or form which that conversion takes. Whether the scene suggests biblical expulsion from Eden, release from imprisonment by angels, literal immersion in water, or communion, the requisite catalyst is suffering, an agony which results in a major modification of personality.

This requisite suffering suggests the last—and the most central and significant—of George Eliot's biblical symbols: the cross. In *Adam Bede* there appears a long discursive passage in which George Eliot, as she discusses the plight of Hetty Sorrel, sets forth her feeling for and symbolic concept of the cross of Christ:

> What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields..."
and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire,—
the rich land tilled with just as much care, the woods
rolling down the gentle slopes to the green meadows,—
I have come on something by the roadside which has
reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a
great agony—the agony of the Cross. It has stood per-
haps by the clustering apple-blossoms, or in the broad
sunshine by the cornfield, or at a turning by the wood
where a clear brook was gurgling below; and surely, if
there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing
of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony
would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst
of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden
behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or
under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be
a human heart beating heavily with anguish; perhaps a
young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge
from swift-advancing shame; understanding no more of this
life of ours than a foolish lost lamb wandering farther
and farther in the nightfall on the lonely heath; yet
tasting the bitterest of life's bitterness.

Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny
fields and behind the blossoming orchards; and the sound
of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot be-
hind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a
despairing human sob. No wonder man's religion has much
sorrow in it: no wonder he needs a suffering God.83

In George Eliot's letters, one finds further proof of her
high estimate of the aesthetic and ethical truth conveyed by
the crucifixion and resurrection. When comparing Christian
and classical myth and symbol she observes, "What pitiable
people those are who feel no poetry in Christianity! Surely
the acme of poetry hitherto is the conception of the suffering
Messiah—and the final triumph 'He shall reign for ever and
for ever.' The Prometheus is a very imperfect foreshadowing
of that symbol wrought out in the long history of the Jewish
and Christian ages."84 Again, her concept of the significance

83Eliot, IV, 106-7.

of Christ's life is expressed in her allusion to
that most beautiful passage in Luke's Gospel—the appearance of Jesus to the disciples at Emmaus. How universal in its significance! The soul that has hopefully followed its form—its impersonation of the highest and best—all in despondency; its thoughts all refuted, its dreams all dissipated. Then comes another Jesus—another, but the same—the same highest and best, only chastened, crucified instead of triumphant—and the soul learns that this is the true way to conquest and glory—And then there is the burning of the heart which assures that "This was the Lord!" that this is the inspiration from above—the true Comforter that leads into truth.85

Sorrow and suffering in Eliot's novels both chasten egoism and develop deeper spiritual insight and fellow feeling. As in Adam Bede, so in several instances it is the Christian's symbol of suffering and love which she employs to convey her message.

The earliest appearance of the cross in Eliot's fiction is in "Janet's Repentance." The concluding paragraph of Chapter IV reads: "She [Mrs. Raynor, Janet Dempster's mother] too has a picture over her mantelpiece, drawn in chalk by Janet long years ago. She looked at it before she went to bed. It is a head bowed beneath a cross, and wearing a crown of thorns."86 The suffering symbolized by Christ is borne by Mrs. Raynor because of her daughter's unhappiness; by Janet Dempster because of her husband's drunken abuse of her; and by Tryan the Evangelical minister because of his self-immolating service to others. Suffering produces in the characters of

85 Ibid., I, 228.
86 Eliot, II, 59.
the novel a greater degree of Christlikeness in George Eliot's sense—not doctrinally, but emotionally. Sacrificial service to and sympathy toward humanity follow the ordeal of agony.

The same is true in The Mill on the Floss, or would have been true had Maggie lived. After Maggie has time to reflect on her relationship with Stephen Guest, she concludes that she had let go the clue of life—that clue which once in the far-off years her young need had clutched so strongly. She had renounced all delights then, before she knew them, before they had come within her reach. Philip had been right when he told her that she knew nothing of renunciation: she had thought it was quiet ecstasy; she saw it face to face now—that sad patient loving strength which holds the clue of life—and saw that the thorns were for ever pressing on its brow. The yesterday, which could never be revoked—if she could have changed it now for any length of inward silent endurance, she would have bowed beneath that cross with a sense of rest.  

The suggestive details are readily detected: the "sad patient loving strength," the "thorns . . . for ever pressing on its brow," the cross that Maggie "would have bowed beneath."

Here again Eliot resorts to the cross to express her concept of spiritual turmoil and thought. In the waning moments of life, just before the flood comes, Maggie Tulliver cries, "O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort—" Through suffering she comes to perceive clearly the meaning of renunciation as she had found it expressed in The Imitation of Christ: "Both above and below, which way so-ever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross."  

87 Ibid., VI, 311.  
88 Ibid., p. 378.  
89 Ibid., p. 31.
One character who is not ennobled through such suffering is Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*. Adam changes, as Eliot effectively conveys in the communion scene, but Hetty does not. She suffers and eventually dies, but there is no evidence that her experience has any beneficial effect. Nevertheless, the suffering she endures is conveyed by means of the cross.

Whereas in "Janet's Repentance" the symbol takes the form of a painting, in *Adam Bede* a roadside cross, and in *The Mill on the Floss* a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, in *Romola* it is a crucifix. When Romola's brother Dino dies, he gives to his sister the crucifix he wears. For Romola, as for her father and Tito, it is initially a hated symbol of fanaticism and unnatural self-deprivation. When Tito and Romola marry, he locks the crucifix within the classical triptych of Bacchus and Ariadne--an act itself fraught with symbolic significance. Later, when Romola first leaves her husband, she poses as a nun and carries the crucifix with her as she departs Florence. Outside the city she is halted by the Dominican Savonarola. He urges her to return to her husband and fulfill her responsibilities. Seizing upon the crucifix for demonstration, he tells Romola, "Conform your life to that image, my daughter..."

In the dialogue

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91 Eliot, IX, 106.
that follows, he explains his meaning more fully: "The higher life begins for us . . . when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom and freedom and blessedness. And the symbol of it hangs before you."92 He stresses his point shortly after by repetition: "My beloved daughter, sorrow has come to teach you a new worship: the sign of it hangs before you."93 And gradually during the novel Romola learns this "new worship"--the outgrowth of personal sorrow, disappointment, and suffering--the worship symbolized by the crucifix.

Such then are the biblical symbols employed by George Eliot: symbols of Eden, of the flood, of the wilderness and the promised land, of temptation, of conversion, and of the cross. Perhaps it is valid generalization to claim that all these symbols somehow merge as symbols of conversion, or are artistic variations of the symbolic many blending into the symbolic or thematic one. The symbolism is biblical, although the conversion itself is to Eliot's religion of humanity. Yet Eliot chooses as dominant symbol of her religion of humanity the cross of her Christian background. What Maggie Tulliver reads in a Kempis may well be taken symbolically to describe the whole of Eliot's fiction: "which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross."

92 Ibid., p. 108.

93 Ibid., p. 109.
CHAPTER VIII

ELIOT'S USE OF THE BIBLE
IN CHARACTERIZATION

Mention has been made in earlier chapters of George Eliot's uses of the Bible in characterization: the strings of biblical quotations, paraphrases, and allusions in the dialogue of Dinah Morris, Rufus Lyon, and other characters; the misreadings and misapplications of the Bible by Mrs. Holt which enhance her comic stature; and the parallels such as George Eliot's ironic presentation of the embittered Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt, the Radical and the hapless Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede as counterparts to Mary, mother of Christ. Once or twice, as in the discussion of Dinah Morris's affinities with the Apostle Paul and in the tracing of Adam Bede's similarity in his upper room to Christ, extensive use of the Bible for characterization has been suggested but not discussed.

For purposes of fuller analysis, George Eliot's use of the Bible in character delineation can be divided into three facets: significant use of biblical names, use of a specific biblical character or type as the pattern for a fictional character, and use of various biblical characters to create a single fictional character.

That fictional and biblical characters share identical names is not necessarily significant. At times, however, an
author's intention seems obviously to invite interpretation--symbolic or thematic--in biblical terms. For proof, one need look no further than the opening sentence of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*: "Call me Ishmael." Or in the fiction of George Eliot, no further than the initial chapter of *Adam Bede*: when the author introduces two brothers named Adam and Seth, and identifies Adam as a carpenter, she is at the very least alerting the reader to watch for possible extensions of these biblical hints.

There are at least four of George Eliot's characters whose biblical names are significant: Adam in *Adam Bede*, Eppie in *Silas Marner*, Jacob in "Brother Jacob," and Esther in *Felix Holt, the Radical*.

In Chapter VII, the symbolic significance of Eppie's appearing to Silas Marner in the Christmas season is demonstrated.\(^1\) As Heilman observes, "We are told early in the book . . . , and often reminded, that the 'great change' in Silas's life took place in the Christmas season: a little child came to bring love into his world. Delicately, and yet compellingly, Eliot brings in the suggestion of an ancient mystery."\(^2\) Eliot's suggestion is strengthened by the name which Silas selects. He names the child Hephzibah, after his mother and sister. Also, as he informs Dolly Winthrop, "It's

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\(^1\)See pp. 165-66.  
a Bible name." The literal meaning of the "Bible name" is "my delight is in her," a meaning George Eliot obviously was aware of. In Isaiah 62:4 the term is used symbolically to denote the restored Jerusalem, in which God will once again delight: "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah. . . ." The literal and symbolic meaning of the name in the Bible befits the fictional situation of Silas and his Hephzibah, his Eppie, of whom he came to say, "My delight is in her."

Another character whose name seems purposely taken from the Bible is Jacob in the relatively unknown "Brother Jacob." Of this brief, atypical tale Gordon Haight has written:

The frivolous names she uses suggest the allegorical nature of the tale. The scene of it is the town of Grimworth, the actors are David Faux (alias Edward Freely), Penny Palfrey, and John Towers, while minor figures are called Sally Lunn, Zephaniah Crypt, Mr. Prettyman, Mr. Pullilove, and so on. David's theft of his mother's little hoard of golden guineas and his ultimate exposure as a social hypocrite are the two significant elements of the plot.

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5Compare the rendering of the Revised Standard Version: "You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My delight is in her. . . ."

The one exception to Eliot's "frivolous" selection of names is the name of the title character. The name Jacob literally means "he who supplants, he who trips up the heels of." The Old Testament patriarch was so named because of the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth. His twin brother Esau was born first, Jacob second. Genesis 25:26 relates of Jacob that "his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob." Later, after Jacob has cheated Esau of his birthright and his blessing, the elder brother angrily remarks in Genesis 27:36, "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing."

Strangely enough, Esau's complaint against his younger brother is directly—if comically—relevant to the fictional situation. When the fictional older brother, David, attempts to steal his "birthright," a collection of guineas his mother is saving for him, the attempt is unwittingly foiled by Brother Jacob. Later, posing as Edward Freely, David Faux ingratiates himself with the townspeople of Grimworth and is preparing to marry the lovely daughter of a prominent, well-to-do citizen. The "blessing" is negated, however, by the sudden appearance of Brother Jacob, through whom David Faux's imposture is discovered. The complaint of the biblical brother becomes fitting for the fictional elder brother: "Is not he

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Buttrick et al., II, 782-83.
rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." Here, as in *Silas Marner*, a biblical name is used for its fictional pertinence.

A third example is Esther Lyon in *Felix Holt, the Radical*. The significance of Esther's name has been pointed out by David Carroll:

Even before her elevation of rank, she is seen "in this small dingy house of the minister in Malthouse Yard" as "a light-footed, sweet-voiced Queen Esther". . . . Later at Transome Court, Harold assures her that she is "empress" of her fortune, even though she confesses "I don't think I know very well what to do with my empire". . . . As might be expected, the biblical parallel is further developed by Lyon, who looks at everything from the same panoramic point of view: "he was so accustomed to the impersonal study of narrative, that even in these exceptional moments the habit of half a century asserted itself, and he seemed sometimes not to distinguish the case of Esther's inheritance from a story in ancient history". . . . For the Jews he substitutes the "body of congregational Dissent," and hopes Esther will fulfill her ordained role: "Your education and peculiar history would thus be seen to have coincided with a long train of events in making this family property a means of honouring and illustrating a purer form of Christianity than that which hath unhappily obtained the pre-eminence in this land". . . . His interpretation is wrong, but Esther does continue her biblical role at the trial when she uses her new position to appeal for Felix, identifying herself with the people among whom she has been brought up: "Some of that ardour which has flashed out and illuminated all poetry and history was burning today in the bosom of sweet Esther Lyon". . . .

The details of the novel invite an extension of the analogy beyond Esther herself to the other characters: Rufus Lyon can to some extent be equated to the biblical Mordecai, who raises

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Esther although he is not her father, and for whom she eventually renounces rank and status rather than be separated from her people; Harold Transome in search of a wife is similar to Ahaseurus in the Old Testament narrative; the lawyer Jermyn, with his love of distinction and his vindictive but unsuccessful attempt to overreach his enemies by guile, calls to mind the biblical Haman; Mrs. Transome, the adulteress, can even be seen as an ironic contrast to the modest Vashti, parallel both in her potential banishment and in her rejection at the hands of her lover. To carry such identifications very far, however, beyond the main emphasis of Esther herself, may be going beyond authorial intention.

In each of the instances cited, the names—Hephzibah, Jacob, Esther—have been taken from the Old Testament. On two occasions, Eliot utilizes not Old Testament names but extended Old Testament analogies. The two characters who function in the novels much as their biblical counterparts functioned are Eliot's two prophets, Savonarola in Romola and Mordecai in Daniel Deronda.

George Eliot fittingly chooses as the setting for Romola the city of Florence, whose patron saint is John the Baptist. The author states that "San Giovanni had been the patron saint of Florence for at least eight hundred years" before the time of the events of the novel. The prophetic patron

9Eliot, VIII, 119.
saint, the solitary man of the wilderness, preached repentance, condemned the religious and political hypocrisy of the Jewish people, and hailed the coming of a deliverer. In the novel, the fourteenth-century counterpart of the biblical John is "Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Prior of the Dominican Convent of San Marco in Florence." He too speaks of personal and public corruption, of the need for reform, and of a coming judgment at the hands of a deliverer. In his sermons, he prophesies that Florence will be scourged, that Florence will be regenerated, and that both these events will transpire "in our days," during the lifetime of Savonarola and his contemporaries.

