

DAUGHTERS OF THE CHURCH: WOMEN'S PLACE AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE
IN VICTORIAN WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS NOVELS

by

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To my family

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by

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Using the lens of lived religion, I examine the religious novels of three Victorian women in order to contextualize their representations of religious practices and controversies. I extend prior work on Elizabeth Missing Sewell, Charlotte Yonge, and Margaret Oliphant. Close readings of a selection of their novels demonstrate the authors' engagement with one of the period's major religious controversies: the Oxford Movement. The dissertation counters previous suggestions that these women made anti-feminist statements and redundant claims about religion. These three authors confront the role of a daughter in the Church of England; they do not simply act as a mouthpiece of the male church hierarchy. Elizabeth Missing Sewell's early major novels, *Amy Herbert* (1844), *Gertrude* (1845), and *Margaret Percival* (1847), emphasize the spiritual development of young women. Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1854), *The Daisy Chain* (1856), and *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865) suggest she acted independently of church authority and felt conflicted about the position of women. Margaret Oliphant's *Chronicles of Carlingford* (1861-1876) address religious controversies. Understanding how religious women represented religious practices in their fiction helps to explain religion in works

by canonical authors like Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. This dissertation concludes these three religious novelists make an important contribution to the history of women's writing by presenting a religiously informed view of women's power and autonomy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In an early letter that encourages the recipient to focus on reading non-fiction, George Eliot discusses a then-popular but now-neglected genre of Victorian literature, religious novels, which were written by men and women and popular enough to earn even Eliot's scorn:

Religious novels are more hateful to me than merely worldly ones: they are a sort of centaur or mermaid, and like other monsters that we do not know how to class, should be destroyed for the public good as soon as born. The weapons of the Christian warfare were never sharpened at the forge of romance. Domestic fictions, as they come more within the range of imitation, seem more dangerous.

(1839, 27)

Her label of “monsters” has been retained by some scholars to describe all of women’s religious novels of the Victorian period, despite the fact Eliot wrote this prior to the publication of some of the most well-known religious novels of the Victorian period.¹ Later, in her 1856 essay “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists,” Eliot classifies the silly novels into the following categories: “the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic” (179). Eliot explains that while calling religious novels silly “may seem impertinent” since they address significant subjects, she uses the epithet

¹ In her introduction to *Victorian religion*, Hilary Fraser (2002) points out Eliot calls them “hateful books” and “monsters” but shifts to point out the novels should not be denounced (102). In *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*, Avrom Fleishman points out her severity “on fiction, both secular and religious” (15), but he focuses on the secular themes of the dismissal. In her book on religious novels, Margaret Maison suggests Eliot represents “the majority of serious-minded people of her day” (2). See also Rainof (63).

“advisedly” since the novels contain a “mediocre amount of instruction” and prevent “more solid education” (195). “Dangerous” “monsters” have become “silly” and “frivolous.”

Some literary critics use Eliot’s concern about the texts as part of a wider dismissal of women’s religious novels. Her label of “monsters” is invoked on occasion, and her classification of these novels as “silly” has helped in part to relegate these works to outsider status. This dismissal extends to Eliot’s non-religious novels. Even Eliot’s most religiously themed works like *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda* are not considered as canonical as her other works, which can be read as addressing more popular topics in Victorian studies. Scholars of religion have seen religious women’s novels as derivative of the big ideas of important men and therefore insignificant.² Feminist scholars have seen these novels, specifically the “domestic fictions,” as part of an “anti-feminist” experience.³ Traditional literary scholars have dismissed them due to their lack of high literary pretensions or the didactic intent of the authors.⁴

² In *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, James C. Livingston mentions some male novelists, but in his focus on “important” critical controversies, he does not address women or their publications. *Religion in Victorian Society* by Richard Helmstadter and Paul Phillips does not include Victorian women. Timothy Larsen’s *Crisis of Doubt* focuses on men. Rosman notes the “religious work undertaken by Victorian women related to their accepted domestic and maternal roles” (227); she does not include religious novelists. J. Russell Perkin sees an authority in religious novels but finds them to be derivative of theologians. In contrast, in *Victorian Religion: Faith and Life in Britain*, Julie Melnyk sees religious novels as “an important forum for theological debate” and “particularly important for women” (110). Finally, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall see the Oxford Movement as “a search for a male-bonded culture” that placed “women firmly in separate sisterhoods as men recreated the religious world of ritual without female interference” (451). Davidoff and Hall reference women’s religious writing but focus on self-published or personal documents; they do not reference religious best sellers.

