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VICAR VICTORIA:  
WRITING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FICTION

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Mississippi

Rachel Elizabeth Cason

May 2019

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## ABSTRACT

*Vicar Victoria: Writing the Church of England in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* shows how the organizing force of the Anglican Church and the figure of the Anglican clergyman were used to interrogate social, legal, and historical developments in nineteenth-century fiction. The project outlines how authors reacted to events such as Pluralism reform, the opening of training schools for clergy, and the Oxford Movement. There was a growing importance of institutions (including new physical buildings and Anglican reform movements). Further, the clergy, pushed by the increased expectation to modernize and professionalize, became a specialist career, with raised training and performance requirements. As a result of these internal changes, we find the Anglican Church establishment in a state of flux across the nineteenth century: working to adapt itself to a new normal where Anglicanism as the dominant organizing force in people's lives could no longer be taken for granted.

This dissertation argues that nineteenth-century fictional clerical figures and depictions of the Church are more psychologically-complex than those that came before, and that writing these dynamic, psychologically-complex versions allowed Victorian authors to engage seriously the reform movements that affected people across England. Texts examined include Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Margaret Oliphant's *The Perpetual Curate* and *The Rector*, Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain, Or Aspirations*, and G.K. Chesterton's *The Innocence of Father Brown*.

## DEDICATION

The work that went into this project is dedicated to my family, whose tireless support made the endeavor possible, especially to Dot, Jonathan, Nina, and Randy.

To Gleason and Sandra Ward, who first introduced me to *Pride and Prejudice*.

To PoPo and Bluebell, who may only be cats, but who have been human enough to be of great comfort through the difficult hours of a hundred visions and revisions.

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This one goes out to the folks who very kindly asked about  
(and sometimes, even more kindly, did not ask about)  
how it was coming along.

I guess it's coming along okay.

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This document could not exist without the gracious faculty whose moral and academic encouragement cannot be overstated. My advisor, Daniel Stout, and my committee Ian Whittington, Jason Solinger, and Jarod Roll. Individually and corporately they supported and helped me develop this project into the best version it could be.

Simple thanks seem inadequate for how important the following people have been to me finishing this project, but simple, heartfelt thanks are what I can offer: To Katie Harrison, Cori Walker, Daniel Novak, Claire Mischker, Dustin Anderson, and Joe Pellegrino. Thank you.

All the mistakes and typographical errors herein are entirely mine.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Vicar Victoria: Writing the Church of England in Nineteenth Century Fiction**

#### **Introduction**

*Mr. Collins was not a sensible man, and the deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society; the greatest part of his life having been spent under the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father; and though he belonged to one of the universities, he had merely kept the necessary terms, without forming at it any useful acquaintance. The subjection in which his father had brought him up had given him originally great humility of manner; but it was now a good deal counteracted by the self-conceit of a weak head, living in retirement, and the consequential feelings of early and unexpected prosperity. A fortunate chance had recommended him to Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the living of Hunsford was vacant; and the respect which he felt for her high rank, and his veneration for her as his patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as a clergyman, and his rights as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility.*



This image of William Collins, along with David Bamber's masterful portrayal in the 1995 BBC miniseries, is likely one of the first that most people think of when they think of a clergyman in a novel. He is servile and obsequious and nonsensical; Alex Woloch calls his personality "caricatured," "the symptom and sign of minoriness" (84). And he has lucked into a good living under the gift of Lady Catherine de Bourgh thanks to his excessive fawning. Mr. Collins joins a long tradition of stock or typecast clergy figures which is present in the eighteenth-century novel, but, as my dissertation shows, is radically changed during the nineteenth century.

*Pride and Prejudice*, one of Austen's most enduring and endearing novels, was first composed sometime around 1796, was probably significantly revised around 1811, and was first published in 1813. The character Mr. Collins, cousin to Mr. Bennet (Lizzy's father), has the entail of Longbourn and his first introduction in the book is an attempt to ingratiate himself into the family by choosing one of the Bennet daughters for his wife. This would essentially (in his mind) make a compromise to prevent the family being entirely disinherited on Mr. Bennet's death. Mr. Collins's introductory letter leads Lizzy to call him "pompous" and an "oddity," and Mr. Bennet to expect him to be "quite the reverse [of sensible]" adding that "There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter" (44). These first impressions prove to be incredibly accurate: "Mr. Collins [was] in fact much better fitted for a walker than a reader, [and] was extremely well pleased to close his large book and go" (49), because although he did attend "one of the universities" (48), his education was minimal at best. His interests are rather more in the

comforts of the world, like "a good house and very sufficient income" which now leave him only the desire to marry (48). Collins's disdain for learning and assumption that his living is a given because he has ticked the requisite boxes are clerical attitudes that will be revised in the mid-nineteenth century.

Collins is repeatedly foolish, and that foolishness is not interrogated in the novel, which suggests that this kind of typecasting was common in the eighteenth century. Critic John Lauber argues that the "life of a fool appears to be an endless repetition" (511), and as a result, "Precisely this mechanical quality sometimes leads to a larger significance: the fool, being essentially the embodiment of a single trait, may become an archetypal figure" (512). In the novel, Austen takes every opportunity to let Mr. Collins display his inadequacies and his comical stock nature to readers. Showing him in polite society, he ignores propriety which dictates that he should wait to be introduced to Mr. Darcy, given the setting (a ball) and Darcy's dramatically higher social status. Instead, Collins ignores Lizzy's caution and "with a low bow he left her to attack Mr. Darcy" who "replied with an air of distant civility. Mr. Collins, however, was not discouraged from speaking again, and Mr. Darcy's contempt seemed abundantly increasing with the length of his second speech" (67). This blatant transgression of societal rules is quite different to the kind that I will address in chapter one in George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857). By that point we will see that novel characters become more individualized as critics, like Ian Watt, have argued. Whereas in his own parish, a clergyman can and must interact with every member of every caste, here at the Netherfield Ball, such presumption on Mr. Collins's part is the height of inappropriate conduct.

Mr. Collins's ineptness at being a clergyman, (given that his time is not spent visiting parishioners or preparing sermons), is an important contrast to what we will see with later nineteenth-century clergy; Collins is all inward-focused. Austen shows us domestic life at Hunsford for the Collinses. Once they are married, Charlotte spends as much of her time (as discreetly possible) apart from him—for example she prefers a drawing room that does not afford a view of the lane which he watches like a hawk for any sign of Lady Catherine's passing by. Austen tells us that:

Mr. Collins invited them [Charlotte's father and sister, and Lizzy, who are visiting the Collinses at Hunsford for the first time] to take a stroll in the garden, which was large and well laid out, and to the cultivation of which he attended himself. To work in his garden was one of his most respectable pleasures; and Elizabeth admired the command of countenance with which Charlotte talked of the healthfulness of the exercise, and owned she encouraged it as much as possible.

(104)

That working in his garden should be "one of his most respectable pleasures" is, I think, Austen's ironic commentary on just how truly useless and comical Mr. Collins is in his work life. Gardening in his glebe, or renting it out to be gardened by parishioners, would have been a way for Collins to supplement his income. The eighteenth-century typecast clerical figures are flat, comic relief characters, and Mr. Collins is far from the only one.

Parson Abraham Adams in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) participates in the same tradition of the archetypal foolish cleric. Adams is the curate and educator to Joseph Andrews in *The*

*History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*,<sup>1</sup> a novel in a style that Ian Watt calls "the comic epic in prose" (239). He is "an excellent Scholar," a "perfect Master of the *Greek* and *Latin* Languages; to which he added a great Share of Knowledge in the Oriental Tongues, and could read and translate *French, Italian* and *Spanish*" (19). Having spent years in "the most severe Study," Fielding tells us, Adams was more learned than most university graduates of his day. However, he is also "entirely ignorant of the Ways of the World, as an Infant just entered into it could possibly be" (19). Adams is almost the opposite of Mr. Collins. Whereas Collins is entirely absorbed in his domestic arrangements and making his life comfortable, bookish Adams is immersed in academics that have no real-world application. We are left with an image of a book-smart man who will quickly prove to be fodder for comedy and the source of many misunderstandings in the story.

Parson Adams is largely depicted through a series of contradictions and moments of utter ridiculousness. For example, he is able to go on for a "full Hour" on the minutia of "small Tithes" without allowing a word in edgewise (65), but is unable to interact in any reasonable way with fellow clergymen. He spends a considerable amount of time attempting to sell his sermons as a book, but is repulsed by the low price offered by a bookseller (66). However, in spite of the haggling over remunerations, he also calls himself an "Enemy to the Luxury and Splendour of the Clergy" as any man can be (70). When he is unable to command the price for his nine volumes of sermons, he "apply'd to his Pipe" to think the matter over while wearing his "Night-Cap drawn over his Wig, and a short great Coat, which half covered his Cassock; a Dress, which added to something comical enough in his Countenance" to bring stares from even those who

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<sup>1</sup> In all quotations from *Joseph Andrews* I follow the capitalization and italics conventions present in the Oxford World's Classics edition of the text, unless otherwise noted.

would not ordinarily take notice of things not of their concern (64). His image, literal and figurative, is one that does not hold up under scrutiny. Adams wears the trappings of a clergyman, but does so with no dignity.

More than just ridiculous, though, Parson Adams is depicted as one who is so often lost in thought that he has difficulty functioning as a member of society. I have already alluded to, and will further discuss, how important it is that clergymen in the nineteenth century be able to interact with members of all strata of society. Parson Adams can hardly interact with any members of any caste. He is unable to contain himself when speaking to his betters, interrupting a lady's story to tell her that she is "here guilty of a little Mistake" which he corrects although his insertion about the way Quarter Sessions operate was "not very material" to what she was saying (92). Finally, Parson Adams, in a scene that perfectly encapsulates how useless he is, displays for the world his lack of common sense and the literal and metaphorical narrowness of his vision. Having been traveling in tandem along their separate ways toward London, Joseph and Adams are separated but are due to meet at a previously-agreed inn. When Adams gets there and cannot find Joseph, he "[falls] into a Contemplation on a Passage in *Æschylus*, which entertained him for three Miles together, without suffering him once to reflect on his Fellow-Traveller" (81). Thus lost in thought, he:

soon came to a large Water, which filling the whole Road, he saw no Method of passing unless by wading through, which he accordingly did up to his Middle; but was no sooner got to the other Side, than he perceived, if he had looked over the Hedge, he would have found a Foot-Path capable of conducting him without wetting his Shoes. (81)

Whereas Collins learned almost nothing at University, Adams has book-learning that is touted as being well beyond that of his University-graduated peers. They are at opposite ends of a spectrum, but they are both socially inept characters who seem to be in the story primarily for the purpose of comic relief. Adams literally wades through water because he simply failed to even look left or right to see if there was any way to walk around the water, much less to see if a footbridge had been constructed. In the mid-1700s, and up to the nineteenth century, fictional clergymen, as we see, are as dense as they are unadaptable.<sup>2</sup>

We can extrapolate a few items of import: these men do not have personal lives or personal problems. They are permitted to bumble and bungle along and generally face no real consequences to their actions. They are not worried about money, they are able to have and support families without excessive effort or apparent precariousness, and neither ever seem to be doing anything directly church-related.<sup>3</sup> The concept of "realism" changes dramatically between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century, and we can see that in the depictions of clergy. Whereas the earlier characters are stock, carrying the stereotyped traits of a useless, silly class of clergy who are neither good at nor interested in the professional work of the church, later ones are psychologically-developed and deal with real contemporary problems.

Austen is not interested in describing a broad world; her novels are set in the home counties and the characters rarely travel outside their own neighborhood or parish. As a result, most of her characters are archetypal or stock. Lady Catherine can, as Elsie Michie says, "be

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<sup>2</sup> Although I am pulling out two specific cases for clergy who are featured in eighteenth-century works who are not complex or developed, and who are generally typecast as useless or comic relief, we have no shortage of such flat, fictional clergy to choose from: the bribe-taking abbot of Périgord in *Candide*; the ever-annoying Yorick in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; the scheming and vengeful Mr. Elton in *Emma*; minor character Elias Brand in *Clarissa*; and so on.

<sup>3</sup> To be fair, we do see Parson Adams try to sell a book of his own sermons, which was certainly an accepted practice at the time. But that seems much more a promotional than clerical pursuit.

read as posing arguments about the negative effects of the possession of wealth" (17) as the archetype of a rich woman. Mr. Darcy is an archetype of a rich man. Wickham is a rake. Only Elizabeth Bennet undergoes some dramatic change in the way she thinks about the world; she is the character "who comes to be the center of the narrative" (Woloch 77) in *Pride and Prejudice* thanks in part to the fact that she is a dynamic character who has a "depth of [. . .] consciousness" (Woloch 80), or interior life. Interiority is a recurring issue in this dissertation, especially in chapters one and three, where the relationship of the Church as an institution to the Church as a body of individuals is examined in more detail. My working understanding here is based on Alex Woloch's work in *The One Vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*. He says that the "tension between the one and the many," or between the main character and the supporting ones in a novel,

becomes particularly pressing in the realist novel, which has always been praised for two contradictory generic achievements: depth psychology and social expansiveness, depicting the interior life of a singular consciousness and casting a wide narrative gaze over a complex social universe. (19)

The realist novel that Woloch refers to is the style of novel that my dissertation will address most closely. Representing daily life in some way that attempts to get at an objective version of events is part of the project of my major authors. Just as George Eliot was inspired by the school of Dutch Realism in paintings,<sup>4</sup> the novels in this dissertation, I argue, make an attempt at verisimilitude in the way they address the problems faced by nineteenth-century clergy.

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<sup>4</sup> See William J. Hyde's "George Eliot and the Climate of Realism" for a good description of the realism George Eliot introduced in *Adam Bede*, and Sheila Stern's "Truth So Difficult: George Eliot and Georg Büchner, a Shared Theme" for a recent revision to our understanding for how George Eliot came to discover the Dutch Realist school.

Furthermore, Woloch's "depth psychology and social expansiveness" are key to my understanding of the difference in the clerical characters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whereas above, we see the tropey Mr. Collins, a literary fool, both in the work that follows the clerical characters become psychologically real. They have money worries and complicated family relationships, and the laws that are passed in parliament directly impact their daily lives in ways that we simply cannot imagine Parson Adams or Mr. Collins facing.

### **The Critical Field**

*Upon that mass [of historical evidence now widely available] an almost comparably large swarm of research students has settled, and part of the work of anyone trying to deal with nineteenth-century history must be an attempt, probably an unsuccessful attempt, to cover the relevant work which is being done on his subject...*

G. Kitson Clark *The Making of Victorian England*, 2

For this dissertation, there are two essential critical movements that are necessary context: histories of religion and society<sup>5</sup> in the Victorian era and texts that address religion and literature<sup>6</sup> in the Victorian era.

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<sup>5</sup> See Alan Haig's *The Victorian Clergy*; John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*; Miriam E. Burstein's *Victorian Reformations: Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy, 1820-1900*; Alisa Clapp-Intyre and Julie Melnyk's (editors) *"Perplexed in Faith": Essays on Victorian Beliefs and Doubts*; G. M. Young's *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*; Hugh McLeod's *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914*; G. Kitson Clark's *Churchmen and the Condition of England, 1832-1885*; among many others.

<sup>6</sup> See Rebecca Styler's *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*; James R. Perkin's *Theology and the Victorian Novel*; U. C. Knoepfelmacher's *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*; R. L. Brett's *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularization in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin*; and Anne DeWitt's *Moral Authority, Men of Science, and the Victorian Novel*.



Three concrete moments in the nineteenth century act as the catalysts for the main body chapters of this study: the debate around and passage of the Pluralities Act 1838, the opening of the clergy to non-graduate men via the establishment of theological training schools (beginning in 1816 and reaching a peak in the 1860s), and the Oxford Movement and events surrounding it. I go into greater detail of each of these movements in their corresponding chapters, but for the moment a little historical context is prudent.

The Pluralities Act of 1838 was an attempt by parliament to legislate away the practice of a single clergyman holding multiple livings at one time. This practice caused numerous conflicts within and without the Church: parishes whose clergyman was a non-resident would not have access to the person their tithes supported, meaning that they might go un-churched for longer than a week, business requiring an officiant would have to be postponed, and it also signified a likely gap in country parish youths' education for which the clergy were largely responsible in the nineteenth century. One way that some clergy who practiced pluralism combatted these problems was often just as bad, paying a curate a small percentage of the living's value to perform all the work of the cure of souls, while then pocketing the rest of the money and never having to visit that parish at all. Curates, not unlike our adjunct college instructors today, who had neither long-term job security nor hope of movement up the ranks of the clerical profession, worked hard to provide the same kind of pastoral care that a vicar or rector would, on far fewer resources. Different versions of the Pluralities Act limited the number of livings that could be held, limited the distance between livings held by a single clergyman, and mandated minimum salaries to curates.

These reforms ultimately helped the clerical field to operate more like a profession, with clearer regulations for entry. Prior to the opening of theological training schools, and the concurrent admission to the clergy of non-university graduates, beneficed clergymen had generally been second sons of the landed gentry, whose fathers could afford to buy them a place within the clergy, but not provide an independent fortune. The profession of the clergy was seen as an acceptable gentlemanly pursuit, especially in the eighteenth century when being a clergyman came with less expectation to perform pastoral care (and more expectation of living a gentle lifestyle of leisure). However, over the course of the nineteenth century, as more professions became specialized, the clerical profession became one where a man was expected to have both a calling to the job, and special training to perform it. Theological training manuals and schools both attempted to reform the field into a workforce capable of expounding on religious texts, as well as provide comfort to parishioners in distress. In the 1800s, there were essentially three major forms of text directed at the state of the clergy in England: legislation<sup>7</sup> resulting from parliamentary discussion, instructional documents<sup>8</sup> intended to teach clergy how best to perform their work, and fiction that featured clergymen and attempted to "recast religion" by "endow[ing] an alien evolutionary cosmos with new ethical principles" (Knoepflmacher 15).

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the text of the *Pluralities Act 1838*, which I address at length in Chapter One as part of a longer discussion of parliamentary intervention into the lives of clergymen.

<sup>8</sup> See the unsigned 1835 text *Hints to Young Clergymen, on Various Matters of Form and Duty: To Which Are Prefixed, Hints for a Simple Course of Study Preparatory and Subsequent to Taking Holy Orders. By the Incumbent of a Country Parish*; John W. Burgon's 1864 *A Treatise on the Pastoral Office: Addressed Chiefly to Candidates for Holy Orders, or to Those Who Have Recently Undertaken the Cure of Souls*; and Patrick Fairbairn and James Dodds's 1875 *Pastoral Theology: A Treatise on the Office and Duties of the Christian Pastor*. A more recent entry, Leslie J. Francis's 1989 text *The Country Parson* attempts to do the work of the above prescriptive manuals, while also referencing popular literature, and taking the perspective of one who is within the Church, Dr. Francis himself a reverent and parson. This revision to the 1800s instruction manual is especially of interest as it shows how rather than practical direction, the country parson of the later 1900s needed an overview of the history of their own position.

If we think of the above movement from "any gentleman can be a clergyman" to "men who want to be clergy should have a vocation" as one that codified the importance of doctrine and cure of soul, then we might think of the Oxford Movement as using that same impulse to address formal issues of worship. The Oxford Movement, or Tractarianism, was a reform within the Anglican Church, that began with scholars at Oxford University and the publication of tracts, which advocated for a return to the more Catholic roots of High Anglicanism, or a higher High Anglicanism. I address this in greater detail in chapter three, but High Anglicanism emphasizes ritual and formalism, and is generally seen as opposed to Low or Broad Church forms of worship. Low Church tended to be more evangelical and emotional; the Broad Church was essentially the middle ground between High and Low, allowing more flexibility to each Church to determine worship style.

These are reformist movements that, though they begin in the Church, ripple outward and broadly affect the English populace. The history I deal with primarily takes place within an approximately fifteen-year span in the middle of the century. However, as I show in chapter one, for example, the Pluralities Act had been in the works for decades before any measures were actually implemented. And not only did each of these moments have important lead-up agitation, but the impacts were felt long after. The Oxford Movement would not only divide the generation that birthed it, but the resulting conversions of some from High Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, including G. K. Chesterton, irrevocably altered the landscape of the Church of England. Framing these mid-century emerging changes, I pull back somewhat in my coda and introduction. This introduction has drawn on Henry Fielding's mid-eighteenth-century *Joseph Andrews* and on Jane Austen's later *Pride and Prejudice*. The coda to this project addresses texts

from 1911 with G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories, about a Catholic priest, but written during the period in his life when Chesterton was still a self-identified Anglican. The goal of bookending the work this way is to give a broad sense of where fictional clergy landed after the Victorian era and the rise of secularism took its toll, and to have an idea of what the figure looked like ahead of the Victorian era's early religiosity.

In this dissertation, I look at ways this social history is portrayed in nineteenth-century fiction, at how the Anglican Church and its institutional power affected the people living under its system. As a result, historical accounts have proven of great import. Social histories of religion in nineteenth-century England written since G. Kitson Clark's tenure, have relied heavily on his work, and so have I. His 1962 text, *The Making of Victorian England*, is based on a series of lectures he gave at the University of Oxford. In the series, he attempts to both reconstruct and revise the way we think about the history of the Victorian era, moving us from broad generalizations into the scrupulous review of "the great mass of evidence which is now available" (2). Instead of attempting to perform a "complete" history of the Victorian Church<sup>9</sup> in his chapter on "The Religion of the People," Clark sets the precedent to be narrowly focused on specific moments or movements in the century. His points of interest, like mine, address such social issues as the unmanageable ratio of parishioners to parsons and how that affected the quality of cure of souls early in the century (150, 168), mid-century legislation (156-157), and the role the Church of England played in building schools and spreading education (173). Taking his cue from Clark, Alan Haig's *The Victorian Clergy* delves even more deeply into those primary sources that Clark said would be of greater necessity in the coming years. Haig

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<sup>9</sup> As Owen Chadwick later did in his two-volume opus *The Victorian Church*.

reproduces census reports and tables (179, 220-221, 250) to show how the clerical profession statistically changed and grew over the nineteenth century, and he importantly gives designation to the "non-graduate clergy" (116), providing both the needed vocabulary and data to discuss how opening the clerical workforce to trained (but not university-graduated) men was a necessary step in the second half of the nineteenth century to help the Anglican Church attempt to meet the demands of England's growing population. It is this kind of adaptation which we will see rehearsed in the realist novels of the nineteenth century.

Social histories of the nineteenth-century Church, in addition to dealing with the above matters of the institution and its officers, have to address the changes to belief and practice across the era, without speaking in overly broad strokes. This is where more specialized texts, those that address belief and doubt and dissent and secularism,<sup>10</sup> come in. Elisabeth Jay's *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* excerpts a number of fictional and non-fictional Victorian texts,<sup>11</sup> and offers a historical view of the period, organized around topics as broad as "The Evangelicals," "The Broad Church," and "Doubt"—this last of which she notes was "like faith, [. . .] best seen as a process" (99). In *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (1996), Hugh McLeod notes that "doubt" was a common term in the late Victorian era (179), with more people embracing different belief systems, including dissent and forms of agnosticism, that had not been previously available. He states that while between 1850 and 1914 "a relatively high degree of religious consensus existed" (1), "Anglican attendance declined slightly between 1851 and 1881,

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<sup>10</sup> Like Charles Taylor and others after him, I use the term "secularism" to refer to multiple possible belief systems, including unbelief and agnosticism. See Taylor's *A Secular Age* and *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (edited by Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun).

<sup>11</sup> See also Richard J. Helmstadter and Paul T. Phillips's *Religion in Victorian Society: A Sourcebook of Documents* and Kate Flint's (editor) *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change* which is a compilation of external sources loosely linked together by commentary.

and much more rapidly between the later 1880s and the First World War" (172). So, the authors represented in this work fit with their age: a generally "religious" country full of people dealing with the effects of science and legislation on their belief systems. The availability of doubt and the viable option to self-identify with some belief other than Anglicanism or Roman Catholicism (McLeod 179), became more accepted during the latter part of the Victorian era, with an especial push toward agnosticism, the term coined by Thomas Henry Huxley. McLeod notes that while Christianity was no longer the only option for belief by the start of World War I, after which the true faith crisis began, it nevertheless had an organizing effect on the century.

These social histories, however, only tell one part of the story for this dissertation, which also explores, to a lesser degree, the changing role and influence of religion on nineteenth-century fiction. I have already cited from U. C. Knoepfelmacher's *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*, which makes the case that the three authors he studies (George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler) show a pattern of expansion and contraction—from, as he puts it, "disparagement of the old religion" to "a conservative clinging" (7).<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Carolyn Oulton looks at how authors "engaged imaginatively with what they saw as the flaws in evangelical thought" (1) as she picks out the religious convictions of writers like Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. These kinds of studies, of the personal lives of authors have not factored as heavily into my work as they do in others. I remain skeptical that it is necessary to know what George Eliot believed, for example, in order to assess the work she produced.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For my purposes, "conservative" in the context of the nineteenth-century Church tends to be the opposite to Evangelicalism and Dissent, rather than the Tory/Whig bifurcation the term probably brings to mind for modern readers.

<sup>13</sup> For what it is worth: George Eliot moved to bring figures of the clergy in fiction away from simple stereotype and toward a human class with attendant quirks and difficulties that came of living in the early part of the century, pecuniary as well as personal. George Eliot was famously raised in a religious environment, and then moved against

In my own work, I have tried to follow the other tack taken by scholars in recent years, which is to look at how Victorian novels themselves intersect with religion, in historical context. J. Russell Perkin's *Theology and the Victorian Novel* (2009) brought such study into fashion for contemporary readers with a detailed account of the distinctions in High and Broad Anglicanism<sup>14</sup> and he asserts that "great works of literature offer profound insight into issues of fundamental human concern" (5). Miriam E. Burstein's *Victorian Reformations: Historical Fiction and Religious Controversy, 1820-1900* (2014) considers how "popular religious fictions—by authors of any denomination—imagine historical processes at work, processes that, for these authors and their readers, led beyond nineteenth-century national history to the apocalypse itself" (3). In *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency, and the Victorian Novel, 1832-1867* (2014), Chris R. Vanden Bossche "treat[s] the novel itself as a social agent [and] contend[s] that while novels can only imagine agency in terms of existing discourses that produce contemporary ideology, they can also reframe or re-function those discourses" (4).

Like my own project, these critics have selected particular historical moments, and paired fictional (and non-fictional) texts with them to try and observe something important about the century. The key difference between my project and the studies cited above is that I pin my argument on attending to the development of the figure of the clergyman as a way to gauge how the realist novel addresses social issues in the nineteenth century.

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or questioned it later in life. Margaret Oliphant's family were "political and Radical" (qtd. In Merryn Williams 3) and involved in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland where they supported the Free Church (Williams 6). Charlotte Mary Yonge's family were close with John Keble, and she was herself a stalwart Tractarian to the end of her days. G. K. Chesterton converted to Catholicism from High Church Anglicanism in 1922, and during his life he wrote several theological treatises.

<sup>14</sup> My own description of them follows in the pages below.

## Organization of the Project

My chapters are organized around moments within the history of the Anglican Church: the passing of the Pluralities Act, the opening of theological training schools, and the Tractarian Movement. Victorian England has been called a religious era,<sup>15</sup> but the nineteenth century also saw the rise of agnosticism,<sup>16</sup> the increasing influence of scientific advance<sup>17</sup> on people's daily lives, and the pressure placed on Anglicanism by the growing acceptability of belonging to other Protestant sects.