Not only in his prophetic mission is Savonarola similar to John the Baptist, but also in the manner of his death. John drew down upon himself the wrath of the Jewish rulers for his denunciation of their conduct and consequently was beheaded. As Henry Lucas points out, Savonarola sought to revamp public and private life in Florence according to the law of Christ. . . . He believed that Charles [VIII of France, 1483-98] was the scourge of God come to purge the church of its evils. This advocacy of Charles' cause ran counter to Italian national interests as championed by the League of Venice. The pope was opposed to him because of his friendship toward France, which desired a council. . . . So he excommunicated Savonarola which made possible the success of the friar's enemies.

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10 Ibid., p. 306.
11 Ibid., p. 183.
Their ultimate success was the burning of the prophetic priest at the stake. Of his demise George Eliot writes,

Power rose against him not because of his sins, but because of his greatness—not because he sought to deceive the world, but because he sought to make it noble. And through that greatness of his he endured a double agony: not only the reviling, and the torture, and the death-throe, but the agony of sinking from the vision of glorious achievement into that deep shadow where he could only say, "I count as nothing: darkness encompasses me: yet the light I saw was the true light." \(^{13}\)

Going beyond the situational and personal similarities of the Florentine priest Savonarola and the Florentine patron John the Baptist, George Eliot reinforces her portrait of the priest as Old Testament prophet through explicit parallels:

Savonarola appeared to believe, and his hearers more or less waveringly believed, that he had a mission like that of the Hebrew prophets, and that the Florentines amongst whom his message was delivered were in some sense a second chosen people. The idea of prophetic gifts was not a remote one in that age: seers of visions, circumstantial heralds of things to be, were far from uncommon either outside or inside the cloister; but this very fact made Savonarola stand out the more conspicuously as a grand exception. While in others the gift of prophecy was very much like a farthing candle illuminating small corners of human destiny with prophetic gossip, in Savonarola it was like a mighty beacon shining far out for the warning and guidance of men. And to some of the soberest minds the supernatural character of his insight into the future gathered a strong attestation from the peculiar conditions of the age. \(^{14}\)

This link with the Hebrew prophets is forged more strongly by Eliot through her additional observations and through the comments of her various characters. She explicitly compares

\(^{13}\)Eliot, IX, 420.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., VIII, 307.
Savonarola to Elijah; when she devotes a chapter to Savonarola in the monastery, she entitles it "The Prophet in His Cell"; Nanni, a fervent disciple of the Dominican priest, says of Savonarola, "He has seen it in a vision, even as the prophets of old: he has seen the sword hanging from the sky"; another character, Francesco Cei, refers to Savonarola as a "new Jonah"; this parallel is repeated later when Savonarola himself exhorts in a sermon, "let Florence . . . repent and turn from its ways, like Nineveh of old. . . ."; and in a disparaging reference to the popular preacher, the character Cennini observes, "Our people . . . will run after anything in the shape of a prophet, especially if he prophesies terrors and tribulations."

In Romola, George Eliot traces the profound impact of this prophet upon his community and upon individual lives—the life of Romola herself, for instance. With probing psychological analysis, Eliot lays bare the layers of this complex historical and religious figure, showing him to be a man driven by contradictory yearnings for purity and for power, yearnings to serve and to dominate, opposing urges responsible for "that hard struggle which made half the tragedy

15 Ibid., IX, 361-62: "But Fra Girolamo did not move, except with the ordinary action accompanying speech. The speech was bold and firm, perhaps somewhat ironically remonstrant, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal, demanding the cessation of these trivial delays."

16 Ibid., p. 342 (Chapter LXIV). 17 Ibid., VIII, 32.

18 Ibid., p. 246. 19 Ibid., p. 312. 20 Ibid., p. 247.
of his life—the struggle of a mind possessed by a never-silent hunger after purity and simplicity, yet caught in a tangle of egoistic demands, false ideas, and difficult outward conditions, that made simplicity impossible.\(^{21}\) In one of her many passages analyzing Savonarola, George Eliot summarizes well the strengths and weaknesses not only of this individual prophet but also of many biblical and historical prophets:

In Savonarola's preaching there were strains that appealed to the very finest susceptibilities of men's natures, and there were elements that gratified low egoism, tickled gossiping curiosity, and fascinated timorous superstition. His need of personal predominance, his labyrinthine allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, his enigmatic visions, and his false certitude about the Divine intentions, never ceased, in his own large soul, to be ennobled by that fervid piety, that passionate sense of the infinite, that active sympathy, that clear-sighted demand for the subjection of selfish interests to the general good, which he had in common with the greatest of mankind.\(^{22}\)

The Florentine Dominican of *Romola* stands, along with Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*, as the finest of George Eliot's psychological portraits of religious types. Bulstrode is the rationalizing, well-meaning pharisee; Savonarola is the prophetic voice crying in the wilderness, the Jonah who preaches repentence to others yet finds his greatest challenge in practicing it himself.

Whereas Savonarola is patterned closely after John the Baptist and other prophetic biblical preachers of moral and

\(^{21}\) Ibid., IX, 297. \(^{22}\) Ibid., VIII, 347.
spiritual reform, Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda* is fashioned more after the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament who believed fervidly in the future as well as the past glory of the Jew, and who looked forward to the messiah as the one who would re-establish that greatness. Mordecai is a prophet in the sense suggested by Albert Cook in his distinction between Old Testament prophet and Old Testament poet:

The prophet has much in common with the poet, but is more didactic, and is concerned with the national life rather than with the individual. Like the poet, the prophet rehearses or alludes to God’s dealings with His people, so that continuity of motive is maintained throughout. A projection into the future opens up occasional vistas of limitless range and surpassing beauty, which give scope and direction to such hopes as men are prone to conceive for themselves or their descendants.  

Preoccupation with the national interest and with hopes for national greatness through his descendant or successor is the predominant feature of Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*.

As he himself relates, his name is Ezra Mordecai Cohen, a name suggesting not only prophetic character as exemplified by Ezra in the Old Testament book bearing his name but also staunch insistence upon fidelity to the Jewish faith and race as exemplified by Mordecai in the book of Esther. True to his Hebraic namesakes, Mordecai espouses the Jewish spirit and outlook. As he informs Deronda, "the hidden reasons why I need you began afar off. . . . Then ideas, beloved ideas,

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24 Eliot, XVII, 40.
came to me, because I was a Jew. They were a trust to ful-
fill, because I was a Jew. They were an inspiration, because
I was a Jew, and felt the heart of my race beating within
me. They were my life; I was not fully born till then."25
The very details of his life he sees as verifying his belief
in himself as the type of Israel. He tells Deronda,

Mine was the lot of Israel. For the sin of the father
my soul must go into exile. For the sin of the father
the work was broken, and the day of fulfilment delayed.
She who bore me was desolate, disgraced, destitute. I
turned back. On the instant I turned--her spirit, and
the spirit of her fathers, who had worthy Jewish hearts,
moved within me, and drew me. God, in whom dwells the
universe, was within me as the strength of obedience.26

In his identification with Israel, in his fervid com-
mitment to Judaism, Mordecai sets forth within the novel
many of his "beloved ideas." He believes Judaism to be the
"fundamental religion for the whole world."27 He conceives
of Israel as "the heart of mankind."28 He sees a similarity

25Ibid., XVI, 319. 26Ibid., p. 385.

27"Seest thou, Mirah," he said once, after a long si-
lence, 'the Shemah, wherein we briefly confess the divine
Unity, is the chief devotional exercise of the Hebrew; and
this made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole
world; for the divine Unity embraced as its consequence the
ultimate unity of mankind. See, then,--the nation which has
been scoffed at for its separateness has given a binding
theory to the human race." Ibid., XVII, 274.

28"Each nation has its own work, and is a member of the
world, enriched by the work of each. But it is true, as
Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of man-
kind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds
a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence
for the human body which lifts the needs of our animal life
into religion, and the tenderness which is merciful to the
poor and weak and to the dumb creature that wears the yoke
for us." Ibid., XVI, 368.
between his club of Jewish philosophers and "the Masters who handed down the thought of our race." 29 He believes in the needfulness and necessity of Jewish separateness. 30 As a means toward that end of Jewish separateness, he yearns for the re-establishment of the Jewish state:

In the multitudes of the ignorant on three continents who observe our rites and make the confession of the divine Unity, the soul of Judaism is not dead. Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality. Looking towards a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West—which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding. Let that come to pass, and the living warmth will spread to the weak extremities of Israel, and superstition will vanish, not in the lawlessness of the renegade, but in the illumination of great facts which widen feeling, and make all knowledge alive as the young offspring of beloved memories. 31

Shortly after this outburst of Jewish nationalism, Mordecai reverts to the same idea in terms of its biblical parallels:

29 "I have pleased myself with a faint likeness between these poor philosophers and the Masters who handed down the thought of our race--the great Transmitters, who laboured with their hands for scant bread, but preserved and enlarged for us the heritage of memory, and saved the soul of Israel alive as a seed among the tombs." Ibid., p. 355.

30 "When it is rational to say, 'I know not my father or my mother, let my children be aliens to me, that no prayer of mine may touch them,' then it will be rational for the Jew to say, 'I will seek to know no difference between me and the Gentile, I will not cherish the prophetic consciousness of our nationality--let the Hebrew cease to be, and let all his memorials be antiquarian trifles, dead as the wall-paintings of a conjectured race.'" Ibid., pp. 365-66.

31 Ibid., p. 371.
"Let them [those "who carry in their veins the Hebrew blood"] say, 'we will lift up a standard, we will unite in a labour hard but glorious like that of Moses and Ezra, a labour which shall be a worthy fruit of the long anguish whereby our fathers maintained their separateness, refusing the ease of falsehood.'"32 Again, he pleads with his fellow philosophers: "Let the torch of visible community be lit! Let the reason of Israel disclose itself in a great outward deed, and let there be another great migration, another choosing of Israel to be a nationality whose members may still stretch to the ends of the earth..."33 Such Judaic jingoism is certainly after the fashion of the Old Testament prophets.

Yet Eliot carries her analogy further. Mordecai realizes only too well that he is viewed as a fanatic by the majority of his fellow Jews, that he is as a voice crying in the wilderness. Therefore he seeks a spiritual successor or messiah to carry on and fulfill his dreams:

For many winters, while he had been conscious of an ebbing physical life, and a widening spiritual loneliness, all his passionate desire had concentrated itself in the yearning for some young ear into which he could pour his mind as a testament, some soul kindred enough to accept the spiritual product of his own brief, painful life, as a mission to be executed.34

In his yearning, he habitually stands dreamily on the bridges

32 Ibid., p. 374.  
33 Ibid., p. 376.  
34 Ibid., p. 284.
of London and envisions the coming of his spiritual successor, a man of "youth, beauty, refinement, Jewish birth, noble gravity." That man, of course, eventually appears as Daniel Deronda. When Mordecai finally dies, he takes comfort in his transmission of Judaic fervor to Deronda. Adding another touch to the Old Testament portrait, George Eliot patterns Mordecai's dying comments after those of the Moabitess Ruth in her pledge to Naomi, her Jewish mother-in-law: "Where thou goest, Daniel, I shall go. Is it not begun? Have I not breathed my soul into you? We shall live together." In such biblical language as this, in his name, in his beliefs, and in his actions, George Eliot reflects in Mordecai the Old Testament prophet.

She further stresses Mordecai's prophetic nature through comments and observations both of her own and of various characters. Hans Meyrick playfully but significantly refers to Mordecai as "this prophet Elijah," and quips, "I hope you will all of you like the new Lamentations of Jeremiah." Mirah, Mordecai's sister, explains to her errant father that "to stand before him is like standing before a prophet of

36 Ibid., XVII, 385. Compare Ruth 1:16--"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."
37 Ibid., p. 51. 38 Ibid., p. 52.
George Eliot herself brings into focus even more sharply the prophetic picture of Mordecai when she observes that "this change of clothing gave a still stronger accentuation to his dark-haired, eager face, which might have belonged to the prophet Ezekiel." Later in the novel, she again stresses Mordecai's prophetic role when she calls him a "spiritual exile" and a "Hebrew prophet."

Reaction within the novel to this "Hebrew prophet" varies. Hans Meyrick typifies the response of most characters when he describes Mordecai as "really a sort of philosophical-allegorical-mystical believer." And although Mordecai and Sir Hugo Mallinger never meet, Daniel Deronda imagines that his foster father, the pragmatic Englishman, will assess his spiritual father as "a consumptive Jew, possessed by a fanaticism which obstacles and hastening death intensified, who had fixed on Deronda as the antitype of some visionary image, the offspring of wedded hope and despair: despair of his own life, irresponsible hope in the propagation of his fanatical beliefs." Offsetting somewhat these negative reactions are the responses of Mirah, Deronda, and George Eliot herself. Mirah sees her elder brother as "a prophet of God." Deronda gradually responds

39 Ibid., p. 283.
40 Ibid., XVI, 175-76.
41 Ibid., p. 390.
42 Ibid., p. 391.
43 Ibid., XVII, 141-42.
44 Ibid., XVI, 338.
to Mordecai's "extravagant demand of discipleship"; he comes to believe that this nineteenth-century Jew has the chief elements of greatness: a mind consciously, energetically moving with the larger march of human destinies, but not the less full of conscience and tender heart for the footsteps that tread near and need a leaning-place; capable of conceiving and choosing a life's task with far-off issues, yet capable of the unapplauded heroism which turns off the road of achievement at the call of the nearer duty whose effect lies within the beatings of the hearts that are close to us, as the hunger of the unfledged bird to the breast of its parent.

Obviously, this is an estimate which George Eliot wholeheartedly endorses.

Critics have been more prone to side with Hans Meyrick and Sir Hugo than with Deronda and George Eliot in their evaluations of "Mordecai, the misunderstood prophet." There seems agreement as to the author's intentions in creating her fictional Ezra Mordecai Cohen. Kriefall notes that "Mordecai is a type of Israel in captivity, suffering both in the sense of exile and in the sense of physical illness." Paris observes of George Eliot,

In "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" she asserted that the future of the Jewish race depends largely upon the guidance of men of heroic stature, "upon the hope that

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46 Ibid., p. 389.  
among its finer specimens there may arise some men of instruction and ardent public spirit, some new Ezras, some modern Maccabees." Clearly Mordecai, whose first name is Ezra, is her version of such a man. . . .