³ Tamara Wagner notes this preference for feminist or subversive texts in the opening of *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel* (6) and suggests some critics have shifted to consider popular works (10). *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel* presents Oliphant and Yonge as antifeminist. In *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760-1900*, Altholz focuses on publications by or for men. Gilbert and Gubar dismiss women’s religious novels as conservative.

⁴ In their book *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature*, Mark Knight and Emma Mason discuss Keble and his poetry, but not female religious novelists. They mention Oliphant as a member of a church and a critic of Dissent, but they do not discuss her fiction. They ignore Yonge altogether. The neglect of religion extends beyond a neglect of women; for example, *The Cambridge Companion to*

However, these religious novels or “domestic fictions” do not reflect a true “anti-feminist” experience but instead an experience informed by religious beliefs and best understood through the lens of lived religion, which privileges practice over theology. These women probably did not set out to write great works of art or major theological treatises. They did provide a popular alternative reading experience that intended to uplift their readers and focus them on a particular religious trajectory. These novels provide a representation of women’s religious beliefs and spiritual practices, which have both been neglected by scholars or considered only secondarily to major theological trends or religious controversies. Religious novelists wrote for audiences within and beyond each of the major Victorian religious movements, traditionally defined as Anglicanism, Evangelicalism, Catholicism, and doubt or lack of faith. This dissertation focuses on three authors affiliated with the Church of England: Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Missing Sewell, and Margaret Oliphant. The three wrote after the start of the Oxford Movement during the middle and second half of the Victorian period. I compare them to a selection of novels by Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot, all of whom wrote at the same time and included religious themes without writing purposefully religious novels. The comparison counters some previous views of female religious novelists and understandings of the place of religious women in Victorian society. The analysis suggests ways in which women operated in the public religious sphere as they expressed their religious beliefs, represented religious practices and controversies, and sought to influence others. The authors do not make anti-feminist or religiously redundant claims. They instead present complex views of

Victorian Culture (ed. Gorman, 2010) includes Keble on its timeline but does not discuss religion in any detail anywhere in the book.

women's duty and religious faith and doubt. Religious novels provide an important context for and influence on Victorian women's fiction more broadly, and complicate previous views of religious women's understandings of female power and autonomy.

This dissertation uses a number of key terms: spiritual, religious, religion, lived religion, church, and religious writing. While some scholars resist defining them, I find establishing their boundaries to be a useful part of distinguishing between personal preferences and prescribed practices. "Spiritual" will typically be used to refer to personal religious practices that are can be but are often less related to cultural norms and values. "Religious values" can be prescribed practices by an established church, the Church of England for all of the authors considered in this project. However, "religious practices" can also be adopted by and promoted by individuals. A "church" then refers to any established group of multiple people who have a sustained membership and at least occasional meetings. Of course, what a church hierarchy prescribes as a practice and what people find spiritually important often but not always converge. For example, the church hierarchy in some instances pushed back against pew ownership and for open seating. This would fall under "religious practices." "Spiritual practices" could include anything from a personal belief in ghosts to an emphasis on prayer in the mornings or avoiding train travel on a Sunday. Whether or not to participate in train travel is not simply about observing a day of rest but also reflects cultural values and class abilities. As may be evident from the example of belief in ghosts, in my broad definition, "religion" encompasses a system of beliefs in a supernatural or higher power beyond oneself.

The two terms most important for this project are “lived religion” and “religious writing.” I use the term “lived religion” to refer to religious and spiritual practices and individual participation in religious or church activities. “Religious writing” refers to writing that has some level of intent by the author to promote spiritual or religious beliefs or practices, or church activities or missions, as well as a sense that readers received the book as within the religious tradition. To be “religious writing,” that intent must be one of the core functions of the author’s decision to write and to publish. George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* could be read as a religious novel but is not considered one because of its multiple purposes, publication at a non-religious press, and reception by readers as a mainstream novel. As W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley warn against in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, I am not using the intent as a means of judging the success of the works. I am doing quite the opposite. I suggest that some critics have unfairly judged these authors based on intent to teach a moral or to proselytize. Most religious writing does serve a religious function in promoting beliefs that reflect the established church’s positions as well as the author’s personal views. However, I am not simply “consulting the oracle,” as Wimsatt and Beardsley put it (17); instead, I am using the term “religious writing” to find representations of practices and beliefs. An author of a religious novel may state in her correspondence she intends to promote the values of the Oxford Movement but actually includes a critique of them. The critique, frequently set forth through representations of religious practices, points to the importance of these novels. Most “religious writing” will include religion or spirituality as a primary theme, but the authors considered in this project include many other themes, including politics, colonialism, and inheritance, all typical of mainstream fiction at the time. In contrast to scholarly work interested in developing the

theology of these women, I refer rarely to sacred religious texts such as the Bible or the Book of Common Prayer. This dissertation does not focus on “religious writing” printed by religious presses for organized religious functions like the Tracts for the Times or on autobiographies, which I do use at times to explain how these women viewed their own writing. Instead, the dissertation focuses on religious fiction, specifically novels but also a few short stories, which were read by a popular audience.