Because the clergy remained formally useful to the realist project of the novel, I attend very closely to the Anglican Church and British authors. Similarly, my choice of the figure of the Anglican clergy was dictated by the literature produced then and available now: it is through Victorian Anglican clergy we see the development of generally complex characters with stories that more thoughtfully engage the "real" world. Clergymen are seemingly ubiquitous in nineteenth-century fiction, and character studies are valuable avenues of study.<sup>18</sup> Clergy interact with, or can interact with, every member of their parish. They are held to social conventions, but, unlike any other social group at the time, are allowed to transgress them. So, rather than dealing exclusively with members of his own caste, a clergyman, like the bishop in chess, can cut across from queen to pawn.

This dissertation pointedly steers away from questions about doctrinal or theological truth. I resist the impulse to make sweeping (or detailed) comment about the actual beliefs or

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<sup>15</sup> See Julie Melnyk's *Victorian Religion: Faith and Life in Britain*.

<sup>16</sup> See Alan D. Gilbert's *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel, and Social Change, 1740-1914*.

<sup>17</sup> See McLeod on the role of medical advance (3) and on "the spread of scientific knowledge" (182).

<sup>18</sup> I am thinking here of Elsie B. Michie's 2014 text on the figure of the wealthy woman, *The Vulgar Question of Money: Heiresses, Materialism, and the Novel of Manners from Jane Austen to Henry James* which was a source of inspiration both in form and content for my dissertation.



scriptural bases on which the Anglican Church is founded. Instead, I have approached the Church as an organizing institution around which people's lives revolved in the nineteenth century, one that is imbricated in the social and political spheres of England. Where appropriate, I discuss some of the internal structure of the Church of England, especially as I anticipate a readership who have not previously acquired a familiarity with it due to personal circumstances (I.e., belonging to the Church of England from childhood) or some specialized form of Anglophilia. In that same vein, I have tried to be mindful about the distinction between religion, as a form of belief, and Anglicanism, an institution. While both terms occur in this project, they are not used interchangeably.

There is, perhaps, a question about the appropriateness of Margaret Oliphant, a Scottish Presbyterian, and G.K. Chesterton, who converted to Catholicism, being in this dissertation which deals so closely with the Church of England. Given that quite a lot of her library is out of print, I cannot speak to the entirety of Oliphant's writing, but the specific novels I address in Chapter Two are set in England and within the Anglican parochial system, and in them she shows herself familiar both with the system and the problems facing it. Chesterton, who features in the coda, did convert to Catholicism, and did write about Father Brown, a Roman Catholic priest. However, the Tractarians were agitating to bring many of the formal Catholic traditions into the Anglican Church, following the precedent of the branch theory that says that Catholicism and Protestantism are branches of the same (tree of) religious tradition. Further, as I discuss in the coda, it is an important development that Chesterton can write popular novels with a sympathetic Catholic lead character at the start of the twentieth century, given how vilified they were in the pre-1800s. This anti-Catholic sentiment seems radically diminished by the end of the

1800s, a change we can attribute in part to the influence of the Tractarians and their insistence on the doctrinal relatedness of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.<sup>19</sup>

This project contends, following historians and critics cited above and below, that the Victorian era is a secularizing period, in the sense of making more forms of belief available and viable (including irreligion and unbelief and doubt), but I also am implicitly making a claim for the continued importance of religious figures (clergymen) in popular novels through the century and beyond. This does not seem to me to be a contradiction. I have and will argue that the clerical force is a social designation with a political and social role within England. The function that they perform certainly changes through the century, but the space they occupy as figures able to move between classes and to interact freely with various parishioners stays the same (or arguably grows). Secularism did not diminish the importance of or interest in the figure of the clergyman. Rather, the secularization of the era made the clerical figure a locus for investigating larger social changes associated with modernity, including the rise of professionalism and the changes and adaptations undertaken by institutions.

Finally, the clergy I have used in this dissertation are by no means the only, complex, interesting, or important fictional clergymen in the nineteenth century. In addition to the authors discussed at length in my work, a small sampling of such fictional representations include Anthony Trollope's *Chronicles of Barsetshire* (Septimus Harding and Dr. Grantley) and *The Way We Live Now* (the Bishop of Elmham); Elizabeth Gaskell's work, especially *North and South* (Mr. Hale); Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (St. John Rivers and Mr. Brocklehurst); and Charles

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<sup>19</sup> For a good overview of the complicated relationship of the Tractarians, Anglo-Catholics, and Roman Catholics, see D. G. Paz's *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (1992), and Sheridan Gilley's "Roman Catholicism" (1995).

Dickens's *Bleak House* (Mr. Chadband). Some, like Chadband, "a large yellow man with a fat smile and a general appearance of having a good deal of train oil in his system" (Ch. XIX) and a caricature, still bear a resemblance to Austen's Mr. Collins. Chadband, too, is a minor character in a very populated novel, who is out in the periphery of the main story. But to think of Mr. Collins, Parson Adams, or Mr. Chadband as the only type of clergymen in novels is a gross oversight, when we have characters like Harding whose personal life is complex enough to span the first two entries in the *Chronicles of Barsetshire*.

### **Chapter Summaries**

Chapter one takes the project that George Eliot set for herself in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, to humanize fictional clergy, to see how one clergyman, Amos Barton, suffers under the constraints of the organization of the Anglican institution. In this chapter I expand on the above-mentioned need for a clergyman to be able to mingle with various levels of society, and discuss the financial straits in which many such men found themselves. To that end, I show that George Eliot showed support for reform movements that treated clergy as any "other class of person" (Carroll 49-50), that is to show the clergy not as a stereotype or a figure consumed with doctrinal attendance, but as men living in England under the various institutional strictures that other men did. In that way, the figure offers a way to think more broadly about the importance of welfare.

In chapter two I bring contemporary mid-1800s discussions about the difference in vocation and profession to bear on Margaret Oliphant's fiction. Generational changes in what it meant to be a clergyman who has a calling, rather than simply one who needs a career, are a point of meditation and concern in both *The Rector* and *The Perpetual Curate*. The former

assesses the shortcomings of career men, and the latter susses out potential difficulties for called clergy and those whose calling might lead them outside the Anglican Church.

Chapter three addresses the Oxford Movement. Beginning in 1833, and continuing through the 1870s at least, the Oxford Movement (or Tractarianism) had as a primary aim to revive the more Catholic rites and rituals that form the basis of the Anglican Church. Charlotte Mary Yonge's fiction shows her connection and devotion to the movement, even as it thinks through how growing a sect of Anglicanism that insists on a certain level of exclusivity might be possible, and how democratic exclusivity requires church builders to decide which stringent rules can be made lax for the sake of attracting members.

Finally, the coda to this dissertation looks forward to the beginning of the twentieth century. After novels about the lives and livelihoods of clergymen have ceased to dominate popular fiction, I argue that rather than falling away, the clerical figure simply undergoes a similar transformation as it did at the end of the eighteenth century when it moved from being a stereotyped comic figure to a psychologically-complex individual who can be used to look at contemporary social issues. Whereas in the Victorian era, what was wanted was a human view of the clergy that would allow social problems to be interrogated in popular fiction, in the early twentieth century the aspect of clerical life that is brought forward is that of information-gathering and sorting. Literally the clerical functions of the clergy, to maintain various histories and records, come to the forefront in a society more interested in scientific method and procedure. With this shift we see the clerical detective, among other fictional detectives, come into his own.

## CHAPTER I

# **Institutions and Individuals: George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* and the Humanity of the Curate**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I make three primary claims: first that in George Eliot's<sup>20</sup> *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857) we have a complex, realistic portrayal of a clergyman as he exists under the institutional oversight of the Anglican Church. Second, that that existence was dominated in the early part of the nineteenth century by fiscal concerns which needed legislative correction. And third, that *Scenes* therefore represents not only a clerical novel but a novel that uses clergy to explore institutions and how they relate to individuals.

To begin, I survey the historical context of the setting of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which is about twenty-five years prior to its composition and publication. At that time, there was a major debate about how to fix the economic problems being faced by clergy, especially the overworked and underpaid curates. Various acts of parliament, as well as vigorous debate, fueled public feeling that something needed to be done to make the clerical profession one which was livable

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<sup>20</sup> There seems to be no defined standard as it comes to the naming convention used for George Eliot. Born Mary Anne Evans, but spelt Mary Ann Evans by her family, and later transformed to Marian to seem more "sophisticated" (Bodenheimer 26), George Eliot subscribed herself under many names through her life. Some critics and biographers, like Pauline Nestor and Joanne Shattock, treat "George Eliot" as "Eliot" when convenient. Others, like preeminent George Eliot scholar George Levine and biographer Barbara Hardy, treat "George Eliot" as a pseudonym entire and not as a proper name with a separable surname. Because George Eliot invented the name as a pseudonym rather than alter-ego, in this essay I have opted to follow Levine's example. See Rosemarie Bodenheimer's "A woman of many names" for an excellent explanation of George Eliot's appellations and their significances.

for men who were not independently wealthy. I next turn to the critical body of work around George Eliot and *Scenes*. Since my argument addresses both the historical record and her reaction to the reforms happening within the Church of England, my critical survey puts special emphasis on the scholarship that has addressed similar aspects of George Eliot's work. With the historical and critical scaffold in place, I move on to my reading of "The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton" where I focus especially on the twin meanings of "fortune" that I see as crucial for understanding how the story is responding to and anticipating the Church reform that serves as its impetus. Finally, in my concluding section I tie together the historical and the literary elements presented in this chapter and look forward to chapter two, which continues the meditation on literature and Church reform.

*Scenes of Clerical Life* explores a changing relationship between the institution and the individual. The text is hyperlocal in its interest, exploring a single, small country parish, Shepperton, over the course of three generations. However, the concerns evinced, particularly in the first scene, have national ramifications. If the story, "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," is narrowly interested in Barton, a curate, and his interactions with his parishioners and his institution, then we might think of the figure of the curate within the short story standing for the more overarching and contemporary concern about the place of the individual within the nation. As I discuss below, the setting of this sketch forces readers to consider it alongside political developments such as the Pluralities Act and the Reform Act, which I suggest reconfigured the way that people thought about "the people" (as a broad group of individuals) and representation.

Focusing particularly on financial and societal subjects, this chapter will show that "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" not only lends itself to implicit commendation of the Pluralities Act 1838, but also addresses how the Anglican Church bears responsibility for its employees' wellbeing. Barton is a complex character with practical financial problems; he is far from what Barry Turner calls a "portray[al]" that paints the clerical figure "as a buffoon or a charlatan" (11). George Eliot humanizes the fictional clergyman, and makes a solid case in favor of reform that puts the needs of individuals ahead of the desires of institutions.

### **Historical Context: Pluralities Act 1838**

*Those were days when a man could hold three small livings, starve a curate a-piece on two of them, and live badly himself on the third. It was so with the Vicar of Shepperton [. . .] who executed his vicarial functions towards Shepperton by pocketing the sum of thirty-five pounds ten per annum, the net surplus remaining to him from the proceeds of that living, after the disbursement of eighty pounds as the annual stipend of his curate.*

George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 5-6

"Amos Barton" is set in 1836, the eve of pluralism reform being passed in parliament; therefore, some context is necessary to understand the stakes of the story. Pluralism, in the sense of one ordained cleric holding multiple livings (stipends attached to parishes through either the lifetime gift by a squire's family or the appointment of funds for such by the Anglican Church), caused numerous problems during the nineteenth century. Some men who had gone through the academic and financial rigors to become ordained were unable to find permanent positions as

parish rectors. Some who held plural livings were spread thin, and frequently unable to perform the weekly offices and pastoral care for all of their parishes. This twofold deficit initiated a curacy state wherein fully educated and credentialed university graduates performed the pastoral functions of a permanent rector, but were being paid to do so "under the table," usually quite badly, and with no permanence of position guaranteed from year to year. The Church of England of the early 1800s sought to remedy what they saw as the gravest concerns stemming from pluralism: beneficed clergy's absenteeism which resulted in decreased cure of souls, and some professional clergy growing wealthy by holding multiple livings while others were unable to find livable positions.

Over the course of the 1800s, Anglican clergy gained stability and station. In *The Country Priest in English History* (1959), A. Tindal Hart makes some very bold claims about "the Victorian Age [that] witnessed the golden summer of the parson's progress" (19). He tells us to,

picture [the country parson] in his prime as a resident country gentleman, the landlord of the glebe farm and the receiver of the tithes, who was usually also an extremely hard-working clergyman and a simple man of God. It must never be forgotten, of course, that there were plenty of indigent incumbents and some starvation curates about in the nineteenth century—the poor are always with us!—but the standard was set by the well-to-do-rector of good family, who could meet his bishop or squire on the common ground of their social and intellectual equality. (19)



The beneficed clergyman was "in his prime." However, the precarious life of an underpaid curate held no guarantees about terms of employment. Hart happily glosses over the "plenty of indigent incumbents and some starvation curates about in the nineteenth century." These men were employed "to do the rough work" on nominal stipends, while their vicars and rectors themselves lived lives of leisure with holidays abroad, dining with the local squires and best families, and held ruling powers jointly with the village squires (*Country Priest* 19). That "rough work" seems a way to cover all manner of activities, but based on Hart's description of what is not rough, we can assume that he really means the pastoral care for which tenured rectors were originally hired. Elsewhere, Hart says that a curate "was the life and soul of the parish" and he lists some of the activities that would fall under the curate's job description: establishing guilds and clubs, visiting the sick and poor, catechizing children, and keeping "the Sunday School in such perfect discipline" (*Curate's Lot* 147). So, while Hart acknowledges that over the century the role of the clergyman in the country parish changed generally for the better, we must acknowledge that the position of the curate remained pretty bad.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, "the wealth of the Church [. . .] was concentrated in few hands" (Turner 57). According to the findings of "an exhaustive investigation<sup>21</sup> into the value of every clerical living in England and Wales," about "a third of the clergy were doing very nicely" while "the majority were struggling" (Turner 57). Brenda Colloms states that up to the 1830s, "about 80 per cent of livings produced less than £400 a year" (19), and that "[c]urates fared much worse. Their average stipend was £81 per year and more than 4,000 of them served parishes where the rector resided elsewhere" (19). G. Kitson Clark

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<sup>21</sup> Turner notes that the investigation began "in the year of the Reform Bill" 1832, by the Ecclesiastical Revenues Commission (57).

points out that for the country cleric who was not independently wealthy, times were lean well into the century, noting, "[i]n the middle of the century in all probability the problem was a peculiarly difficult one, since the clergyman in a poor parish was not now normally able to supplement his income by serving as a schoolmaster in a grammar school or taking service in a neighboring parish" (*The Making of Victorian England* 170). Perhaps this is a fair assessment for the latter part of the century, but in the early and middle 1800s, government record, statistical census information, and fictional presentations of the figure show that the position was still fraught.

In the 16 May 1834 issue of *The London Gazette* (a printed official record of British government), a group of petitioners which include "the Archdeacon and [. . .] Clergy of the Archdeaconry [. . .] of Stafford," asked for intervention for the "welfare of the Established Church of England" (895). Partly, this request is for preventative measures against the rising agitation by Dissenters to be admitted to – and be allowed degrees from – universities, on the grounds that "it would ill become a Christian nation to secularize education in its seats of learning" and might increase "scepticism" (896).

The second section, though, deals with an increasing concern about pluralism in the Anglican Church. The petitioners cede, "that in some of its provisions our ecclesiastical system is not sufficiently adapted to the spiritual wants of our population" (896), which is to say, that a result of pluralism is that some parishes end up forced to go without access to certain regular offices which can only be provided by having a proper rector living within the area that he serves. The writers specify that "the unequal extent of dioceses and parishes, and the difficulties which still impede the erection and endowment of additional places of worship" are of grave

concern to the spiritual well-being of the people, as well as the financial well-being of clergymen (896). They ask for "more effectual regulations for the restriction of pluralities and securing a more general residence of the clergy" and also that "some specific and appropriate course in theological education should be enjoined on the candidates for the ministry in our church" (896). The latter concern would be addressed with the opening of "no less than 8 theological colleges [. . .] founded between 1836 and 1876" (Clark *Making* 170), and toward the second half of the century the greater number of authorized Anglican clergy would swell to match the increased population (Clark 170). The concern revealed in this petition regarding the regularity of benefice pluralism was addressed both in and out of the political sphere.

Four years after this we have one of the earliest printed instances of pluralism being brought before parliament as a concern which needed tending to through legislation: the Pluralities Act 1838 was passed to limit the holdings of a single parson. After the enacting of this legislation, "Not more than Two Preferments" could be held by "any Spiritual Person" and only in the case that the two benefices were within ten miles of one another (*Act 1838* 838). This would, theoretically, limit or prevent the absenteeism associated with a parson living in a county that is not within riding distance of another for which he has charge, thereby making him literally unable to perform his offices in both (or all) his parishes in a single holy day. Furthermore, the act provided that any "Spiritual Person holding a Benefice with a Population of more than Three thousand Persons" could not accept any other living (838), nor could he hold a living or livings in such a way as to cause the "joint yearly Value" of his stipend to exceed one thousand pounds (838). Limiting the number and value of livings allowed to be held by any single priest should mean both that there were enough livable-wage situations to support the growing clerical force,

and that the resulting beneficed clergy would be present, active members of the parish in which they worked. Authors like George Eliot, whose fictional accounts of the life and times of early nineteenth-century clergy, engage the problems of pluralism and curate stipends to illustrate that the ability of a person to live well hinges on an individual's relationship to the institution that employs him, and is affected by numerous systems of advocacy and control. The political and ecclesiastical voices who spoke out on the Pluralities Act 1838, and earlier iterations, like the Benefice-Residence and Plurality Bill, give us important context and a clue into what the major concerns were, both with the acts enacted as written and with the possible consequences of not passing some measure.

The issue of legislative solutions to pluralism was brought up in the Houses of Lords and Commons numerous times between March 1832 and August 1885, under different names—but usually it was simply referred to as the "Pluralities Bill."<sup>22</sup> An early proposed bill, discussed before the House of Lords on 16 March 1832, invited hearty debate among the earls, lords, bishops, and archbishops in session. There does not seem to be an extant copy of this bill, since it ultimately failed. However, we can read the transcripts of official debate. Over the course of their discussions, various speakers raise their objections, citing examples of how the measures proposed would not have been beneficial. Some of the objections include Lord Suffield's concern about the power of the bill to limit the ability of bishops to make special dispensations to allow pluralities where it would be logical and convenient (HL Deb 16 March 1832 para. 2).

The Bishop of London rallied for this version of the bill stating that rather than harming them, "it

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<sup>22</sup> Versions of this bill were also called "Plurality of Benefices" (2 April 1832), "Parliamentary Reform-Bill for England-Second Reading-Second Day" (10 April 1832), "Established Church Bill" (25 August 1836), and simply "Pluralities" (6 August 1838). Acts called "Pluralities Bill" were submitted to the Houses on 3 March 1832, 16 March 1832, 23 March 1832, 27 March 1832, 29 October 1884, 20 May 1885, 7 July 1885, and 9 July 1885.

would enable the poor clergyman to hold two livings without a dispensation, the expense of procuring which was now considerable" (HL Deb 16 March 1832 para. 8). Poor clergy and curates were both, theoretically, on the minds of the members of parliament as they were debating this Pluralities Bill.

When the piece of legislation came back before the House of Lords on 23 March 1832, the debates again centered on objections to the wording and how such legislation could be used to improve both the availability of pastoral care and the lives of impoverished clerics. The Archbishop of Canterbury particularly noted how this version of the bill, would decrease "the present pluralities nearly two-thirds," but that there yet needed an amendment which would "enabl[e] incumbents of the poorer livings to pay their curates" because up to this point "Bishops always paid their curates larger salaries than other holders of benefices" (HL Deb 23 March 1832 para. 1).

At the same time, the 1832 Reform Act was being debated and passed, increasing franchise rights to include men lower on the socioeconomic scale (any man owning a household worth ten pounds would be eligible to vote after this reform), and ending the fiefdom rule of some families in "rotten boroughs" which offered over-representation to some very small parishes (in several documented cases one borough would be sending a representative to parliament to represent just one family). Along these latter lines, the Great Reform Act also tried to even out representation for the urban centers which were growing at a rapid rate during the period just ahead of the Industrial Revolution.

Not only did the Great Reform Act end the "rotten boroughs" problem, but it also provided a kind of mediated access to government involvement by (criteria-meeting)

Englishmen. Making the system of local elections more equitable, and representational politics more accurate, brings us back to the idea that, in the first half of the 1800s in England, the individual and the corporate nation are engaged in a mutually-affecting relationship. Thus, there are echoes of similar issues sounding between these two 1832 acts: a problem of pluralism is that the fate of many are held in the hands of few and there does not seem to be a democratic or effectual way to make known or resolve the difficulties faced in townships under the care of a curate. That same inefficient process accounts for these rotten boroughs and unequal representation at parliament.

Though the 1832 Pluralities Bill would not be passed as it was presented at the time, the issues stemming from pluralism did not stop plaguing the Church of England. We know that the Pluralities Act 1838 would resolve some of the major problems with a sweeping reform. However, that reform was apparently received with mixed reviews.

I will shortly discuss George Eliot's interpretation of pastoral care. For the moment, there is one last important element in this Ecclesiastical Commission letter when the author proposes a different method of determining pluralism. In the same footnote cited above, the author says, "On the Benefice and Plurality Bill, I may be excused for suggesting, that *population* might have proved a more beneficial criterion for licensing Pluralities, than *distance*, and certainly quite as practicable" (italics in original). It is an oversimplification, perhaps, to talk about the nineteenth-century influx of people to the cities and metropolitan centers, but it is certain that in the 1830s the rural parishes, rotten boroughs, and countryside of England still featured numerous areas of low population density where the author's premise would be a logistical failure. At the very least, the problems associated with a vicar who is tasked with covering too much land area to be

personally present in his parish would not be resolved in the rural areas where a given number of souls could be spread over many more miles than they would be in cities. In such cases, it would still not be feasible for one cleric to serve their needs in the way that this bill called for. The difficulties of providing pastoral care and the lack of individual agency within the Church institution present challenges for curates attempting to work within a framework designed against them.

### **Critical Context**

*This is what I am commissioned to say to you about the proposed series. It will consist of tales and sketches illustrative of the actual life of our country clergy about a quarter of a century ago; but solely in its human and not at all in its theological aspect; the object being to do what has never yet been done in our Literature, for we have had abundant religious stories polemical and doctrinal, but since the Vicar [of Wakefield] and Miss Austen, no stories representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows, and troubles of other men. He [George Eliot] begged me particularly to add that—as the specimen sent will sufficiently prove—the tone throughout will be sympathetic and not at all antagonistic (iii, 269) [sic].*

George Henry Lewes to John Blackwood, quoted in Carroll 49-50

Critical attention paid to George Eliot has been interested to the ways that she both spoke to her contemporary society and anticipated Modernism, the way that her works intersect with

religion,<sup>23</sup> philosophy,<sup>24</sup> realism,<sup>25</sup> and feminism.<sup>26</sup> As I have alluded to and will further explore, one of the major issues that George Eliot brings up in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" is the relationship of the individual curate and his Church institution and how, by putting issues of faith off the table, she can better assess the human needs of a man. That is, George Eliot makes a concentrated effort not to try to define or explain the mystical aspects of a personal relationship to the Divine, never asking whether or why Amos Barton's own faith exists as it might. The figure of the curate, here, is one which must act within the system of the Church on behalf of individuals, and with individuals on behalf of the state Church, rather than for either as an intercessor with the Divine. Focusing "solely in its human and not at all in its theological aspect," George Eliot sets us up to interrogate the relationship of individuals and institutions.

George Eliot's design in writing *Scenes of Clerical Life*, according to George Henry Lewes, was to take a figure well-known to readers in the mid-nineteenth century and change the

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<sup>23</sup> See Darryl Jones "'As If The Waters Had But Newly Retired From The Face Of The Earth': The Flood In Victorian Fiction;" Jane Donahue Eberwein "'Dangerous Fruit Of The Tree Of Knowledge': Mary Ann Evans, Emily Dickinson, And Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*;" Marilyn Orr . "Incarnation, Inwardness, And Imagination: George Eliot's Early Fiction;" Annemarie Frank "Daniel Deronda: The Cultural Imperative Of Religion;" John H. Mazaheri "Religion And Work In Adam Bede" and *George Eliot's Spiritual Quest In Silas Marner*; Robert P. Lewis "Full Consciousness: Passion And Conversion In Adam Bede;" Susan E. Hill "Translating Feuerbach, Constructing Morality: The Theological And Literary Significance Of Translation For George Eliot;" and G. Douglas Atkins *Literary Paths To Religious Understanding: Essays On Dryden, Pope, Keats, George Eliot, Joyce, T. S. Eliot, And E. B. White*.

<sup>24</sup> See Daniel Wright "George Eliot's Vagueness;" Henry Staten *Spirit Becomes Matter: The Brontës, George Eliot, Nietzsche*; Lesa Scholl "George Eliot, Harriet Martineau And The Popularisation Of Comte's Positive Philosophy;" K.M. Newton "George Eliot, Kant, And Free Will;" Andrew Lallier "'Where Can Duty Lie?': George Eliot, Kant And Morality;" and Kimberly J. Stern "The Poetics Of Criticism: Philosophical Discourse And George Eliot's 'A College Breakfast-Party.'"

<sup>25</sup> See John Murdoch "English Realism: George Eliot and the Pre-Raphaelites;" William Hyde "George Eliot and the Climate of Realism;" Imraan Coovadia "George Eliot's Realism and Adam Smith;" John McGowan "The Turn of George Eliot's Realism;" Hilary Schor *Curious Subjects: Women And The Trials Of Realism*; and most recently Maria Su Wang's "Realism's Operative Paradox: Character Autonomy Vs. Authorial Construction In Middlemarch."

<sup>26</sup> See K. M. Newton "The Otherness of George Eliot;" June Skye Szirotny "Why George Eliot Was Not A Political Activist;" David Hempton *Evangelical Disenchantment: Nine Portraits of Faith and Doubt*; Kimberly J. Stern "A Common Fund: George Eliot and the Gender Politics of Criticism;" Kimberly VanEsveld Adams *Our Lady of Victorian Feminism: The Madonna in the Work of Anna Jameson, Margaret Fuller, and George Eliot*;" and Nancy L. Paxton *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender*.



perspective from which he was treated. The "country clergy" had not, in at least forty years according to her view, been represented "like any other class [. . .] of men." That is, the individual has, to her mind, gotten lost in the shuffle of the institutional concerns. Clergy have been treated in fiction either as comic figures (like in Fielding or Austen) or as representatives for the concerns of an established Church, rather than as people who face their situations and inform their understandings of them from the "human [. . .] aspect." Her plan to offer a "sympathetic" tone points to George Eliot's interest in Comte's Positivism (Vogeler 408), creating a universe in which Positivism can be allowed to succeed or fail, but to approach it by focusing on how an individual may be harmed or helped by the backdrop of a connected institution. An early review of *Scenes* suggests that audiences received the work in such a spirit. An unsigned review by Samuel Lucas from 1858 particularly praises George Eliot's "clear and simple descriptions, and a combination of humour with pathos in depicting ordinary situations" (qtd. in Carroll 62).