While critics recognize her intention, however, for the most part they do not respond favorably to the result. Most notable among those denouncing Eliot's prophet is F. R. Leavis, who in The Great Tradition distinguishes between Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth and dismisses the former as George Eliot's Zionist faux pas. Leavis observes trenchantly that "Middlemarch can show nothing to match the wastes of biblicality and fervid idealism . . . devoted to Mordecai." Walter Allen echoes this sentiment when he writes of both Mirah and Mordecai, "As human beings they are simply not there." More recent detractors include Calvin Bedient, who objects to Mordecai's dialogue as "sodden with sentiment."

Mordecai, then, like his Old Testament prophetic counterparts, is largely denounced and dismissed as a character of consequence.

George Eliot's two characters presented largely as

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prophets after the Old Testament manner—Savonarola in Romola and Mordecai in Daniel Deronda—stand poles apart in their effectiveness as character creations. The "purer" prophet—prophetic not only in conduct but in name, nationality, religion, and messianic outlook—is the greater artistic failure. Perhaps the very closeness of Mordecai's portrait to the Old Testament prophets explains in part his failure to function effectively as a dynamic character. In the delineation of her Jewish prophet, George Eliot never really succeeds in disentangling him from the pages of the Old Testament sufficiently to allow him independent life. He fits well Cook's general definition of prophet, but he never ceases to be a prophet in general and become a specific person. He is too much the type, too little the individual. Savonarola, on the other hand, while obviously evincing general traits of the prophet and of the Dominican priest, becomes a credible, dynamic character. As Eliot observes,

Under this particular white tunic there was a heart beating with a consciousness inconceivable to the average monk, and perhaps hard to be conceived by any man who has not arrived at self-knowledge through a tumultuous inner life: a consciousness in which irrevocable errors and lapses from veracity were so entwined with noble purposes and sincere beliefs, in which self-justifying expediency was so inwoven with the tissue of a great work which the whole being seemed as unable to abandon as the body was unable to abandon glowing and trembling before the objects of hope and fear, that it was perhaps impossible, whatever course might be adopted, for the conscience to find perfect repose.53

53Eliot, IX, 343.
It is this tumultuous heart and conscience seeking but not finding repose which Mordecai lacks, and which results in his simply not being there as a human being, as Allen has observed. That George Eliot effectively employed the Old Testament in her creation of Mordecai, as well as Savonarola, is obvious. That she did not sufficiently transcend that source, humanize that prophet, also seems apparent.

As prophets, both Savonarola and Mordecai look forward to the coming of a messiah. Savonarola mistakenly believes Charles VIII of France to be the deliverer who will purge Florence of its spiritual and political corruption. Mordecai is more fortunate; he finds in Daniel Deronda the Jewish deliverer he seeks, one who will propagate his beliefs and lead his people.

George Eliot makes use of the Bible once again in presenting Deronda as the messianic fulfillment of Mordecai's dreams. But it is the New Testament rather than the Old Testament from which she draws. More specifically, George Eliot makes of Deronda a Christ figure.

If Christ figure is defined in a restrictive sense, as a character who bears unmistakable resemblance to Christ, as one whose actions demonstrate extensive parallels with the actions of Christ, then Deronda is Eliot's only Christ figure. If a looser definition is employed, if the term is taken to mean in general "any character who represents true authority (or opposes false authority), who moves from a
higher station or 'world' to a lower one, who resists temptation or fights against evil, who suffers or dies (or merely disappears for a time), who loves another or helps him or reforms him or forgives him or substitutes for him or judges him or refuses to judge him,"\textsuperscript{54} then Eliot's fiction teems with Christ figures. The only meaningful use of the term, however, is in the highly selective sense. And by that demanding standard, Daniel Deronda is Eliot's only bona fide Christ figure. As Kriefall notes, "George Eliot . . . set out to reestablish by her novel the true ground of religious faith by reconceiving the Christ. Daniel Deronda is her idea of the true Christ."\textsuperscript{55}

There is at least a suggestion of Christlikeness in Eliot's sketch of Deronda's basic character traits:

Daniel had the stamp of rarity in a subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others, which did not show itself effusively, but was continually seen in acts of considerateness that struck his companions as moral eccentricity. "Deronda would have been first-rate if he had more ambition"--was a frequent remark about him. But how could a fellow push his way properly when he objected to swop for his own advantage, knocked under by choice when he was within an inch of victory, and, unlike the great Clive, would rather be the calf than the butcher?\textsuperscript{56}

The possible parallels are Deronda's "sympathy," his "activity . . . on behalf of others," his "acts of considerateness


\textsuperscript{55}Kriefall, p. 95.  

\textsuperscript{56}Eliot, XV, 255.
that struck his companions as moral eccentricity," and the fact that "unlike the great Clive [but like the great Christ?" he "would rather be the calf [or lamb?] than the butcher."

In addition to this description, Eliot records a scene which at least superficially hints at a Christ parallel. At thirteen, Deronda is shown conversing with his tutor, Mr. Fraser, posing questions aimed at shedding light on the identity of his parents. One calls to mind the biblical scene in the temple, that of the Christ child at twelve conversing with the Jewish scholars. When discovered by his parents there, he tells them that he must be about his father's business. Deronda, conversely, is the child seeking his lost parents; he eventually, however, discovers his Jewish origin and then goes about his father's business. Admittedly the parallel is tenuous, but the selection of this single glimpse of Deronda's childhood, this situation of a boy conversing with a learned man concerning his father, at least brings to mind the only glimpse in the gospels of Christ as a boy.

As a young man, Deronda is described in terms which further hint at association of biblical and fictional. His love of "still seclusion" parallels Christ's need for solitude as recorded in such passages as Mark 1:35 and Mark

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57 Ibid., pp. 234 ff. The scene begins Chapter XVI.
58 Ibid., p. 265.
6:46. Eliot also stresses Deronda's potential leadership, his desire to become a sort of Joseph, or Moses, or Christ:

But how and whence was the needed event to come?—the influence that would justify partiality, and make him what he longed to be yet was unable to make himself—an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real? To make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without; but how make it?59

In answering these questions through the development of the novel's plot, George Eliot traces Deronda's Christlike relationships to various characters.

To Lady Mallinger, his foster mother, Daniel stands as a symbol of strength and security: "When she was much puzzled, it was her habit to say to herself, 'I will ask Daniel.'"60 Her husband, Sir Hugo, perceives in Deronda a penchant for the didactic and emotional. Jokingly but aptly he says to his young ward, "You are always looking tenderly at the women, and talking to them in a Jesuitical way."61 Much later, Sir Hugo remarks to Deronda, "You have a passion for people who are pelted, Dan."62

The first of these "people who are pelted" is Daniel's college comrade, Hans Meyrick:

To Deronda he poured himself out on his studies, his affairs, his hopes; the poverty of his home, and his love for the creatures there.... He wanted no confidence in return, but seemed to take Deronda as an

59Ibid., p. 128. 60Ibid., XV, 324. 61Ibid., XVI, 122. 62Ibid., XVII, 251.
Olympian who needed nothing. . . . Deronda was content, and gave Meyrick all the interest he claimed, getting at last a brotherly anxiety about him, looking after him in his erratic moments, and contriving by adroitly delicate devices not only to make up for his friend's lack of pence, but to save him from threatening chances. Such friendship easily becomes tender: the one spreads strong sheltering wings that delight in spreading, the other gets the warm protection which is also a delight. Deronda's role as Hans's confessor-protector and his sacrificing of his own studies to help Hans prepare for examinations lead Hans to describe Deronda to his sisters as "the salvation of him, a fellow like nobody else, and, in fine, a brick." This magnanimous action of Deronda on their brother's behalf produces in the three Meyrick girls an attitude of worship toward Hans's friend. Mab comically, but significantly, describes to Mirah Lapidoth their reverence for Deronda: "Kate burns a pastille before his portrait every day. . . . And I carry his signature in a little black silk bag round my neck to keep off the cramp. And Amy says the multiplication-table in his name. We must all do something extra in honour of him, now he has brought you to us." These acts of worship which Mab playfully imagines invite comparison of Deronda to Christ—the honoring of the portrait or image through formal worship, the carrying of a religious token, the formulaic religious act of saying things "in his name."

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63 Ibid., XV, 260.
64 Ibid., p. 264.
65 Ibid., p. 321.
In keeping with this worshipful attitude, the Meyrick girls consider Deronda too superior to ever marry a mortal woman. 66

As Deronda proves the salvation of Hans and gains the admiration of the entire Meyrick family, so he also "saves" Mirah Lapidoth from intended suicide and subsequently concerns himself with her welfare. She comes to regard him as a savior, a "rescuing angel": 67 "The God of our fathers bless you," she says to Deronda, "and deliver you from all evil as you have delivered me. I did not believe there was any man so good. None before have thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor and miserable, yet you have given me the best." 68 The involvement with Mirah leads Deronda to a general interest in Judaism and a specific interest in discovering Mirah's brother, a quest which leads him to the prophetic Mordecai.

Their relationship begins in mutual distrust and disappointment and ends in the transmission of Jewish ideals and dreams from the prophet to his successor. Deronda fulfills the role of a messiah in the Old Testament sense of one who will seek to re-establish the former glories of Judaistic nationalism. This role is one assumed slowly, by degrees. Kriefall traces the important steps in this "decision for

66 "No woman will do for him to marry." Ibid., XVII, 162.
67 Ibid., p. 382.
68 Ibid., XV, 289.
messiahship":

1) Deronda's visit of the Frankfort synagogue; 2) his first encounter with Mordecai at Ham's book shop; 3) the Blackfriars Bridge encounter; 4) the meeting at the Philosophers' Club. In each of these, others recognize him as having a special relation to Israel and, in the latter two instances, a special "call" to be the long anticipated savior of the Jewish people. 69

The climactic step is his visit with his real mother; then Deronda learns that he is indeed a Jew and determines to act on that knowledge: "I consider it my duty--it is the impulse of my feeling--to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and hand to I shall choose to do it." 70 He makes the same messianic announcement to

69 Kriefall, pp. 83-84. Kriefall's thesis in his dissertation is that Daniel Deronda can be "thoroughly . . . fitted in the mold Strauss made for Jesus. First of all, the name 'Daniel' corresponds to the name of the Biblical book which most vividly portrayed the Son of Man and which, from the view of historical influence, was the most important. Secondly, as the long cherished messianic expectation is seen fulfilled in Jesus, so Mordecai's vision is fulfilled in Daniel Deronda, though at the time of the Blackfriars Bridge recognition Deronda is ignorant even of his Jewish blood. In Strauss and in Eliot the older prophet [the biblical John the Baptist, the fictional Mordecai] is the mentor. Thirdly, Mordecai's foreknowing is rooted in his personal need and in the need of his people, which follows Strauss' thesis that apocalyptic is the faith of a people in despair of their fortunes. Fourthly, even in the detail of the Deliverer arriving against the background of the clouds of heaven, the similarity holds between the apocalyptic Son of Man and Eliot's figure. Finally, the Son of Man in both the ancient myth and the Victorian story will be the Deliverer of the Jewish people and the restorer of their homeland. Compare Daniel's 'And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all people . . . should serve him' with Mordecai's 'I seek nothing for them [the Jews], but the good which promises good to all the nations.' Pp. 67-68.

70 Eliot, XVII, 170.
Kalonymos, close friend of his fervidly Jewish grandfather, to his mentor Mordecai, and to his spiritual disciple Gwendolen Harleth. To Kalonymos he declares,

I shall call myself a Jew. . . . But I will not say that I shall profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed. Our fathers themselves changed the horizon of their belief and learned of other races. But I think I can maintain my grandfather's notion of separateness with communication. I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation.71

And he assures the exultant Mordecai, who had long sought a spiritual successor:

Since I began to read and know, I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude—some social captainship, which would come to me as a duty, and not be striven for as a personal prize. You have raised the image of such a task for me—to bind our race together in spite of heresy. You have said to me—"Our religion united us before it divided us—it made us a people before it made Rabbanites and Karaites." I mean to try what can be done with that union—I mean to work in your spirit. Failure will not be ignoble, but it would be ignoble for me not to try.72

Finally, for Gwendolen he sketches his grand scheme in greater detail:

"I am going to the East to become better acquainted with the condition of my race in various countries there," said Deronda, gently—anxious to be as explanatory as he could on what was the impersonal part of their separateness from each other. "The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have,

71 Ibid., pp. 260-61.

72 Ibid., pp. 298-99.
though they too are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty: I am resolved to devote my life to it. At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own."  

Deronda serves, then, as Christ figure to the Jews, especially to Mordecai, in his role as national messiah. To Gwendolen Harleth he is also a Christ figure, but in a differing way. As Carroll suggests, whereas "Mordecai requires him to be a national messiah, . . . Gwendolen wants him as her personal saviour."  

The novel ends with the stress on the messianic Deronda setting off for the East; it begins by stressing the redemptive relationship of Deronda toward Gwendolen Harleth. In the initial scene, that of Gwendolen's gambling at Leubronn with Deronda disapprovingly looking on, his influence upon her begins, an influence felt at first with resentment:  

The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict.