“Lived religion” is a term popularized in ethnographical approaches to religious studies. The focus on “lived religion” privileges individual religious practice. Theological issues, religious controversy, and denominational matters take a secondary role to the examination of how people practiced religion. The practices become complicated by individual differences. In short, as scholars have shown, each person practices religion differently. In the introduction to *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, David Hall explains that the concept comes from a French sociological tradition, *la religion vécue*, but has been used by American scholars in their cultural and ethnographical approaches (vii). Robert Orsi popularized the ethnographical approach in *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem*. By looking at a specific religious event and using a combination of interviews, photographs, and documents left by participants, he reconstructs the spiritual practices of a small set of people at a particular time. He emphasizes the complexity of individual practices. Building upon his work, Meredith McGuire defines “lived religion” as “how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people (rather than official spokespersons) in the context of their everyday lives” (12). Using a broad definition of “religion,” she focuses on

the embodied practices and their complexity. To a degree, then, “lived religion” seeks to redefine religion itself as it seeks out the “full reality” of one’s “religious world,” as McGuire puts it (13).

However, using lived religion to approach literature can become more complicated than an ethnographic approach to lived religion. Some of the major religious female novelists did have connections to the official spokespersons. Sewell’s relationship with her brother, William,⁵ and Yonge’s relationship with the Keble⁶ family are frequently referenced in discussions of them. However, the scholarly interest in these women’s relationships and the possible influence of important men on women’s writing de-emphasizes these women’s individual views and downplays the importance of their writings. Further, in contrast to Orsi’s attention to interviews and archival documents, examining women’s fiction distances the researcher even further from the actual religious practices. Scholars of literature must consider the differences between an individual’s statements about practices—particularly when given years or decades after the fact—and actual practices. The examination of fictional writings for evidence of religious practices must take into account the distancing effect in addition to the authors’ motivations for writing and their use of the practices within the novels. For example, a character may treasure her Bible above all books in the novel, but that could be aspirational behavior in the author’s view rather than an actual and expected practice. Alternatively, a character’s misuse of the Bible

⁵ Sarah Cutts Frierich’s dissertation, now published on Victorian Web, remains a valuable source of information on Sewell. Frierich’s work emphasizes Sewell’s brother as crafter of ideas: “Two of the members of her family had a marked influence on her professional life; her mother’s policies strongly influenced her own educational practices, and her brother William’s opinions determined the subject matter and tone of much of her writing.” (“The Sewell Family”). My chapter on Sewell disputes his influence.

⁶ John Keble was one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement. He remained part of the Church of England and also wrote poetry, including the popular, devotional, and poetic work *The Christian Year* (1827).

to justify an action and the author's impulse to correct mistaken beliefs may closely reflect a religious practice. Careful attention to textual details and contextualization within the religious wider movements demonstrates how religious controversy and denominational matters inform practice and individual beliefs.

This attention and contextualization matters because there are few ways to reconstruct how women lived out religion during the Victorian period. Their novels help to demonstrate what they believed, what they practiced, and what they valued. Other ways to find these values include examining periodicals, diaries, letters, and autobiographies, among other evidence of religious and spiritual practices. Using novels moves the research from a form of microhistory to a wider analysis of the transmission of cultural and religious values. The fictional depictions have the potential to reveal, or at least start to reveal, women's views and experiences of religion. My approach differs from traditional uses of "lived religion," but I continue the tradition that Hall notes of emphasizing "lived religion" as a means of breaking with the use of "high and low" religion or "opposition" to avoid displacing "the institutional or normative perspectives on practice" (ix). Given the passage of time and lack of archival materials, novels offer one way to find what Hall calls "culture in action." Close reading can bring scholars closer to women's involvement in and views of the Oxford Movement.