In George Eliot's journals she describes her original impetus to write *Scenes of Clerical Life* this way:

I mentioned to [George Henry Lewes] that I had thought of the plan of writing a series of stories, containing sketches drawn from my own observation of the clergy, and calling them 'Scenes from Clerical Life,' opening with 'Amos Barton.'

He at once accepted the notion as a good one—fresh and striking. (*Life* 299-300)

And, after receiving early news of the reviews of "Sad Fortunes," which were mixed, George Eliot commented that,

In reference to artistic presentation much adverse opinion will, of course, arise from a dislike to the *order* of art rather than from a critical estimate of the execution. Any one who detests the Dutch school in general will hardly appreciate fairly the merits of a particular Dutch painting. And against this sort of condemnation one must steel one's self as one best can. (*Life* 309, emphasis in original)

From these two pieces, we can see that George Eliot viewed the ends of her art to be based on reality ("drawn from [her] own observation"), to be as exact as possible (fitting with the school of Dutch realist paintings), and that she and Lewes understood it to be a new perspective ("fresh and striking"). Indeed, Lewes described George Eliot's intended *Scenes of Clerical Life* as an opportunity to return to "stories representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows and troubles of other men" (qtd. in Carroll 49). Alain Jumeau explains that because "the religious debates of the 1830s ha[d] lost their violence and [could] be considered with less passion" (16) in the mid-1850s, George Eliot's novel did not need to address any religious debate, but could focus entirely on how clergymen faced practical issues (like not having enough money to live). Her novel is able to consider how a clergyman "reflects a human and sociological bias" (Jumeau 16). This is quite different from Austen's Mr. Collins who seems to have neither financial nor practical concerns. But George Eliot's writings do not approach the figure of the curate as one who is simply senseless or impractical. Her Amos Barton is a victim of the way the Anglican Church's organizational structure simply did not take care of its employees.

Recent entries into the critical field follow along the themes that George Eliot herself identified: sympathetic and realistic presentations of people in their communities. A common thread, important to this work, is the assertion that George Eliot's fiction addresses real, contemporary problems that she observed in society, and that her work is based on such observation. Cristina Richieri Griffin's 2017 article "George Eliot's Feuerbach: Senses, Sympathy, Omniscience, And Secularism," for example, suggests that George Eliot's "fiction [. . .] repeatedly privileges forms of fellow feeling that avoid abstraction and instead capitalize on the productive intimacy gleaned from proximate and embodied experiences" (476). These proximate experiences include direct observation of clergy, and her intimate knowledge of their livelihoods, which she used in her novels to "build up a picture" (Paterson 77) that went beyond the stereotypical aspects fictional clergymen had previously been known for, as David Paterson points out. Graham Handley calls George Eliot's clerical scenes "reflective of a faith in human nature" because they show "the many-sidedness of the human character" (39). However, other critics have pointed out that she used this intimate knowledge to critique the "imperfections of provincial life" (Barrat 56) to bring forward "failings aggravated by society" (Barrat 49).

Finally, Martin Bidney goes so far as to say that not only is *Scenes of Clerical Life* inspired by real life events, but that it is "a blend of fiction and autobiography," "replete with characters and events whose real-life prototypes are readily identifiable" (1). So, we start from the position that George Eliot features and responds to real-world situations in order to raise sympathy for the characters on which *Scenes* is centered, and move to consider how she uses this sympathy to support social reform that takes the individual's needs into account above all else.

"The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" is about an impoverished curate who attempts to improve his station through social connections, but cannot do so because the system is rigged against curates. It was first published in 1857, but per George Eliot's intentions is set "about a quarter of a century ago" (qtd. in Carroll 49). This puts the time frame for the scene in a recent past, in the early- or mid-1830s. George Eliot describes the chronological setting as "five-and-twenty years ago" (*Scenes* 3) but gives as the orienting markers references to "the New Police, Tithe Commutation Act, [and] the penny-post" (3). The "New Police" established a national policing network in London in 1829, which eventually spread to the rest of England. This system moved policing from a parish-by-parish setup by centralizing authority and standardizing practices. The Tithe Commutation Act, as noted, regularized income for rectors and expenditure for parishioners, as well as making it simpler for parishioners to plan and remit payment for the tithing on their annual produce. The 1835 penny-post established the first national compulsory postage payment on all pieces of mail, which like the New Police, began in London and then radiated out to the rest of England. Chronologically, then, Amos Barton's tale begins soon after the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 which standardized the practice of parishioners giving to their rector a pre-calculated-average cash settlement approximately equal to the value of one tenth of the annual harvest, rather than literally giving one tenth of the fruits of the land.

These reforms from the first half of the nineteenth century in some way moved control from parishes to federal or national hands to ease interactions between individuals and their institutions. That is, by the restructuring of systems which had been in place in parishes to make them efficient on a national scale, English people had easier access to needed services at more

standardized rates. Although *Scenes of Clerical Life* is a highly-localized text, set in a single parish and with the stories generally limited even to single neighborhoods within that parish, the fact that "Amos Barton" is grounded by historical, national changes suggests that, at the very least, George Eliot is conscious of how smaller subsets of people within a larger context are affected by such regulatory systemic changes. While "Amos Barton" focuses quite narrowly on *one* individual, the story nevertheless thinks through how such a national scale affects *the* individual. That is, George Eliot's commentary on a concrete figure should more adequately be interpreted as a critique of the ideas which support him: not just a story about a clergyman, but a meditation on the relationship which binds individuals to their communities. George Eliot's use of these historical phenomena introduces the primary concern of the scene: how can an individual like Amos Barton operate within a system like the Church of England successfully?

In the same way that the political developments which inform the chronology of Amos's "Sad Fortunes" deal with the way that an individual is represented within and to his larger body (parish, state, nation, Church), George Eliot's narrator calls our attention to Amos Barton as one who would perhaps in the past not have been granted such recognition as he is about to receive. As "a man who was so very far from remarkable" (38), he might easily not have been remarked on. However, if the scaffold on which George Eliot bases this story is the development of institutional powers in England, then Amos Barton stands as a man in line to either suffer or benefit from that development. His identity as an individual is something which may have, in the past, been taken for granted, but in this story, it is his relationship to the Anglican Church that causes tension and suffering.

## "The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton"

*The Rev. Amos Barton, whose sad fortunes I have undertaken to relate, was, you perceive, in no respect an ideal or exceptional character, and perhaps I am doing a bold thing to bespeak your sympathy on behalf of a man who was so very far from remarkable [ . . . ].*

George Eliot *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 38

The first vignette in *Scenes of Clerical Life* is about fortunes, and how they go badly for Rev. Amos Barton. His personal life and position in society ("fortunes" as the chance that guide anyone's life) as well as his financial state ("fortunes" as wealth and monetary holdings) affect one another in such a way as to cause the reverend both personal heartache and public ruin. Barton's coffers go from bad to worse to non-existent over the course of the story. On a parallel track, his respectability wanes from aspiring gentleman to pariah, eventually forcing him to move house and leave the town of Shepperton to find work and a clean slate.

Put briefly, the story can be summarized as follows: Amos Barton is a new curate in Shepperton, a small parish town. He and his wife, Milly, have too many children to feed and clothe, and not enough income on which to do it. One way that he attempts to remedy the situation is by courting the goodwill of local socialite Countess Czerlaski, who talks a much bigger game than she should do as she lives on the charity of her elder brother. She has made Barton believe that she has friends with church livings to dispose of, and that a word from her would secure one for him. However, Barton's blind faith in the woman causes him to neglect cultivating relationships with other parishioners who actually could become a network of

support. Shepperton parishioners turn on Barton, believing that the Countess is his mistress. Milly dies in childbirth, and Barton's vicar recalls the curacy to give it to his brother-in-law, forcing Barton to move to a "large manufacturing town" (68). This fits into a similar interpretation of luck and chance that Robert C. Koepp observes in George Eliot's works. He argues that, in the case of George Eliot's characters, "Clinging to the unfounded hopes of chance can, moreover, result most seriously in loss of an essential sense of duty or an abdication of moral responsibility for others" (306). Koepp is discussing George Eliot's characters broadly, who he says are placed "in situations where they *must act*" (306, emphasis in original). We can see the same kind of inaction-as-destruction with Barton. The fact that he refuses to do something to either improve relations with his parishioners or to push the Countess to keep her word leads to his deterioration. When he finally does act, and moves away from Shepperton, we suppose that his lot must improve, simply for the fact that he is taking control of his destiny as Koepp says George Eliot's fiction rewards.

The twin meanings of "fortunes" are both negotiated within the story. Amos Barton's ruins (financial and personal), as is clear from George Eliot's characterization, are the results of both his poor judgment regarding things within his control, and the way that his parishioners have the right to withhold offerings (which are given in addition to tithes which are legally required) that they might make to Barton.

Amos Barton faces the insurmountable dilemma of being a "man with a wife and six children [. . .] obliged always to exhibit himself when outside his own door in a suit of black broadcloth" (6) and a good hat and cravat which will not belie his "plebeian" station or his having "tak[en] to the hideous doctrine of expediency" (6), living in a parish "poor enough to

require frequent priestly consolation in the shape of shillings and sixpences" (6), and his position as a curate only earns "the sum of eighty pounds per annum" (6). That is, Barton must kit himself and his family out to appear of a higher caste than his birth and career denote, perform the cure of souls in the pragmatic way of offering both pastoral care and relief aid to the people within his domain, and he has to do all this on an annual stipend which is lower than that of the average artisan worker at the time<sup>27</sup> (Bowley 23) and had not the guarantee of future job security of such a tradesman.

And for a curate, though he holds the town together under his pastoral oversight, there is no such thing as job security. One of the young Shepperton socialites "wondered why [Barton] was always going *for* to do a thing" (14, emphasis in original). While her concern is with the grammatical inaccuracies of Barton's speech, our notice should be drawn to the fact that Amos Barton perceives pastoral care to be an active engagement: always to be doing a thing to help his parishioners live better lives. Among the activities shown or described in the story, Barton has made plans to make improvements to the Shepperton church, solicited people about town to increase or enroll in subscriptions toward that fund (10), begun a lending library "in which he had introduced some books that would be a pretty sharp blow to the Dissenters" (14), and structured his preaching to particularly reach both High and Low Church sensibilities (14)—to appeal to the widest audience so that none would fall to what he perceives as the great evil of Dissenting sects (14). Clergy have access to people in all social positions and are expected to minister to their various needs, which necessarily differ according to their social and financial circumstance. Brian Heeney outlines some of the expectations and realities of the working

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<sup>27</sup> Considering the time and money an artisan would spend during his apprenticeship, and the time and money a man would spend at university to become a clergyman, these seem apt professional divisions for wage comparison.



clergy in his 1976 book *A Different Kind of Gentleman: Parish Clergy as Professional Men in Early and Mid-Victorian England*. He notes that "parish visiting was universally recognised as an important element in the ministry of every incumbent," wherein the parson went "among different social classes" (52). This is all to say, Amos Barton makes earnest effort in his work as the parish curate, and has done as well as could be expected for an unremarkable individual. But no amount of hard work will convert the curacy to an incumbency; his professional security is completely out of his control. He is still, in terms of his stipend and professional opportunities, forced to work within the already-set structure of the Church of England, which does not have much sympathy for any individual or curate.

When Barton loses his position in Shepperton at the end of the vignette, it is not the result of the perception of the town with regard to his affiliation with the Countess, or a failure on his part to perform his duties. In fact, at a point when the rebuilding and improvements of "the church was quite finished and reopened in all its new splendour, and Mr Barton was devoting himself with more vigour than ever to his parochial duties," he receives a letter from the vicar which "contained the announcement that Mr Carpe [the priest who employs Barton] had resolved on coming to reside at Shepperton" giving Barton six months to find a new placement (67). And as an indication that Barton and his pastoral efforts are appreciated at least in Shepperton, "[i]t roused some bitter feeling, too, to think that Mr Carpe's wish to reside at Shepperton was merely a pretext for removing Mr Barton, in order that he might ultimately give the curacy of Shepperton to his own brother-in-law, who was known to be wanting a new position" (67). They feel the injustice of the situation, though "it must be borne" (67).

## Pecuniary Particulars

Barton, as curate in Shepperton (67), earns eighty pounds per annum on which he is supposed to support himself, his wife, and his six children. A. Tindal Hart says that "the average nineteenth-century curate acquired but little of that prestige which the better-off incumbent was now enjoying. His poverty, insecurity, plebeian birth and sometimes his uncouthness frequently led both his employer and parishioners to treat him either with contempt, ridicule or pity" (*Curate's Lot* 131). Amos Barton's desire to clothe his family "with gentility," (6) then, is a pretension he can neither afford nor presume. For his cure of souls, in addition to the pre-assumed need to have various parishioners over for dinner (either due to their need or his social practice), Barton takes it on himself to help the impoverished as often as possible: Shepperton has "poor enough to require frequent priestly consolation in the shape of shillings and sixpences" (6). Prior to the advent in the mid-century of various charitable organizations and poor law relief efforts, a parish clergyman stands as the primary point of supply and distribution of those elements we think of today as falling under the umbrella of social work. However, these acts are performed out of pocket, and in the case of curates like Barton, the pocket is probably not deep at all.

A concern here is how much of Barton's fortune and fortunes are the result of the layers of agency present for an individual working within a superstructure like the Church of England. There is no legal recourse for Barton to challenge the amount of his stipend, no precedent for curates to be accepted as full members of aristocratic circles, and no opportunity for advancement along the social or professional ladder without the dedicated interest and assistance of his betters. So, while his problems (his coffers are bare, his social capital in recession, and the

like) are unique to his individual story, George Eliot also uses him to uncover problems associated with the corporate entity of the Church of England in the early 1800s. The character of Barton is rich in that it allows both George Eliot and readers to take a circumspect view of how great an effect legislative changes have on the personal lives of individuals.

We know Barton earns eighty pounds per year because his finances are at the forefront of the scene. George Eliot tells us that Barton, not being the incumbent of Shepperton, is employed by a vicar who is "running into debt [by living extravagantly] far away in a northern county" (5) and collecting all but Barton's eighty pounds of the Shepperton stipend. About a year before the start of "The Sad Fortunes," and for many years prior, an aunt of Amos's wife Milly had lived with the Barton family, providing furniture and income to support them which had "kept the wolf from the door" (40). But "[i]t was now nearly a year since [Milly's aunt's] departure, and to a fine ear, the howl of the wolf was audibly approaching" (40). Thus, the sum total of resources available to Amos Barton and his family are what he earns as the Shepperton curate.

When we first meet him, Barton's family is two months out from Lady-day. According to Josie Billington's notes in the Oxford World's Classics edition of the text, "Lady-day" signifies the date of Barton's next quarterly stipend payment on the twenty-fifth of March (*Scenes* 337). We look in on Amos and Milly Barton discussing their financial situation when Milly tells him that the butcher "must have some money" for which the man has actually called at the Barton home (17). Barton's reply is telling, both of the state of his pocketbook and his inability to maintain his family on it: "I think I must ask Hackit to lend me twenty pounds, for it is nearly two months till Lady-day, and we can't give Woods [the butcher] our last shilling" (17). Milly

convinces Amos to supplicate to a different parishioner because the Hackits have already "sent us so many things" (17).

To put this in perspective, Amos Barton's curacy earns him twenty pounds every three months. After just over one month, he is down to his last shilling, or one twentieth of a pound (twelve pence in value). That is, 95.75% of the income for the quarter is gone in only 33% of the time it was meant to last. And the amount that he is going to borrow, another twenty pounds, is logically just not enough to see Barton through to his next stipend payment, almost two months away yet. Twelve pounds are "due as back payment to the butcher" (39), though it is unclear whether that is simply a payment towards a larger debt or whether that zeroes the account; and then "[p]oor Fred must have some new shoes [. . .] before Sunday" (17-18), and with eight sovereigns in hand, the Bartons find it hard to resist new clothing and accoutrements for themselves and their six children (39).

George Eliot is blunt in her assessment of Amos Barton: he is incompetent in terms of education, achievement, and ability to live on his budget. However, in the epigraph to this section, she describes Barton as "far from remarkable" (38), which indicates that the fact that he struggles to perform as well as he might is not the only reason that he is struggling to live on the wages he earns; otherwise, he would be remarkable. The fact that he is unremarkable in his situation speaks to one of the broader problems that George Eliot highlights in this scene: the many English working poor who are unable to change their situations because of the degree to which they are at the whim of the corporation. In "The Natural History of German Life" she decries that terms such as "the people" and "the masses," "are as far from completely representing the complex facts summed up in the collective term" as the difference in the mental

images conjured by the term "railways" by a selection of persons each with different experiences of railways (*Selected Essays* 108).<sup>28</sup> I would suggest that Barton's being "far from remarkable" is also part of her theory of good art as she presents it in that essay, in which "the real characteristics" of the collective group at hand must be "sufficiently disclosed by our Art as well as by our political and social theories" (108).

There is clearly more at stake than simply a man who is bad with money. George Eliot's implicit critique is of officially-sanctioned practices surrounding curates in the early nineteenth century. Barton's parishioners think that he has "been havin' money from some clergy charity" (48), and Barton himself believes that Countess Czerlaski has the ability and desire to follow through on her offer to write to the Lord Blarney "whom [she] knew before he was chancellor [. . .] and tell him how he ought to dispose of the next vacant living in his gift" to Barton (32). The fact that a kind of welfare state within the clergy of the established national Church is taken here as a given, and yet seems like such an enormous concession. While archbishops, bishops, and archdeacons are growing wealthy living in palaces (literally, in the case of the archbishops), the ones on the frontlines are barely scraping by.

The very "human" aspect, as George Eliot draws it out, is that life is a series of problems and solutions. She asks, "can you solve me the following problem?" (6) and proceeds to lay bare the financial burdens put upon Barton, including his above-noted pulls toward charity and gentility. She continues, "By what process of division can the sum of eighty pounds per annum be made to yield a quotient which will cover that man's [Barton's] weekly expenses?" (6).

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<sup>28</sup> George Eliot opens this essay by comparing the disparity in mental images produced by the term "railways" to such people as a casual passenger, a conductor, and someone "who is not highly locomotive" (*Selected Essays* 107). She uses this, what we might refer to as the slippage between signified and signifier, to move into her argument about the importance of representational art being absolutely mimetic.

Additionally, a "problem" she highlights is the fact that reducing an individual down to strictly financial terms leaves aside the story of his life. This equation comes at the opening of the sketch, and it sets the scene for us to watch Barton's fortunes deteriorate.

George Eliot poses a situation which, within the frame of the scene has no solution to offer, but for 1850s readers bears a solid connection to contemporary legislative measures such as the Great Reform Act. George Eliot has, rather seamlessly, put us into the mind of a dead-end curacy with no hope for immediate assistance to make the living livable, for readers who have the frame of reference of what must have seemed sweeping (and perhaps obtrusive?) legislation in the established Church. George Eliot's readers have had some fifteen years or so to see these reforms put into action. "Sad Fortunes" can, therefore, serve as a kind of reminder about why reform was needed, as well as an argument for the general kind of reform that encourages institutions to take care of their employees.

### **The Value of a Clergyman**

*Even in a novel of parliamentary reform and election day riots [Felix Holt], "wider public life" is almost nonexistent, because George Eliot treats large-scale social phenomena purely as the unintended aggregates of the microscopic transactions by which individuals unintentionally thwart or promote one another's pursuits.*

Imraan Coovadia, "George Eliot's Realism and Adam Smith," 820

There are, finally, several issues which have come together in "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton" to inform the way that the scene has put history in dialogue with fiction,

and the individual in a relationship with institution or community: The Pluralities Act 1838 and its predecessors which were supposed to help less well-to-do clergy be better able to live and perform the cure of souls; George Eliot and her effort to make use of and humanize the clergyman, a figure fallen from popularity or relegated to the position of comic relief, as a way of dissecting and responding to the social and legal changes occurring in the first half of the nineteenth century; and we have the character Amos Barton, a curate in the least ideal position a clergyman could find himself in 1836, with no safety net to protect his family from ruin, or legal recourse to lobby for money or a permanent living.

In the case of "Sad Fortunes," George Eliot uses the individual impoverished curate and the "microscopic transactions" he engages in as a way to consider the broader concerns of English society. Barton's circumstances, she shows, are at least partly the result of the institutions in which that person operates, and in order for the individual to be successful he must at least not be obstructed by those structures. She shows the curate's plight through the two major issues: the financial concerns of a curate and the precariousness of social position. And further, these two personal issues are tied to the broader problems associated with pluralism.

The novel is published in 1857, but "Amos Barton" is set in 1836. That time difference means that George Eliot can address the Pluralities Act 1838 to take appreciate the legislative battles won in the vignette. The tone is nostalgic when she describes a "fond sadness [for] Shepperton Church as it was in the old days" (4), but triumphant because her readers would have a view of the events of the story that would assure them that the likelihood of such a story being true in their own day had been greatly decreased thanks to parliamentary legislation. This offers

a forward-looking hope as regards voter representation and expanding franchise, and increasing availability pastoral and social care.

I begin from Imraan Coovadia's position that George Eliot interprets society through an Adam Smith-esque lens, that she "treats large-scale social phenomena purely as the unintended aggregates of the microscopic transactions by which individuals unintentionally thwart or promote one another's pursuits" (820) and that "large-scale order (or, indeed, disorder) is the result of innumerable actions" (826). That is, institutions affect individuals through legislative means, but individuals affect institutions by their membership and personal actions and lives. These are, I suggest, Coovadia's micro-transactions. Barton personally does not earn enough money to support his family because a system is in place where by the working lives of professional, university-graduated men are lawfully exploited to allow someone higher on the chain to take in more than their share; what is the responsibility of an institution towards enabling its workers to work? The early-century curate lives in a state of relative poverty, reducing him to asking his neighbors for loans and gifts which is a short-term solution at best; how should England offer long-term support to its underemployed poor? Barton does his job as well as he possibly can, trying to make a positive difference in the lives of his parishioners with small-scale interactions that ripple out into broader issues: education of the masses and pastoral care.

By placing these micro-transactions within the purview of a curate (as opposed to a tenured vicar or rector with job security and a reasonable stipend) George Eliot pinpoints one crystallization of the interaction between unrepresented individual and his institution, as well as the ability to consider the same problems from several viewpoints as clergy are one of the few



professionals who interact with all strata of society. The first time we meet Amos Barton he "had been dining at Mr Farquhar's, the secondary squire of the parish" (13). After having made the acquaintance of the Countess, he begins to have "a vague consciousness that he had risen into aristocratic life, and only associated with his middle-class parishioners in a pastoral and parenthetic manner" (42). As we have seen, Amos Barton would not, according to the station of his birth, have ordinarily been invited to dine with local aristocracy like the secondary squire or the Countess and her gentleman-of-leisure brother, Mr. Bridmain, were it not for the fact of his employ in the Church of England.

However, where the aristocrats are, by virtue of their station, socially disconnected from the majority of the locals who live in the parish, Amos Barton still associates with all his parishioners—at the least in the most important way that he always has which is to offer pastoral care. Further, by centering the text around a clerical figure, George Eliot gains the ability to unearth pressing complications that arise when an individual is part of a network but has no authority to affect change in it. We see not only the Countess and Bridmain at an elegant dinner in their stately home, but we also get to witness the way the middle-class parishioners act when they talk about Barton and his efforts to get both laborers and the poor involved in a "Track Society" and cottage meetings (10-11). And in this capacity he has been successful, since according to middle-class Mrs. Hackit, "some of our labourers and stockings as used never to come to church, come to the cottage [. . . and] more o' the poor people [are] going tracking, than all the time [she has] lived in the parish before" (11) which she says has greatly helped to discourage these same people from "drinking at them Benefit Clubs" (11). So Barton, by

particular virtue of his being a clergyman, has the ability to be a part of micro-transactions with every caste, while himself climbing the social ladder (in the first half of the vignette).

In the "Amos Barton" scene, the curate is placed at the center of a representational web. Historically, a curate was frequently a member of the middling or lower classes, thus his lack of a ready family living to take possession of or the connections that would secure him a permanent spot in the ranks of the Church of England. However, a curate with the cure of souls of a parish would be, as we have seen, among the most educated people around, a social division which would have tended that see them lumped in with the peerage than their fiscal peers. Amos Barton, like other curates living on poverty wages, is not yet in a position to totally fulfill the ideal of living like his betters, but his ability to mingle with them represents a forward motion in the realm of social fluidity. Similarly, the country clergyman is a locus for the changes of his historical moment. New pluralism legislation in the middle of the century made great strides toward a more equitable distribution of livings among workers.

George Eliot has made a strong case that humane sympathy would have every English man and woman embrace the reforms and positive changes that came from them, improving a clergyman's opportunity to find a living that could support a family, slightly better terms of employment for curates, and the closer pastoral attention that could be given to each parish with the strictures that cut down on absenteeism. In the next chapter, we see further expansion of the importance of such reforms Margaret Oliphant championing the dual goals of theological training: a wider availability of work as a clergyman to those who felt called to it, and better training to make pastoral care more effective.

## CHAPTER II

### **Profession and Vocation: Margaret Oliphant on the Changing Character of Called Clergy**

#### **Introduction**

In my previous chapter I looked at how the Victorian liminal clerical position mediated a complicated relationship between the individual and the institutional, particularly as national attention was being focused on that position through the lens of pluralism (both its existence and the efforts made to course correct). In this chapter I move from thinking about the Church institution, to thinking through the process by which that institution made moves to grow in terms of sheer volume and in usefulness as the landscape of what parishioners needed and expected changed.

First, I explain a generational shift in the kinds of men who became clergy, away from a broadly gentle/leisure class to a dedicated group of men from various social strata. From this I explore a key debate within the Victorian Anglican Church and its politics: the distinction between calling and career. Referencing contemporary handbooks, I explore how men who were committed to pastoral care and cure of souls, from a sense that they had been especially called by the Divine, gained primacy in public opinion over men who had joined the clergy out of a simple

need for a job. As the ranks moved from profession to vocation, and as more social-work-style labor was expected of these men, the training they needed changed.

In my third section I show how the opening of theological training schools both opened the ranks of the clergy to the men who had a calling without independent wealth, as well as equipped the working clergy with skills needed to adequately perform their functions as pastoral care-givers. This naturally leads us to consider what those functions were. So, in my fourth section I unpack exactly what kinds of activities fall under the cure of souls, particularly as it is distinguishable from the previous generation's focus on parochial leadership given the clergy's place as one of the most educated men within their parish.

Finally, with historical and social context established, I turn to Margaret Oliphant and two of her stories from the Carlingford series: *The Rector* (1863) and *The Perpetual Curate* (1864). I look at the way clergy in these two texts negotiate professional goals and vocational aspirations to serve their parishioners.

This chapter deals with an essential change in the populations that made up the British clergy, and how that change affected their parishioners, across the second half of the nineteenth century. Primarily, I refer in this chapter to a difference in understanding the clerical field as strictly either profession or vocation, to something hovering in the middle of those two. Increasingly, theological and pastoral training took on a pragmatic approach as the century progressed. Between 1836 and 1878 "no less than [eight] theological colleges were founded" after it "was no longer considered that a general degree course at Oxford or Cambridge was all that a clergyman needed and bishops began to require specialized training in a theological college" (Clark 170). That is, the formal requirements that might make one a good gentleman

(money, university degree, title, land), were no longer enough to be considered a good clergyman. Specialization of the field meant that a good clergyman was trained in the particulars of his career, as well as committed on a spiritual level.