The effect is definite, however. Later in the chapter she considers returning to the gaming tables, "but always in this latter scene there was the presence of that Deronda, watching her with exasperating irony, and--the two keen

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73 Ibid., pp. 374-75.
75 Eliot, XV, 7-8.
experiences were inevitably revived together—beholding her again forsaken by luck." 76) The entire episode is embellished by Eliot’s ascribing to Gwendolen an Evelike pride 77 and by the description of the haughty maiden in serpentine terms suggesting Edenic evil. As Gwendolen gambles, male onlookers make analyses:

"You like a nez retrousse' then, and long narrow eyes?"
"When they go with such an ensemble."
"The ensemble du serpent?"
"If you will. Woman was tempted by a serpent: why not man?" 78

And later, just before Gwendolen departs Leubronn, George Eliot records that "she walked on with her usual floating movement, every line in her figure and drapery falling in gentle curves attractive to all eyes except those which discerned in them too close a resemblance to the serpent, and objected to the revival of serpent-worship." 79

The association of Edenic pride and evil with Gwendolen is subsequently traced in her universal haughtiness, her marriage to Grandcourt, and her disillusionment with the

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76 Ibid., p. 19.
77 "And happening to be seated sideways before the long strip of mirror between her two windows she turned to look at herself, leaning her elbow on the back of the chair in an attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait. . . . Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm." Ibid., p. 20.
78 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
79 Ibid., p. 21.
marriage. The result of this disillusionment is the eventual emergence in Gwendolen of "something like a new soul, which had better, but also worse, possibilities than her former poise of crude self-confidence."\(^8^0\) In an attempt to tip these precariously poised spiritual scales in the right direction, Gwendolen turns to Deronda. George Eliot describes Gwendolen's attitude toward him: "He was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience, as one woman whose nature is an object of reverential belief may become a new conscience to a man."\(^8^1\) In seeking counsel and guidance from Deronda, Gwendolen essentially "had turned this man ... into a priest."\(^8^2\) His function as a spiritual guide begins in Chapter XXXVI; on two occasions Gwendolen and Deronda are alone together. In the garden, she partially confesses her unhappiness due to her own misdeeds; later, in the library, she elaborates more fully and requests guidance. In response, Deronda counsels Gwendolen to rise above personal egoism, to bear necessary burdens. Among the young man's comments is an allusion of some significance. "It is true," he tells Gwendolen, "that the consciousness of having done wrong is something deeper, more bitter. I suppose we faulty

\(^8^0\)Ibid., XVI, 79.  
\(^8^1\)Ibid., p. 203.  
\(^8^2\)Ibid., p. 226.
creatures can never feel so much for the irreproachable as for those who are bruised in the struggle with their own faults. It is a very ancient story, that of the lost sheep—but it comes up afresh every day."83 She is the sheep, he the seeker, the counterpart of the good shepherd in Christ's parable.84 Toward the close of the chapter, Gwendolen utters for the first time a phrase of thankful appreciation which she repeats periodically throughout the remainder of the novel: "It shall be better with me because I have known you."85 As Paris has noted, "The nature of their relationship at this point underwent a profound alteration, Deronda becoming to Gwendolen what the suffering Christ is to the devout Christian."86 He further observes, "Clearly, Deronda was for Gwendolen a combination of the suffering, forgiving Christ—the God who is love—and God the lawgiver and judge, from whom the sinner inevitably suffers a sense of alienation."87

83 Ibid., p. 238.  
85 Eliot, XVI, 259. Later examples include the following: after Grandcourt's death by drowning, Gwendolen cries out to Deronda, "I should have been worse if it had not been for you. If you had not been good, I should have been more wicked than I am" (XVII, 228); and the last sentence of her letter to Deronda on the day of his marriage reads, "It is better—it shall be better with me because I have known you" (XVII, 384).  
86 Paris, p. 238.  
87 Ibid., pp. 239-40.
From this point on, Gwendolen looks to Deronda as spiritual touchstone for her thoughts and actions. Domestic despair invites defiance and desertion, but Gwendolen withstands the temptation—"and always among the images that drove her back to submission was Deronda." This impulse to change for the better which Gwendolen derives from Deronda is summarized in the following observation by Eliot:

She had learned to see all her acts through the impression they would make on Deronda: whatever relief might come to her, she could not sever it from the judgement of her that would be created in his mind. Not one word of flattery, of indulgence, of dependence on her favour, could be fastened on by her in all their intercourse, to weaken his restraining power over her...; and amid the dreary uncertainties of her spoiled life the possible remedies that lay in his mind, nay, the remedy that lay in her feeling for him, made her only hope. He seemed to her a terrible-browed angel from whom she could not think of concealing any deed so as to win an ignorant regard from him: it belonged to the nature of their relation that she should be truthful, for his power over her had begun in the raising of a self-discontent which could be satisfied only by genuine change.

The Christlike position and influence of Deronda are repeatedly underscored in passages that draw a close, often overt, parallel between Deronda and his biblical counterpart. While sailing the Mediterranean with her hated husband, Gwendolen muttered "inarticulate prayers," and when she "thought of definite help, it took the form of Deronda's

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88 Eliot, XVII, 86.
89 Ibid., p. 187.
90 Ibid., p. 188.
presence and words, of the sympathy he might have for her, of the direction he might give her." 91 When she was boating with Grandcourt at Genoa, she gained comfort from Deronda's presence in the city: "The sense that he was there would save her from acting out the evil within." 92 After her husband's drowning, Gwendolen again derives comfort from Deronda's presence and pastoral exhortation:

"I believe that you may become worthier than you have ever yet been—worthy to lead a life that may be a blessing. No evil dooms us hopelessly except the evil we love, and desire to continue in, and make no effort to escape from. You have made efforts—you will go on making them."

"But you were the beginning of them. You must not forsake me," said Gwendolen. . . . 93

In other such passages, George Eliot suggests that Deronda has appeared to Gwendolen and acted for her benefit "in the stead of God"; 94 that his impulse is "to save her from sorrow, to shelter her life for evermore from the dangers of loneliness, and carry out to the last the rescue he had begun in that monitory redemption of the necklace"; 95 that he is to Gwendolen a "severe angel," and his words are "like the touch of a miraculous hand"; 96 that the "struggling regenerative process in her . . . had begun with his action"; 97

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., p. 199.
94 Ibid., p. 317.
95 Ibid., p. 320.
96 Ibid., p. 326.
97 Ibid., p. 329.
that he represents "Mighty Love,"98 as well as a "corrective presence."99

The overwhelming impact of Deronda's Christlikeness in the redeeming of Hans, Mirah, and Gwendolen and their worship of him, in his assumption of Jewish messiahship in response to Mordecai's call, prompts one to fully agree with Kriefall when he claims that

Deronda is different . . . from the Christ figures which abound in modern literature--different from Joe Christmas, for example, in Faulkner's Light in August, who resembles Christ only in respect to age and degree of suffering. Eliot is attempting with the portrait of Deronda to produce the sort of image that steps from the pages of the Gospels, one who still calls others to discipleship and the renunciation of self.100

The resulting character, whom Henry James labelled as George Eliot's attempt "to make a faultless human being"101 and Jerome Thale has called "the English gentleman as Alyosha,"102 is perhaps excessively Christlike to be a dynamic character in his own right. He is called by Carole Robinson a "secular man of sorrows, the most exasperating and least convincing hero in Victorian fiction."103 Because of his idealized

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98Ibid.
99Ibid., p. 364.
100Kriefall, pp. 136-37.
spirituality, he lacks human substance or essence. He stands as grand example in George Eliot's fiction of the Christ figure redefined in her own terms, yet lacking adequate life apart from his role as savior and messiah to create positive reader response. In that shortcoming, he stands as worthy associate of the ultimately prophetic but equally lifeless Mordecai, both of whom the uncompromising F. R. Leavis would banish from the novel.

Not all of George Eliot's "biblical" characters can be closely identified with a single type or single individual as can Savonarola, Mordecai, and Deronda. Eclectic biblical characteristics remain too diverse with some characters to allow interpretation in terms of one figure; at the same time, the fictional individual displays a basically biblical personality and function, and is obviously intended by Eliot to be so interpreted. Three examples of this type of biblical eclecticism in character creation are Tom and Maggie Tulliver, Dinah Morris, and Adam Bede.

In The Mill on the Floss, the epigraph of the novel ("In their death they were not divided") stresses the closeness in death of two family members not always compatible in life--the stern father and the affectionate son of the Bible, the stern brother and affectionate sister in the novel. Close as children, Tom and Maggie grow apart as they mature but are reconciled in the death scene. Their
epitaph underscores at the close of the novel the familial
union which they achieved, in keeping with the biblical duo.

A second biblical parallel integrated in Tom and Maggie’s
creation is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here Maggie
is the Prodigal and Tom plays consummately the role of the
Elder Brother. The first suggestion of the parallel is in
the passage relating Maggie’s absent-minded negligence in
caring for Tom’s rabbits. She has forgotten to feed them;
they have died; young Tom has bitterly denounced her lack of
concern. Seeking solace from Luke the Miller, Maggie notices
in his cottage a painting of the Prodigal Son at the low
tide of his errant career. She stares intently at the pic-
ture, and George Eliot relates that

the indefinable weight the dead rabbits had left on
her mind caused her to feel more than usual pity for
the career of this weak young man, particularly when
she looked at the picture where he leaned against a
tree with a flaccid appearance, his knee-breeches un-
buttoned and his wig awry, while the swine, apparently
of some foreign breed, seemed to insult him by their
good spirits over their feast of husks.

"I’m very glad his father took him back again--
aren’t you, Luke?" she said. "For he was very sorry,
you know, and wouldn’t do wrong again."

"Eh, Miss," said Luke, "he’d be no great shakes,
I doubt, let’s feyther do what he would for him."

That was a painful thought to Maggie, and she
wished much that the subsequent history of the young
man had not been left a blank.105

Like the biblical father, Maggie’s father is always forgiving
toward the sins of his "little wench," his prodigal. But

105 Eliot, V, 42-43.
the elder brother, Tom, is less disposed to clemency. Throughout the novel Maggie is pictured as a prodigal, continually erring but always penitent. Her ultimate sin, in the eyes of family and community, is the river trip with Stephen Guest; this time, when the prodigal returns home there is no forgiving father to greet her, only the iron-willed brother:

"Tom," she began faintly, "I am come back to you--I am come back home--for refuge--to tell you everything."
"You will find no home with me," he answered, with tremulous rage. "You have disgraced us all. You have disgraced my father's name. You have been a curse to your best friends. You have been base--deceitful; no motives are strong enough to restrain you. I wash my hands of you for ever. You don't belong to me."

Maggie's mother appears at this moment, pleads for her daughter, and departs with her when Tom refuses to relent. Thus the parent of the prodigal forgives, accepts, and defends--just as in the biblical parable. Of Tom's unyielding and un forgiving attitude Bellows has remarked,

Tom is, indeed, the "elder son" of the old parable, who was virtuous, who stayed at home, who spent not "his substance in riotous living,"--so virtuous, indeed, that he has hardened his heart against his own flesh and blood. He has not gone wrong. He has had as hard a battle as she to fight, but he has conquered where she has ignominiously failed. He despises her and her actions: she shall hardly find a shelter under his roof. He will let the world see that he knows the proper distinctions to be made between good and evil.

106Ibid., VI, 329.

Intertwined with the presentation of Tom and Maggie Tulliver as fictional counterparts to the characters in Christ's parable of the Prodigal is yet a second parabolic parallel: the Pharisee and the Publican. This second parable also contrasts spiritual penitence and humility with spiritual pride and intolerance. George Eliot's sketch of Tom and those of his type strongly suggests a pharisaic person:

To minds strongly marked by the positive and negative qualities that create severity--strength of will, conscious rectitude of purpose, narrowness of imagination and intellect, great power of self-control, and a disposition to exert control over others--prejudices come as the natural food of tendencies which can get no sustenance out of that complex, fragmentary, doubt-provoking knowledge which we call truth.

Earlier George Eliot had referred to Tom as "unimaginative, unsympathetic." The identification is carried beyond the realm of the speculative, however, when the frequently criticized sister strikes back at her brother on one occasion:

I know I've been wrong--often, continually. But yet, sometimes when I have done wrong, it has been because I have feelings that you would be the better for, if you had them. If you were in fault ever--if you had done anything very wrong--I should be sorry for the pain it brought you; I should not want punishment to be heaped on you. But you have always enjoyed punishing me--you have always been hard and cruel to me: even when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than any one

109 Eliot, VI, 287.
110 Ibid., p. 190.
else in the world, you would let me go crying to bed without forgiving me. You have no pity; you have no sense of your own imperfection and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard; it is not fitting for a mortal— for a Christian. You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues—you think they are great enough to win you everything else. You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 119-20.}

Brother and sister, then, are analogous to various biblical pairs: Saul and Jonathan, the Elder Brother and Prodigal, and the Pharisee and Publican. George Eliot selects those pairs who illuminate the personalities of Tom and Maggie. Tom is the stern father figure, the unforgiving Elder Brother, the Pharisee; Maggie is the counterpart of the affectionate Jonathan, the penitent Prodigal, the humble Publican. The strokes in these portraits are made by employing differing biblical brushes, but the finished picture of brother and sister is a harmonious whole, an effective merging of the biblical many into the fictional one.

Another George Eliot character whose creation is in part a blending of diverse biblical elements is Dinah Morris in \textit{Adam Bede}.

To begin with, her name is a biblical one, although George Eliot seems not to have any direct parallel in mind between the chaste and saintly Methodist and the assaulted Dinah of the Old Testament whose brothers wreak savage and sordid revenge as recorded in Genesis 34. If there is any
association intended it is probably ironic, as Knoepflmacher has suggested. A truer parallel than that suggested by name is the analogy drawn by George Eliot between Dinah and Mary, the sister of Martha. Referring to Dinah's Aunt Poyser, Eliot writes, "The family likeness between her and her niece Dinah Morris, with the contrast between her keenness and Dinah's seraphic gentleness of expression, might have served a painter as an excellent suggestion for a Martha and Mary." This contrast between the galvanic aunt and her placid niece is one which George Eliot repeatedly underscores in the novel, for comic as well as serious effect.

Another contrast, one lacking altogether the comic dimension, is that of the spiritual Dinah and the sensual Hetty Sorrel. In this relationship, as well as in others, Dinah is presented as a slight Christ figure. The Wordsworthian epigraph to Adam Bede refers to those "among the flock as swerved/ Or fell"; this pastoral imagery so suggestive of the Good Shepherd is consistently used to define or describe the relationship between Dinah and Hetty. Dinah's first reference to Hetty is to "that poor wandering

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112 U. C. Knoepflmacher, George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 107: "Ironically, this virginal resident of Snowfield... bears the name of a biblical figure deflowered by a gentile."


114 Ibid., p. v.
lamb," a lamb she seeks to rescue from the imagined "thorny thicket of sin and sorrow, in which she saw the poor thing struggling torn and bleeding, looking with tears for rescue and finding none." Not until late in the novel, however, does Hetty respond to Dinah's overtures of sympathy and succor. When in deepest despair in the woods she has exhausted all hope, she calls to mind Dinah's earlier proffer of aid; and later in prison, sullenly incommunicative, Hetty finally confesses to Dinah. As Thale has noted, "Only Dinah can take compassion and penetrate the wall Hetty has around her, for Dinah is the only character whose world is large enough to include both feeling for others and an awareness of suffering."