While debates may exist about the types and degrees of change within the religious environment of Victorian England, few would question that change did occur. The broadening of the scope and influence of the role of religious writing and the expansion of women's participation in organized religion are two of those many changes. During the Victorian period of roughly 1830-1900, the English people saw everything from the emancipation of Catholics to the

increased role of science. Most scholars treat the major Victorian religious groups as divided into the Church of England, the Catholic Church, or the Free Churches / Nonconformist. Scholars frequently have a fourth group of “doubters” in books that address religion and literature.⁷ The Church of England divides itself into Low Church, Muscular or Broad Church, or High Church. The Broad Church movement, which is addressed by several of the authors in this dissertation, was smaller, loosely organized, and considered liberal or part of liberalism. Julie Melnyk explains that it was “a group of liberal, educated, theologically progressive men who shared a vision of the Church of England as tolerant of Dissenting opinions and open to new ideas” (30).⁸ The Low Church was associated with evangelicalism; the High Church was associated with the Oxford Movement. For those in the Church of England, the major issues include the relationship of the Established Church to the Catholic Church, educating the people, and converting the poor religiously and economically. These concerns were political and cultural as well as religious. Politically, church issues in the first part of the nineteenth century included the issue of the church and state, which Richard Helmstadter and Paul Philips link to the Reform Act of 1832 (xv), which extended the franchise. After bills in 1778 and 1793 to grant Roman Catholics additional rights such as to carry a firearm, the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1829 emancipated Catholics, specifically men who could now sit in parliament. In *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture*, Anne Hogan suggests that popular sentiments about Roman Catholicism suggest

⁷ As an example of the emphasis on doubt, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, the chapter on “Intellectual Debate in the Victorian Novel: Religion and Science” by John Kucich notes that Sewall and Yonge among many others wrote novels. He uses half of a paragraph to do so before returning to his focus on doubt.

⁸ Melnyk points out that the Broad churchmen did not include Catholics or Unitarians.

hostility in the early parts of the Victorian era, given the “long association of Catholicism with England’s traditional enemies Spain and France” as well as the assumption that Catholicism demanded an “obedience” that was “incompatible” with Victorian ideas about the importance of freedom (93).

Within the Church of England, the High Church Oxford Movement was the primary religious controversy during the first part of the Victorian era. Many in the Church of England saw a need to reform the church in order to retain its power, to attract people, and to appeal to its current members; the Oxford Movement sought to do so through reform, including through practical means like architectural alternations to church buildings. The first generation of adherents is referred to as Tractarian or Puseyite, after Edward Bouverie Pusey. In *Tractarians and the ‘Condition of England’*, S.A. Skinner argues for a shift between the first and second generations of the Oxford Movement. In the first, John Keble, John Henry Newman, and Pusey held leadership, and novelists like William Gresley and Francis Edward Paget were major influences. Skinner argues that the first generation had particular social interests, which were communicated in the Tractarian’s national media, the *Tracts for the Times* and the *British Critic*, and which waned with the wider economic improvements made around 1840 (26). Skinner sees not only a “theological, spiritual, and ecclesiological legacy” as documented by other scholars (as in R.W. Church’s *The Oxford Movement*, 1891) but also a social and political legacy (“confessional politics and ecclesiological paternalism,” 2). These movements and their related controversies were not obscure religious arguments unknown to the general public but part of a wide debate about how the church should be understood. The Oxford Movement’s emphasis on decorations, liturgy, vestments, and apostolic succession created concerns among some people

who feared the church would become too Roman Catholic. Church leaders were lampooned in satirical cartoons, and religious novels were read widely.

Yonge and Sewell are considered part of the Oxford Movement's second generation, as they began publishing their novels in the 1840s.⁹ Several scholars have seen the movement as providing opportunities for women to participate in the church activities.¹⁰ Some scholars like John Reed have seen this in particular gendered ways. For example, in his useful book on the movement, Reed includes a chapter on gender and suggests that the movement's attention to "decorative work" like needlework gave opportunities to women, particularly those unmarried women with what he suggests would be extra time (190-193). As seen in the novels in this dissertation, the heroines rejected needlework or duties that kept them home. Further, many female characters opted to remain single or were forced to do so. Reed connects the changes in the Victorian family to the changes in the church and its membership, and he notes the increased percentages of women in churches linked to the Oxford Movement as compared to other churches. Further, Reed suggests that challenges were made to patriarchal values that may have enticed women to challenge authority (193). In other words, the male family members could not control women's thoughts or intellectual decisions such as supporting the Oxford Movement.