Opening these training schools is particularly salient since, as Alan Haig points out, the university education of a cleric was not proscriptive; his liberal education was expected to supply him the pastoral skills needed to operate successfully (73). Haig mentions Amos Barton as one who had received such an education, but gained no practical clerical-career skills by it. This appears to have been common among the clergy of the early 1800s, with "[c]omplaints about "the lamentable inexperience and incapacity of freshly graduated clergy [occurring] through the century" (73). Quoting from a published anonymous letter from a clergyman, Haig notes that it "was correctly asserted in 1832 that the 'clergyman is the only member of any of the learned professions who has strictly no regular provision for an education suited to the office, to which he aspires'" (Haig 73). That is, in the first third of the nineteenth century, Amos Barton is the rule, not exception, of underqualified, undereducated men in the clerical profession. This was to change mid-century, however, as the problem became more visible and solutions more practical.

Two main causes of the move toward a specialized clergy which Colloms identifies are, first, "[t]he career reforms of Gladstone's first ministry" which "opened new professions to merit through the examination system" inviting gentlemen to pursue other kinds of civil service which would have once been considered less important or valuable (31). And the second item she describes is the increased desire "for a priest to have a genuine vocation" (31), which she says was not a "common" concern prior to the "battering belief in the infallibility of the Bible had received from the new scientific theories of the 1860s" (31). That is, in the mid-1800s, as

Gladstone's reforms<sup>29</sup> took hold and more occupations were opened to men who could still be considered gentlemen, the Church lost some of its prestige. And rather than attracting (almost exclusively) younger sons of the well-to-do, it began to attract instead those who had a personal desire to perform pastoral work.<sup>30</sup>

Because her interest is much more in the accounts of particular individuals than the general history, Colloms simply says that the "Church sought to redress the balance by establishing theological training colleges which young men could enter without taking a university degree first" (31). The historical moment where these two generations met was somewhat difficult, as torch-passing goes. The older, university-graduated clergy had attained or maintained a certain status in their parishes, being not only the local pastor, but also the source of education, guidance, and records: clerics in all senses of the word. They were all of these and still considered a gentleman in standing. However, "[t]he parson of this later period," that is, one who had attended a specialized school to prepare him for pastoral work specifically, "found that his sphere of activity was circumscribed, limited to work and decisions connected with church clubs and services but no longer extending over the parish as a whole" (Colloms 31). Colloms is describing a form of specialization whereby the clergyman of a parish would no longer be, in close collusion with his patron or squire, the final authority on matters moral and general.

Brian Heeney calls this new sort of clergy "nongraduate literates." He posits that "one-third of the ordinands in 1863 were" from this class (29). G. Kitson Clark's *Churchmen and the*

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<sup>29</sup> In particular here, I am thinking of Gladstone's attention to the importance of the individual and to reforms that encouraged individual success. Roland Quinault puts it succinctly thus: "The other major reforms of Gladstone's first ministry also created a broader atmosphere of civic trust among and between the classes and opened the society to even greater possibilities of social mobility based on merit rather than birth or confessional affiliation" (eBook, n.pag.).

<sup>30</sup> This is probably also somewhat a result of the decline of the landed gentry. As cities grew and the countryside depopulated, it would likely have been less feasible to keep supporting second sons on family estates.

*Condition of England 1832-1885* offers an excellent summary of these changes. He notes that, prior to the turn of the nineteenth century there was an expectation that "the poor and the uneducated should be served not by an equal but by a priest who had both the education of a gentleman and sufficient independence and adequate resources to do his duty as a pastor and ruler of his parish" (30). That is, prior to 1800, simply being above rank in terms of status or wealth was enough to give a pastor the authority needed to run his parish. Clark continues, "The theory was that if he had no more education than his parishioners, if he lived in the straitened circumstances in which they were likely to live, and above all, if he were financially dependent on their voluntary contributions" (30) that the clergyman would not be received well by a parish. This all changed over the course of the century, albeit gradually.

In the first half of the 1800s, "between roughly 1813 and 1836, tithe became a burden to the farmers and a cause for unpopularity of the clergy" (*Churchmen* 32). Prior to 1836, of course, the tithe rate was due as a literal ten percent of whatever the land produced in the parish—usually foodstuffs and cash crops. After the 1836 Tithe Commutation Act, the dues rate was changed to an average monetary sum, which was theoretically better for all involved, allowing a priest to plan for a stable annual income from the land and saving parishioners from stringent computations of what was due year-to-year. At the same time that tithes were becoming a factor that divided parishioner from priest, "the closer association of the clergy with the gentry, the change in their manners and habits of life" (*Churchmen* 32) also tempered whatever positive feelings locals would have for their local clergy, seeing him as unable to understand their own positions or needs because his life was situated so far above theirs. The clergy also felt a growing disillusion with their situation. In the first half of the century they

were "discontented with life in a cottage in a village street and either insisted on building more elaborate parsonages probably a little way away from the other houses, or made the fact that there was no suitable house in the parish an excuse for not residing there" (*Churchmen* 32). Clark points out the fact that the secular duties which had been previously ascribed to country clergy were no longer tenable given the changing landscape of the populace. He notes that, whereas the clergy had previously been expected to participate in two "traditional administrative networks, the system of the justices of the peace and the system of the Poor Law" (xvii), later:

commitment to local administration [. . .] emphasized the fact that an incumbent of the established Church ought to be concerned with the secular problems of his flock, and not simply with their souls. Probably, in fact, under the old regime too many of the clergy were too exclusively preoccupied with what was secular, but in the nineteenth century, at the time of the religious revivals, the balance might very well have swung down to the other side, and clergymen might have come to think that they were exclusively concerned with the saving of souls and need not interest themselves in what happened to men's bodies. (*Churchmen* 36-7)

But one important driving factor is the population growth and increased need for vocational clergy to take on the cure of English parishes. And by the 1860s, writers seem to have begun seeing the changes they had hoped for. John Henry Blunt proclaims in 1864 that "Openly wicked clergymen are happily become rare" (vii) in *Directorium Pastorale: The Principles and Practice of Pastoral Work in the Church of England*. As the title implies, this work concentrates on the idea of a clergyman as a pastor, evoking the image of a shepherd leading his flock that became very popular during the Victorian era. Blunt briefly explores how the appellation of



"shepherd" came to be associated with the pastoral office. While he notes that the image of the shepherd is generally used in a secular sense in the Hebrew Bible (17), he says that "In Ezekiel and the post-captivity writers the word is more clearly used in the Gospel sense" (17). He suggests that the etymology was motivated thus:

Among the many terms afterwards adopted to express the functions or responsibilities of the Christian ministry, — such as stewards, watchmen, ambassadors, builders, labourers, — pastor or shepherd is the one term which our Blessed Lord identifies with His own ministerial office and functions; "I am the good Shepherd:" and His use of it seems to have dwelt on the ears of the early Church, like the echo of a sweet strain of music. (19)

His argument is that to be considered as a pastor, rather than having the political or financial connotations of a title like "bishop" or "deacon" (18), one must have a "true interpretation of the pastoral office" (20) which includes feeding the hungry as well as "all else that falls within the province of the Good Shepherd's deputies in the earthly work of His Church" (20). Such are the "functions or responsibilities of the Christian ministry," as noted above—the pastor must not only care for the physical needs, but also should take a strong stand in terms of the spiritual needs of every individual in their charge.

### **Profession and Vocation**

One concern for Victorians, both in terms of social constructs that explained what clergy should and should not do, and in terms of fictional accounts of "good" and "bad" clergy, was whether the field of pastoral care constituted a true profession, or if it was more so influenced by

the principles of a vocation. A Victorian author noted that "there is an easily recognised distinction between the ministerial calling and a professional in civil life" in spite of the fact that "[i]t is not unusual to speak of the *profession* of a minister of the gospel" (*Pastoral Theology* 79).

Some use the terms more loosely, but still seem to maintain a distinction of meaning:

Clergymen should strive to be 'workmen that need not to be ashamed' through want of practical acquaintance with their duties. In every profession and occupation a more strict technical knowledge is required than in the last age; and the ambassadors of Christ must not be behindhand in their persevering endeavors to become expert in their calling. (*Directorium Pastorale* 21)

John Henry Blunt is here referencing the idea that commitment to a vocation requires attentive training, or "practical acquaintance," and education beyond what had been minimally required. He seems to want for the model clergyman to have both a vocation and a profession for pastoral work, suggesting that the one should naturally lead to the other. His note that the clerical field is a calling, of course, must imply a caller which we would presume to be the Divine. But the calling to pastoral work is not enough. Blunt's insistence on the "expert[ness]" of Anglican ministers gained through "technical knowledge" points to his impression that vocation is not enough, and that professional training in the same vein as other specialized fields is wanted.

Blunt's point is carried in John W. Burgon's *A Treatise on the Pastoral Office*: "Every man may master the English Bible and acquire a competent knowledge of Divinity, *if he will*. Every one also, it is thought, may learn to write an interesting Sermon and to preach it impressively, *if he be but in earnest*" (174, italics mine). The emphasis in both these treatises

calls ministers to something more than a learnable task, enforcing an idea that an "earnest" minister has both a mastery of and a calling to the work.

Some of that mastery involves pragmatic tasks which must be undertaken within each parish. Burgon notes that he expects each clergyman to "mak[e] oneself practically acquainted as speedily as possible with the details of every part of that curious and complicated piece of mechanism of which a parish priest finds himself the mainspring and center" (378) by learning "the local details of that Law which provides for the relief of the Poor" (379). He continues that "our entire practice requires to be reconsidered and remodeled"<sup>31</sup> due to the frequency with which he was applied to for answers to basic questions about the best way to perform the cure of souls in very common circumstances (Burgon ix). Burgon says that the junior clergy he has interacted with, those who held university degrees but had not had theological-specific training, were generally unprepared, and that neither they nor he had been able to find a cumulative resource to help them visit, catechize, prepare candidates for confirmation or the Lords Supper, read services, or to "discourse publicly about a Science of which as yet he does not know so much of the grammar" one to three times per week (ix). He further notes that one "practical answer" to the lack of training was "the setting up of a few Diocesan Theological Colleges" (x). This, of course, is exactly one practical solution that the Anglican institution undertook as a way to adapt to population changes.

In one of the most explicitly algebraic phrasings I have found, the anonymous author of *Hints to Young Clergymen* expounds on the perceived ideal relationship between the clerical field and the designation of profession and vocation. They go so far as to contend:

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<sup>31</sup> Burgon's text was written between 1856 and 1864, in the same general timeframe as the novels this dissertation addresses.

In the business of this life there are *many professions* and more trades—but, strictly speaking, there is *only one vocation*. To state this truth differently, the world permits each person to select his own occupation—whether it be that of a doctor or lawyer, carpenter or shoe-maker; but God is pleased to choose His own agents for Himself. (10-11, italics mine)

We can see, from the writing of those most intimately acquainted with the clerical field, that scrupulous examination to the elements that make up professions and vocations were under consideration as they applied to the clergy. Furthermore, there was a strong push to differentiate the clerical from other pursuits even with similar tasks: doctors and the clergy both take care of the "sick," but in different ways and with different expectations as regards the kind of men who would fill the positions. The distinction that this writer makes, between the many professions and the only vocation, is a new idea in the nineteenth century, but it is one that has taken a strong hold. The emphasis on vocation implies a similar kind of specialization that we could trace in many career histories: an emphasis on someone with both the temperament to perform pastoral care, and the training to do it well.

Just as looking more closely at Mr. Collins and Parson Adams offers a useful comparison for understanding Amos Barton and other clergy of nineteenth-century realist novels, it is easier to see how called clergymen were a different class by looking at the expectations of earlier members of the profession. An early-century handbook, published in 1835, by an author identified simply as "the incumbent of a country parish," shows the thinking about the clerical role among the earlier generations of clergy. This tome, *Hints to Young Clergymen, on Various Matters of Form and Duty: To Which Are Prefixed, Hints for a Simple Course of Study*

*Preparatory and Subsequent to Taking Holy Orders*, outlines what clergy of the early nineteenth century saw as the ideal clerical training. It opens with a reading list appropriate for the education of "Every Gentleman" (8), which broaches the prevalent notion that ministers were not being properly trained in pastoral care methods up to the mid-century. In fact, the majority of this text, though ostensibly aimed at "the ordinary parish priest, not [...] the man of leisure, or learned divine" (10), deals with proper dress, how to be different to Dissenters, and the wisdom of having terriers<sup>32</sup> drawn up to better assess tithes and "assessments generally to the poor, and other rates" (46). So, our "incumbent of a country parish" writer presumes that like himself, all or most clergy of the early 1800s will be more concerned with their status, income, and social life, rather than spiritual or physical needs of their parishioners.

However, as early as the 1830s, parishioners were expecting a greater return on investment for the clergyman whose tithes they paid. C.K. Francis Brown discusses the differentiation between spiritual and lay duties in *A History of the English Clergy, 1800-1900* (1953). He notes that, "The basis of complaints now [in the 1830s] beginning to be made against the Church was a simple one: the ecclesiastical system had a duty, at least morally, to the common people who paid for it and that duty was being neglected" (11). Brown quotes from the biography of Bishop Charles James Blomfield (1786-1857) to explain:

Fifty years ago, a decent and regular performance of Divine Service on Sundays was almost all that any one looked for in a clergyman: if this were found, most

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<sup>32</sup>"Terrier" is an Ecclesiastical law term that was commonly used in the phrase "glebe terrier." It refers to a document which "may describe the glebe lands, parsonage house, rights, fees, tithes and customs of the church, furnishings, bells, books and vestments. Bounds of the parish may also be given, with information on charities and endowments, and dates of the ordination and induction of the incumbent" (Cornwall.gov.uk).

people were satisfied. The clergyman might be non-resident, a sportsman, a farmer, neglectful of all study, a violent politician, a *bon vivant*, or a courtier; but if he performed in person, or by deputy, that which now usurped the name of his 'duty,' that was enough. (147-8)

While at the start of the century the least common denominator for clergy were men who were of the leisure classes and could maintain their lifestyle with the weekly interruption of performing Sunday services, toward the middle and second half of the century it is clear that more was expected. By the 1860s, Brown says "it remained a mere memory" (149). Further, "on the whole," he declares, "the clergy began to be better educated, to be more spiritual and to be increasingly conscientious" (146), which are related as they all lend themselves to the "new standards of zeal and efficiency" (Brown 144) growing in importance to mid-century clergy. To be better educated was to be more efficient, better able to perform under any kind of circumstances, while being more conscientious indicates a closer attention paid to meeting the needs of the parish. And the increased spirituality gets at the idea of vocation, at not treating the clerical office as a fallback career for a gentleman of means, but to treat it as a Divine order to perform necessary and good work with eternal consequences for the parishioners under one's care.

This suggests that the attitudes governing the swing toward a vocation-centered clerical body were the result of numerous extra-institutional forces: laity agitating for more spiritual help, government control increasing over former clerical duties (schooling, magistration, legal advisement), and the New Poor Law taking some of the burden off the clergy for running an in-house full-time food bank and charity for parishioners in need.

In 1875, Patrick Fairbairn published his own *Pastoral Theology* wherein he addresses the more esoteric issues facing the Victorian clergyman, and he uses practical and scriptural examples to demonstrate the best attitudes and approaches. In his third chapter, "The Pastoral and Social Life of the Pastor," he addresses the changed attitude with which those outside the Church thought about its men:

It is not unusual to speak of the *profession* of a minister of the gospel as we do of that of a lawyer or a physician; and were it simply a profession in the sense that these others are, our next subject of consideration, after having discussed the nature of the office itself, would be the different modes of operation, or lines of duty, through which its important ends are to be reached. But there is an easily recognized distinction between the ministerial calling and a profession in civil life. The one cannot, like the other, be contemplated as a thing by itself, apart from the state and character of the individual. From its very nature, it is but the more peculiar embodiment and exhibition of the characteristics of the Christian community, a kind of concentrated manifestation of the views and principles, the feelings and obligations, which belong in common to the Church of Christ. (79)

It seems important that lawyer and doctor are the most common comparisons being made by writers when they meditate on the type of men best suited to the work, as well as the type of work which ought to be expected from these men. I am put in mind of Doctor Thorne in the Anthony Trollope novel of the same name. In the twenty-fifth chapter Thorne is called in by his alcoholic friend to counsel him and settle his mind to his inevitable early death because that

friend says that there is nobody more useless to a dying man than a member of the clergy. Given the publication of *Doctor Thorne* in 1858, I would suggest that this further illustrates the problems that men like Fairbairn illustrate: the kinds of men who had in previous generations become doctors or lawyers were those who were dedicated to the set of tasks that they would assume control of. But the need for specialization in the craft of curing souls and minding the spiritual needs of everyone in a parish was a new idea. And to sell it, writers who addressed potential clergy used the two people-centered service professions, which also required extensive training, as their basis of comparison.

In the above selection from Fairbairn we also see that even as the clerical position is becoming more vocational, there is an expectation that the "state and character" and "principles" and "feelings" are all considered with some equal weight to that granted to the "lines of duty, through which its important ends are to be reached." Fairbairn's appeal to the all-important "distinction between the ministerial *calling* and a *profession* in civil life" (italics mine) suggests a specialization within the pastoral field, a way to distinguish a pastor from any other gentleman. By 1875, the ordinary "gentleman," even one with the benefit of a broad Oxford or Cambridge education, was no longer considered adequately prepared to take on the cure of souls. Instead, Fairbairn would point to one who "exercise[s]" "fidelity and solicitude in behalf of [the souls of parishioners], that shepherds are expected to do in respect to their flocks" (39-40) as the suitable candidate for a Church occupation.

Fairbairn later states that "the Christian ministry [. . .] must be regarded in the first instance a life, and secondarily as a *work*" (79, italics in original). He wants the pastoral care of a parish to be performed as though it is a calling, and the man that fills it to be more interested in



the people he serves than his position. That position, Fairbairn wants to be treated as "an embassy" (56) between the parishioners and the Divine, rather than in terms of pragmatic items associated with an occupation (pay, prestige, power, position). His desire is that the person have a vocation for pastoral work. The thing about treating something as a "work," though, is that in having a profession, one is expected to professionalize: learn best the techniques that will allow the performance with greater efficiency and accuracy. That is, specialization on one hand may make a person think of their labor as an impersonal career, but it definitely causes them to become expert at that labor. And it turns out that in the middle-third of the nineteenth century, experts were what people wanted and needed.

We can see that the driving idea underpinning these developments is that the clergy needed to professionalize, and in order to do so, would need a proper and properly specific form of training. Clark puts it this way:

the fact that men were coming to believe that it was necessary to provide special training for the clergy seems not only to be a sign of the revival of life in the Church, but also a foretaste of a new conception of what the office of priest in the established Church might be held to mean. All but the dullest [men recognized . . . ] the fact that a clergyman was a man who had spiritual duties to perform, but now it was beginning to be realized that a priest was a man who ought to be in some way separated from ordinary secular life, that the clergy were men who ought to receive special training and whose way of life perhaps ought to differ from what was proper for the laity more than had seemed to be necessary in the past. (*Churchmen* 50)

Clark, as well as the Victorian writers already mentioned and those to come, advocate for clergy who are specialized. But more than just a stronger education, the idea of men who are "separate" from "ordinary secular life" alludes to this vocational expectation. Where the Anglican clergy of previous ages could be mere gentlemen, with general University degrees, who were able to provide a curate or were willing to read the Sunday services themselves if needed, the mid-nineteenth-century clergymen were expected to be experts in a field, and moreover were expected to have some deeper reason to pursue that expertness than just the need for an occupation.

### **Progress in Education**

In the 1850s and 60s Heeney says, "hundreds of incumbents were needed for newly consecrated churches, and when higher standards of pastoral care created an unprecedented demand for assistant curates, clergy were in alarmingly short supply" (27). These "newly consecrated churches" include numerous chapels-of-ease which had, in the first half of the century, been converted to full curacies, their curates "promoted" to perpetual curates who would be paid out of a stipend, with no tithe right or glebe lands as their parish priest brothers in ancient established parishes would have. Curates, and therefore perpetual curates, as we know, tended to be those sons of fathers who did not have a familial living to bestow, who were therefore more likely from families of less wealth, and so were the ones who would not have been able to go to Oxford or Cambridge for a full, liberal education. Instead, they might have gone somewhere like All-Souls, a constituent college of the University of Oxford which stands alone as a theological training school and figures frequently in Margaret Oliphant's Carlingford series.

Perhaps most relevant for our consideration here, it is the opening of the theological training schools, which did not require a university degree to attend, that opened the clerical profession to men in various financial and social positions. So, when anyone can become a clergyman, and when more men do become clergy, the Church can narrow its placing of men to the ones most willing to work hard in that position. Alan Haig offers a nuanced view of the phenomena in his seminal work *The Victorian Clergy*. Offering (mathematical) figures to show the exponential growth of Church of England parishioners through the nineteenth century, along with "the drop in clerical recruitment in the mid-century" (117), Haig posits that the need for theological colleges "can [be] see[n] under three heads" which he calls:

demand for clergy, not otherwise supplied by the universities, from the towns and the North; demand on the part of the prospective students; and a general demand for higher levels of clerical training. They are connected, but the first is the dominant and necessary factor. (117)

I of course cannot hear "the North" and not think of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* with its focus on the industrializing cities and attendant population growth. As in the novel, here we see that the urban population booms lead to a greater need in social services, like available clergy (and the Salvation Army). The idea of a "demand for higher levels of clerical training" and Colloms's phrasing that there was a perceived desire for clergy to have a true "vocation" would seem to be the same issue as we saw in *Hints to Young Clergymen*: that there are many professions but only one vocation (10-11). And, I suspect that the "demand on the part of prospective students" is tightly related to the reforms of Gladstone's first ministry; the changed perception of examination-based success which was moving toward a general, gentlemanly

status would have increased the number of men who could not afford a traditional university degree to aspire to a genteel profession at – for example – theological training schools.

The new breed of clergy coming out of these schools did not necessarily hold a university degree, but did have vocational training in pastoral care. Haig calls them "non-graduate clergy" and he says that they filled the open positions in the clerical ranks created both by growing demand for vocational men and by this shift in perception about what qualified as appropriate employment for a gentleman, but as he explains, the filling of that vacuum was not a foregone conclusion in the middle of the nineteenth century. In previous years, "[t]he majority of university graduates had always gone on to ordination" (Haig 29), with the remarkable majority cresting in 1827-28 when Haig calculates that 91% of ordinands were university graduates (Haig 31). Tracking available data, Haig puts the "peak" of "the influx of non-graduates" in 1886.

### **Duties**

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century a parish cleric was expected to be a "companion in sport as well as in society" to the gentry, a peer who could be invited to dinner with regularity for the "patron-squires" of a parish, one who doled out charity with an open hand to the poor, and a patron to the local tradesmen (Heeney 2). During this period of (re)vitalization, Sally Mitchell tells us that the general idea was to make the Church central to the lives of the people. She notes that "chapels were at the center of life for many skilled workers and clerks. Their children learned to read in the Sunday school; their recreation was provided by the chapel's choirs, mission societies, study groups, and excursions; and the working men who served as preachers and deacons were men of power and authority" (241). Mitchell uses descriptions that seem

secular in nature, but all of these activities point toward giving common people access to spiritual experience. Teaching parishioners to read would allow them to read Scripture (one of the decisive differences between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism). Mission societies and mission-related excursions imply that personal belief in the necessity of personal salvation that the Great Reformation hinged on.

Clergy were increasingly expected not only to have a vocation or calling which set them apart from gentlemen of secular professions, but also that they would be immediately recognizable as such—as a shepherd is immediately distinguishable from a flock of sheep. Blunt lays out stringent requirements for those who would take on the clerical profession, including "prov[ing] by examination and trial that they are 'learned in the Latin tongue'" (4) as a comparable requirement to men who graduate University. But "A further gradation of knowledge, that of the special subjects connected with their profession" is also called for under the heading "Theological education" (4): "sufficient" knowledge of Scripture gained either "from theological lectures of the University, or by means of an additional year of divinity education and training spent at a Theological College" (4). At such a moment of growing need and changed demands, the clergy would still have perhaps been expected to perform "secular clerical duties" like running a parochial school; however, "the pastor was called to an essentially religious work" (Heeney 35). That is, a parish priest would have performed numerous duties which could be considered as straddling the line between secular and religious. Heeney notes that an expected regular round of parish visiting "had purposes which were secular" (35) and would no doubt include general socialization and tithe-collection. But that does not mean such an activity could

not also have served to "cultivate the awareness and knowledge of God" that Heeney calls the pastor's ultimate goal (35).

Heeney points to several nineteenth-century sources for his claim. One is Oxenden's *The Pastoral Office: Its Duties, Difficulties, Privileges, and Prospects* in which the "heavenly mission of the Christian minister" (40) is "to be a living pattern to Christians, a living rebuke to sinners. He is to be ever about his Master's business. He is, in short, a man of consecrated character, and should be not merely a *teacher* of holiness, but also a *lover* of holiness, and an *example* of holiness" (41, italics in original). Or, as Edward Monro puts it, "it is our lot while we may use the weapons of all these [statesman, orator, poet, philosopher, physician, and logician], to have committed to our keeping that with which each blessed Person in the ever-glorious Trinity is concerned, the heart and the soul of an immortal being" (259). Or, to put it more plainly: "the clergy began now to take very seriously [. . .] the preparation of the villagers for confirmation" which included "first the Baptismal Service, then the Catechism Service and lastly the office of Holy Communion. He took a certain proportion each time, making perhaps twenty or thirty lessons on the whole" (Hart and Carpenter 22-3). The clergy took on the responsibility of giving a deep understanding of the meaning of these sacraments, and instilling into parishioners that the performance of the same was more than "an opportunity for a day's enjoyment" (Hart and Carpenter 22). Chapters in *Directorium Pastorale* like "The Relation of the Pastor to His Flock" (ch. III), "Pastoral Converse" (ch. VII), and "Pastoral Guidance" (ch. VIII) lay out detailed instructions for appropriate interactions between the clergyman and his parish(ioners). "Pastoral Guidance" entails the differentiation between pulpit work and personal work, noting that while "Preaching will go a long way, with those who can 'take it in'" (245), it

would be far more beneficial to "get people to come to the clergyman at his own house, as freely as it has become the custom for him to go to theirs" (246). Blunt expects that an ideal parson will offer instructional classes at his home as a way to familiarize the parishioners with cultivating "a sort of home feeling towards the accustomed room at the parsonage such as they have towards the Church itself" (246-7). And so on, the advice goes, with the ultimate obvious goal that parsons engage first and foremost in the cure of soul of every parishioner, rather than being gentlemen first and clergy second.

### **The Novel, Vocational Clergy**

Margaret Oliphant's *The Rector*, a novella which was originally published in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Hochwender), shows the difference in ability of a man educated with a broad idea of his future in mind, as compared to one trained specifically to perform the cure of souls.

Morley Proctor is presented in *The Rector* as the rector of Salem Chapel in Carlingford distinguished for his incredibly short incumbency. He spent fifteen years as a fellow at All-Souls and takes the Carlingford living, we are told, primarily to be able to keep his mother near him (at the Rectory) and see her through the end of her life (ch. 2). While in Carlingford, "[h]e made no innovations [. . .] but he did not pursue [previous rector] Mr Bury's Evangelical ways, and never preached a sermon or a word more than was absolutely necessary" (ch. 2). Given the extended time he spent at college, and the questionable ethics of his reason for moving into the world of practical pastoral care, it is clear that Oliphant has set us with an "educated" but incompetent rector. Although he has trained for the job, he does not have a vocation for the profession, and Oliphant will use this device to show us what can go wrong in such a case.