Early in the novel Lisbeth Bede also, after her husband's death, responds strongly to Dinah's words and deeds of comfort. When Dinah leaves, Lisbeth remarks to Adam that Dinah "spakes so gentle an' moves about so still. I could be fast sure that pictur was drawed for her i' thy new Bible--th' angel a-sittin' on the big stone by the grave." And when news of Hetty's murder of her child is revealed to the Poyser and Bede households, both feel the need of Dinah in their distress. Mr. Poyser says, "We'd better ha' sent for Dinah,

115 Ibid., p. 44. 116 Ibid., p. 226.
117 Thale, p. 30.
118 Eliot, III, 199.
if we'd known where she is..."119 This feeling is echoed by Lisbeth Bede, who laments, "I'd like her to come in an' take me by th' hand again, an' talk to me: she'd tell me the rights on't, belike--she'd happen know some good i' all this trouble an' heart-break..."120 As George Eliot comments, in a passage which forms one of the strongest links between Christ and Dinah Morris, "the pitying love that shone out from Dinah's face looked like a visible pledge of the Invisible Mercy."121

Two additional links are the sermon Dinah preaches on the village green and the letter she sends to Seth. The sermon is a tissue of biblical quotations and phrases, with all quotations by Dinah being the words of Christ himself. She relates to the villagers "how the good news had been brought, and how the mind of God towards the poor had been made manifest in the life of Jesus, dwelling on its lowliness and its acts of mercy."122 As Szirotny remarks, "What she says about Christ has relevance principally for Dinah herself."123 An even more explicit identification of Dinah as a Christ figure is in her letter to Seth Bede. Her letter, like her sermon, is laced with biblical phrases and quotations by Dinah being the words of Christ himself.

119 Ibid., IV, 82. 120 Ibid., p. 183.
121 Ibid., p. 247. 122 Ibid., III, 33.
The crux of the letter, however, is this passage in which Dinah's affinity with Christ is obvious:

I sit on my chair in the dark room and close my eyes, and it is as if I was out of the body and could feel no want for evermore. For then, the very hardship, and the sorrow, and the blindness, and the sin, I have beheld and been ready to weep over,—yea, all the anguish of the children of men, which sometimes wraps me round like sudden darkness—I can bear with a willing pain, as if I was sharing the Redeemer's cross. For I feel it, I feel it—infinite love is suffering too—yea, in the fullness of knowledge it suffers, it yearns, it mourns; and that is a blind self-seeking which wants to be freed from the sorrow wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travailleth. Surely it is not true blessedness to be free from sorrow, while there is sorrow and sin in the world: sorrow is then a part of love, and love does not seek to throw it off. It is not the spirit only that tells me this—I see it in the whole work and word of the gospel. Is there not pleading in heaven? Is not the Man of Sorrows there in that crucified body wherewith he ascended? And is He not one with the Infinite Love itself—as our love is one with our sorrow?

These thoughts have been borne in on me of late, and I have seen with new clearness the meaning of those words, "If any man love me, let him take up my cross."

124 Among the many biblical phrases and allusions woven into Dinah's letter (IV, 54-57) are the following: "as if the windows of heaven were opened again" (Genesis 7:11); "to lay by money" (I Corinthians 16:2); "like the laying up of manna" (Exodus 16); "as the patriarch Joseph did, who, when he was exalted to a place of power and trust, yet yearned with tenderness towards his parent and his younger brother" (Genesis 42 ff.); "My heart is knit" (I Chronicles 12:17); "the children of men" (several Old Testament passages; see, for example, Genesis 11:5, I Samuel 26:19); "wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travailleth" (Romans 8:22); "If any man love me, let him take up my cross" (direct quotation of Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23); "I have all things and abound" (Philippians 4:18); "like laying a false offering on the altar and expecting the fire from heaven to kindle it" (I Kings 18); "the work of the house is sufficient for the day" (Matthew 6:34).
I have heard this enlarged on as if it meant the troubles and persecutions we bring on ourselves by confessing Jesus. But surely that is a narrow thought. The true cross of the Redeemer was the sin and sorrow of this world—what lay heavy on his heart—and that is the cross we shall share with him, that is the cup we must drink of with him, if we would have any part in that Divine Love which is one with his sorrow.125

Close association both in sermon and letter with the "Man of Sorrows," the "Redeemer," together with Dinah's ministry to the "wandering lamb" Hetty Sorrel and others, marks her as a Christ figure in Adam Bede.

Yet it is not quite correct to call Dinah a Christ figure, not without qualification. For in the very letter just quoted, as well as elsewhere in the novel, George Eliot draws a parallel between Dinah and the Apostle Paul. Early in the novel, Dinah discusses with Seth Bede her intention to return to Snowfield, and explains why:

I'm called there. It was borne in upon my mind while I was meditating on Sunday night, as Sister Allen, who's in a decline, is in need of me. I saw her as plain as we see that bit of thin white cloud, lifting up her poor thin hand and beckoning to me. And this morning when I opened the Bible for direction, the first words my eyes fell on were, "And after we had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia."126

The verse to which Dinah opens is Acts 16:10, which George Eliot slightly misquotes, substituting "we had seen" for "he had seen." Verses 9 and 10 read, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed

125Eliot, IV, 55-56.
126Ibid., III, 44.
him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." As Higdon has observed, "George Eliot has closely paralleled Dinah's experience to that of Saint Paul. Both individuals experience visions of people requesting aid; both abandon other plans in response to the vision; both immediately accept the vision as a directive from God." Here, then, the parallel is with St. Paul rather than with Christ.

A second Pauline parallel lies in Dinah's refusal to marry. She says to Seth, "I desire to live and die without husband or children. I seem to have no room in my soul for wants and fears of my own, it has pleased God to fill my heart so full with the wants and sufferings of his poor people." Recognizing the source of her view, Seth had earlier conceded that "St. Paul says, 'She that's married careth for the things of this world how she may please her husband'"; but he goes on to point out that "St. Paul says as plain as can be in another place, 'I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give

127 David Leon Higdon, "George Eliot and the Quest for 'Magic Books,'" paper delivered at the South Central Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, Fort Worth, Texas, November 9, 1973, p. 3.

128 Eliot, III, 47.
none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

The problem is that Dinah does not consider "younger women" so much her prototype as she does the evangelistic apostle himself, who summed up his personal attitude toward marriage when he wrote in I Corinthians 7:32, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." Here again Dinah is a fictional image of Paul.

In Chapter XV, "The Two Bedchambers," there appears another parallel. When trying to decide whether or not to visit Hetty in her room, Dinah again seeks guidance from her Bible.

The first words she looked at were those at the top of the left-hand page: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." That was enough for Dinah; she had opened on that memorable parting at Ephesus, when Paul had felt bound to open his heart in a last exhortation and warning. She hesitated no longer, but, opening her own door gently, went and tapped at Hetty's.

The visit is unsuccessful, but it does plant the seed of sympathetic understanding that later blooms in the prison scene. What is pertinent to note, however, is that

Again, parallels underline the similarity between Dinah and Paul. Immediately before leaving Ephesus, Paul spoke at length with the elders of the Church exhorting them to Christian discipline by succinctly paraphrasing the words of Christ. He then left for Jerusalem. Paul's

129Ibid., p. 45. The passages Seth cites are I Corinthians 7:34 and I Timothy 5:14.

130Ibid., p. 227.
audience was more receptive than Dinah's, however. Like Paul, she is about to leave; like him, she tries to strengthen her audience; like him, she is embraced by her sobbing audience, but unlike Paul, Dinah is pushed away by Hetty—who demands to be left alone.131 Dinah perceives the similarity in each instance between Paul's situation and her own and acts accordingly. The reader also perceives these similarities and their contribution of another biblical dimension to the characterization of Dinah Morris.

One further parallel between St. Paul and Eliot's Methodist heroine remains to be noted, that found in the letter with which this discussion of apostolic analogy began. There are, as noted, several elements in the letter identifying Dinah with Christ. But the conclusion is in another vein. Dinah closes by writing this postscript below her signature: "I have not skill to write the words so small as you do, and my pen moves slow. And so I am straitened, and say but little of what is in my mind. Greet your mother for me with a kiss. She asked me to kiss her twice when we parted."132 This epistolary closing brings to mind passages in the Pauline epistles. When Dinah takes note of the largeness of her handwriting as compared to Seth's one thinks of Paul's comment in the concluding verses of Galatians, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand," a passage more accurately translated in the Revised Standard

131Higdon, p. 5.
132Eliot, IV, 57.
Version as "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." Then, too, Dinah's injunction to Seth to greet his mother with a kiss closely echoes Paul's formulaic closing of four of his epistles:

I Corinthians 16:20--"All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss."

II Corinthians 13:12--"Greet one another with an holy kiss."

Romans 16:16--"Salute one another with an holy kiss."

I Thessalonians 5:26--"Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."

In her epistolary writing, then, in her evangelistic fervor, in her initial foreswearing of marriage for religious reasons, and in situational similarities brought out through sortes Biblicae, Dinah Morris is patterned after the Apostle Paul.

In considering this character combined of traits taken from Christ, the central figure of the New Testament, and from Paul, the zealous missionary responsible for writing some two-thirds of the New Testament, one is reminded of the encomium of Eliot's contemporary, the American poet Sidney Lanier:

that beautiful Dinah Morris you will remember in Adam Bede--solemn, fragile, strong Dinah Morris, the woman-preacher whom I find haunting my imagination in strange but entrancing unions of the most diverse forms, as if, for instance, a snow-drop could also be St Paul, as if a kiss could be a gospel, as if a lovely phrase of Chopin's most inward music should become suddenly an

133Galatians 6:11.
Apocalypse revealing us Christ in the flesh,—that rare, pure and marvelous Dinah Morris who would alone consecrate English literature if it had yielded no other gift to man. 134

Not all critics share Lanier's lofty estimate of Eliot's heroine. 135 In at least one sense, however, this poetic description is very much to the point. Lanier both summarizes and goes beyond the analysis of Dinah Morris to this point when he refers to her as "St. Paul," "a gospel," "Christ in the flesh." Dinah's similarities to Christ and to Paul combine to produce a "gospel," a character who comes to stand for the entire message of the New Testament as George Eliot understands it. As Routh observes, Dinah Morris "embodies the New Testament spirit of universal love and service." 136

This view is reinforced by that of Bellows, whose closing comment is nevertheless open to question or qualification: "She stands for what George Eliot feels to be the highest thing in life,—a human soul ready and able to help another human soul in its hour of supreme need. She is the personification of the Positivists' religion of humanity." 137

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135 Leslie Stephen, for example, writes that "She is a little too good not only for Seth but for this world, and I have a difficulty in obeying the summons to fall upon my knees and worship." George Eliot (London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 71.


137 Bellows, p. 218.
The third and last of George Eliot's characters whose makeup is in large part due to a mixture or combination of biblical characteristics is Adam Bede. Tom and Maggie Tulliver are characterized through allusion to biblical pairs: Saul and Jonathan, the Elder Brother and the Prodigal, the Pharisee and Publican. Dinah Morris is portrayed by interweaving traits of Christ with those of Paul to produce the representative essence of New Testament charity. Adam is a fictional blending of the two biblical Adams. In his epistles, Paul expresses the idea which summarizes George Eliot's treatment of her character. He asserts that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come"; the one who "was to come," for whom Adam was the prototype, was of course Christ: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Milton has poetically and theologically expressed this Pauline concept of the first Adam and the second Adam in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. In Milton's poems the temptation and fall of the original Adam in the garden is contrasted with the temptation and perseverance of Christ, the second Adam, in the wilderness. What Milton has done in poetry, Eliot has done in prose, although her version of the

138 Romans 5:14.
139 1 Corinthians 15:22.
two Adams and their significance differs greatly, at least in a theological sense. The two Adams merge into a single character, a character whose conversion in the novel is from the old Adam to the new, from pride to humility, from justice to mercy, from intolerance and harshness to sympathetic understanding and love.

The picture of the old Adam begins immediately in Chapter I. The association of the fictional with the biblical Adam is enforced by the name of his brother, Seth. Seth was in Genesis the third son of Adam and Eve, the son who replaced the banished Cain and the murdered Abel. George Eliot makes it clear in this first chapter that Adam is a man of sternness and rigidity who contrasts sharply with the mild, good-natured Seth. Seth intervenes in a verbal skirmish between Adam and Ben Cranage by appealing to Ben: "Come, Ben, lad, . . . don't let's have a quarrel about it. You know Adam will have his way. You may's well try to turn a waggon in a narrow land. Say you'll leave the door alone, and make an end on't." Eventually Ben grudgingly abates, but not without further comment concerning the two brothers: "Ne'er heed me, Seth, . . . y' are a downright good-hearted chap, panels or no panels; an' ye donna set up your bristles at every bit o' fun, like some o' your kin, as is mayhap cliverer."