⁹ They were not the first women novelists to write religious novels; as one example, a Vicar's daughter, Mrs. Trollope, wrote a novel that would seem like a predecessor to Tractarian novels. Baker calls *The Vicar of Wrexhill* an "important clerical novel", but he says it "exhibited no trace of the Oxford Movement" (6). However, he states she despises Evangelicals and "attacks the doctrines of election and regeneration" (6-8). The differences that he states, which including disliking "fervor" and liking the "good things of the world" may be as much religious as cultural.

¹⁰ As an example of how religious novelists are neglected, the collection *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture* talks about the role of the Virgin Mary as Angel in the House and mentions the emphasis on mother/child relationships as ways in which women were valued by the Oxford Movement. However, the collection does not discuss Sewell, Yonge, or Oliphant in detail.

Reed also points out several other trends during the second generation. He explains that ritualistic practices sometimes divided the congregations by gender, which separated women from their families and encouraged them to think of Jesus Christ as husband and family (Reed 193-195). Reed notes the push against confession, which was in some ways considered a particular danger to women as they could be “corrupted” or “seduced” as well as reveal family secrets (196-198). Some felt confession would replace the husband as confessor with priest as confessor (Reed 200). Some women, particularly in the second generation (Reed 205), converted to Roman Catholicism in order to join a sisterhood. A literary example of this is in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, in which one of the spinster stepsisters converts and donates her inheritance to a nunnery, which she eventually leads. Finally, Reed suggests that the Oxford Movement paralleled the Victorian feminist movement in the resistance to the Evangelical movement, which heightened the emphasis on family. He proposes that the Oxford Movement is not feminist but an “alternative to feminism” and to the focus on family (208-209).

While some Anglicans converted to Catholicism, many more held strong anti-Catholic sentiments; in fact, anti-Catholic sentiment remained strong. Susan Griffin’s important book *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* focuses on the novel as a venue for “religious controversy” by those who display a “bigotry” against Catholics (2, 1). She links anti-Catholicism with fears of modernization, professionalization, and anti-domesticity (17, 18). D.G. Paz in *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* sees the wider group of Anglo-Catholic novelists during the period of the 1840s-1860s as warning about Rome while showing sympathy or promoting Catholic practices like confession (68). The novels’ warnings about Roman Catholicism includes themes and tropes such as “duplicious priests, superstitious

practices, sinister Jesuits, and the pain of damaged personalities and broken homes” (59). The concern about the damaged home stresses the role of duty to one’s family and faith. For example, Paz also sees Oliphant’s *The Perpetual Curate* (1864) as particularly interesting. He suggests readers hear some of the point of view of the wife of an Anglican clergyman who wishes to convert to Rome (of course, being married he cannot convert and remain in the clergy) (68). Conversion to Rome meant conversion to celibacy for those in the clergy and a reduction in the number of eligible bachelors for the middle class. For women, conversion and seclusion in a nunnery meant celibacy and a form of removal from participation in “polite” society. Spinster daughters would be unavailable to care for aged or married relatives. The perception of the danger of the effects of conversion extended beyond religious practices to individual lifestyles and cultural expectations. Finally, some have suggested the Oxford Movement ended or lost significance after the 1840s given the waning of its national media and the retirement or removal of its most famous leaders. However, these novelists demonstrate that the religious controversies related to the Oxford Movement continued well into the 1860s at least.

While I suggest that religion permeated the lives of these women and their readers as well as the general culture, much attention to religion during the Victorian period has focused on doubt, loss of faith, or what has been called deconversion. Scholars like Timothy Larsen have noted the emphasis on the narrative of religious decline (*Crisis of Doubt*). For example, in *The Death of Christian Britain*, Callum Brown argues for a death of the church in the 1960s (due in part to feminism), but he grants that “a large group of scholars” sees this occurring about a century earlier. Many books on Christianity in Britain or religious novels place a break with allegiance to religion in either the 1860s or 1880s, although no definite event seems to occur at

those times. In his important work on autobiographical writing, *Versions of Deconversion: Autobiography and the Loss of Faith*, John Barbour coins the phrase “deconversion,” “a loss or deprivation of religious faith” (2, a word not found in the OED yet). This deconversion includes “doubt or denial of the truth of a system of beliefs,” “moral criticism,” “emotional upheaval,” and “rejection of the community” (2), and he sees “ethical considerations as primary” (4). He expands upon his argument as he claims “every conversion is a deconversion, and every deconversion a conversion” (3). He includes a chapter on gender but analyzes recent American women since, he claims, “there are few texts by women in the tradition I have traced” (188). His narrative of deconversion can be applied to Victorian England; however, despite his selective and all-male approach, the term deconversion has become typical in descriptions of Victorian thinkers and authors. For example, Wendy Williams in her book on Eliot’s poetry applies the term to Eliot (42). However, other recent critics have noted the deficiency. Elizabeth Gray points out the privilege of “poetry of questioning and doubt” (3) and argues that has “skewed our understanding of religious devotion in the century’s creative work” (3). She sees this as even more problematic for women “for whom ambition in both literary and spiritual arenas was profoundly problematic” (3). The emphasis on deconversion seems to be shifting slightly to the recognition of the importance of faith in the lives of typical Victorians, but the treatment of Victorian writing as representing a narrative of doubt or deconversion is not new.