It is debatable whether the primary action of this novella is Mr. Proctor's realization that the young and beautiful Lucy Wodehouse will never consent to marry him (spoiler: she has already chosen Francis "Frank" Wentworth, a storyline which we will follow shortly in my analysis of *The Perpetual Curate*), or if it is that he is not properly equipped to perform the pastoral duties that are most reasonably assumed of him and his choice to proceed in his career. This is a thread that I will follow up on in when I discuss *The Perpetual Curate*, but we can see in both stories a tension between the marriage plot and the question of vocation. Proctor takes his job as rector to help take care of his mum, but he leaves it when his affections are not returned. The suggestion is that while Proctor has the professional training, his lack of dedication to pastoral care as a vocation is a detrimental misstep. What is certain in the novella, though, is that there is one main moment of crisis to account for whatever that primary action is: a sick woman dies.

In the third chapter of the story, Lucy and her elder sister, Miss Wodehouse, are visiting a sick parishioner on behalf of St. Roque's – the chapel of ease near the wharfs in Carlingford where Mr. Frank Wentworth acts as perpetual curate and the Misses Wodehouse are his "Sisters of Mercy." St. Roque's is in the nebulous position of being within Carlingford, but not under the direct jurisdiction of its resident rector, another point that takes on greater emphasis in *The Perpetual Curate*. While the sisters are on their charitable visit, the sick woman takes a turn, proclaims that she is dying, and begs the presence of a clergyman. Rector Mr. Proctor just happens to be out walking nearby and so he is, naturally, called to answer the woman's anxiety about dying without certain knowledge that she has secured for herself the ideal afterlife. As we saw above in John W. Burgon's *A Treatise on the Pastoral Office*, this was an expected moment



in the work of a cleric. But, in an objectively hilarious response to being asked for this counsel, Proctor replies, "'Have they gone for a doctor? that would be more to the purpose,' he said, unconsciously, aloud" (ch. 3). Proctor is not a specialized man, and that is the kind of person he thinks best suited to such a moment of crisis.

Once cajoled to enter the sick room and speak to the woman, Proctor panics, not knowing how to reassure her "on the fly" without the aid of his books. Instead, he repeatedly insists that she is not really dying (she is) and that who she really needs is a doctor (she doesn't). It is his continual push for a professional who specializes in just such events which lends import for our study to this comical scene. The rector, desperate to pass the activity of the moment, comforting this sick woman in her faith rather than her bodily need, off to someone he perceives as better equipped to handle it, shows the practical crack in his academic façade. Because Proctor is a professional man, but not a vocational one, he is unprepared and unwilling to attempt the human service to assist this woman with her spiritual crisis. He wants his books, his toolkit, and without them he is hapless and hopeless.

Whereas Proctor "had no spontaneous word of encouragement or consolation to offer" and goes "through it as his *duty* with a horrible abstractness (ch. 4, italics mine), what he hopes calling a doctor will accomplish is that someone actually prepared, experienced, and willing to help can be given charge of the situation. Proctor cannot handle this, he thinks, because it calls for an amount of spontaneity and thinking on his feet which his fifteen years as a fellow of All-Souls has not developed. Of course, we know that "Extreme Unction," or the anointing of the sick, is one of the most basic sacraments that is expected to be performed by every Anglican clergyman. A man trained without the practical expectation of professional activity in mind

turns out not to be a very useful professional or clergyman. Both the clergy and doctors, the two professions juxtaposed in this scene, require specialized, professional training, and the purpose they serve has real life-and-death consequences in the real world. Obviously for the doctor it is easier to see those consequences: either the person treated recovers or they don't. But for people whose faith is in the Protestant vein, dying without being assured of the situation of their souls in the afterlife is possibly even more important, given that it is a theoretical eternity of either torture or paradise at stake.

This moment of crisis is made explicit within the text when Proctor complains to his mother that "such duties require other training than mine has been" (ch. 4). Training, not education, social position, or personal wealth are what Oliphant points to as necessary in the production of a good clergyman. And who or what does she hold up to show us the fulfilled requirements? A character given but brief space in this novella, and more fully developed in a novel which was published later the same year as *The Rector* (1863), *The Perpetual Curate* a further entry in the Carlingford series: the much-alluded Frank Wentworth.

In *The Perpetual Curate*, as in *The Rector*, Frank Wentworth is the perpetual curate of St. Roque's in Carlingford. His chapel is in the "bad" part of town, but he has a strong regular crowd and is especially known for maintaining his High Church ideals as well as his many forays into public service. Together, the novel and preceding novella work as puzzle pieces. In *The Rector*, Wentworth is identified as one who has the training to which Mr. Proctor has alluded as being necessary to a good clergyman. Where Proctor can only wring his hands and bemoan the lack of a medical professional, Wentworth steps in to visit the dying woman with neither prior preparations nor hesitation. He goes in to see her and, as Proctor learns later, he is able to fully

reassure the woman and allow her to die peacefully in the conviction that she has done all that is required of an Anglican who wants to go to heaven.

In *The Perpetual Curate*, Frank Wentworth's personal life, and how it is intertwined in his professional and social position, is more on display, even as a more assertive (if not entirely capable) new Carlingford Rector Mr. Morgan enters the scene at odds with Frank's ideals.

If the crisis in *The Rector* centers around the dying woman and her need for faith, there are several crises of faith central to *The Perpetual Curate*, though most of these are not with regard to a faith in the Divine, but rather faith as an broad idea. To wit, Frank's elder brother loses faith in his professional position in the Church of England (though importantly, not in his calling to ministry), Frank's biddy aunts lose faith in Frank's faith due to his High Church principles, Lucy Wodehouse loses faith in Frank's faithfulness to herself, and nearly all of Carlingford loses faith in Frank as a gentleman of sound morals.

Gerald Wentworth, Frank's elder brother, seems to have taken the same drastic view of the Oxford Movement that we will see Cardinal Newman do in the next chapter. Gerald goes from simply keeping to High Church customs at the Wentworth Rectory to a determination to go over to the Roman Catholic Church. As the second oldest of Squire Wentworth's sons (so, not the eldest who stands to inherit the position and land and money of the family line, but not the younger sons who would be expected to make their way as they would after the gentleman's education that their father could provide them), Gerald had been installed at the rectory into the "family living—not a very large one" (ch. 2). And while Frank "held 'views' of the most dangerous complexion, and indeed was as near Rome as a strong and lofty conviction of the really superior catholicity of the Anglican Church would permit" (ch. 1), it is Gerald who "has a

bad attack of the Romishness coming on" (ch. 3) according to their exacting Low Church Aunt Leonora.

Some plot is again expedient: Gerald's wife Louisa sends a note to Frank begging his attendance at the Wentworth estate to see Gerald as soon as possible. Frank arrives at Wentworth from Carlingford within the day to find not a seriously ill or injured Gerald as he might have expected, but rather that his brother has stated aloud his desire to leave his post as Rector of Wentworth, to leave the Anglican for the Roman Catholic Church, and to further become a Roman Catholic priest. There are some obvious problems with this scheme: if he leaves his rectory, his family "shall be ruined" and "not have enough to eat" (ch. 16) according to Louisa, who we presume to be giving an accurate, if hyperbolically-presented, outline of the consequences to the family hanging in the balance.

Next, leaving the Anglican for the Roman Catholic Church presents the problem of alienating Gerald's family and friends – those who most likely have helped sustain his family over the years. The ostracization aside, one usually must complete some specific education to be admitted to the Roman Catholic Church, and it is unclear that Gerald has planned for the expense that might incur. He seems to be under the impression that the he will be immediately accepted into the RCC as soon as he declares himself a brother minister.

And not least is the fact that Gerald continually asserts that "I am a priest, or nothing. I can't relinquish my life!" (ch. 16). Not content to merely become a member of the RCC, an accomplishable goal if one with hidden obstacles, he is set on taking priestly orders, one of which is a vow not to take a wife or have a family. Gerald already has both.

This problem seems at the front of Squire Wentworth's mind when he tells Frank that "It did not strike him as a conflict between belief and non-belief; but on the question of a man abandoning his post, whatever it might be, the [Squire] held strong views" (ch.17). It is unclear here whether the Squire means the gentlemanly "post" of husband/father or the financial "post" of rector who holds the only family living that is entirely under his authority to bestow. (Squire Wentworth's sisters are the patrons of the parish of Skelmersdale, and the three of them jointly choose their appointee separate from the Squire's influence.) The Squire's insistence that Gerald's inner conflict really comes down to duty rather than faith points us toward the generational change that Victorian clerical handbook authors noted above. Whereas a generation ago would have put all the insistence on the professional aspects of being a cleric, Frank and Gerald's generation have come to expect in themselves and their colleagues that driving motives for joining clerical ranks are more than pecuniary. Burgon's "earnestness" and his insistence that while professions are many there is only one vocation, seems to be the same attitude adopted by Gerald and not dismissed by Frank.

We begin to see Gerald and the Squire at opposite ends of a spectrum, with Frank posted somewhere in the middle. The Squire was brought up in the era Charles Blomfield referred to as being rife with clergy who were non-resident, or worse, resident but more interested in leisure activities like sport or classicism (Blomfield 147-48). It is clear that for the Squire, the post or profession of the clergyman is paramount, while the calling to it is secondary at best. The living should stay in the family, regardless of the personal convictions of the man who might be questioning his livelihood.

Gerald, meanwhile, has been raised under the auspices of the push for pastoral care that focuses on the cure of souls, an active intervention into the spiritual lives of parishioners, as well as the push that encouraged men to join the clergy if (and only if) they felt a Divine calling to the life. He has clearly taken these expectations to heart. Gerald has had years of being "led from one step to another" to arrive at his conviction that the Roman Catholic Church and its priesthood are the only true vocation for him (ch. 16). He even describes his movement from being a clergyman in profession to being a priest in vocation in terms of a "great battle" and a literal "conflict" which he has been powerless to stop (ch. 16).

However, what is more pressing for our study is the dichotomy we see in the situation as mediated through Frank's consciousness. Frank opts not to take sides in the conflict between Gerald and his wife. Instead he attempts to act the disinterested intermediary and encourages Gerald to take a more moderate path than the one he is contemplating. He suggests that Gerald "may go to Rome, and cease to be a priest of the Anglican Church, but [he] cannot cease to be a man, to bear the weight of [his] natural duties" (ch. 16). That is, Gerald can follow his faith and give up his profession, to Frank's mind, without answering the call to vocation that would leave his wife and children untitled and dis-homed. Indeed, keeping up his "duties" is the term to which Frank repeatedly returns. His advice comes down to the question of primacy of work in the battle between vocation and career.

Gerald feels that his true calling is and has always been to a form of pastoral care which finds roots in service of the Divine via the "true" Church. Having been raised an Anglican with the expectation of the Wentworth Rectory, he had anchored his vocation and profession to the same tether. Thanks to the change of mind (not heart) that has come about, probably both from

his own study and conviction from persuasive opinions being circulated (*Tracts for the Times*), his professional aspirations have changed, but his vocation has not. That is, Gerald's heart, his vocation and calling by the Divine to the work of ministry, remains steady. However, his professional goals, the employer he wants to associate with and the kind of ministerial role he wants to fill, have changed and initiated a denomination-identity crisis.

In some way, Gerald and Louisa's interlude into Frank's story offers us a chance to see what could happen after the vows that typically end the marriage-plot novel. Here, Louisa married Gerald with the expectation that he would provide for her and her children out of the Wentworth Rectory family living. We know because it is the point to which Louisa continually returns in her wailing about their uncertain future. In her initial letter begging Frank to come to see them she cites that "if he is not *mad*, as I sometimes hope, he has forgotten his duty to his family and to me, which is far worse" (ch. 10). The grammar here is a little uncertain as to whether she means it is worse for him to forget his duty than it is to be mad, or whether it is worse to abandon her than to abandon the family. When Frank first arrives at the Rectory Louisa tells him that "Gerald is using [her] so badly" and that she will not be able "ever to hold up [her] head in society" as the result of Gerald's proposed course of action (ch. 15). Frank still does not know what the problem is, in fact, because the only time Louisa refers to the actual situation is when she tells Frank that,

it feels like being divorced—as if one had done something wrong; and I am sure I never did anything to deserve it; but when your husband is a Romish priest, [ . . . ] You can't be his wife because he is not allowed to have any wife; and you can't go

back to your maiden name, because of the children; and how can you have any place in society? (ch 15)

Louisa's focus is inward, as it would seem to have been for a long time before this moment given that he finds her in isolation which "as was well known to all the house of Wentworth" was where she retired "when she had her headaches" (ch. 15). Louisa's identity is fully wrapped up in her ability to attach herself to the Wentworth family through the socially-acceptable bounds of marriage. As she notes, without that she would be considered a pariah – worse than a divorcee, she would be a fallen woman, and would likely take the blame for the failure of her marriage. Louisa's fear is not about the heresy of Gerald moving from the Anglican to the Roman Church, but about the fact that her status will be significantly lowered and that she and her children will go homeless and hungry. She almost goes so far as to situate herself in the position of the Divine, calling on Frank to "not forsake me in my time of trouble" (ch. 15), which echoes the final words of Christ on the cross as reported in Matthew 27.

I interpret Louisa's focus on the social and financial repercussions of Gerald's contemplated move as representative of the professional stakes for a clergyman in the nineteenth century who changes to an unpopular course. For the people around him, Gerald's desire is strictly professional: the giving up of a good living, a good career, a good social standing. For Gerald, he is following his vocation to minister in the most appropriate way he can find. This tension between vocation and profession that Gerald embodies has outward-rippling impact, affecting not only Louisa, the children, and the squire, but Frank as well as he goes about his own work in the rest of the novel. In chapter twenty-four, we learn that he is preoccupied



thinking over the situation as he prepares to deliver a subsequent Sunday service. Oliphant tells us that,

At Oxford, in his day, Mr Wentworth had entertained his doubts like others, and like most people was aware that there were a great many things in heaven and earth totally unexplainable by any philosophy. But he had always been more of a man than a thinker, even before he became a high Anglican; and being still much in earnest about most things he had to do with, he found great comfort just at this moment, amid all his perplexities, in the litany he was saying. (ch. 24)

This idea of being either a man or a thinker strikes me as something that must have jarred Oliphant's initial readers. The implication seems quite clearly to be that men of faith do not think, which here I take to mean philosophize on the state of the world. Rather than trying to explain the "unexplainable," as thinkers do, the man accepts on faith what he cannot prove with logic or empirical evidence. This rhetorical posture was still very much in vogue in the protestant church as of the twenty-first century. Oliphant's phrasing comes across as almost purposefully hostile. However, I would suggest that that hostility is more about marking in no uncertain terms the difference between a cleric with a calling and a man with a profession. It is clearly not the case that Oliphant thinks Frank Wentworth stupid. She treats him sympathetically by keeping us in his perspective of being so much beyond evil thoughts as to be unaware when Mr. Elsworthy insinuates (and later accuses, taking Frank by complete surprise and making him rather indignant) that Frank is having an inappropriate relationship with Elsworthy's niece, Rosa. Had it been the case that we were treated to the inner workings of Elsworthy's mind, Frank would come off as designing and ungentlemanly, and probably much worse. But we stay with

Frank and know that, whatever may appear to the outside world, he maintains the best intentions and spotless character all along.

Both Gerald's crisis and Frank's lack thereof serve as illustrations of clergy with vocations, whose paths are still quite different. Oliphant does not propose that one size fits all, but rather that the trend is toward a more vocation-inspired generation of clergy. And that, while there will likely be growing pains, the general trending promises positive effects in Britain's chapel towns. This is a point she drives home by putting young Frank into direct conflict with the new rector of Carlingford, Mr. Morgan.

### **Intergenerational Encounter**

Mr. Morgan has recently arrived in Carlingford at the beginning of *The Perpetual Curate*, and both he and his wife are strongly opposed to the situation the previous rector left behind. Mrs. Morgan is appalled by the "objectionable carpet" (ch. 1), the state of the rectory garden, and the style of furnishings in the home. The carpet, which Mrs. Morgan spends the entire novel secretly plotting against, scheming to cover or replace, and being privately ashamed to have visitors see, becomes representative to her of all of Mr. Morgan's own character flaws which "would disturb the temper of an angel" (ch. 12). Meanwhile, Mr. Morgan is equally incensed at the liberties he perceives as being taken by his young curate in the setting up of a school, the delivering of services at Wharfside, the visiting of parishioners—and all without consulting himself for permission. Mr. Morgan, though, finds less subtle ways than his wife's carpet-sighs and mental exercises to express his displeasure, and later in the novel takes up the charge of

helping to assassinate Frank's character as part of a formal inquiry into his relations with Rosa Elsworthy.

In the second chapter, Oliphant tells us that Mr. Morgan is one who:

talked rather big, when the ladies went away, of his plans for the reformation of Carlingford. He went into statistics about the poor, and the number of people who attended no church, without taking any notice of that "great work" which Mr Wentworth knew to be going on at Wharfside.

We are not meant to empathize with Rector Morgan—his is a career path. He has taken the Carlingford living to have an income on which to support the wife who has waited some ten years for him to start a career while he enjoyed a fellowship at All Souls (ch. 1). His is an entirely professional aim: to earn a paycheck in a small chapel town (where presumably the work would be easier than in a densely-populated city). His work and work ethic are clearly much less important to him than is financial and social situation. Just as he ignores, and really is quite perturbed at the "great work" Frank has undertaken at Wharfside, it is the fact that this work seems to detract from his own authority that upsets Morgan.

Morgan's talk is big. He knows about the local populace in "statistics" and "numbers," but when it comes to their spiritual situation, the cure of souls, he seems uninterested. I read this as a very clear signaling on Oliphant's part that his aim is literally numerical, or fiscal. While we do not see Frank quote figures, we do see him visit the sick, know the names of everyone in the poor part of town even though he lives in the nicer area of Grange Lane, and generally show the kind of compassionate concern which will later cause him so much trouble when he insists on

walking Rosa Elsworthy home because he knows her to be too young and impressionable to be out walking along at night.

The perceived affront to Morgan's professional standing becomes the issue which will spur him to spearhead an official inquiry into Frank's personal life later in the novel. It colors all his interactions with him, though Frank does not realize it for a long while. Frank cannot imagine that Morgan harbors such distaste and personal offense at the Wharfside proselytizing he has undertaken because, as noted above, Frank's is a career born of vocation. This vocation, or calling, leads Frank to make a similarly difficult decision to the one made by Gerald. Where Gerald's assessment is that he must move to the Catholic Church to follow the call of the Divine, Frank finds that he must deliberately offend his aunt to hold to his High Church beliefs. Frank knows that he could very easily preach the kind of evangelical sermon that would assuage his aunt's incredulity at his High Anglicanism. However, "moved like a rash young man as he was" (ch. 3), he pronounces his intention of not preaching, and instead sticking with the scripted material available: "the Church has made such ample provision for the expression of our sentiments. I am more of a humble priest than an ambitious preacher" (ch. 3). He says this in spite of knowing that "the very name of priest was an offence in its way to that highly Evangelical woman" (ch. 3) because of her views on High Anglicanism. Oliphant is underpinning the fact that he would choose calling over career. By preaching a High Anglican litany even though he knows it will put off his aunt, and even though he is capable of the style of preaching that he knows would make her happy, Frank deliberately sticks to his own convictions about what is proper for a Sunday service.

## Landing in the Middle

At the end of *The Perpetual Curate* Frank Wentworth has succeeded Mr. Morgan as rector of Carlingford after the latter "has been offered his father's rectory" and recommends Frank to take over the living there (ch. 48). With all obstacles cleared, Frank and Lucy's relationship can proceed without the hindrance of financial insolvency; with the mystery of Rosa's disappearance solved and Frank acquitted, his relationship to his parish clerk, Elsworthy is restored; and with a man who is both a professional and a called man at the help, the cure of souls in Carlingford gains a dynamic new life. And his High Anglicanism remains unaltered. The first service he delivers after accepting the position of rector has not even "a little additional warmth" interjected into "his utterance of the general thanksgiving, as he might have done had he been a more effusive man; but, on the contrary, [he] read it with a more than ordinary calmness" (ch. 48). The version of Anglicanism to which Frank feels called, the High Church ritualism which disdains the emotional style of the Low Church, is preserved absolutely in his moment of triumph. However, it is the note on which Oliphant concludes her novel that I wish to draw our attention to. Wentworth assures his aunt Leonora that "no man shall work in *my* parish unless I set him to do it" (ch. 48). And the final sentences of the novel:

it is certain that the new Rector of Carlingford turned back into Grange Lane without the least shadow upon his mind or timidity in his thoughts. He was now in his own domains, an independent monarch, as little inclined to divide his power as any autocrat; and Mr Wentworth came into his kingdom without any doubts of his success in it, or of his capability for its government. [. . .] Mr Wentworth trode with firm foot the streets of his parish, secure that no parson nor priest should

tithe or toll in his dominions, and a great deal more sure than even Mr Morgan had been, that henceforth no unauthorised evangelisation should take place in any portion of his territory. This sentiment, perhaps, was the principal difference perceptible by the community in general between the new Rector of Carlingford and the late Perpetual Curate of St Roque's. (ch. 48)

It almost appears dissonant to the tone that Oliphant has used up to this point to decry the way Morgan attempted to lord his power over Frank, to be quite indignant that Frank was doing a "great work" at Wharfside without permission. And yet, here is Frank Wentworth preparing to operate as an "independent monarch" who would brook "no unauthorised evangelisation" within his "dominions." At first blush, we might think that this is a version of absolute power being absolutely corruptive, but I do not see that happening here. Instead, what we see is that a man with a true vocation, who is also truly a trained professional, performs his duties to the highest possible caliber. Whereas Morgan was satisfied to know numbers, Frank Wentworth is satisfied only by offering pastoral care to every person within his reach. It is not that there is no curate or evangelizing allowed, rather that it is not needed, which we see in the fact that the community only sees a difference in the authority with which Frank carries himself. The now Rector and former Perpetual Curate are the same except that in one Frank has license to operate freely; his dedication to the craft remains the same.

## CHAPTER III

### **Church-Building and Church Buildings: Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* and the Tractarian Project**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is about the relationship of Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain, Or Aspirations* to the dynamic, retrenching movement in the Anglican Church: the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement formulated a version of the Anglican Church which emphasized ritual while de-emphasizing the interiority associated with a more personal, evangelical form of Anglicanism. *The Daisy Chain* and the Oxford Movement perform generic moves which contradict the messages that underpin their respective missions: while Tractarians make the case that outside interpretation of Church doctrine is unnecessary and could be dangerous, the tracts themselves contradict this by performing interpretation of Church doctrine, asking readers to take the word of the Divine at face value but only through the mediation of the tract writers. Ultimately, I argue that Yonge is engaging an impossible project: creating or affirming an institution that is exclusive for everyone. This exclusive-for-everyone Oxford Movement, as presented in the novel, prioritizes form and action over interiority.

Yonge's novel seems to have been intended to teach adolescent female readers that their spiritual lives were all important and all-encompassing and needed constant vigilance to be

maintained, else worldly influences like vanity or pride would take hold and turn their good efforts into something contemptible. As a novelist her income was donated to Tractarian causes and with that information in mind her prose takes on a didactic hue. Early in the story, for example, we are shown that Mrs. May's usual habit was to follow up Sunday services with her own didactic commentary in conversation with her children:

The Catechism was repeated, and a comment on the Sunday Services read aloud. The Gospel was that on the taking the lowest place, and when they had finished, Ethel said, "I like the verse which explains that:

*"They who now sit lowest here,  
When their Master shall appear,  
He shall bid them higher rise,  
And be highest in the skies."*

"I did not think of that being the meaning of 'when He that bade thee cometh,'" said Norman thoughtfully.

"It seemed to be only our worldly advantage that was meant before," said Ethel.

"Well, it means that too," said Flora.

"I suppose it does," said Mrs. May; "but the higher sense is the one chiefly to be dwelt on. It is a lesson how those least known and regarded here, and humblest in their own eyes, shall be the highest hereafter." (Part I, Ch. 1)



We have here a quotation from Exodus, and the interpretation by the children and Mrs. May that "worldly advantage" should have less importance in people's lives than a religious one. This moment represents the kind of didacticism that we can certainly find in the novel: a general exhortation to be better than one has to to get by in the world. However, Yonge does not offer an overt Tractarian message, even though she was a personal friend and student to Tractarian guiding light John Keble. The text, as I show in this chapter, addresses the ideology of the institution of the Anglican Church, forcing us to examine the ways that the Oxford Movement's ideals ran counter to the realities of an expansion of its ranks. Where George Eliot showed us in chapter one how an institution relates to its employees and has direct bearing on their quality of life, in this chapter we will see that building the Anglican institution also relies on its relationship to its members.

In this chapter I will outline the historical context, as well as the content, of the Oxford Movement and its publications, specifically Newman's *Tracts for the Times* and Keble's *The Christian Year*, both supplements to Anglican liturgical practice. Yonge's novel, which steadily avoids naming the Oxford Movement, nevertheless explores how such a movement, with its roots in the upper classes at Oxford, could function in a multi-class society. Yonge's conclusion is that there will be growing pains in the Anglican Church under the Oxford Movement as it both desires to maintain exclusivity and formal conventions, but also must allow for some deviation in High Church practice as a way to disinhibit growth.

Putting the novel and novelist into their respective historical and social contexts is key to being able to see how Tractarian ideals and Tractarians' activities—growing their membership and building more churches—sometimes run at cross-purposes to their goals, so I spend quite a

bit of time here setting up the background of the 1856 novel. Given that the high point of the Oxford Movement had already passed (the tracts were published between 1833 and 1841), Yonge shows that the aim of the Tractarians evolved somewhat, to include church-building and educational pursuits, in addition to more dogmatic aim of reintroducing High Church practices to mainstream Anglicanism.

### **Historical Context: The Time for Tracts**

Although it is sometimes glibly referred to as the "bells and smells" version of Anglicanism, High Church doctrine actually does retain numerous connections to the Roman Catholic Church from which it takes many of its rituals. Because the High Church maintains many similarities to the Roman Catholic Church, it is sometimes referred to as Anglo-Catholicism.<sup>33</sup> Of the services themselves, Thomas Arthur Russell writes that "Anglican worship is liturgical and highly dramatic. Typically, churches have robed choirs and organs. In services, participants 'kneel to prayer, stand to sing and sit to listen'" (188) and in the High Church one could expect "regular participation in the Eucharist, which they may call the Mass" (187). He continues to differentiate Low and High Church functions by showing that in the Low Church, the "focus is on the sermon with Bible readings, prayers, and hymns" while "In a High Church, there is normally a more formal liturgy, not unlike a Roman Catholic service or at least a Pre-Vatican II service without the Latin" (188). So, while there was not a Latin element to High Church services, which would necessarily exclude middling and lower-class individuals, the High Church and its push toward a ritual-heavy service would still have been exclusive in terms

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<sup>33</sup> See Colin Buchanan (24-28) for a more complete history of the association between the Tractarians and the term.

of the ability of the masses to understand the meanings and value of the elements which had been imported from the Roman Catholic Tradition.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, though, the High Church, and the Anglican Church itself, cannot survive without members. The High Church and Tractarian focus on the importance of ritual will continue to be important as we think through the way Charlotte Mary Yonge's text addresses the personal and impersonal elements of Church membership. We can already see an obvious difficulty in both growing the institutional base to include the less educated, less religious, or less wealthy members of society, while still holding to some basic standards of expectation like "proper" behavior during a Sunday service and participation in rituals with obscure or foreign roots.

