Extracts from *Shirley*, by Charlotte Brontë, published 1849 (shortened)

The story takes place in Yorkshire in 1811-1812.

1. Read lines 1 to 4.

What is the setting? Who are the characters? How do the characters seem to be related to the place and to each other?

2. Read lines 5 to 14.

- **ejaculate**: exclaim.
- In the Church of England, a **churchwarden** (Fr.: *marguillier*) is a lay person who helps run a **parish** (Fr.: *paroisse*). The priest who is at the head of a parish is that parish's **vicar**; if there are other priests in the parish under the vicar, they are **vicars**. A member of the Church of England is called a **Churchman**; a member of another Protestant church is called a **Dissenter**.
- **cane** (v.): beat with a cane
- **settle** (here): régler son/leur compte à

a. What happens in this passage?

b. What type of place is the story set in? Who are the characters?

c. The vicar's name is Matthew Helstone. Describe his attitude.

3. Read lines 15 to 26.

- **in the thick of**: in the middle of.
- **a revival** (here): a religious meeting typical of a Dissenting church.
- **bog**: marécage.

a. What French word looks like 'apostle'? Based on the context and the meaning of the prefix 'co-', who is meant by the noun phrase 'his co-apostles' ?

b. Based on the context, what is Connaught?

c. What French words look like 'appendage'? Based on the context, what is meant by 'the sacred institution of which they are merely the humble appendages'?

d. What happens in this passage?

e. Why does Helstone mention Methodists?

f. Why does Helstone single out Malone among the curates?

g. What meanings of the word 'disgrace' do you know? What meaning does Helstone use it with?

4. Read lines 27 to 34.

a. Based on the context, who is Moore?

b. Why has Helstone come to the inn?

4. Based on the whole extract, analyse Helstone as a character:

a. What people does he speak to? What does he tell them and how does he speak to them?

b. What people does he speak about? What does he say about them and how does he speak about them?

c. What are his beliefs and values?
What are the common points between these ideas?
What does he think is the Church of England's place and role in society?

5. What was the writer's intention in writing this text?

Do you think she shares Helstone's convictions? Justify your answer.

What are her own ideas? How does she get them across to the reader?

6. Translate lines 1 to 14.

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With these words a person entered—a middle-aged man, in black. He walked straight across the kitchen to an inner door, opened it, inclined his head forward, and stood listening. There was something to listen to, for the noise above was just then louder than ever.

"Hey!" he ejaculated to himself; then turning to Mr. Gale—"Have you often this sort of work?"

Mr. Gale had been a churchwarden, and was indulgent to the clergy.

"They're young, you know, sir—they're young," said he deprecatingly.

"Young! They want caning. Bad boys—bad boys! And if you were a Dissenter, John Gale, instead of being a good Churchman, they'd do the like—they'd expose themselves; but I'll—"

By way of finish to this sentence, he passed through the inner door, drew it after him, and mounted the stair. Again he listened a few minutes when he arrived at the upper room. Making entrance without warning, he stood before the curates.

[...]

"I assure you, sir, we were only having a little chat together over a glass of wine after a friendly dinner—settling the Dissenters!"

"Oh! settling the Dissenters, were you? Was Malone settling the Dissenters? It sounded to me much more like settling his co-apostles. You were quarrelling together, making almost as much noise—you three alone—as Moses Barraclough, the preaching tailor, and all his hearers are making in the Methodist chapel, where they are in the thick of a revival. I know whose fault it is.—It is yours, Malone."

"Mine, sir?"

"Yours, sir. Donne and Sweeting were quiet before you came, and would be quiet if you were gone. I wish, when you crossed the Channel, you had left your Irish habits behind you. Dublin student ways won't do here. The proceedings which might pass unnoticed in a wild bog and mountain district in Connaught will, in a decent English parish, bring disgrace on those who indulge in them, and, what is far worse, on the sacred institution of which they are merely the humble appendages."

"What is it?" inquired Malone discontentedly.

"Have you any arms about you?"

"I have the pistols you gave me yourself. I never part with them. I lay them ready cocked on a chair by my bedside at night."

"Very good. Will you go to Hollow's Mill? Moore is alone there. He has sent all the workmen he can trust to Stilbro'; there are only two women left about the place. You know Moore has resolved to have new machinery, and he expects two wagon-loads of frames and shears from Stilbro' this evening. Scott, the overlooker, and a few picked men are gone to fetch them."