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140Eliot, III, 7. 141Ibid., p. 10.
Other characters respect and admire Adam, but with a touch of awe or fear. Mr. Casson praises Adam as "an uncommon clever stiddy fellow, an' wonderful strong," but qualifies his compliment by characterizing the older Bede brother as "a little lifted up an' peppery-like";\textsuperscript{142} Adolphus Irwine, the Vicar, echoes his parishioner's judgment by describing Adam as one with "independence of spirit enough for two men--rather an excess of pride, if anything";\textsuperscript{143} further testimony comes from Adam's schoolmaster, Bartle Massey, who on one occasion tells his pupil, "You've got an iron will, as well as an iron arm,"\textsuperscript{144} and later fondly berates Adam as "over-hasty and proud, and apt to set your teeth against folks that don't square to your notions."\textsuperscript{145} Creeger summarizes well Adam's shortcomings: "Adam is wrathful . . . , stern . . . , 'stiff and masterful' . . . , unyielding . . . , harsh . . . , hot and hasty . . . , intolerant . . . , and essentially humorless. . . ."\textsuperscript{146} Thale points out that "in conventional religious terms, Adam's sin is spiritual pride. He is the just man, trusted and admired, but he is more feared and respected than loved. His character is strong,\textsuperscript{147}

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., p. 19.
\item\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., p. 144.
\item\textsuperscript{144}Ibid., p. 239.
\item\textsuperscript{145}Ibid., p. 354.
\item\textsuperscript{146}George Creeger, "An Interpretation of Adam Bede," ELH, 23 (1956), 230.
\end{footnotes}
his moral outlook is clear and honest, but neither is particularly lovable.\textsuperscript{147}

In keeping with this characterization of the first Adam, Eliot closely associates him with other patriarchs of the Old Testament. Dinah Morris compares the brothers by noting that "Seth is a gracious young man, sincere and without offence; and Adam is like the patriarch Joseph, for his great skill and knowledge, and the kindness he shows to his brother and his parents."\textsuperscript{148} Adam himself, discussing with Dinah favorite biblical readings, expresses a preference for the Judaic lawgiver:

"Ah," said Adam, "I like to read about Moses best, in th' Old Testament. He carried a hard business well through, and died when other folks were going to reap the fruits: a man must have courage to look at his life so, and think what'll come of it after he's dead and gone. A good solid bit o' work lasts: if it's only laying a floor down, somebody's the better for it being done well, besides the man as does it."\textsuperscript{149}

Association with Moses, "whose example strengthened Adam's belief in the nobility of honest, self-forgetful labor,"\textsuperscript{150} is reiterated late in the novel when Dinah twice suggests Adam-Moses parallels. Dusting around Adam's desk, she

\textsuperscript{147}Thale, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{148}Eliot, III, 130. Dinah later repeats her comparison of Adam to Joseph (IV, 53-54): "God has given him great gifts, and he uses them as the patriarch Joseph did, who, when he was exalted to a place of power and trust, yet yearned with tenderness towards his parent and his younger brother."

\textsuperscript{149}Ibid., IV, 283-84. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{150}Paris, p. 101.
hesitates to move anything lest he "be put about by finding things meddled with; and even the man Moses, the meekest of men, was wrathful sometimes"; later, as she leaves the Bede home, she quotes Psalms 90:15 in her parting benediction. Psalm 90 is traditionally the oldest of the psalms, bearing a superscription indicating that the poem is "a prayer of Moses." So Moses too, along with Adam and Joseph, is suggested as a biblical counterpart to Adam Bede, the proud, stern believer in justice who bases his religious beliefs on an Old Testament passage:

I know a man must have the love o' God in his soul, and the Bible's God's word. But what does the Bible say? Why, it says as God put his spirit into the workman as he built the tabernacle, to make him do all the carved work and things as wanted a nice hand. . . . And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls. . . .

But analogy with the patriarchs is valid only to a point, that point being Adam's conversion from the old Adam to the new Adam. The groundwork for this conversion or growth of moral and emotional awareness is laid by Eliot in the following analysis of Adam:

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151 Eliot, IV, 294. Moses' meekness is referred to in Numbers 12:3.

152 "The God of love and peace be with them. . . . Make them glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil." IV, 298.

153 Ibid., III, 9-10. The passage Adam has in mind is Exodus 35:30-35.
Perhaps here lay the secret of the hardness he had accused himself of: he had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey? And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it—by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequences of their error, but their inward suffering. That is a long and hard lesson, and Adam had at present only learned the alphabet of it in his father's sudden death...154

The remainder of the novel is devoted to Adam's learning this lesson and growing thereby. Through Hetty Sorrel and the suffering she both undergoes herself and brings upon others, Adam slowly broadens his sympathies and deepens his fellow-feeling. Adam learns that Hetty has accepted Arthur as her lover, then thinks that she has run away to avoid marrying, and finally discovers that she is to be tried in Stoniton for child murder.155 The climactic act in this process is the trial itself, along with Adam's symbolic supper in the upper room. This scene in which Adam partakes of bread and wine at the same time that he vows to publicly stand by the abandoned Hetty in court signifies a new attitude, a spiritual regeneration, a new Adam in place of the old. Here it is not the parallel with the old sinful Adam of the garden

154 Ibid., pp. 302-3.

155 "Having provided Adam with this full involvement, she next makes certain that he will suffer as a result, first by having him learn that Arthur is Hetty's accepted lover; next by having him think Hetty has run away from their approaching marriage; and finally by having him learn of Hetty's being brought to trial in Stoniton for the murder of her child." Creeger, p. 233.
which is stressed, but the association with the new Adam. As Knoepflmacher observes, "It seems hardly necessary to elaborate the symbolic parallel of this . . . supper taken by a 'new' Adam, the bearded son of a carpenter, who 'stood upright again.' In an era in which we teach our students to hunt for 'Christ-figures' in the works of Hemingway and Faulkner, such a parallel is all too evident." The conversion is, as Bernard Paris suggests, "the triumph of love over justice in Adam," the acceptance of the idea that "the forgiving, redeeming love of the human Christ is ultimately a more potent force than God the lawgiver who is the objectification of the impersonal reason." The biblical parallels used by Eliot are in keeping with this shift: the "new Adam" leaves behind his patriarchal traits, replacing them with the appearance and action of the "new Adam," Christ.

As this chapter demonstrates, the Bible served as constant source for George Eliot in characterization. In every novel, in some way, to some degree, characters are created through use of biblical quotations, phrases, and allusions. Their names, their comments, and their deeds often suggest Eliot's conscious use of the Bible. The artistic effectiveness of the different characters varies greatly, but all attest

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to an expert grasp of the Bible and demonstrate the degree to which George Eliot's art is based upon the King James Bible.
CHAPTER IX

GEORGE ELIOT'S THEMES AND THE BIBLE

One of the best known and most widely quoted anecdotes about George Eliot is the following passage from an article published by Frederic W. H. Myers shortly after her death:

I remember how, at Cambridge, I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity, on an evening of rainy May; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men,—the words God, Immortality, Duty,—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing Law. I listened, and night fell; her grave, majestic countenance turned toward me like a sibyl's in the gloom; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates.\(^1\)

This verbal assertion of duty's preeminence, its "peremptory and absolute" nature, is echoed thematically throughout George Eliot's novels from first to last.

One of the fullest and most forthright expositions of duty as George Eliot understands and conveys it is found in the early "Janet's Repentance"; in assessing the positive and negative effects of Evangelicalism in Milby, the author points

\(^1\)"George Eliot," *Century Magazine*, 23 (Nov. 1881), 62.
out that Evangelicalism had brought into palpable existence and operation in Milby society that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life. No man can begin to mould himself on a faith or an idea without rising to a higher order of experience: a principle of subordination, of self-mastery, has been introduced into his nature; he is no longer a mere bundle of impressions, desires, and impulses.2

From this point and this passage in Eliot's fictional career until her very last novel, there is constant emphasis upon the theme of duty. In Felix Holt, the Radical, she under scores "that supremely hallowed motive which men call duty, . . . which can have no inward constraining existence save through some form of believing love."3 And in Daniel Deronda the saying of Deronda's grandfather is Eliot's own in that it forms the thematic cornerstone of her writings: "Let us bind love with duty; for duty is the love of law; and law is the nature of the Eternal."4

Through such passages as these, one comes to understand what Eliot means by "duty" and how it is presented in her works. Duty is "that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self"; it introduces into the life of him who acknowledges its claim a "principle

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3Ibid., IX, 311.
4Ibid., XVII, 256.
of subordination, of self-mastery"; it thrives on "some form of believing love"; and it forms the middle link in a moral chain of awareness: duty is acknowledgment of eternal law, acknowledgment which takes the form of loving action.

Many critics have pointed to this theme of duty in George Eliot's novels. Baker suggests that "to her the highest possible development of personality was a religion; duty was the first article of her belief." Bonnell classifies or qualifies Eliot's concept of duty when he writes, "She sees duty in the light of moral emotion, rather than in that of religious enthusiasm. But the important point is that it is duty that she sees." Fremantle adds to this critical chorus when she insists that "the impulse which drove her to write Romola was a religious one; she wished to convince herself, and the world, of the efficacy of Duty and Tradition as substitutes for an eclipsed divinity."

Usually duty is suggested by such critics as one of a number of Eliot's basic themes. Barbara Hardy, for instance, identifies four major themes: affection, or strength of affection; unheroic tragedy; egoism and altruism; and the


divided sensibility. Creeger, in an enlightening and helpful analysis of Eliot's novels, lists five: egoism or pride as the source of man's woe; the necessity of suffering; the presence of Law at the heart of the universe; the "peremptory and absolute" nature of Duty; and redemption and regeneration. Deakin's classification of themes is also apt: "There are three lessons which George Eliot is always teaching; as regards oneself--the wisdom of unembittered resignation to the inevitable; as regards others--the duty of loving sympathy; as regards oneself and others too--the might of the inexorable law which rules our lives and its retributive power."  

The purpose of this chapter is first to suggest that there is something of a hitherto unnoted thematic hierarchy in Eliot's novels, one in which duty holds a preeminent position with respect to the other themes listed by critics; second, to suggest that each of her basic themes is essentially--although not exclusively--biblical; third, to demonstrate the biblical elements used to convey each theme--elements which, when coupled with Eliot's didactic intent and method, go far toward making her novels a Victorian

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gospel comparable to and largely drawn from the biblical gospel.

In Eliot's fiction, duty is that in man which perceives certain truths and then acts upon them. The perception of these truths suggests certain themes such as sowing and reaping, and the resulting actions account for others such as sympathy, renunciation, conversion, and suffering. All these themes in some way spring from the underlying concept of duty.

The need for duty on the part of the individual in George Eliot's fiction follows from or is brought about by "inexorable laws which govern the life of man." As she has Joseph Kalonymos say in Daniel Deronda, "law is the nature of the Eternal." George Eliot formulates that moral law in biblical terms of sowing and reaping, what Deneau has called the "doctrine of consequences," Baker has labelled the "chains of consequence," and Woolson has termed "the inexorable nature of retributive justice, the certainty that evil deeds lead to evil results, not only for the guilty doer, but for the innocent who are associated with him in life—for family and friends. This undeniable truth she is

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12 Eliot, XVII, 256.
14 Baker, VIII, 222.
always anxious to enforce."15 There is a positive as well as negative side to this law; Bassett summarizes well both possibilities and correctly suggests the degree of emphasis on each in Eliot's fiction:

To this theme, the importance and irrevocability of actions, there are two aspects; first, the degeneration that follows from acts committed with selfish motives, and, second, the regeneration that is accomplished by acts of love. The second may or may not follow the first, but it is the only possibility for atonement. It is the first of these aspects that George Eliot commonly emphasizes, and this accounts for the weighty sense of gloom and depression that marks the greater part of her work, a depression arising from a portrayal of the disastrous effects that overtake a wrongdoing which frequently has its inception in some seemingly harmless although selfish trait.16

The presentation and enforcement of this "undeniable truth," as Woolson terms it, can be seen in every novel, both in authorial observations and in plot development. In *Adam Bede*, for example, George Eliot lays down her basic premise when she writes, "Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds,"17 and she extends that premise somewhat when in *Felix Holt, the Radical* she points to "the hard pressure of our common lot, the yoke of that mighty irresistible destiny laid upon us by the acts of other men as well as our own."18 And, characteristically, she emphasizes the


17 Eliot, IV, 34.

18 Ibid., XI, 320.
negative effect of this law or truth when in The Mill on the Floss she writes, "So deeply inherent is it in this life of ours that men have to suffer for each other's sins, so inevitably diffusive is human suffering, that even justice makes its victims, and we can conceive no retribution that does not spread beyond its mark in pulsations of unmerited pain." 19

The theme of duty, then, is presented first as duty of perception: man must see that "our deeds determine us," that every act of the individual has consequences both for himself and for others. This moral law itself becomes a theme of Eliot's fiction, one essentially biblical in nature. A negative recognition of and reaction to the source of the theme is Bedient's plaint that "all she had done [in her philosophical shift from Evangelicalism to humanism] was to anchor in the Biblical saw that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." 20 The same point is positively made by Eliot herself in Felix Holt, the Radical when Rufus Lyon observes, "One soweth, and another reapeth, is a verity that applies to evil as well as good." 21 The verity is borne out

19 Ibid., V, 365-66.


21 Eliot, XI, 185. Compare Job 4:8, Proverbs 22:8, and Galatians 6:7-8. The last passage reads, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
by the actions of Anthony Wybrow, Arthur Donnithorne, Hetty Sorrel, Godfrey Cass, and a host of other characters whose "sowing" has far-reaching consequences "reaped" both by themselves and by others such as Maynard Gilfil, Adam Bede, and Silas Marner. This being true, a character's first duty in Eliot's fiction is to perceive the presence and punitive power of this moral law.

His second duty, that which inevitably follows perception, is to conduct himself accordingly. If every act inherently has as its consequence an effect—for good or evil—on both the individual and on others, then he must act benignly. Such actions toward one's fellow man again take the form of basic themes: altruism rather than egoism, renunciation, sympathy, and service. As with the presentation of the theme of inexorable law, of sowing and reaping, each of these themes of responsible action is essentially biblical and is presented that way in the novels.