The Tractarian, or Oxford, Movement, which originated with and is most strongly associated with John Henry Newman, John Keble, and Edward Bouverie Pusey, came out of a High-Church, conservative reformation push by Oxford University clergy and students. While it is also interchangeably called the Oxford Movement by most critics (see exceptions below), the term "Tractarianism" is derived from the fact that ninety individual pamphlets, or tracts, were published during the years of 1833-1841 under the title *Tracts for the Times*. These tracts outlined Newman and Pusey's positions and encouraged their readers to accept the High Church tenets of the movement. These tenets include "rigid insistence on the Divine basis of the threefold ministerial order: bishop, priest, and deacon," "the episcopal system of church government and the apostolic succession" (Faught 37), and an "interest in ritual" (Faught 44).

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<sup>34</sup> C. Brad Faught notes that The Oxford Movement had an "uneven impact" due to the way that Tractarians' "religious beliefs shaped closely their apprehension of the reasons for social inequities" (125). See also Nigel Scotland on class interest in ritualism in "Evangelicals, Anglicans and Ritualism in Victorian England."

However, as Peter Benedict Nockles notes, they "were the work of individuals beholden to no committee of revision, and thus did not exemplify uniformity in doctrine" (37), so though taken together they form the basis for the movement, it is important to keep in mind that several factions took cues from the *Tracts* and used them as they would. As we move through this chapter, we will see that a primary tension that Yonge addresses is a cornerstone of the Tractarian project: the coexistence and co-operation of formality and adaptability within the same institution. The very fact that Newman had to write the tracts suggests that this belief was not the default position that most Anglicans took—he is trying to convince them of something of which he says they should not need to be convinced.

To this end, Victorian Church historian Nigel Yates points out some of the finer distinctions between Tractarians, the Oxford Movement, ritualists, and ecclesiologists (among other nomenclature that was used sometimes derisively and sometimes descriptively) in his 1999 text, *Anglican Ritualism in Victorian Britain, 1830-1910*. For my project, the major points of differentiation that we should be aware of are first, as Yates notes, that Tractarianism came first and consisted of "those who published the *Tracts for the Times* and those who, to a greater or lesser extent, agreed with them" (48); and second, that the Oxford Movement was the natural outgrowth of Tractarianism. Nockles adds that the Victorian idea of the High Church was generally based on the Oxford Movement (25). A High Churchman, according to Nockles, "tended to uphold in some form the doctrine of apostolical succession as a manifestation of his strong attachment to the Church's catholicity and apostolicity as a branch of the universal church catholic" and he "believed in the supremacy of Holy Scripture and set varying degrees of value on the testimony of authorised standards such as the Creeds, the Prayer Book, and the

Catechism" (25-26). So, our High Church movement is the progeny of the Oxford Movement, which developed out of the Tractarian movement. Because they are so closely related, and because historians have used the terms somewhat interchangeably<sup>35</sup> (with the exception of authors who are specifically trying to untangle the one from the others, as Yates is), I use the terms to refer to the same period and program which looked to "prove that the Church of England was the Catholic Church in England, belonging by descent and by its basic profession to that one, supernaturally founded, endowed, and perpetuated body which claimed to be the extension of the Manhood of Christ" (Peck 208). Following Owen Chadwick's pronouncement that the "major differences separating the old high-church parties and the Oxford Movement" are "a matter of atmosphere, not doctrine" (referenced in Cornwall 146), and given that doctrine never becomes a central matter of concern for Charlotte Mary Yonge, I find it safe to consider the nomenclature to be a porous issue that is only important so far as it allows us to situate ourselves into the right frame of reference.

This, then, is the context in which we find ourselves: a number of people with disparate belief systems latched onto the ideas<sup>36</sup> that the Tractarians brought before the general public. Among others, there were factions dedicated to church-building, Yates's "ecclesiologists" (48); those who wanted a return to the ritualism of the Medieval Church, Yates's "ritualists" (48); and the ones who wanted a more exacting standard of institutional membership and attendance, Cornwall's "High-church Anglicanism" (14). What all these groups have in common is the

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<sup>35</sup> See for examples, T. L. Harris's "The Conception of Authority in the Oxford Movement," Elisabeth Jay's *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*, and Peter B. Nockles's *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857*.

<sup>36</sup> Put briefly, Tractarians posited that "the doctrinal authority of the catholic church to be absolute, and by 'catholic' they understood that which was faithful to the teaching of the early and undivided church. They believed the Church of England to be such a catholic church" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* "Oxford movement").

reforming attitude. They all see a piece missing from the Anglican Church as it existed in the early nineteenth century, and they all seem to have an idea of what action would best supply that piece.

Perhaps the most important element in all of this is an expansionist attitude. All these groups within the Anglican Church look to expand the literal ranks of the organization, and to increase the standing of the Church within English society. Elisabeth Jay points out that one major reason for the Tractarians to push for expanded powers and prominence was a mid-century report: "The 1851 Religious Census with its revelation of two-tiered society in which the lower tier was working class and godless, untouched by the church- or chapel-attending Christianity of the higher echelons, shocked precisely because it attacked the prevailing assumptions" that Victorian England was a religious society (1). The effect of class structure here, that lower classes were less involved or invested in churches or in Church, taken with the way that the Tractarians reached the churched public, means that in order to really expand High Church practice, the Oxford Movement had to move into the lower castes, the best option for gaining literal and metaphorical ground.

The Oxford Movement stressed the difference between High-, Low-, and Broad-Church factions. Historian Sally Mitchell stresses that the Low Church "stressed personal piety, conversion, individual Bible reading, and the serious Christian life" (242), while the High Church "emphasized tradition, the sacraments, and priestly authority" (242-243). According to Sykes et al., "The liberal or Broad Church [. . .] could trace its accents back to the Latitudinarians or the humanist tradition of earlier generations" (257). Broad Church ethos encourages a multitude of interpretations of the Scripture, making it more open to various denominations of

people. The trouble for us is the seemingly opposing sides that are both a part of the Tractarian goal: both to increase membership and High Church members, and to maintain the ritualism and formalism that necessarily cuts off a significant portion of the English population from being willing or able to join.

In its most basic definition, Tractarianism argues that Anglicanism is just one branch of the catholic (universal) Church. Originated by theologian William Palmer in his 1838 text *Treatise on the Church of Christ*, the so-called Branch Theory has the Church of England as technically under the same banner as Roman Catholicism, because it, too, traces origins to the Apostles of Christ. Palmer contends: "We also regard the title of catholic, as properly belonging to the members of the British and Oriental churches ; but as these churches do not imitate the conduct of Romanists, in pretending that their branches of the church are alone catholic ; and therefore do not apply the term catholic to themselves, as distinguished from the Roman churches generally" (298). The first of the *Tracts for the Times*, "Thoughts on The Ministerial Commission, Respectfully Addressed to the Clergy" sets the tone for the entire operation. John Henry Newman<sup>37</sup> pits himself, and anyone like-minded, against "the Dissenters on all sides of you." He makes a case that "Apostolical Succession" is the only true way to be considered a clergyman, noting that it is only through "succession" to the office administered by one who has already attained it that one can wield "the power to bind and loose, to administer the Sacraments,

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<sup>37</sup> Perhaps this is an appropriate moment to gloss Cardinal John Henry Newman's own controversial relationship to the Anglican Church, first alluded to in the previous chapter. He trained as a priest at Oxford and became a working clergyman and writer for the Church of England at Oxford University. By 1845, four years after the publication of the last of the *Tracts*, Newman converted to Roman Catholicism. I point this out for one primary reason: to differentiate the Oxford Movement from Catholicism itself. While the former advocated for an increase in the seriousness and ritual of the Anglican Church, it did not seek to separate from Anglicanism broadly, or to reintegrate the English Church into the Romish.

and to preach." That is, Newman is reinforcing the hierarchy that prevents lay-preachers from wielding any authority and which should keep them from gaining any popularity.<sup>38</sup>

By the time we get to the final tract, though, Newman has gone much further than just to say that those who are not qualified and sanctified by the Church should not try to engage in proprietary Church leadership activities. In the ninetieth (and final) tract, "Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles," Newman calls for "an authoritative interpretation" of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, which outline the exact tenets on which the Church of England is founded (n. pag.). He continues that "There was but one authority to whom recourse could be had for such interpretation—the Church Catholic [who] had been taught the revealed truth by Christ and His Apostles" (n. pag.). Newman argues that because it traces its roots directly to Christ and the Apostles, the historical Catholic Church holds the truest theological authority on earth. The revelation of truth that he calls for here suggests, in some way, that theologians are not needed to interpret the texts on which the Church is based, because that work has already been done.

Newman argues that "there are real difficulties to a Catholic Christian in the Ecclesiastical position of our Church at this day, no one can deny; but the statements of the Articles are not in the number" (*Tract 90* n. pag.), but then goes on to make a case for the validity of the Articles. How can a document which does not need a champion, as Newman contends the Thirty-Nine Articles do not, also need a public relations person writing these *Tracts* in its support? Further, what is the purpose of a book of poetry (John Keble's *The Christian*

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<sup>38</sup> I am here put in mind of Dinah Morris in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), performing an open-air preaching though she is not ordained to do so, and a woman besides. It is her style of usurpation, if we might call it that, that Newman is warning against.



*Year*) to a liturgical calendar that has already laid out service and sermons for the year? These supplementary texts both seem to undermine the position of their authors. The leading lights of the Oxford Movement, in trying to create and defend their position of the catholicity of the Anglican Church, undermine their own position. This leaves us with the problem of reconciling the simultaneous contentions that the Anglican Church is already a perfect institution, and that it needs to be adapted to fit modern life. It is also the position into which Charlotte Mary Yonge pulls us in *The Daisy Chain*. The tensions between dogma and change that we see in the novel existed within the social and historical developments that the Tractarians agitated for.

Yonge is not an author of religious texts, in the way that Keble and Newman are. Rather, she is a fiction author who incorporates Tractarian elements (like emphasis on church-building and an emphasis on formalism) into the storyline. However, her early novels were published "by firms who specialized in religious works" (Sanders 93). Church-building, features prominently in many of her novels, including *Daisy Chain*. Georgina Battiscombe puts the importance of building churches as a way to build the Church in context this way:

Though the science of ecclesiology was in its infancy and most architects were as ignorant as William Yonge, church-building was a characteristic enthusiasm of the Tractarians. It was the material expression of the central doctrine of the Oxford Movement, the belief in an "ecclesia." To the frank Erastianism of the eighteenth century these new men opposed the mystical doctrine of the Church, the body of Christ. To them the Church was infinitely more than a convenient form of organized religion; it was the successor of Christ on earth and the recognized depository of grace. (50)

Ecclesia and the branch theory that the Oxford Movement finds foundational dovetail nicely. Ecclesia suggests that a "church" is both a particular congregation as well as the entire religious body (past, present, and future included). This, of course, dovetails with the idea of the various denominations linked through their same root in the apostolic church. Not only is the "church" a growing corporate group of believers connected across divisions by virtue of the family-tree-like branching of the institution, but also encouraged that growth by building more physical spaces where believers could meet.

Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain, Or Aspirations* from 1856 is one of the best-known novels to consider ramifications and to attempt to solve the seemingly opposed positions of expansion and exclusion of the Movement, from an author whose personal life and literary career are widely held to have helped spread and continue the work begun by the Newmanites and Puseyites in the Oxford Movement.

### **Charlotte Mary Yonge**

Compared to contemporaries, and in spite of her prolific writing career, we know really very little about Charlotte Mary Yonge's life. Biographer Georgina Battiscombe explains that there is a "paucity" (7) of ephemera—and therefore information—because Christabel Coleridge (granddaughter to Samuel Taylor) took possession of all of Yonge's papers upon her death. She used those to write the first Yonge biography, and then destroyed most of the papers. Therefore, many claims Coleridge makes for Yonge's life and person cannot be confirmed. We know Yonge was born in 1823 and that she lived quietly, as Battiscombe's subtitle "*The Story of an*

*Uneventful Life*" indicates. However, for my purposes, perhaps no biographical fact is more important than Yonge's relationship to John Keble.

Valerie Sanders, as many scholars who write about Yonge do, notes that,

at fifteen, she was prepared for confirmation by John Keble, a leading churchman in the Tractarian movement of the 1830s and 1840s, which left her a staunch supporter not only of the High Church ethos and doctrines, but also of the practical reforms undertaken by the rural clergy to elevate the condition of their parishes: hence her characters' interest in church-building, teaching, and missionary work. (92)

John Keble may not have attained the same level of celebrity in the Oxford Movement that his contemporaries Newman and Pusey did, but his publication of *The Christian Year* ranks with *Tracts for the Times* in terms of influence for the Tractarians; historian Michael Wheeler calls *The Christian Year* "the most popular volume of verse in the nineteenth century" (60). *The Christian Year* is a book of poems "meant to throw light and interest on the services of the Prayer Book, and to quicken meditation and devotion. The plan of the book is simple. There is a poem for every Sunday and Holyday in the year, and a poem for each of the Occasional Services in the Prayer Book" (*Project Canterbury* n.p.). *The Christian Year* was an important text for Charlotte Mary Yonge. Margaret Mare and Alicia C. Percival note that "all of Miss Yonge's well-educated characters read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest every word of Keble's *Christian Year*" (107). They meditate on propriety and what moral guides would have them do, and often refer to leading lights like Keble and Bishop Ken.

For as much of a theological value as *The Christian Year* offered for Yonge, in her own writing she avoids mixing genres for the benefit of dogmatic edification. That is, "Miss Yonge considered it irreverent to weigh the pros and cons of dogma and to make free with the name of the Almighty in a novel, so we need not look in her books for expositions of the teaching of the Movement from the lips of its protagonists" (Mare and Percival 103). Given that Yonge was inspired personally and professionally by the Oxford Movement, it seems especially important that her generic concerns are made so plain: a novel is not the right form in which to address theological dogma; that is what the *Tracts* are for.

Not only his writing, but in person John Keble was an influence on Charlotte Yonge. Beyond being the man who prepared her for Confirmation, "Mr. and Mrs. Keble counted almost as part of the Yonge family" (Battiscombe 62), due to their shared interest in Tractarian reforms. Further, he acted as mentor and literary critic to Charlotte Yonge. Sanders says that Yonge's "parents, meanwhile, decided that her literary career should proceed only if she devoted her earnings to church and missionary activities. She discussed her work with them and with Keble, until their deaths" (93). After John Henry Newman's secession to the Roman Catholic Church, the Oxford Movement was shaken and "the repercussions" of his defection "were felt far beyond the confines of Tractarian society" and "might well have meant the ruin of the whole" movement (Battiscombe 62). However, John Keble "stood firm in the general collapse, and whilst Keble held fast the Oxford Movement still lived" (Battiscombe 69). For Yonge, the crisis was much less traumatic than it might have been. Battiscombe notes that: "Charlotte herself, as became Keble's favoured pupil, remained unswerving in her belief though not untouched by doubts" (69) which Keble answered to her satisfaction. The last work that Yonge published in her lifetime

was *Reasons why I am a Catholic and not a Roman Catholic*. Critics and biographers (like Battscombe) have relied on this piece as proof of her steadfastness, and while it is currently out of print, the text stands as a bookend to her lifelong career defending the High Church Anglicanism that defined her life.

### Critical Context

Yonge is most well known for her children's and domestic "slice-of-life" or "family chronicle" literature. Valerie Sanders explains the family chronicle as "perhaps best defined as an infinitely extendable story of family interaction and engagement with the outside world, written in a realist mode" (95). In Yonge's novels the family unit, and its ability to weather storms is put to the test—often through the death of one or both parents. And, as expected given her biography, Yonge's novels always feature clergymen "whether in the forefront or in the background" (Mare and Percival 119). Her least sympathetic characters tend to be Low Church oriented, making her High Church figures the more admirable by comparison, a trend spotted and stated by Mare and Percival: "As did Trollope in the case of Mr. Slope, Miss Yonge rather cruelly indulges her prejudice against Evangelicals by frequently hinting that those who professed this form of religion were not drawn from the best social circles" (104-5). In *The Daisy Chain*, we will see that the High Anglican Tractarian ideals of church-building and formalism are colored by this same kind of class-prejudice.

Sanders gives one of the best overviews of Yonge's publication career. She notes that Yonge's "first novel, *Abbey Church* (1844), set the pattern for her later writing, which was usually about family groups of children and teenagers and their relationship with the

neighbourhood and the church" (92-3). She continues, "[h]er best-seller status as a Victorian author seems to derive from her astuteness in identifying a class of readers for whom her type of novel was tailor-made: young girls whose romanticism needed to be grounded in the real life of the school-room and parlor" (107). Given the fact that Yonge wrote so much, and that so much of it is presently out of print, it can be hard to say exactly how many publications Yonge produced, but Ellen Jordan puts it at "more than ninety works of fiction" and "well more than eighty works of nonfiction" (453). She also notes that Yonge "contributed articles to the periodical press, sponsored a large number of collections and translations from the French, and for almost fifty years edited the *Monthly Packet*, a periodical aimed at a readership of adolescent girls" (454).

In addition to such scholarship that deals with the gendered themes in Yonge's works, common themes in Yonge criticism are domestic in nature. Leslee Thorne-Murphy, for instance, deals specifically with women as economic agents in "The Charity Bazaar and Women's Professionalization in Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*." Thorne-Murphy makes the case that Yonge's own aspirations in some way mirror those of Ethel May in the novel: working ambitiously, but feeling deeply the need to constantly assess the motivations for that work. She points to an early conversation Yonge had with her father wherein he told her there were only three reasons to publish anything, for fame, for fortune, or to benefit society in some way (882). And like Ethel May who checks herself and her motives again and again through the novel, Yonge portrayed her reaction as one that poured straight from the heart as being tearful and only desired to be "useful" to young women readers (quoted in Thorne-Murphy 882-83).

Although most of Yonge's oeuvre is currently out of print, it still enjoys a modest critical following. Talia Schaffer says that her works "provide some of the most vivid (and heart-rending) accounts of intellectual girlhood in Victorian England" and maintain a "commitment to realism" which can "undermine her politics" (245). Schaffer thinks about the way that girlhood in Yonge's works tends to come against Victorian masculine pursuits, like higher education or "meaningful work" (245). This is evident in *The Daisy Chain*, especially considering Ethel who not only wants to keep up with her brothers in terms of education by learning from them and trying to master their lessons ahead of them, and her church-building scheme at Cocksmoor. But where Schaffer and I diverge is her claim that, "Yonge's central project, then, is to depict dissidence for the purpose of subduing it" (247). Schaffer suggests that, politically, Yonge depicts liberated girls who want to expand beyond traditional or stereotypical gender roles only to subdue them as a way to both present a mimetic version of reality but to then bring that version under the control of her own worldview. I cannot quite meet Schaffer here. I think she gets it right that Yonge is attempting to represent a "true" or "real" version of reality, and that such representation includes complicated relationships between what young women want to accomplish and what society deems proper for them to. But I do not think that subduing is the ideal outcome for Yonge. In *The Daisy Chain*, Ethel does have to give up studying Latin when it takes time away from her helping her father run the household. But she is still allowed to take a lead role in the Cocksmoor scheme, and her own education helps her educate the Cocksmoor youths when she and Richard initially begin their work. That is, she moves from the High Church ideal of learning Latin, to the more Tractarian endeavor of church-building and educating. In the end of the novel she is not subdued, rather Ethel has found ways to achieve her

goals (religious formalism, opening a church, and opening a school) while maintaining the social position that her family deems appropriate.

There seem to be strange cross-purposes happening in this text which are similar to those purposes associated with the publications in support of the Oxford Movement itself. At the same time, we have a movement which is empowered on the naturally-revealed truth of the Divine: Newman's case for the inclusion of the original Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion contends that they are compatible with Anglican doctrine *and* Council of Trent Roman Catholic doctrine, and that the only disconnections happen as a result of poor interpretation by theologians and scholars looking to invent divisions that keep apart the branches of catholic religion. This issue is more complicated than this phrasing will make it seem, but in some way, Tractarians are making the case that there is no need for interpreters to muck around with Church doctrine, by interpreting Church doctrine. The built-in tension here is front-and-center in *The Daisy Chain* which thinks through how democratic exclusivity can (or cannot) work. Growing the institution to include people who do not know the forms, while insisting that the forms are integral to appropriate membership, seems like an impossible task. That seeming impossibility is, I argue, at the core of Yonge's work in this text. The novel may not, according to Yonge, have been intended to be a piece of dogma, but the takeaways are dogmatic nevertheless.

### ***The Daisy Chain* and the Tractarian Project**

Since we have no collected works to draw from, and so since no one can presently claim to have read everything Yonge authored, I will offer my own plot summary of *The Daisy Chain, Or Aspirations*, here: The text follows the May family, father Dr. May and his numerous



children, in the immediate and long-term aftermath of a carriage accident which kills wife, mother, and moral standard-bearer Mrs. May. We watch the family metaphorically rebuild itself, with its members engaging and correcting their own personal shortcomings and perceived moral turpitude; and we watch as they, led by two of the older May children but pulling effort from the entire group and surrounding neighborhood, struggle to build a church for the poor people of their nearby neighborhood Cocks Moor. The first volume takes place immediately after the carriage accident and addresses the family's reactions to her absence, with Yonge paying especial attention to the discovery by each person individually how much emotional labor Mrs. May had done unnoticed before. It also deals with the educational efforts by Ethel and Richard May to proselytize the youth of Cocks Moor into a High Anglican education. The second volume is set some years into the future and focuses more on how the May children have grown into the people their mother predicted they would, and crescendos with the actual building of the Cocks Moor church, giving the corporate body of believers that have been steadily building a proper place for proper services.

While Part One begins just after the carriage accident and seems to go on over the following several months, Part Two seems to be set several years later, with no immediate context clues of the fact. As we leave Part One Margaret's spinal injury seems to be on the mend, Norman's intellectual pursuits have won him the scholarships and merit to encourage him carrying on, Flora's attempt to climb social ladders is harming no one and is being done above reproach, and Ethel's impatience seems at last to have been properly tempered by humility and a genuine desire to do good for the poor of Cocks Moor. However, in Part Two we are suddenly set forward in time but backward in progress: Margaret is wasting away and though her father does

not like to admit it, her condition is irreparable. Norman is once again concerned that he has spent his life pursuing education for the wrong reasons and looks for a way to redress this by giving up every accolade and becoming a missionary to the Maori of New Zealand. Flora's infant daughter is in peril due to Flora's own work helping her husband climb the political ladder to Parliament. And Ethel nearly gives up working in Cocksmoor and acting as her father's helpmate at the first blush of a potential romance with her second cousin.

The Oxford Movement finds several footholds in *The Daisy Chain*, although it is never directly mentioned. Oxford, the university, has fifty-two references; there are none to the tracts or the Tractarians. Nevertheless, thematically, this novel is more about the Oxford Movement and its attendant issues than it is about anything else. The text, as mentioned above, opens on the May family suffering the catastrophe of a carriage accident which kills Mrs. May, seriously injures Dr. May (rendering his right arm essentially useless for the rest of his life), and paralyzes eldest daughter, Margaret. Norman excels in school but constantly worries his motivation is for praise; Ethel determines to build a school for the impoverished youths of Cocksmoor but frets she's doing so to make herself more important; Margaret wants to marry the young man who had begun courting her before the accident but does not want to bind him to a lamed helpmate; Flora marries a wealthy-but-daft man and turns him into a politician which indirectly causes her baby to die of slow laudanum poisoning and gives her the firm belief that she will never deserve to go to heaven and see her mum again; and even Dr. May struggles with his temper and the realization that he had previously left too much work on his wife having expected her to raise the children and to mind himself, keeping him from allowing his passions to get between him and damage to his children. All of their personal issues can be essentialized into the problem of

formalism. Each character is concerned about observing the right rituals for their social positions and acting their parts properly.

Yonge herself nods to the mixed purposes of the text in her preface calling it "an overgrown book of nondescript class, neither the 'tale' for the young, nor the novel for their elders, but a mixture of both" and notes that it is rather a "domestic record of home events, large and small" with an especial focus on "those aspirations which are a part of every youthful nature." A tale for the young sounds like a fable, one that they would read at a time when they are learning about life and behavior, and seems to signal instruction and (therefore) dogma. Novels, Yonge says, are for people who already have that basic education and serve to complicate, or to borrow a term from Alex Woloch, "populate" (190) the way they see the world by introducing more characters than they meet in ordinary life. The fact that Yonge sees the text of *The Daisy Chain* as somehow hovering between dogmatic fable and formalist novel has contributed to the way that I read the book: neither as prescriptive as a handbook nor as plot-driven than a novel.

If there is a unifying plot line in the text, it is about the triumph of spirit over flesh through formal, prescriptive actions. Every person's problem as described above winds up being solved by the contemplation and doing of whatever would have made the late Mrs. May proud, given that she stands in their memory as grace and faith personified, and in their minds as watching their every move (and motivation) from Heaven. Mrs. May stands in as the face of a Divine presence that is emotive (disappointed or proud) and active (watching and hearing) in the lives of the rest of the May family. To return to our earlier moment with Norman, he even seems to be praying to the spirit of his dead mother. Having gone to the chapel at his school to find a

moment's respite from his duties as head boy and to clear his mind to work out a solution to the problem of his brother Tom's unseemly friend group, Norman cries out:

"Mother! mother!" he murmured, "have I been harsh to your poor little tender sickly boy? I couldn't help it. Oh! if you were but here! We are all going wrong! What shall I do? How should Tom be kept from this evil?—it is ruining him! mean, false, cowardly, sullen—all that is worst—and your son—oh! mother! and all I do only makes him shrink more from me. It will break my father's heart, and you will not be there to comfort him." (Ch. 19)

This moment, even though it is clearly not about the Oxford Movement, is very much inspired by the Oxford Movement, in the same way that Yonge's oeuvre is presumably inspired by the steady belief in it. By having Mrs. May as the absent parent, we can read the shape of a confessional service onto the moment without the preachiness of showing a proper church service. First the formal elements of the rote services prescribed by the Tractarians are here. There is a form of call-and-response in Norman's literal calling out to his mother. He addresses her by the name of "mother" which designates both her position and her relationship to him, he asks her questions, and in the end appeals to her again by the familiar, formal name. It is less Catholic this way than it would be were Norman calling out to "father," and helps the text from entering into the dogmatic tone that Yonge tried to avoid. Any liturgical meaning is read onto the scene, and Yonge maintains the novel form.

This is a key moment where we see Norman enacting the formal conventions of a ritualist religion, and in so doing quashing the emotional overtones of evangelical practice: whether he has been "harsh" to a young boy, how "evil" is actively seeking Tom out, how Tom must be

actively kept from that force, and the heartbreak that their father will feel if Norman fails to protect him. These all rely on, in his mind, Norman not only acting rightly, but doing so with the proper heart, as we are told in the following paragraph that he would wait to speak to him until "the alarm of detection and irritation should have gone off." All emotions must be subordinated in favor of outward expression, and Norman feels the burden to be the manager. A second equally important item of note here is how Mrs. May is not "present" in the way Norman would wish her to be, which I read as an absent Divine. While Norman himself takes comfort in this sort of conversation with his mother-cum-Divine, he is convinced that his father could not receive the same kind or quality of consoling that he does.