Eliot, as mentioned early, mostly famously lampooned religious novelists and their work. Eliot has frequently been quoted as calling religious novels “monsters.” However, most scholars do not attend to the context of her comment or the point in her career that she wrote that word. She does so in a letter to her schoolmistress, Miss Lewis, in May 1839. Eliot advises Miss Lewis

against other imitative novels, including *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Byron's *Poetical Romances*, and all of Walter Scott's work (25). Eliot instead encourages the reading of the "transactions of real specimens of human nature from which we may safely draw inferences" (26). Before reading fiction, one should exhaust "all the wonders of truth" (26). She then begins discussing religious novels. At this stage, her opinion of fiction in general is very low. The "monsters" may be lowest, but she writes at the very beginning of the use of the religious novel, which was not yet quite developed. In her next recorded letter, she also critiques the Oxford Movement. She states that she was veering "to all points of the compass" in her beliefs, but does not imply an agnosticism (27). She considered the "Oxford Tracts" a "confused and unscriptural statement of the great doctrine of justification" (28) and the teachers to resemble "the character of heretical teachers" (28). Interestingly, she states she is reading a non-fiction work by Rev. W. Gresley, one of the early Tractarian novelists. She was interested in religion, but she found the novels a waste of time. Even though her "monsters" comment was made well before the flurry of publication of religious novelists, her description has been applied to all religious novelists, without noting she also disparaged Cervantes, Defoe, Byron, and Scott at this point in her life, a time prior to her career as an author.

Academic attention to the Victorian religious novel began in the 1930s. Joseph Ellis Baker's 1932 work, *The Novel and the Oxford Movement*, still seems remarkably current. Baker calls the religious novel the Oxford Movement's "chief instrument of propaganda," "their favorite means of presenting serious psychological or social study," and "their most popular art" (ix). He suggests that understanding the "minor" authors like those of religious novels is critical for understanding the major ones. Unlike later scholars, who would downplay women's

contributions, he begins with a woman, Mrs. Trollope, who wrote *The Vicar of Wrexhill* about the dangers of Calvinism (7). Mrs. Trollope would have been writing when Eliot made her “monsters” comment.

Two other early scholarly works are still considered important in the field of religious fiction. Margaret Maison’s *The Victorian Vision: Studies in the Religious Novel* (1961) provides a useful cataloguing of religious novels. She sees the novels as “pulpit, confessional, and battlefield” (5). While some have criticized her work for its lack of in-depth analysis, as a product of its time, Maison provides useful information and sees the novels as “precious clues to the understanding of the Victorian march of mind” (7). She argues that the Oxford Movement “launched the religious novel on a large scale” and that the Victorian period is the “zenith” of the religious novel (3). She aims to provide a “glimpse” and does, including in an expansive bibliography, which includes women novelists who still have been paid little to no scholarly attention. Following her, Robert Wolff’s *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (1977) argues for the importance of understanding Victorian religious thought in order to understand “the issues of the drama and of typical persons” (22). He criticizes Maison as showing her Catholic bias (Wolff 513) as perhaps is seen in her emphasis on the Oxford Movement. Wolff discusses Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant, but does not consider the role of gender. Maison, on the other hand, includes Sewell and Yonge as “spinster novelists” (Maison 31). These two early scholars both also help to solidify the emphasis on a loss of faith. As Larsen points out (9), Wolff and others like Elizabeth Jay (*Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*, 1986) include “doubt” in the title of their works. About one-quarter of Wolff’s work focuses on “varieties” of doubt. About one-third of Maison’s work addresses “lost faith”—as a “tragedy of

unbelief” or an “escape to happiness” (ix). Maison and Wolff’s works, probably because of their readings of the sometimes lengthy and tedious religious novels, are still cited in current scholarship.