The theme which encompasses or leads to the others, as it in turn is encompassed or necessitated by duty, is that of altruism. Since one's deeds affect others, one must take those others into consideration before proceeding with any action. Increased consciousness of and responsiveness to others demands decreased emphasis upon one's self; it is the displacement of egoism by altruism, a shift in moral outlook or perspective from concern with self and self-interest to concern for others. Bonnell rightly states that
her books quiver with it, and all her contrasts are
drawn with the intention of showing the two contending
forces in interplay: egoism and altruism; the self-
concentration which in ministering to personal gratifi-
cations, to the exclusion of the social good, hinders
that good according to the varying degrees of its per-
nicious activity; and, opposed to this, the centring of
the life on a sympathetic attempt towards perfecting
and ever more perfecting the social good by relegating
self to its proper place among the other units.22

Duty dictates that one's basic concern and motivation become
societal rather than personal. As Creeger suggests, "What
George Eliot attacks is the dominance of self to the exclu-
sion of all that lies outside it. As a concept of immorality,
this is very old; it is distinctively Christian in its formu-
lation, and it constitutes the ground of George Eliot's
ethic."23 Examples of altruism abound in the novels: Edgar
Tryan and Maynard Gilfil from Scenes of Clerical Life, Dinah
Morris and Adolphus Irwine in Adam Bede, Savonarola in
Romola, Rufus Lyon in Felix Holt, the Radical, Farebrother
in Middlemarch. These Christian ministers, as well as such
nonclerical characters as Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda, ex-
emplify this altruistic outlook. Others—for the most part
the main characters such as Adam Bede, Arthur Donnithorne,
Maggie Tulliver, Gwendolen Harleth—must painfully acquire a
benevolent perspective. They must be brought to realize that
"self-gratification is the source of all our woes. We are
to be self-denying, considerate of others, watchful against

22 Bonnell, pp. 159-60.
23 Creeger, p. 4.
the first surrender to temptation. No forgiveness can
screen us from the consequences of selfish, ignoble acts."24

Inherent in, essential to, this conversion of self-
lishness to selflessness is renunciation. Such self-denial
is the means to the altruistic end and represents in Eliot's
fiction an interrelated theme with that of altruism. The
realization that one's deeds bear directly upon the lives of
others leads to renunciation of acts potentially detrimental.
As Maggie Tulliver tells Stephen Guest, "Faithfulness and
constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest
and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean renouncing whatever
is opposed to the reliance others have in us—whatever would
cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made
dependent on us."25 Maggie utters these words in the dawning
light of what constitutes a spiritual revelation. Early in
the novel, under the strong but imperfectly understood in-
fluence of The Imitation of Christ, Maggie embraced and
espoused this doctrine of renunciation as she interpreted
it—as eremitic withdrawal from life, as a turning from
society and its pleasures for the sake of self. Later, how-
ever, she perceives more clearly the meaning of renunciation
as laid down by the medieval priest and George Eliot. True
renunciation is the outgrowth not of isolationism, but of

24 Woolson, p. 140.
25 Eliot, VI, 317.
growing concern for others. One renounces desires and refrains from actions because of a compelling concern for the well being of others. Those others are not primarily the strangers who together constitute that faceless mass called society but those "whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us," as Maggie now rightly understands.

Here again, the essence of this renunciatory theme is to be found in the Bible. The biblical origin and influence of the thought is particularly obvious in The Mill on the Floss, in which The Imitation of Christ is used so extensively and effectively by Eliot in leading her heroine to the proper ethical perspective. The same lesson of self-denial is taught Romola; in that novel, the crucifix is cited by Savonarola as its symbol. In Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen Harleth learns renunciation from the Christ figure Deronda. In these instances as well as others, the theme is conveyed by use of some biblical or biblically related device such as a Kempis's book, the cross, or a Christ figure. Indeed, as Nadel notes, the very "origin of the principle of renunciation is biblical." He goes on to point out that "the earliest form of renunciation is defined by Jesus in the New Testament. In the Gospel of Matthew he tells his disciples that 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life
for my sake will find it." In Eliot's fiction, of course, Christ's "my sake" becomes the sake of one's fellow man, the denial of egoistic impulses and desires in order to accomplish "transcendence of the self, moral virtue, and the unification of the individual with his world." Even with this modification, however, the doctrine of renunciation as preached in Eliot's novels is that Christian or biblical "doctrine of the Cross" which Brown has pointed to as pervading her art.

As renunciation succeeds acknowledgment of inexorable laws and the altruistic impulse, so does an attitude of sympathy and tolerance follow renunciation. In understanding the interrelatedness of men's actions and their effects, in understanding and exercising the individual strength of will demanded to denounce ego and renounce irresponsible actions, in coming to consider the good of others, it is but a short step to develop a positive, conscious concern for the struggles of those others and a desire to assist in those struggles. It is simply the next step in the "movement

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26Ira Bruce Nadel, "The Alternate Vision: Renunciation in the Novels of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy," Diss. Cornell 1970, pp. 11-12. Nadel also points out, pp. 99-100, that "the immediate source of George Eliot's pre-occupation with the doctrine of renunciation is her experience with Evangelicalism... Renunciation, as it appears in her fiction, is the secular remains of the Evangelical ethics she once actively pursued."

27Ibid., p. 176.

outward from the self to mankind, the achievement of true sympathy." But this "simple" step in the altruistic progression which begins with duty proves a difficult achievement for many Eliot characters. In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot sets forth the theme of sympathy in a pattern that Barbara Hardy has called "the contrast of the in-turned and the out-turned heart." Dinah Morris exemplifies ideal sympathy; Adam grasps the concept, but imperfectly; Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne are totally devoid of such feelings. In pondering a biblical passage--one which summarizes Eliot's theme--Adam comments,

"They that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of those that are weak, and not to please themselves." There's a text wants no candle to show't; it shines by its own light. It's plain enough you get into the wrong road i' this life if you run after this and that only for the sake o' making things easy and pleasant to yourself. A pig may poke his nose into the trough and think o' nothing outside it; but if you've got a man's heart and soul in you, you can't be easy a-making your own bed an' leaving the rest to lie on the stones. Nay, nay, I'll never slip my neck out o' the yoke, and leave the load to be drawn by the weak uns. Father's a sore cross to me, an's likely to be for many a long year to come. What then? I've got th' health, and the limbs, and the sperrit to bear it.31

This much of Eliot's doctrine Adam understands, and is to

29Nadel, p. 171.

30Hardy, p. 81. She goes on to say, "We first meet the contrasted pair in *Scenes of Clerical Life*: Milly Barton and the Countess Czerlaski, Gilfil and Wybrow, Tryan and Dempster. In *Adam Bede* the pairing is more elaborate, for we have the twin contrasts of Adam and Arthur, Dinah and Hetty."

that extent further advanced than either Arthur or Hetty. Yet he too must progress, must come to see not only that a sympathetic shouldering of the burdens of others is his duty, but also that he must develop an attitude of forgiveness and tolerance toward those like Arthur and Hetty who act without regard for consequences. The climax of the learning process on Adam's part is the symbolic act of communion in the upper room. Here the fictional Adam, who is drawn from the biblical Adam, is used to underscore the theme of sympathy and forgiveness in a symbolic scene drawn straight from the New Testament.

The same theme of sympathy is seen in works earlier and later than Adam Bede. In "Janet's Repentance," for instance, George Eliot stresses man's need for sympathy when she writes of the heroine, "Janet felt she was alone: no human soul had measured her anguish, had understood her self-despair, had entered into her sorrows and her sins with that deep-sighted sympathy which is wiser than all blame, more potent than all reproof--such sympathy as had swelled her own heart for many a sufferer."32 Tryan later provides that sympathy, and Janet responds to it. In The Mill on the Floss, there is again the emphasis on "one draught of human pity," which is "more helpful than all wisdom";33 in Romola, the plague-ridden village visited by Romola enlarges her sympathetic

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32 Ibid., II, 149. 33 Ibid., VI, 331.
outlook so that she cries, "If everything else is doubtful, this suffering that I can help is certain"; and in Middle-march, the same theme is summarized by Eliot's epigraph to Chapter LXXVI. It is a quotation of two stanzas from Blake, stanzas which indicate both the closeness of Eliot's theme to the Bible and its essential difference:

To mercy, pity, peace, and love
All pray in their distress
And to these virtues of delight,
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face;
And Love, the human form divine;
And Peace, the human dress.

The virtues themselves are those treasured by Eliot from her Evangelical days—mercy, pity, peace, and love; the shift in her own thinking is reflected in Blake's lines, where the supernatural is supplanted by the human. What Blake expresses and Eliot endorses is a modified version of her early credo, "the social concern of Evangelicalism, which she could reconcile with her humanism: Feuerbach's emphasis on human love and Comte's teaching that human sympathy was the basis of the moral life." Her doctrine or theme of sympathy or

34 Ibid., IX, 399.


social helpfulness remains, however, as Bonnell has suggested, "to all practical intents and purposes, Christian." 37

This concept of sympathy found throughout George Eliot's novels is one she strongly stressed in fiction because she felt it so keenly in actual life. In a letter written long after her break with Evangelicalism but before her first fictional work was published, she states, "My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy." 38 Years later, after her death, J. W. Cross related that "It was often in her mind and on her lips that the only worthy end of all learning, of all science, of all life, in fact, is, that human beings should love one another better." 39 Of Eliot's outlook Gerald Bullett has written, "Herein lies her true greatness, that with all her intellectual acuteness she remained free from intellectual snobbery and abounding in human sympathy. Conscious of possessing unusual mental power, she was yet essentially humble, simple, brotherly, in her attitude to human beings." 40 In her concept of duty

37 Bonnell, p. 164.
and those responsibilities which it dictates—social rather than personal concern, renunciation and self-sacrifice, sympathy and forgiveness, George Eliot is not actually far from her earlier Christian position. As an Evangelical, she espoused the two great commandments as set forth by Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Later, as a free-thinker, she simply merged the first with the second, fusing God and man into a single entity and retaining the concept which she continually stresses in her novels, that of selflessness and sympathetic service to "thy neighbour."

Some of George Eliot's characters possess an adequate understanding of duty from the first. They are aware of the infinite entanglement of their lives with those of others, they realize the potential effect of their actions, they act in an altruistic, sympathetic manner. The list of such individuals includes Maynard Gilfil, Edgar Tryan, Dinah Morris, and Daniel Deronda. For the most part, however, Eliot's main characters are lacking—in part or altogether—this sense of duty. It is around these characters that George Eliot builds her novels, with the introduction of yet another duty-related theme: conversion. Inevitably, the plot development of a George Eliot novel hinges on the conversion

of a character from a state of moral blindness to a condition of clear perception. Liebman lists the following instances of such conversion:

Adam experiences that "unspeakable suffering" that "may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state"... Tom experiences "a new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in life, that had lain beyond his vision"... Silas is similarly "reawakened" and feels his soul "unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness"... Romola has "a new baptism" when she applies to the plague-stricken children the doctrine which she has learned from Savonarola. 42

To this list may be added several other characters, including Janet Dempster, Maggie Tulliver, Esther Lyon, and Gwendolen Harleth.

As Liebman's quotations from the novels suggest, both the elements found in George Eliot's fictional conversions and the pattern of conversion itself bear biblical analogues or analogies and embody once again subordinate themes found throughout her fiction. For that matter, as Jerome Buckley observes, the theme of conversion or redemption is one that frequently appears in the literature of the age: "Throughout Victorian literature ran the message of redemption. Poet, novelist, and sermon-writer joined to urge the supreme necessity of spiritual purgation, of the little death-in-life, the dying unto the corrupted self." 43 Although in one sense


George Eliot shares this theme in general with other Victorian writers, in another sense she surpasses such novelists as Thackeray and Dickens in this intense interest in her characters' psychological or spiritual state:

In fact George Eliot inaugurated a kind of fiction which has since become conspicuous in twentieth-century literature. She makes characters interesting because of what they think, not because of what they do. The climax is no change of fate but a change of soul; a rapid transition from the unconsciousness of routine to the consciousness of spiritual needs; the significance of each story arises out of this effort at readjustment.44

Whether one calls it "effort at readjustment," redemption, conversion, "the inner drama of conscience,"45 "choosing one's life,"46 "spiritual rebirth,"47 or "reorientation of personality,"48 it is a basic George Eliot theme repeatedly noted and analyzed by critics. Burns contends that "her

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48Creeger, p. 6.
major theme in all her fiction is spiritual progress, whether upward or downward, growth or degeneration, expansion or diminishment." And I. W. Adam elaborates on conversion in Eliot's novels as follows:

Of the many archetypes underlying the fiction of George Eliot that of restoration or spiritual rebirth is among the most prominent. All her novels concern themselves with egoists who re-enter the human family by the adoption of an ethic similar to her own, though usually the character's personality gives the necessary aesthetic disguise to the similarity. This restoration is usually the result of a confluence of factors: the operation of conscience, the identification with suffering humanity which comes from tragic suffering, the influence of wiser, altruistic advisers (George Eliot's "mentors"), or the influence of place and childhood memory.

The "confluence of factors" referred to by Adam which produces conversion is largely a confluence of such biblical factors as suffering, confession, and symbolic baptism. The predominant factor, however, is always that of suffering.

Having created characters such as Janet Dempster, whose marital unhappiness leads to psychological or spiritual depression and isolation; Adam Bede, who is dutiful but proud, unyielding, intolerant; Silas Marner, who bitterly turns his back on his God and his fellow man; Arthur Donnithorne, who prefers pleasure to renunciation; and Gwendolen Harleth, the epitome of egoism, George Eliot then proceeds to engage each of these—and many others—in a process of enlightenment or

49 Burns, p. 129.
50 Adam, p. 9.
conversion. Always the process entails privation and suffer-
ing, what Creeger calls "the necessary preconditions, in George Eliot's scheme of things, for any radical reorien-
tation of personality." The theme of suffering appears early in Eliot's fiction. In "Mister Gilfil's Love Story," Maynard Gilfil tells Tina, "We can hardly learn humility and tenderness enough except by suffering ... ; and God sees we are in need of suffering, for it is falling more and more heavily on us." And in "Janet's Repentance" Janet finds in her sorrow one who himself has suffered and reaches out to her in "fellowship of suffering"; Tryan takes his cue from the suffering, sympathetic Christ, whom George Eliot refers to in the novel as "the Divine Sufferer." Christ serves as Eliot's symbolic prototype of selfless suffering in "Janet's Repentance": the author writes of Mrs. Raynor, Janet's mother, "She too has a picture over her mantelpiece, drawn in chalk by Janet long years ago. She looked at it before she went to bed. It is a head bowed beneath a cross, and wearing a crown of thorns." The cross of suffering which Eliot forces characters such as Janet to bear is the

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51 Creeger, p. 6.
52 Eliot, I, 272.
53 Ibid., II, 129.
54 Ibid., p. 225.
55 Ibid., p. 59.
painful but successful means toward the end of developing duty and meaning in their lives.