In addition to vignettes like the above which may be read as being influenced by or evocative of the Oxford Movement, there is the major recurring theme of spreading the influence of the Anglican Church that permeates the novel. The Cocks Moor scheme takes up a majority of the narrative of *The Daisy Chain*. It involves, at some point, every named character in text. There is money to collect, teaching and examining to perform, and a building to build. The funding of the Cocks Moor church is the final gift of Margaret's fiancée who dies abroad but still with the impoverished, and un-churched youth on his mind. To the minds of the characters, and under the philosophy of the Tractarians, an Anglican education is the only way to gain souls and continue the efforts of Ecclesia. This plays out in the text as a sort of class clash: the impoverished of Cocks Moor are taken under the wing of the middling May family along with all their wealthier contracts who act as patrons to the effort. The Mays are, however, nearly thwarted by the upper-class women who treat the social status as primary and the ministerial work as secondary, counter to what Ethel and Richard May set out as their goals. The episode

plays out the point of tension where dogmatic form is most important, as with the Tractarians; the inner life, or inner relationship to the Divine that we would see in evangelicals is stoutly rejected.

Yonge gives us a clear example of how growing an exclusive institution will face practical difficulties in the fourteenth chapter, at which point Ethel and Richard have rented a space where they hold weekly elementary scholastic and religious classes, and have donated proper attire and supplies to the Cocksmoor youth to equip them to receive such an education; they find their plans nearly spoiled entirely by Mrs. Ledwich. Mrs. Ledwich, one of the few named members of the Ladies' Committee who adjure the Cocksmoor scheme, is its president and fiercest member. In a scene which brings these class issues into stark relief, Mrs. Ledwich sends home some of the Cocksmoor girls from school because their hair is not cut to the length deemed appropriate for the middling and lower classes. That is, they are not in proper form, in a highly regulated, formal institution. Flora, ever-aware of social cues, tells Ethel in the thirteenth chapter that Mrs. Ledwich "cannot suffer such untidiness and rags to spoil the appearance of the school." In the chapter following Mrs. Ledwich makes good her threats, as repeated to Dr. May by Ethel:

"Did you ever hear anything like it! When the point was, to teach the poor things to be Christians, to turn them back, because their hair was not regulation length!"

"What's that! Who did?" said Dr. May, coming in from his own room, where he had heard a few words.

"Mrs. Ledwich. She sent back three of the Cocks Moor children this morning. It seems she warned them last Sunday without saying a word to us."

"Sent them back from church!" said the doctor.

"Not exactly from church," said Margaret.

"It is the same in effect," said Ethel, "to turn them from school; for if they did try to go alone, the pew-openers would drive them out."

"It is a wretched state of things!" said Dr. May, who never wanted much provocation to begin storming about parish affairs. "When I am churchwarden again, I'll see what can be done about the seats; but it's no sort of use, while Ramsden goes on as he does."

"Now my poor children are done for!" said Ethel. "They will never come again. And it's horrid, papa; there are lots of town children who wear immense long plaits of hair, and Mrs. Ledwich never interferes with them. It is entirely to drive the poor Cocks Moor ones away—for nothing else, and all out of Fanny Anderson's chatter." (Part I Ch. 14)

The hypocrisy of Mrs. Ledwich's position is obvious to young Ethel. She notes how "there are lots of town children who wear immense long plaits of hair, and Mrs. Ledwich never interferes with them." Further, Ethel explicitly states that she believes Mrs. Ledwich does this targeted criticism to "drive the poor" away because they do not meet her exacting class standards. Her concern is contrary to Ethel's. Whereas Ethel is focused on the girls' education, and in particular how that education can claim them for the Anglican Church as members of the exacting High Church, Mrs. Ledwich is strictly worried about appearances and maintaining strict class

boundaries. Ledwich, and the High Church, both have the same problem here: they need more members if they want to grow and become the dominant flavor of Anglicanism within England, but to grow one needs new members who will not immediately know the forms that are most important. Ethel is willing to be somewhat more secular in that she is willing to give ground on the issue of the hair length, provided that the young girls are allowed time to see their error and correct it. She would not to have them turned away the first instance they do not know the forms to take. Obviously, the comparison between whose hair being out of acceptable fashion also lights up, certainly to a lesser extent, the inequality of the application of laws. The poor must adhere to a significantly more severe minimum standard of behavior than their wealthier counterparts.

In addition to the class warfare at play in Mrs. Ledwich's actions and Ethel's reaction, the politics of the Oxford Movement are quite apparent in this scene. Ethel's motivation to build a school in Cocks Moor is "to teach the poor things to be Christians." The verb here, to teach, is of utmost significance. In evangelical thinking, the only matter that brings new members to the Church is faith. But in the High Church, the Tractarian cause, to be a member of the Anglican Church requires a level of understanding of tradition and rote that have Apostolic roots. Joining the Church and participating in it require a level of commitment to such minutia as the liturgical calendar which dictates which days are intended for feast celebrations, what Scripture should be read when, and when the saints' holy days fall. To teach the poor of Cocks Moor to be Christian is a literal endeavor. Ethel is not referring simply to a spreading of the Gospel, but that there are laws and rituals that should be observed by all Anglicans, and for the poor to know the forms they have to first be taught.



The political motivations of reforming the Church and returning it to some of its catholic roots are present as well in Dr. May's rejoinder that "when" he is "churchwarden again" he will be able to take the Ladies' Committee more in hand and coerce them to be welcoming to the Cocksmoor youth. Ramsden, known for "seldom exerting himself, and leaving most of his parish work to the two under masters of the school, Mr. Wilmot and Mr. Harrison, who did all they had time and strength for, and more too, within the town itself" (Part I Ch. 3), is decried as being too lax with the committee. Dr. May, we presume, had to give up the duties of churchwarden after his carriage accident caused him to be physically unable to do many of his previous activities, in addition to being needed the more at home with his wife dead and his many children still very young to be left to themselves. The fact that he views his getting involved again in the leadership of the church as the most likely means of bringing under control the elements who object to the Cocksmoor children is as suggestive of the Oxford Movement as the church-building scheme itself. Part of the ritual and style that the Tractarians wanted to revive within the Anglican Church would include such governing bodies as the vestry, a committee of laypeople involved in church governance within their parish. The Oxford Movement was strongly in favor of the Anglican Church remaining the national church of England, maintaining the status and authority given thereby. Dr. May is rehearsing that same preference on the smaller scale: keeping a vestry who hold on to their power is a way to keep the local church under the purview of whatever parishioners are social leaders.

What this passage performs, then, is a snow-globe version of the Oxford Movement writ large: keeping up and returning to older institutions, putting forward the value of education, and the maintaining the importance of building churches as a way to spread the influence of High

Anglicanism. And, in a move that looks forward, Yonge also uses this scene to great effect to point out the inequal application of the laws and social conventions that guide nations.

### **Ethel's Latin**

In the novel, we can read Ethel May as standing in for the Anglican Church that the Oxford Movement seeks to reclaim. Her educational pursuits, she finds, have been misdirected, and she needs the guidance of a more grounded perspective (in the person of Norman) to come in and help her reform. I have said above that the Tractarians do not quite go the full distance to wanting to re-incorporate Latin into regular services, rather that the ritual forms themselves be observed more strenuously. In the novel, Ethel makes a point of learning as much Latin and Greek as her brother Norman does, right up until she is forced to give up the pursuit to better focus on her stereotypical women's work (helping mind the younger children, clean, and cook). The matter is brought to eldest May daughter, the lamed Margaret, by the girls' tutor Miss Winter who decries, "[Ethel] is at every spare moment busy with Latin and Greek, and I cannot think that to keep pace with a boy of Norman's age and ability can be desirable for her" (Ch. 18). Margaret takes this criticism to heart and broaches the topic with Ethel within a few pages causing Ethel to melt into tears:

"Oh, Margaret! Margaret!" and her eyes filled with tears. "We have hardly missed doing the same every day since the first Latin grammar was put into his hands!"

"I know it would be very hard," said Margaret; but Ethel continued, in a piteous tone, a little sentimental, "From hie haec hoc up to Alcaics and beta

Thukididou we have gone on together, and I can't bear to give it up. I'm sure I can—"

"Stop, Ethel, I really doubt whether you can. Do you know that Norman was telling papa the other day that it was very odd Dr. Hoxton gave them such easy lessons."

Ethel looked very much mortified. (Ch. 18)

Ethel is "mortified" because the most recent Latin play that Norman had been learning had seemed to her especially difficult. To hear not only that she was no longer keeping up, but also that the skills into which she had put such stock did not measure up shocks Ethel to sobbing. Margaret drives the nail home by suggesting that not only has Ethel failed to maintain Norman's pace in Latin, but also has come dangerously near to failing in her appropriate duties: "And for that would you give up being a useful, steady daughter and sister at home? The sort of woman that dear mamma wished to make you, and a comfort to papa" (Ch. 18). Margaret's "usefulness" and "steadiness" here signify that woman's work I mentioned above. Studying Latin and Greek, which have been a major part of Ethel's life for so long, is given second-class status here as being not only less valuable than being useful and steady, but it is revealed to her as the likely cause for her previous carelessness.

We have another instance of whiplash where we go from high emotion to self-reflection to determination within a matter of paragraphical moments. Ethel might be having the kind of inner life that, if shown to the readers, could help us understand how she transitions between high emotions, but instead Ethel talks to Norman whose nonchalance becomes her own:

Ethel did not like anything to be said to be too hard for her, and was very near pleading she only wanted time, but some recollection came across her, and presently she said, "I suppose it is a wrong sort of ambition to want to learn more, in one's own way, when one is told it is not good for one. I was just going to say I hated being a woman, and having these tiresome little trifles—my duty—instead of learning, which is yours, Norman." (Ch. 18)

This simple phrase "some recollection came across her" is all we get to understand what moves Ethel from being sad and angry that the Latin had been "said to be too hard" to fully accepting not just "little trifles" but her "duty" of being useful in the home. There are two points of interest for me in this episode. First, there is an obvious parallel between the Oxford Movement and Ethel as to the importance of Latin. Both seem to be able to let go of the linguistic rule to better serve the duties that are more focused on inclusion and growth. The Latin liturgies of the historical Catholic Church are non-issues for the Tractarians who are far more interested in the rituals and forms than of the language barrier. Yonge does not belabor the Latin for Ethel the same way Keble did not belabor Latin for the Church. Though the transition happens extremely quickly, Ethel receives advice from her elder brother who tells her that it does not make sense for her to continue to pursue Latin since she can never take firsts in school for it, but still encourages her to carry on the work she has taken up in Cocks Moor. She seems to feel, like the Tractarian lights, that there is a net positive in diminishing the importance of Latin in order to better encourage the reform of the Anglican Church. In some way, I read this moment as Ethel standing in for the Anglican Church, Norman standing in for Keble, and Margaret and Miss Winter as the Low Church mindset. Whereas the latter simply want Ethel to stop "undesirable"

activities that are spreading her too thin, Norman takes a measured stance and evaluates what is best for Ethel, and then encourages her to be successful at what she can best do that will help the most people.

A second point of interest here is the way that Yonge again opts not to employ or illustrate interiority, allowing Ethel's swift movement from abject sadness to total acceptance about her future. This shows the way that religion, for the High Church Tractarians, is much more centered on the outward performance of rituals, than it is about the inner state of the person. As we will see below with Flora and her daughter, and as we saw above with Norman and his emotional states, interiority is significantly reduced in favor of the of going through the motions. Ethel here goes from "eyes filled with tears" to "very near[ly] pleading" her case to acknowledging that "[t]his argument from Norman himself did much to reconcile Ethel's mind to the sacrifice she had made" (Ch. 18) in a matter of a few pages. And these phrases make the entirety of the inner-workings that are illustrated in this episode. I will expand this idea in the next section, but for the moment it is good to see the way external expression is given preference over internal reflection, which puts one in mind of the ritualism of the High Church.

### **Flora's Dead Baby**

Time and again, in this novel, we see that what is most important is the exteriority of these characters; their actions and the motives that drive them far outweigh their feelings or thoughts. Flora's dead baby is not treated as an opportunity for soul searching, she just accepts that she has lost her child, assumes responsibility for it, and moves on with her life, because it is the actions that matter. Flora May, the second eldest of the daughters is first introduced with the

simple line that she returned a greeting "properly" and is "a pretty, fair girl, nearly two years older than her sister [Ethel]" (Ch. 1). This brief description fully encapsulates everything we ever learn about Flora. She values propriety above all else. She is well-known for and prides herself on being pretty and politick. And every aspect of her life is lived in an attempt to differentiate herself from her sisters. By the final third of *The Daisy Chain*, Flora has established herself as a leader among the women's committee that organize the Cocks Moor school, marries a sweet-but-stupid man of reasonable fortune, and has turned his life toward politics and convincing him to run for parliament by writing his speeches and interpreting those of his competitors (essentially puppeteering his political campaign). She also gives birth to a daughter, because good form is to have a child, and then hires on a nurse to take care of her so that Flora and her husband's out-late-most-nights lifestyle can continue as she helps him build political clout and connections. In the twentieth chapter Flora writes to her father to ask his medical assistance with her infant daughter who had become "sleepy and dull" and has a certain "look about the eyes" that is giving her alarm (Ch. 20). Dr. May goes to her by train the next day and finds the baby's "little face, somewhat puffed, but of a waxy whiteness, and the breathing seeming to come from the lips" (Ch. 20). By the time Dr. May has gotten to Flora, the baby's fate is quite sealed: she had been "sinking" from the want of more opium to which she had become addicted. Dr. May turns on his daughter, "'What have you all been doing?' cried he, as, looking up, his face changed from the tender compassion with which he had been regarding his little patient, into a look of strong indignation, and one of his sentences of hasty condemnation broke from him, as it would not have done, had Flora been less externally calm. 'I tell you this child has been destroyed with opium!'" (Ch. 20). Flora's "external calm" becomes a swoon and

then a brain fever. Some might see this moment as a tragedy, but the characters in the novel do not seem to. Instead, this is another perhaps more literal example of the importance of exterior action over interior feeling. The baby fussed, an exterior complaint that made Flora and the nursemaid look bad, so her internal organs ended up being destroyed to correct her behavior. The nursemaid hired by Flora to take care of her fussy baby accidentally, for want of oversight and better education, got the infant addicted to opium that kept her quiet, and on a rare moment of motherly interest, Flora's not allowing the laudanum to be administered caused the child to die of withdrawal. This might also be a moment where we would expect to be privy to any of the characters' inner-selves as they process this information: the frightened nurse afraid of being jailed for murder, the enraged husband looking for someone to blame, the semi-catatonic mother who never had time for her daughter until it was too late, the empathetic Dr. May who arrived hours too late to save his first (and so far only) grandchild. But neither of these are how Yonge progresses the episode. Instead, all turns to Flora and her certainty that she will never be, and was never, good enough to go to heaven. Her lack of an interior life, an emotional connection to her baby, has been brought forward for all to see, and the externalizing of it has consequences.

To further drive this home, we see one of the most touching scenes ascribe to the baby that which none of the characters evince: a value beyond their ability to perform. Dr. May offers for Flora to see her daughter one last time, to see how she no longer is in bodily pain, which he thinks will help his daughter begin to heal her grief. Though Flora refuses at first, she is persuaded easily enough (as all emotions pass easily to acquiescence in this novel):

It [the sight of the corpse] stilled the sounds of pain, and the restless motion; the compression of the hands became less tight, and he began to hope that

the look was passing into her [Flora's] heart. He [Dr. May] let her kneel on without interruption, only once he said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven!"

She made no immediate answer, and he had had time to doubt whether he ought to let her continue in that exhausting attitude any longer, when she looked up and said, "You will all be with her there."

"She has flown on to point your aim more steadfastly," said Dr. May.

Flora shuddered, but spoke calmly—"No, I shall not meet her."

"My child!" he exclaimed, "do you know what you are saying?"

"I know, I am not in the way," said Flora, still in the same fearfully quiet, matter-of-fact tone. "I never have been"—and she bent over her child, as if taking her leave for eternity.

His tongue almost clave to the roof of his mouth, as he heard the words—words elicited by one of those hours of true reality that, like death, rend aside every wilful cloak of self-deceit, and self-approbation. He had no power to speak at first; when he recovered it, his reply was not what his heart had, at first, prompted. (Ch. 20)

Instead of being a moment of pure sadness or tragedy, the text attempts to turn this moment into one of triumph—that is, sure the baby is dead, but now she is an angel who will help Flora find heaven all the more easily. The baby, who (depending on one's own school of thought about nature and nurture) cannot have any interiority, is praised as being innocent and perfect enough to be the sort that makes up the kingdom of Heaven. Literally here, the ideal human is one who is a blank canvas inside. And rather than entering into anyone's subconscious or inner-



monologue, we just get Flora rejecting the proposal, and rewriting her entire history by saying she "never" has been entitled to heaven. This is momentous, not just to Dr. May but to readers as well, given how Flora had stayed above suspicion in the performance of her religious duties. Certainly, we do not see any of Ethel or Norman's motive-questioning from her that would have signified the apparent long-time conviction that she was not headed to a heavenly afterlife. Her "cold utilitarian" (Ch. 20) style has never up to now shown any hint of such insecurity because she has always maintained strict control of her external projection. And interiority has never been an issue for these characters.

This does not stop her family from attempting to project interiority on Flora, though. In the following chapters Flora will be called "poor Flora" by her family and friends in relation to the crisis of emotion that she has experienced after the loss of her daughter, but Flora herself shows little in the way of being put out or concerned. She carries on helping her husband in his career pursuits and, though she prefers not to be alone with young children, seems generally to go on as she did before. It is only when she is visiting her family home, alone with her eldest sister (Margaret, whose broken back and wasting disease have progressed significantly in the intervening chapters), that she betrays any inner turmoil that she may have been feeling. In the twenty-fifth chapter, Flora and Margaret stay home from the inaugural service at the newly-built Cocks Moor church, as Margaret was too weak to attend and Flora volunteered to stay with her. Together, they read the same service that is being read at the church. During this rehearsal in miniature of the proper service happening at Cocks Moor, Flora finally has something of the emotional outpouring we might have looked for sooner:

Flora could go no further; she strove, but one of her tearless sobs cut her short. She turned her face aside, and, as Margaret began to say something tender, she exclaimed, with low, hasty utterance, "Margaret! Margaret! pray for me, for it is a hard captivity, and my heart is very, very sore. Oh! pray for me, that it may all be forgiven me—and that I may see my child again!"

"My Flora; my own poor, dear Flora! do I not pray? Oh! look up, look up. Think how He loves you. If I love you so much, how much more does not He? Come near me, Flora. Be patient, and I know peace will come!"

The words had burst from Flora uncontrollably. She was aware, the next instant, that she had given way to harmful agitation, and, resuming her quiescence, partly by her own will, partly from the soothing effect of Margaret's words and tone, she allowed herself to be drawn close to her sister, and hid her face in the pillow, while Margaret's hands were folded over her, and words of blessing and prayer were whispered with a fervency that made them broken. (Ch. 25)

A version of a confession to a surrogate mother, Flora acknowledges her sin and asks for absolution and hope from her older sister. Margaret gives her the assurance she needs, and just like that Flora has "given way" to the fears that she has not acknowledged in the intervening chapters, and becomes "quiescent" again because she has performed the necessary rituals to be forgiven. For her, continuing to be a dutiful wife and continuing in a way that looks the same to outside observers matters most. There is no interior development, because there is no interiority.

Flora's outward actions are what matter to the text. And once she has had a bit of a crisis of the soul with Margaret, she performs the ritual of asking for forgiveness and is instantly revived.

All of these moments of whip-speed acceptance of positions or consequences feel very out of sync with the rest of the novel and with the way Yonge addresses the importance of religion and education and bringing the poor into the Anglican fold. My suggestion is that the fact that none of the characters' interiority matters (to the narrative) reflects or gives us an object lesson to the way ritualism should be accepted and performed in the High Church. It does not matter if the members of the church understand why they kneel or stand or sit; as long as they perform the outward action, they have done their obedience and are full members. The Tractarians do not need people thinking through, questioning, or personally interpreting High Church formalism. They just need members who perform.

### **Conclusion**

An institution that is exclusive for everyone, a doctrine that encourages ritual without emphasizing inner-life, and a novel that thinks through the peculiar tensions that both of these situations bring up: these are the elements we are left with at the end of this ordeal. Writing some twenty years into the project of the Oxford Movement, and a decade after John Henry Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism, Yonge addresses the growing pains of the movement as it seeks to expand, but to still maintain the integrity of the rituals on which so much emphasis is placed.

The Oxford Movement focuses on the external elements of organized Anglican worship, and the apostolic roots of the Church which ally it more closely to the Roman Catholic Church

than to the evangelical wing of the protestant world. This formalist approach necessarily excludes anyone who does not have the benefit of having lived in the upper ranks of society where such propriety of behavior is coded into daily life already. At odds, then, is the need to go into the lower classes to find new members and build the High Church Anglicanism for which the Tractarians advocate, and to maintain rigorous standards of rite and ritual that make up the core of the High Church ethos.

Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* takes the historical problem of an expansionist movement in the Anglican Church and considers one way that the tension can be resolved. For her, the complete elimination and minimization of any inner-conflict seems to be the best way of confronting the situation. Just as the characters' inner lives are not deemed important or valuable enough to consider within the narrative, instead focusing primarily on their actions, we end up with a novel that admonishes against strict adherence to the parts of the code that matter least (Latin, hair length), and makes the case for the frequent review of one's own actions to be sure they fit the High Church ethos.

## CODA

### **Coda: G. K. Chesterton and the Novel Clerical Detective**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter argues two main points: first that the clerical novel became a part of the popular detective fiction genre over the course of the nineteenth century. And second that novel clergymen were always detectives of a sort.

As we have seen, clerical novels address different aspects of the institutional Church and the reforms it underwent in the ostensibly secularizing nineteenth century. Over the course of the century, when religion itself might have seemed to be increasingly in question, the figure of the clergyman became more complicated, and the argument of this project thus far has been that the clerical novel—the novel centered around the figure of a clergyman—has an underrecognized importance to the larger history of the realist novel. Thus, we saw the figure develop beyond simple comic relief, and toward an important force with interactions across social classes. Such connections with everyone in a parish, that only historical clergymen were expected to have, were an important part of bringing diverse, developed characters to the novel. As England secularized, allowing and expecting freedom of choice in terms of belief, the clergy were forced to adapt at the ground level while the Church worked to catch up. So, the figure of the clergyman in the novel presents an opportunity for authors to think through the effects of

individualism. George Eliot, taking the figure over from writers like Jane Austen who had stereotypical and static clergy as background actors in novels of manners, humanized the clergy to address the changing social and legal conditions they faced. George Eliot used the figure to critique the state of affairs in which clergy could be allowed to languish due to poor social safety nets and unrealistic expectations, especially as the institution of the Church slowly recognized the importance of individuality within its congregants and labor force. In "The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton" we see her working through both the way that monetary fortune for early-century clergy was often precarious at best, but even more so how fortune-as-chance held considerable clout in the lives of curates who could be relieved of their posts at any time for any reason. What emerged from that discussion, then, is a new view of the relationship of individual clerical laborers to the institution that employed them wherein the individual's needs are shown to be important to the overall health of the community.

Building on the growing validation of the individual, we saw Margaret Oliphant address the clerical profession as each working clergyman came to be expected to be called to the vocation, willing to take on specialized education and training. Career men of old who had taken a general university degree but were not invested in the office of the clergyman as it entailed being involved in the daily lives of all their parishioners made way for a theologically-trained generation of specialized, committed vocational clergymen. Oliphant's *The Rector* and *The Perpetual Curate* taken together show the generational shift in real time. *The Rector* gives us a non-committal university man whose primary concern is supporting his mother and eventually a family of his own—pecuniary rather than personal motivations. And Mr. Frank Wentworth of

*The Perpetual Curate* shows the benefits of a called clergyman, which far outweigh the way such investment might result in personal disagreements within the parish.

After the increased focus on men having a calling more than just a career, especially as we saw in *The Perpetual Curate* a former Anglican clergyman (Frank's brother Gerald) realizing that his own vocation was to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church, we finally landed in the middle of the Oxford Movement. After the defection/conversion (depending on which side one writes from) of John Henry Newman, John Keble and his ilk took on the leadership of a movement to bring Anglicanism back to its Catholic roots, while maintaining the separateness of the denominations. In Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, we saw how such a movement seems to be embarking on two mutually-exclusive goals: both to grow the High Anglican Church as an exclusive body, and to maintain that exclusivity that differentiated it from the Broad and Low Church ideals. Her text put pressure on the presumption of interiority for characters in novels and showed what the ritualism that the Tractarians championed might look like practically applied to people's daily lives. Ultimately, we have seen Victorian clerical novels challenge the perceived relationship of the institution to its constituent parts, both members and employees.

The nineteenth century saw England develop beyond what can be glossed as an Anglican country, thanks to the availability of religious choice via legal reform and increasing importance of the individual. Historian Julie Melnyk calls the Victorian era "a religious age" but contends that it was "not an era of peaceful faith and doctrinal conformity—it was an era of religious controversy and, increasingly, of religious freedom" (2). In her book, *Victorian Religion: Faith and Life in Britain*, Melnyk coins the phrase "unsettlement of faith" which she uses to underline

the movement in the century from a generally-received tradition of every British person being willing members of the Anglican Church, to a wide spectrum of accepted forms of belief and practice. She notes,

The Victorian era experienced a profound unsettling of faith. Challenges to Christianity seemed to spring simultaneously from many sources. One source of unsettling was the increasing sense of individual choice in religious life. As laws that discriminated against them were repealed, non-Anglicans gradually gained acceptance as full British citizens. (134)

This "sense of individual choice" includes not only various denominations of Protestantism, but ir- and a- religious sects, dissenting "free thinkers," Catholics, and Jewish people (albeit in smaller numbers). Hugh McLeod, alternately, thinks of it as the movement from "a high degree of religious consensus" that existed in England from 1850 to 1914, that "had diminished by the early twentieth century [though] had not yet broken down" (1). He, like so many historians, points to advancement of science and technology in the century as the reason for the decreasing importance of religion in people's lives. Richard J. Helmstadter and Paul T. Phillips, for example, offer this version of the narrative:

That science and religion were at war in the Victorian period is a widely accepted exaggeration that tends to cloud the nature of their complex relationship. But the idea that science and religion were enemies was widely believed during the second half of the nineteenth century, and that popular belief had some basis in fact. (367)



"Some basis in fact" is rather a sweeping way to put it, and Helmstadter and Phillips's tome, a "sourcebook of documents," does go on to offer readings from contemporary Victorian lights to illustrate how science and religion were at odds. But McLeod summarizes what seems like a key to this issue: "It was partly because the increasing prosperity and sense of security resulting from economic, technological and medical progress mean that most people felt increasingly at home in the world and unwilling to seek other-worldly solutions to their problems" (3). Scientific advancement (medical technology), legal changes (Catholic emancipation), and personal choice (individualism) unsettled the Anglican-heavy religious landscape of the nineteenth century in England. Doubt, the term most often used in the Victorian era, grew over the course of the middle of the century, "and in the 1880s and 1890s, agnosticism unmistakably became one of the generally available religious options, alongside the liberal, evangelical, and Catholic versions of Christianity" (McLeod 179). Charles Smythe goes so far as to say that "it is perhaps not too much to say that the major phenomenon in the religious history of England in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the spread of Agnosticism" (162). Having seen fiction of the Victorian era address these disparate types of reform within the Church, we pivot in this chapter to look forward in time, to the early 1900s, and outward from the Anglican Church, to the Roman Catholic Church.