One other important scholar early in the treatment of religious fiction is Q.D. Leavis. She presented *The Novel of Religious Controversy* presented in 1980 and later published it (1989). She argues for the pervasiveness of controversy in the lives of all British people. She lists the major controversies as first Catholic versus Protestant, second Anglican versus Evangelical (21), and third the waning of evangelical influence post the emancipation of the Irish and English Catholics (37). She sees the student’s understanding of these controversies as perhaps more necessary than that of class distinctions, but she focuses on canonical novelists or moments of breaking with traditional views (as in Yonge). She sees religion as an important but only footnote-worthy topic without which novels cannot be understood. She includes religious novelists, but in her other writings, particularly a review article about Charlotte Yonge, Leavis displays a significant derision for Yonge. Leavis argues against critics who either value Yonge for her religious emphasis, take her seriously as a novelist of good literature, or see her as valuable for locating “fictions as religious myths” (235). Instead, Leavis sees Yonge as “profitable” when studied as part of “the sociological history of literature” or a “kind of religious outlook” (235). Leavis’s de-emphasizing of gender shifts scholarly tactics from what appears in the work of Wolff and Maison, and her approach influences or is typical of much of the scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s.

Many of the more recent works on religion and literature and even much church history scholarship ignore gender or downplay women’s contribution to the religious public sphere.

These female religious authors are seen as part of a family structure or influencing decisions within the home. The female authors, who did operate in the public sphere, are seen as derivative or lesser examples or poor evidence of religious movements and beliefs. The 1985 anthology *Religion in Victorian Society*, by Richard Helmstadter and Paul Phillips, aims to provide a wide view of Victorian religion and culture (xiv), but includes only one work by a woman. That work comes from after the Victorian period. Some scholars have neglected by straightforward omission women's role in religious discourse (Livingston, Altholz). In *Nineteenth Century Religion and Literature* (2006), Mark Knight and Emma Mason mention in passing that Oliphant wrote fiction (133), and do not include most of the major female religious novelists. Timothy Larsen's *Crisis of Doubt* (2006) argues scholars privilege doubt rather than religious conviction. Larsen explains that for many who discuss religion and literature, "religious movements are explained to locate the crises" (6). However, attention has begun to shift to women's religious practices and beliefs. In her dissertation, Eun Koh (2011) discusses Victorian religious novels but focuses on the marriage plot. Since then, Talia Schaffer explored domesticity in Charlotte Yonge's writings (2011). Midori Yamaguchi published a book-length study on gender and religion during the Victorian period: *Daughters of the Anglican Clergy: Religion, Gender and Identity in Victorian England* (2014).

Some scholarly works place women's popular religious writing in its own class, separate or less significant than highbrow religious writing or writing that appears less didactic. For example, in his "theological reading" of "mainly canonical novels" (4), J. Russell Perkin agrees that the novels took part in religious controversy, and that they were "authoritative" and "religious" texts (9-10). He emphasizes Thackeray, Bronte, Trollope, Eliot, and Hardy, with one

chapter on Yonge. However, Perkin argues that religious novels “do not offer a particularly profound view of their subject matter and are often in effect fictional pamphlets that argue in favor of positions discussed with greater insight and subtlety in the theologians who formulated those positions” (5). He emphasizes the mainstream views of established men; for example, he draws attention to Yonge’s relationship to Keble. He does not consider any nuances within women’s religious writing or how their works may stand on their own. Traditional church historians, too, have neglected these novels as merely repeating what “great men” said about theology; in this view, women’s writing, particularly novels, are not worthy of attention.

When traditional feminist literary scholars worked to recover the female authors of the nineteenth century, the religious novelists were treated as upholding conservative values. Writing about Yonge and other non-religious mid-nineteenth century and middle-class authors, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest their novels are “deeply conservative” and actively suppress awareness of women’s potential power (169). They grant the content of these novels “frequently retrains traces of the original duplicity so manifest in its origin”—from an author limited by gender—while confining the heroines to a gender-specific role (169). In *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel: Rereading Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*, Tamara S. Wagner points out that until the more recent reconsideration of domesticity and antifeminism, “writers primarily of domestic fiction, such as Linton, Oliphant, or Yonge, were considered the bogeywomen of nineteenth-century protofeminism—if they received any mention at all” (7). Questioning male power, male control, or male-controlled institutions like the Church of England are not the overt priorities of Oliphant and Yonge in their writing; although, I argue, these moments do exist in balance with the religious and spiritual values that these authors sought to promote. Looking for

feminist moments in women's writing does not necessitate viewing the role of religion as unimportant or derivative.