The theme of suffering as a means of conversion which George Eliot first presents in *Scenes of Clerical Life* is repeated many times in the later novels. In *Adam Bede*, Adam seems somewhat like the earlier Janet Dempster—in many ways admirable, but lacking the necessary ethical vision. With him the flaw is one of intolerance; he values and practices justice to the exclusion of mercy and pity. Eliot corrects that inadequacy through the suffering he endures at the hands of Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne. When Hetty is imprisoned and tried, her own suffering and that of Adam reach their apex. Partly through the intensity of his own sorrow, but more through realization of Hetty's need in her time of isolation, Adam for the first time reaches out in sympathy. He determines to stand by her publicly at the trial. Of his suffering and the changes it wrought George Eliot writes:

Deep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. The yearning memories, the bitter regret, the agonized sympathy, the struggling appeals to the Invisible Right—all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim, sleepy existence, and he had only now awaked to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that men should suffer; as if all that he had himself endured and called sorrow before was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless a great anguish may do the work of years, and we
may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity.\textsuperscript{56}

Through the suffering of Adam and others, Eliot effaces his harshness and lack of sympathy. Later in the novel, George Eliot writes,

For Adam, though you see him quite master of himself, working hard and delighting in his work after his inborn, inalienable nature, had not outlived his sorrow--had not felt it slip from him as a temporary burthen, and leave him the same man again. Do any of us? God forbid. It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling, if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it--if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy--the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love.\textsuperscript{57}

This last sentence sums up the theme of suffering as it appears so often in her writings, its power to transform, through pain and sorrow, man's lack of concern for and sympathy with others into a tolerant love. Because of his experience, when Adam again confronts the source of that sorrow, Arthur Donnithorne, he sympathizes rather than chastises: "Adam knew what suffering was--he could not lay a cruel finger on a bruised man."\textsuperscript{58} Adam's experience, his growth through suffering, is only one in a number of such

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., IV, 199.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., pp. 287-88.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., p. 255.
conversions in George Eliot's novels, each of which differs somewhat depending upon the situation.

Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss suffers in much the same way that Arthur Donnithorne in Adam Bede has suffered. She too commits an act which brings bitter sorrow to her family and friends, and must live with that realization. Thereby she comes to a clear understanding of what Thomas à Kempis means by renunciation. Toward the close of the novel George Eliot writes of Maggie,

She saw it face to face now—that sad patient loving strength which holds the clue of life—and saw that the thorns were for ever pressing on its brow. The yesterday, which could never be revoked—if she could have changed it now for any length of inward silent endurance, she would have bowed beneath that cross with a sense of rest.59

As George Eliot symbolized her theme of suffering in Adam Bede with the wayside cross,60 so again in The Mill on the Floss she signifies Maggie's growth through suffering in biblical terms. Earlier in the novel, when George Eliot is discussing the passages Maggie first reads from The Imitation of Christ, she alludes to "the pattern of sorrow, the source

59Ibid., VI, 311.

60Eliot relates, in her authorial expansion on Hetty Sorrel's bewilderment and confusion, that in her Italian travels she has "come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross. . . . Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards; and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing sob. No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it: no wonder he needs a suffering God." Ibid., IV, 106-7.
of all strength";61 before that, she refers to "the suffering . . . which belongs to every historical advance of mankind";62 and even earlier, she comments upon "that new sense which is the gift of sorrow--that susceptibility to the bare offices of humanity which raises them into a bond of loving fellowship, as to haggard men among icebergs the mere presence of an ordinary comrade stirs the deep fountains of affection."63 The theme of suffering is as pronounced and as vital in The Mill on the Floss as it is in Adam Bede.

And so it is in virtually every novel. Romola's conversion is likewise wrought through sorrow, her personal suffering and the suffering she sees others undergo in Florence and in the rural Italian village; here again, George Eliot chooses to represent that suffering with the biblical symbol of the suffering Christ--the crucifix which Romola's brother bequeaths her at his death. Savonarola tells her, "The higher life begins for us . . . when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom and freedom and blessedness. And the symbol of it hangs before you."64 In Silas Marner, the weaver's sorrow is twofold: he is, he thinks, betrayed by his brethren and his God; and his treasure is taken from him.

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61Ibid., VI, 33.  
62Ibid., p. 6.  
63Ibid., V, 287.  
64Ibid., IX, 108.
The betrayal had resulted in his estrangement from his fellow man, the theft had resulted in bewilderment and depression. Once again Eliot produces a conversion, and once again the conversion is to a sense of sympathy and brotherhood with others. As always, the biblical touch is present in the process. This time, however, it is the appearance of the savior-child at Christmas and the link of love that the child forges between Silas and the community. Eliot chooses to summarize the child's effect through the Wordsworthian epigraph of the novel, "A child, more than all other gifts/ That earth can offer to declining man,/ Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts." It is an effect equally well summarized, however, by the biblical precept found in the messianic prophecy of Isaiah 11, "and a little child shall lead them."

Such suffering as these characters undergo in the process of conversion is presented as the principal means to a higher moral development, ultimately resulting in the sense of duty which is the ethical foundation upon which altruism and sympathy are built. But the process is not always productive. If the suffering is unrelieved and attracts no sympathetic outreach from others, it becomes a destructive process. Such is the case in "The Lifted Veil," in which

65Ibid., VII, 2. The lines are from "Michael," lines 146-48.
Latimer laments, "For continual suffering had annihilated religious faith within me: to the utterly miserable—the unloving and the unloved—there is no religion possible, no worship but a worship of devils." 67 What Latimer lacks is the essential sympathetic outreach which in Silas Marner's case is provided by Eppie, and provided to Janet Dempster, Esther Lyon, and Gwendolen Harleth by their respective spiritual mentors—Tryan, Holt, and Deronda.

In those instances where suffering does have an affirmative effect in conversion, the climax of that redemptive process is often marked by Eliot through the use of some scene of baptism or communion. With Adam Bede it is the partaking of bread and wine in an upper room; with Maggie and Tom Tulliver it is a literal baptism beneath the waters of the Floss; with Romola it is the baptismal putting to sea and the retreat to the village where she is greeted as the Holy Mother. The Bible, quite obviously, is an important source for these scenes.

In retrospect, one can say that in George Eliot's novels the predominant theme is duty: first duty of perception, then duty of action. Duty, in turn, unfolds a series of subordinate themes: that of the interrelatedness of men, and the resulting effect for good or evil upon one another of their actions; that of egoism versus altruism; that of renunciation; that of sympathy and active concern;

67 Eliot, II, 304.
that of conversion for those whose concept of duty is lacking or inadequate; and that of suffering as the redemptive means whereby defective moral vision is corrected. Both in the choice of themes themselves and in the development of those themes from novel to novel, once again—as with characterization, symbolism, and other facets of her fiction—George Eliot turns to the Bible as a major source for both thought and illustration.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In one sense, no study of the biblical influence on an English author can be altogether definitive. As Forrest points out,

It lies beyond the power of any human being to state the extent to which any author is indebted to the Bible. At the very beginning of Anglo-Saxon literature stands Caedmon's paraphrase of a portion of Scripture. From that father of English literature to the latest modern writers it is impossible to find one who has not consciously or unconsciously drawn upon the Bible for treasures of speech. . . . Nor can an adequate statement be made of what any writer owes to the thought of the sacred writings.1

Because the phraseology and thought of the Bible, particularly the King James Bible, have so permeated Western culture, an author's use of biblical material may be unconscious rather than conscious.

Also, such material may come not directly from the Bible but from secondary sources. Nathalia Wright has written in her study of Melville's use of the Bible, "Doubtless Melville found and duly appropriated a good deal of Biblical imagery in his secular reading, and it would be difficult indeed to say how many of his allusions were inspired by secondary

sources.\textsuperscript{2} Perhaps the observation applies to George Eliot even more than to Melville, since her Evangelical years were largely devoted to intense reading of not only the Bible but also works of theology. Moreover, before George Eliot became a novelist she translated Strauss's \textit{Life of Jesus} and Feuerbach's \textit{Essence of Christianity}, works which quite obviously make their way into her fiction. If they do not themselves account for her use of certain biblical elements, they have at least influenced the mode of that usage.

Not only does it become difficult at times to distinguish between conscious and unconscious usage, direct and indirect borrowing, but it also is exceedingly difficult to disentangle one source from another, to isolate the influence of one writer or work from that of another. This blending or mixture of more than one source can be repeatedly seen in George Eliot's novels. In \textit{Silas Marner}, both the name of the child and the time of its arrival arebiblically significant. The epigraph affixed to the novel, however, is a quotation from Wordsworth. In \textit{Adam Bede}, the title character is largely drawn from the Pauline concept of the old Adam and the new Adam. At the same time, as F. R. Leavis points out,\textsuperscript{3} Adam's inordinate pride and the consequences of that


pride are treated after the fashion of classical tragedy, of which George Eliot was always fond. A further example of this intermixture of influences is the frequently repeated image of the suffering Christ, used by George Eliot to symbolize ideal love, suffering, and sorrow. It is present in Strauss, and in Feuerbach, and in Thomas à Kempis, all of whom Eliot was intimately familiar with. But one can carry the history of the concept farther back into the novelist's Evangelical background and period of intense Bible study. The focal point of English Evangelicalism was this same crucified Christ. As Storr points out, "In the doctrinal teaching of the Evangelicals, Soteriology occupies the central place. Christ as the crucified Saviour of sinful man is the main theme of almost all their sermons." Further complication presents itself in Romola. There this Christian image, an amalgam of several sources, is set over against a classical one: the crucifix of Romola's brother is locked in Tito's triptych. The triptych itself is an amalgam, suggesting not only the Ovidian tale of Bacchus and Ariadne but also the biblical paradise. And so it goes, ad infinitum, this complex crossing and interweaving of sources in the writing of any well-read author.

Nevertheless—in spite of the widespread integration of

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the Bible into Western speech and thought patterns, in spite of the presence of biblical material in innumerable secondary sources, in spite of the multiplicity and mingling of sources one with another—it is quite possible to come to some fairly accurate analytical and critical approximation of an author's use of and indebtedness to the Bible. That possibility is ably demonstrated by both the aforementioned critics, Forrest and Wright; in spite of protestations of impossibility, they have produced convincing book-length studies of Poe's and Melville's indebtedness to the Bible.

The essential purpose of this dissertation has been to demonstrate the extent and manner of George Eliot's use of the Bible. The resulting chapter-by-chapter analysis has traced the biblical influence on several facets of her fiction: in the creation of characters—-their names, their dialogue, their humorous (Mrs. Holt) and serious (Rufus Lyon) character traits, their actions (Dinah's sermon and letter) and the symbolic meaning of those actions (Adam's baptism through suffering and upper room communion), the use of types such as the prophetic Mordecai and the messianic Daniel Deronda, the use of patterns such as that of master and disciple; in the basic formulation of themes such as duty, altruism, sympathy, suffering, and conversion; in the creation of symbolic objects such as Romola's crucifix, of symbolic scenes such as Tito and Tessa under the plane tree, of symbolic actions such as Adam's communion and Maggie's
reenactment of the Prodigal's return; in the use of direct quotations in dialogue, authorial analysis and commentary, and epigraph; in the use of phraseology, paraphrase, and allusion throughout the novels in a variety of ways; and on occasion even the use of the Bible itself, either symbolically as with the Tulliver family Bible or for reasons of characterization and purposes of plot, as with Adam Bede's Bible with the picture of the angel. In identifying all these biblical usages and analyzing their application in George Eliot's novels, the purpose has not been to argue against other suggested sources or influences but to argue for the Bible—not to minimize the myriad of other sources ranging from Shakespeare backward to Aeschylus and forward to Wordsworth, but to maximize the importance of the Bible by isolation, identification, and analysis of the vast number of biblical elements present in Eliot's fiction.

A purpose of this study was to note any changes over the years in George Eliot's uses of the Bible, either in degree or in kind, from her fictional beginning with Scenes of Clerical Life to her concluding work, Daniel Deronda, and to discover the reason or reasons for such an alteration. No such shift can be seen. There is in the fictional beginning and in the closing novel the identical master-disciple relationship, the same suffering of the two heroines Janet Dempster and Gwendolen Harleth leading to the same sort of spiritual regeneration or conversion. And between these two
chronological extremes marking the fictional boundaries of George Eliot's career, her other novels all demonstrate the same constant use of the Bible without significant shift from work to work.

In the process of identifying George Eliot's biblical borrowings, a related intent was to note the emergence of any favorites, passages or events or books to which she seemed particularly drawn and which she repeatedly employed. Here, however, the discovery has simply been of a biblical eclecticism on her part, a wide enough grasp of the entire Bible so as to draw not only from the readily familiar areas—the creation account and the fall of man, the Old Testament poetic books, the Gospels of the New Testament—but from the darker corners and lesser known characters—Jehu, Rabshakeh, Gallio—as well. It is for the most part the situation or character under consideration which dictates the type of material employed. Dinah's preaching on the green is permeated with the words and thoughts of Christ; the depiction of Mordecai, on the other hand, draws forth a prophetic plethora from the Old Testament; with other characters such as Rufus Lyon, allusions and quotations range far and wide.

Overall, there seems to be no favorite book, passage, or character, with the one exception of Christ on the cross. For George Eliot this image is the essential symbol of man's suffering, that which gives meaning to man's existence. Her
fondness for the figure antedates her fiction. When translating Strauss, Mary Ann Evans kept constantly before her this Christian image. In her novels the image becomes universally symbolic of human suffering that produces the deified man. She explicitly uses the cross in this symbolic way in "Janet's Repentance," Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Romola. Implicitly, it is the thematic essence of all her writings, embodying symbolically the message of duty, sacrificial love, and suffering which George Eliot preaches from first to last in her novels. In Romola, the heroine comes to a conclusion which succinctly summarizes the outlook and fictional message of the author: "If the glory of the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer."5

As an Evangelical, George Eliot accumulated a vast storehouse of biblical knowledge. Later, she renounced Evangelical Christian doctrine but retained the Evangelical earnestness, ethical outlook, and saturation in biblical language and thought. As Knoepflmacher aptly states, "She turned to the novel in order to reshape the figurative truths of the Bible."6 In doing so, she drew continually upon that Bible she knew so well, as is demonstrated in the preceding chapters. Every


novel she wrote owes much to her knowledge and use of the Bible. What is true of the individual novels with respect to symbolism, characterization, and other devices is as true of the whole of her works and the essence of her fictional message. As Maggie Tulliver comes to realize about her world, so the perceptive reader comes to realize about the world of George Eliot's fiction: "Both above and below, which way soever thou dost turn thee, everywhere thou shalt find the Cross."  

7Eliot, VI, 31.
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