The relationship of the individual to their institution is at the heart of detective fiction, similar to how it is at the heart of my understanding of Anglican representation in novels. Popular detective fiction developed and gained status over the nineteenth century; the rising importance of the individual, the scientific development, and the influence of doubt and secularism catalyzed the reading and writing public for procedural and mystery novels. Franco

Moretti says that "the dominant cultural oppositions of detective fiction are between the individual (in the guise of the criminal) and the social organism (in the guise of the detective)" (134). That is, the criminal, who is and acts individually because aloneness "breeds guilt" (135), stands outside society in some way. And the job of the detective is to seek out these individuals who are found out when "something irreducibly personal [. . .] betrays the individual: traces, signs that only he could have left behind" (135). We saw how disruptive it can be when a person moves outside of their established norms with Gerald Wentworth in *The Perpetual Curate*. Gerald upsets (both literally and metaphorically) his entire family when he announces his intention to covert from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism. It falls on his younger brother to seek out the traces, to try to establish the chain of events and the thinking behind his decision, and then to make their father receptive to the information. Moretti says that "in the middle of the nineteenth century, the focus of attention shifts from *execution* to the *trial*. While the former underlines the individual's *weakness* by destroying his body, trials *exalt* individuality: they condemn it precisely because they have demonstrated its deadly greatness" (138, emphasis in original). We might consider Gerald and Frank's interactions that we saw in Chapter Three in this same vein. It is not the fact that Gerald must be punished, rather it is the fact that his individuality, as expressed through his choice to break with familial tradition and join a different church, is a threat to the stability of the group. In the middle of the century, then, individualism is still seen as a negative force that is policed internally (Gerald's own emotional suffering) and externally (by his family, and his parishioners with the expectation of his being shunned). By the end of the century, though, we can see that the power to disrupt lives through his individuality is a strength of individualism.

Although this may make it seem that the emotionally-detached detective is somehow more capable of viewing mysteries objectively than the invested clergyman, Chesterton's Brown achieves both at the same time. Moretti asserts that "the detective has incarnated a *scientific* ideal: the detective discovers the causal links between events: to unravel the mystery is to trace them back to a law" (144, emphasis in original). In the example above, Frank stands in as the detective, unravelling the mystery by collecting the history of Gerald's spiritual crisis, illuminating those "causal links between events." Lawrence Frank addresses the scientific element to detective fiction in his 2003 book *Victorian Detective Fiction and the Nature of Evidence: The Scientific Investigations of Poe, Dickens, and Doyle*. He suggests that detective fiction "responded explicitly and implicitly to the scientific controversies of the day" (3), both by the inclusion of new scientific language and trending-popular fields, like geology which was one of the harshest critics to a biblical explanation of the origins of the earth. He is talking specifically about Poe, Dickens, and Doyle, but this comment is also broadly applicable: detective fiction "promoted a *new*, emerging worldview that was secular and naturalistic in opposition to nineteenth-century scriptural literalism, Natural Theology, and the vestiges of an Enlightenment deism that were often conservative in their political perspective" (3). As we will mark below, G. K. Chesterton does his best to undo the assumption that science and religion are opposites, and instead he shows how they can work together.

A final influence in the genre of detective fiction that is important to consider for this chapter is that of doubt and secularism among the English population at large, which made the literature accessible. Robert S. Paul addresses the interconnection of theology and mystery stories in his *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes?: Detective Fiction, Popular Theology*,

*and Society*. He makes the case that "Detective novels reflect the society to which they are addressed, and in a way that the public must generally approve as a true picture of that society, its ethics, its values, and its basic rationality" (7), approval that is crucial, he goes on, "because of his or her [the detective fiction writer's] dependence on popular taste in order to sell books" (7). Throughout this dissertation I have suggested my poorer form of Arthur Pollard's preface to *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*: "literature is the creation of actual men and women, actually living in an identifiable set of historical circumstances, themselves both the creatures and creators of their times" (xi). We have seen authors react to and influence the perception of such events as the Pluralities Acts and the Oxford Movement. Elisabeth Jay notes that "Doubt, like faith, [ . . . ] is best seen as a process" (100), a process that carried on and grew stronger over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century. Authors like Chesterton, as I discuss below, drew inspiration from this process of doubt, and addressed it head-on with his Father Brown character.

In real life, and in Victorian novels, clergy of the nineteenth century tended to be the best-educated men in their parishes aside from local squires. They often acted in capacities, as we saw in chapter two with Amos Barton, of welfare agents or social workers—offering food to visitors, comfort to the sick and elderly, and counseling to the troubled. If a parishioner needed legal advice, the clergy were a "free" resource (tithes aside) to whom they could turn, perhaps to have a legal document read and explained, or indeed in composing documents and replies. Because the clergy were expected to interact with all members of the parish, not just the upper classes or the lower ones, and because there was a general presumption of discretion, clergy were privy to the secrets, gossip, and news from all walks of life within their domain.

And what is the work of a detective except the entire process of being privy, in reverse?

Whereas a detective starts at the end of the story and pieces together the front matter, clergy start at the beginning and see through to the end. In some cases, like Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, the church records—literally clerical details—hold the key to solving the mystery. In others, as G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories, it is the ability of the clergy to rationally think through the problem from informed perspectives on human nature that allow the threads to be joined.

It is important to be aware as we move through these stories that Father Brown is a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. However, Chesterton's stories do fit into this project for at least two reasons. First, Chesterton himself was a dedicated High Anglican until the early 1920s—he is reported to have converted to Roman Catholicism only in 1922 (Ward xii). As we saw with the Oxford Movement chapter three, the Anglican Church (and especially the High Church) had seen a renaissance of incorporating many ritual elements associated originally with the Roman Catholic Church. So, though the character of Father Brown, in the stories from 1911 that I discuss below, is a Catholic clergyman, the author was at that time an Anglican. And second, the Catholicism of Father Brown is more secondary than it might at first seem. We do not see him performing Catholic rites, only acting as any of the clergy we have reviewed up to this point: concerned with his fellow man, able to interact with all sorts of people, and generally trustworthy and charitable.

Up to this point, my focus has been on stories with Anglican clergy, whether they are High or Low, tenured or curate. Philip Grosset has dedicated no small amount of work to compiling an index of clerical detectives from all religious denominations; he lists the massive

volume of such characters at more than three hundred seventy different detective clergy (*Clerical Detectives*), which illustrates that this genre is more than just a one-off. And his more concise introduction to the genre on *Mystery\*File* lists detectives from various religious orders as Methodist, Jewish, and Anglican, among many others.

The reason this chapter focuses specifically on Father Brown is two-fold. First, the timing is important. The Father Brown stories were first published between 1910 and 1936, just at the end of the long nineteenth century this dissertation has undertaken to examine. The Father Brown stories, to my mind, are a transitional body of work that bring us to Grosset's much more numerous twentieth-century litany of clerical detectives, by (initially, at least) maintaining an important consideration of the clerical field as much as the mystery story. They still have one foot in the broader consideration of the reformist movements that we have seen in my previous chapters.

This brings us to my second reason to narrowly focus on Father Brown, and in particular the first several stories featuring the character: Chesterton offers brief, but certain, commentary on the importance of the Church to Father Brown's ability to detect and solve. For him, the character is not just incidentally a clergyman, but it is his calling to the clergy that has allowed him to apply scientific measures so broadly and effectively. As I discuss below, the fact that the Father has heard confession from all manner of people and has been among the classes with a non-judgmental attitude that Chesterton shows as unique to clergy has allowed him to build a deep, working knowledge of how people act in various circumstances. Though it is most commonly associated with them and is more prescriptive and regulated, perhaps, confession is not unique to the Roman Catholic Church. Father Brown is said to be modeled on a real priest of

Chesterton's acquaintance (Herbert 24) who was Catholic, and the stories, according to Rosemary Herbert are used by Chesterton to "communicat[e] his theological and political ideas" (24). So, Chesterton had vested interest in having his star be a good Catholic, and perhaps just as much motivation to have Valentin, an atheist, be a bad actor under the cover of being above suspicion.

As far as I can tell, relatively few scholars have undertaken to discuss specifically the broad genre of clerical detective fiction. In *Mysterium and Mystery: The Clerical Crime Novel* (1994), William David Spencer approaches the texts from a theological point of view, contending that the term and use of "mystery" originates with a Divine sense of the unrevealed or "the hidden enigma of God" (9). Because the idea of a mystery is rooted in the theological, Spencer says that clerical detectives "stand at the core, the heart of the origin and main intention of the mystery genre" (9). His "theory is that the modern mystery novel is a secularized form structured on the ancient mysterium or revelation of God's judgment and grace" (11). The other, Robert S. Paul's *Whatever Happened to Sherlock Holmes?: Detective Fiction, Popular Theology, and Society* (1991), a source I referred to above, deals more with theological roots of detective fiction broadly, than necessarily with fictional detectives who are clergy.

My undertaking has pointedly avoided making such theological claims about the literature I read. Even as Victorian England was secularizing, and the established church itself becoming more and more open to the influence of social and legal change, I have maintained that literature dealing with figures associated with the Church act as conduits to get at social and sociological concerns. I will continue in this vein in this chapter.

## **Father Brown Versus Irrationality**

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, secularism offers at least one new perspective on religious belief: that it is a form of irrational superstition. Even after Catholic emancipation, and even with the influence in mainstream Anglicanism that the Oxford Movement have had, Roman Catholic practices are treated with incredulity. Chesterton, though, seems to be reevaluating the assumption that Catholicism is the most superstitious of available beliefs. The Father Brown stories center on the titular priest who finds himself coincidentally at the scenes of crimes where his special ability to go into a trance and logically connect pieces of information that helps him solve mysteries well before (if not directly against the wishes of) local authorities. In his first two tales he is working both against the criminal enterprises and for redemption of the soul of Monsieur Hercule Flambeau. Flambeau is widely considered the greatest thief of his age until Father Brown's compassionate, steadfastly-empathetic attempts to have the man confess his sins and reform himself finally stick. Afterward, the two often work together to solve crimes, and much less emphasis is placed on Brown's role as a Roman Catholic priest.

While Brown is positioned to have us rethink the association of superstition and religious belief, Chesterton further contends that men of science are as susceptible to irrationality as anyone else. Head of Paris police Aristide Valentin is set up to be a foil to Father Brown, but we find him in the (his) end to be so consumed with hatred and fear of organized religion, that he murders a man considering giving a generous fortune to the Roman Catholic Church, and then kills himself rather than be caught and punished for his own crime. Though he was introduced as potentially the only man capable of really catching Flambeau due to his canny ability to follow the irrational, it turns out that his own irrationality causes his undoing. William David Spencer



says that Valentin is introduced and fleshed out and then killed to make the point that if Chesterton "in his very second tale will sacrifice a primary character who would have been an excellent foil for the entire series, we can expect him to do anything" (84). Spencer reads most of the Father Brown collection as challenging convention or expectation, and telling readers that very complicated-seeming issues can be reduced down to a "simple truth" (86), in the same way that "perceiving one's place in relation to God" (86) will utterly simplify the lives of mortals, according to Spencer. What follows is my own reading of the Valentin character, in relation to Brown. I read him as the avatar of irrationality, who offers us a stark comparison to Brown who views himself and the Church as under the strictures of logic and reason.

Chesterton gives a lot of time to setting Valentin up as a figure who seems like he will recur well beyond the first two stories, and as one who is equal and opposite to Brown, but neither of these prove true. I think the character must be gotten rid of for the very reason that he is a "sceptic in the severe style of France, and could have no love for priests" ("The Blue Cross"). Rather than ever being able to make a comfortable, mutually-trusting pair as Flambeau and Brown do, Valentin spends as much of his time trying to make Brown into a villain or idiot as he spends trying to solve cases. Moreover, I think Valentin is a useful device to make clear that Father Brown's inductive style of reasoning is superior because it is performed without prejudice.

Valentin is said to have "a method of his own" wherein "he reckoned on the unforeseen. In such cases, when he could not follow the train of the reasonable, he coldly and carefully followed the train of the unreasonable" ("The Blue Cross"). Chesterton uses this as a contrast later in the story to illustrate how Father Brown perceives his own relationship to rationality.

Whereas Valentin, most important and decorated police detective of his age, depends on the "unforeseen" and "unreasonable," Father Brown sees himself as a servant of reason. Valentin overhears Brown say that "reason is always reasonable, [. . .]. I know that people charge the Church with lowering reason, but it is just the other way. Alone on earth, the Church makes reason really supreme. Alone on earth, the Church affirms that God himself is bound by reason" ("The Blue Cross"). In a season when religious establishment is facing a wave of agnosticism and declining importance, Chesterton offers a way to see through some common assumptions into a way that the Church is still relevant. He explicitly acknowledges that popular opinion would have the Church "lowering reason," but he rejects that by reminding Flambeau and readers that "the laws of truth" bind both mankind and the Divine. His understanding of religion, then, is based on the fact that logic and rationality are immutable factors that guide every process and every being.

Father Brown is a champion of rules and reason. Martin Priestman asserts that "It is one of the repeated paradoxes of the series that he never solves a case through divine inspiration but only through reason or the confessional-derived empathy with the criminal mind which enables him to claim that 'it was I who killed all those people'" (124). And meanwhile, listening to Brown's conversation, we have Valentin "tearing his fingernails with silent fury" ("The Blue Cross"). He is not interested in the limits—or the lack thereof—of reason. There seems to be an interesting, important reversal of roles here. The policeman has not followed procedure, but has followed the train of the unreasonable; the priest has both made a case for reason and has foiled the plot of the most (in)famous thief of the era. Valentin's misfiring cognition is brought even more to the center in the second story, "The Secret Garden."

In "The Secret Garden" Valentin invites a few important people in Paris to his home and his walled garden for an evening soiree. Halfway through the night a man turns up dead in the garden, with his head having been separated from his body, and his face that of a stranger—oh, and this is a locked room scenario with no way a stranger could have got into the garden. Father Brown cuts through (forgive me) the impossibility in the end: the head does not belong to the body, Valentin killed one of his guests to prevent him donating a large sum of money to the Catholic Church, and then Valentin swapped the deceased's head with one from the guillotine that he oversees. Valentin then kills himself with cyanide when he realizes Father Brown has managed to work out the true identity of the dead man, and the only possible motive anyone would have had for killing him.

Valentin not only does not use reason to solve crimes, he also does not want the arbiter of reason, the Church (according to Father Brown), to have the resources to become more influential than it already is. His exit from the stories is shocking and almost out of place, much like his entrance wherein he follows the train of the illogical and tears his fingernails when forced to listen to the priest expound on the virtues of reason and rationality. But Valentin does not fit into the world that is ruled by reason and rationality. Chesterton, in his mode of being "an apologist for Roman Catholicism several years before he became an official convert [. . .] gives to the Father Brown series the ambivalence of papal allegiance within a society which was decidedly and, at times even aggressively, Protestant in its public profession" (Paul 68). This perspective, a reasonable Catholicism, may be jarring for readers who are well-versed in the corrupt monks and nuns of the Gothic mode, but for Chesterton, who uses his work "to comment

on the absurdity of English social divisions" (Priestman 130), it was simply part and parcel of his apologist perspective.

### **Father Brown Versus The Criminal Element**

If Valentin is in some ways a character that represents reaction against the established Church and the rationality that Chesterton credits to it, then Father Brown must be a stalwart clergyman who shows us that the clergy have always been detectives of a sort. To illustrate this, I will look at two primary examples of him acting in the capacity that is both entirely ministerial and entirely detective.

The first and clearest moment where Father Brown shows why clergymen have always been repositories for the secret knowledge that lets him solve mysterious crimes with very little information happens as he is talking to Flambeau in "The Blue Cross." Flambeau is startled to learn that Father Brown has a vast working knowledge of many of his swindler's tricks, and even knows a few that Flambeau has never before heard of. Flambeau is nearly crowing, exultant that he has managed to lift a valuable silver and sapphire cross off Father Brown without his realizing it using "a very old dodge" of changing the package for a decoy ("The Blue Cross"), when Brown cuts him off to tell him he had heard of that maneuver before. Flambeau asks where he had heard of it and Father Brown offers this explanation:

"Well, I mustn't tell you his name, of course," said the little man simply.

"He was a penitent, you know. He had lived prosperously for about twenty years entirely on duplicate brown paper parcels. And so, you see, when I began to suspect you, I thought of this poor chap's way of doing it at once."

"Began to suspect me?" repeated the outlaw with increased intensity. "Did you really have the gumption to suspect me just because I brought you up to this bare part of the heath?"

"No, no," said Brown with an air of apology. "You see, I suspected you when we first met. It's that little bulge up the sleeve where you people have the spiked bracelet."

"How in Tartarus," cried Flambeau, "did you ever hear of the spiked bracelet?"

"Oh, one's little flock, you know!" said Father Brown, arching his eyebrows rather blankly. "When I was a curate in Hartlepool, there were three of them with spiked bracelets. So, as I suspected you from the first, don't you see, I made sure that the cross should go safe, anyhow. I'm afraid I watched you, you know. So at last I saw you change the parcels. Then, don't you see, I changed them back again. And then I left the right one behind." ("The Blue Cross")

Brown cannot reveal the names of the parishioners who taught him about bait-and-switch and spiked bracelets, but as a curate, as a trusted confidential repository of the burdens of men's souls, he has had ready access to the confessions of criminals and law-abiding members of society alike. And, though he cannot reveal their identities, he has been able to take the information gotten thereby and collate it into a useful frame of reference for interactions with everyone else he ever meets. As a clergyman, he is a sort of encyclopedia on the human condition, including the criminal element, which makes him an ideal candidate for a detective who must decipher what people are likely to do in given situations and under given

circumstances. Here, he sees a man with a spiked bracelet, and knows that that is most common among thieves of his acquaintance, and so he knows to watch for the parcel-swap and is ready to counter it when it happens. But there is more here.

Not only has Father Brown watched for the decoy parcel, he also used a dodge he learned from a parishioner in order to have the cross sent on ahead after he made the double-back switch:

Then he added rather sadly: "I learnt that, too, from a poor fellow in Hartlepool.

He used to do it with handbags he stole at railway stations, but he's in a monastery now. Oh, one gets to know, you know," he added, rubbing his head again with the same sort of desperate apology. "We can't help being priests. People come and tell us these things."

As discussed earlier, the distinction between profession and vocation, particularly as regards the work of the clergy, as a line that had been under contention in the nineteenth century. Here Father Brown shows that even at the beginning of the twentieth century, there is still a semantic, if nothing else, issue at play. He says that he "can't help" being a priest, which suggests a vocation, or calling, that could not be ignored even if it meant the detriment of the person—here putting Brown in the path of criminals and murderers. However, Chesterton nuances the suggestion with the idea that "People come and tell us" things that they perhaps would not wish to know. So not only are they clergy because of a (Divine) calling that must be obeyed, but they are also repositories of information not because they seek it out, but because their clerical situation causes people to bring it to them.

Although he will have heard the confessions from many people, it is the secrets of people who willfully break the law that is of interest here. The clergy are typically considered paragons

of morality and uprightness, being held to the standards (as we have seen) not only of their peers and parishioners but also the Divine. When Brown asks, "Has it never struck you that a man who does next to nothing but hear men's real sins is not likely to be wholly unaware of human evil?" ("The Blue Cross"), he brings up an important point. Although people are dismissive of priests as having not had the kind of worldly experience that would make them good detectives, and thus Valentin tearing his fingernails, actually they have much more experience than perhaps any other professional class. (Arguably, the police have more contact hours with criminals, but here I am thinking of the fact that criminals are free to talk to priests about their activities with no fear of repercussions.)

The availability of clergy both to and for criminals becomes an important point in the last story in which Flambeau appears as a criminal, "The Flying Stars." In "The Flying Stars" Flambeau steals a priceless necklace, for which the story is named, and very nearly frames another man for it, but Brown figures it out and talks to Flambeau as he makes his escape, providing the counsel that eventually causes him to turn from professional thief to private investigator. Toward the end of the story, Father Brown confronts Flambeau. His speech to Flambeau is somewhat lengthy, but an abridged version might look like this:

"I want you to give [the diamonds] back, Flambeau, and I want you to give up this life. There is still youth and honour and humour in you; don't fancy they will last in that trade. Men may keep a sort of level of good, but no man has ever been able to keep on one level of evil. [. . .] Many a man I've known started like you to be an honest outlaw, a merry robber of the rich, and ended stamped into slime. [. . .] Your downward steps have begun. You used to boast of doing nothing mean, but

you are doing something mean tonight. You are leaving suspicion on an honest boy with a good deal against him already; you are separating him from the woman he loves and who loves him. But you will do meaner things than that before you die." ("The Flying Stars")

This speech combines the two elements, reason and morality, that make Father Brown such an excellent detective. To appeal to his reason, Brown notes how this is the first of Flambeau's crimes that has involved both hurting someone (he chloroforms a policeman and hits him over the head) and leaving the blame on another person. Brown shows how he cannot "keep on one level of evil" and has broken his original code to never do anything "mean." And by appealing to his sense that he has previously been an honorable man, who can be one again, Brown encourages Flambeau to take the moral high ground by giving up his life of crime. "The Flying Stars" is a frame story told by Flambeau from the other side of his storied career as a private investigator. He calls the theft of the necklace his "most beautiful crime" and says that his "imitation of Dickens's style was dexterous and literary" ("The Flying Stars"). But he says he "repented the same evening." This scene illustrates what Frank N. Magill points out, that "the Father Brown stories and other detective works by Chesterton are never simply clever stories built around a puzzle; they are moral tales with a deep religious meaning" (329).

Between Father Brown's speech and Flambeau's description of his crime, it is clear that the stakes of the theft are legal as well as moral. Or, to put it another way, "Chesterton compares the Church to a kind of divine detective, whose purpose is to bring man to the point where he can acknowledge his crime (that is, his sin), and then to pardon him" (Magill 329). It is for this reason that the clergyman makes such a good detective at the end of the nineteenth century.



## Conclusion

At a time before the information superhighway allows everyone to know most anyone's business all the time, clergy were the original collectors of personal information. They recorded births, marriages, and deaths. They were present for major milestones, illnesses, and celebrations. They often, in the nineteenth century, were a young person's first educator, and an old person's last human contact. The literally clerical nature of the clergy's knowledge meant that they knew people's life stories in toto. At the end of the century, as agnosticism and skepticism have grown from being simple rejection of faith to being understood as a complex, individual way of approaching inherited beliefs, the clerical figure becomes more interesting as the site of investigating these developments. The clerical detective offered a way to consider contemporary problems (crime and punishment and how the Church might still be relevant) but still to maintain the presence of the Church in popular media.

I have suggested that the clergy have always been tied up in the same kind of work that detectives have been. I will take that just one half a step further here to say that clerical novels are also all mystery stories of some sort, and that for that reason their clergy protagonists act the part of investigator. Margaret Oliphant considers the importance of education and vocation in *The Rector* and *The Perpetual Curate*, for instance. But we might just as easily frame the crisis of *The Perpetual Curate* as the need to solve the mystery of what happened to Rosa, who goes missing for the middle third of the story. It falls to Mr. Wentworth to discover her location and activities, not only to clear his own name, but also to be a good detective cleric—his concern, that is, is both for the girl's well-being and to use his unique abundance of personal information about his townspeople to solve the mystery that has turned the neighborhood upside down.

This is an exercise, I suggest, we could repeat with any of the realist novels I have mentioned or discussed in this dissertation. There is no mystery for Mr. Collins; he is a clown and he behaves clownishly. However, in "The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton," we readers, like Barton himself, are led to believe that the Countess has influence until we finally learn that she does not. The net result is, while clergy have always filled clerical/scribal functions and in the nineteenth century began to take on welfare and community care roles, while they have come from various classes at different moments in history and have been variously equipped (both financially and preparatorily), the clergy have generally been figures who stand out in society as being innocuous and moral enough for people to share their secrets with. Such intimate knowledge, in a given historical moment, make clergy the most apt scholars of the human condition, which we have seen is heavily informed by the organizing forces of contemporary institutions. The intimate knowledge that they have of their various parishioners (and other people with whom they come into contact), and the clergy's growing specialization across the century, make the figure of the clergyman such an important locus in the realist novel. This figure gave authors a way to explore social and legal reforms, and how such institutional reforms directly impacted individuals. And like Father Brown, novel clergy are easily metamorphosed into novel clerical detectives, simply by placing them into mysterious situations, and allowing their talent for seeing the full puzzle of a person to take over.

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### Education

**Ph.D.** English Literature, University of Mississippi, May 2019. Dissertation: *Vicar Victoria: Writing the Church of England in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*

**M.A.** English Literature, Georgia Southern University, May 2012. Thesis: "Portraits of Progress: The Rise of Realism in Jane Austen's Clergy"

**B.A.** English Literature, Georgia Southern University, May 2010, Minor: Spanish

### Experience

University of Mississippi Department of Writing and Rhetoric (2017-2019)

Graduate Writing Center Consultant and School of Education Graduate Assistant.

Duties included: Consulting one-on-one and in small groups with graduate students from across various departments on their writing, giving feedback on both higher- and lower-order elements of writing. Built a [Google website](#) to house various resources to assist students with academic writing. As School of Education Graduate Assistant, I was the dedicated consultant for all graduate students in the School of Education, with a special emphasis on assisting them through their Dissertations in Practice.

University of Mississippi Department of English (2012-2017)

Teaching Assistant: Survey of British Literature I and II, Survey of American Literature I and II, Survey of World Literature I and II.

Instructor of Record: Survey of World Literature II, Freshman Composition I and II.

Duties included: Grading student work, maintaining course websites, maintaining grade books and spreadsheets, generating assignments and exams, preparing and delivering lectures, composing syllabi and course schedules, and leading discussion sections for undergraduate students.

Georgia Southern University Department of Literature and Philosophy (2010-2012)

Teaching Apprentice: Survey of World Literature I and II.

Instructor of Record: Survey of World Literature II.

Duties included: Grading student work, maintaining course websites, maintaining grade books and spreadsheets, generating assignments and exams, preparing and delivering lectures, and composing syllabi and course schedules.

### **Awards**

Dickens Universe Cruise Director, 2018; Senior Cruise Director, 2019.

UM English Department representative at Dickens Universe, 2017.

Graduate Dissertation Fellowship, University of Mississippi, Graduate School. Spring 2017.

Summer Graduate Research Assistantship, University of Mississippi, Graduate School, Summer 2015 and 2016.

Graduate Assistantship, University of Mississippi, Department of Writing and Rhetoric. August 2018 – May 2019.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, University of Mississippi, Department of English. August 2012 – May 2018.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Georgia Southern University, Department of Literature and Philosophy. August 2010-May 2012 (completion of degree).

Travel Funding Grant, Georgia Southern University, Jack N. Averitt College of Graduate Studies. February 2011.

### **Professional Activity**

English Graduate Student Body Treasurer, University of Mississippi, Department of English. Fall 2014-Spring 2015.

Primary Coordinator, "Ireland: Layers and Laminates." American Conference for Irish Studies (ACIS), February 2011, Southern Regional Conference.

Research Assistant, Center for Irish Studies, Georgia Southern University. Fall 2010-Spring 2011.

"Agency and the Colonial Subject in Charles Chesnutt." British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference, Savannah, GA, February 25-26, 2011.

Chair. "Between the Colonizer and the Colonized." British Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies Conference, Savannah, GA, February 17-18, 2012.