Some who have studied religion and novels have typically been less interested in women's issues and their writing as its own corpus as opposed to a subset of a male-dominated publishing industry. Female religious authors have not been treated as active subjects or participants in publication history. For example, Josef Altholz trivializes women's publications. In *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760-1900* (1989), he estimates 3,000 of the about 20,000 periodicals in the period from 1824-1900 were religious (2, 3), and he calls the list of women's magazines "rather thin" (137). Early in the book, he asks, "Just how did men speak in the name of religion?" (1), and throughout, he focuses on how these men used the periodical press for religious purposes. Altholz bases his view of the prevalence of women's publications on the work of E.M. Palmegiano, who has since updated *Perceptions of the Press in Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals: A Bibliography*. However, Palmegiano simply presents gender as one category. He selectively pulls articles from major publications and does not give any sort of quantitative analysis of the periodical publishing industry. For example, Sewell is not included in the 700-page work, and Yonge is included once. However, both women were extensively involved in periodical publishing. Even when involved in the mainstream and public religious dialogue, they have been excluded from consideration.

This dissertation exemplifies the need for a new treatment of women's religious novels. While these authors certainly may have repeated some of the values presented to them by the male authority figures in their lives, they also took active roles in the major religious controversies of the Victorian period. Their works present women's values. The evidence that

remains of their relationships to the major male leaders of the Oxford Movement suggests less influence than has been assumed. Some, like Reed, have suggested that women saw Jesus Christ as family or as a replacement for a husband, parents, or siblings. Instead, the women in the novels considered in this dissertation choose between duty and family. The duty is religious, but the authors do not conflate religious practices and religious figures. The language used as well as the characters' actions do not support this view. The characters may participate in forms of confession, but their confession is rarely to a priest or clergyman. They never replace their husbands as confessors with an outside figure, as Reed suggests. Indeed, they generally do not take a husband. Instead, they frequently confess to other women or, at times, to older men. Female communities take an important role in most of their novels. The novels do emphasize the importance of family, but they resist the importance put upon family by the evangelical movement. The characters do not face pressure to procreate and raise Christian children. Instead, they face pressure to help parents who have chosen to procreate and cannot, for whatever reason, care for their children. As mentioned earlier, Reed calls the movement an "alternative to feminism." I suggest that the concern about women's work and women's duty, and the authors' answers to what women should do when they possess genius and an understanding of their mental equality, instead suggest an early if alternate version of feminism.

The religious women authors' views of women develop from their religious views. In *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women's Poetry*, Elizabeth Gray writes that women's poetry "created its own Christian discourse, not 'dominated' by the powerful edifice of traditional religion but responding to that edifice to contribute to a revised, more inclusive language with which believers could speak of God, speak to God, and construct their own

personal relationship with God” (9). Further, she sees these Christian women as writing to Christian women and even writing “The Christian Woman into being” (9). Who was this Christian woman? This dissertation argues this woman is not lost but preserved, in part due to the efforts of novelists to entertain, edify, and educate these women. In order to focus this examination, the discussion emphasizes Anglican women during the second wave of the Oxford Movement. Finally, because of the typical emphasis on the narrative of doubt, this project emphasizes authors who wrote about religion for a religious purpose. The authors sometimes include doubt in the novels, but the novels alone do not support the narrative of a steady march to a non-Christian society.¹¹

Further, these religious authors confront the idea of the Angel in the House. Their main characters frequently express desire for positions outside of the house and outside of what is considered ideal in the Coventry Patmore poem. Patmore published his poem, “The Angel in the House” (1854-1856), after the publication of Sewell’s early novels and during the period that Yonge’s novels were very popular. The poem describes the courtship and marriage of Honoria, whom Patmore bases on his wife at the time. Gilbert and Gubar explain that Honoria is “not only a pattern Victorian lady but almost literally an angel on earth” (22). They suggest that her virtue makes her husband great. Gilbert and Gubar point out the development of “those ‘eternal feminine’ virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, politeness” (23). The ideology described by Patmore is not isolated but is echoed in publications like conduct books. In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter

¹¹ Important novelists Mrs. Humphry Ward and Eliza Linton have been seen as emphasizing doubt (Wolff 458, 192).

explains, “The middle-class ideology of the proper sphere of womanhood [...] prescribed a woman who would be a Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home” (14). However, the religious heroines frequently seem less than content with their position, and they find ways to avoid submission to men. Sometimes, male authority figures are removed from the novels through travel, death, or accident. Other times, particularly when the father has been conveniently removed, the heroines reject marriage and therefore submission to a man. The authors impress upon their readers the need to become a “Perfect Lady,” but they knock down some of the walls keeping that Angel inside the house.

Oliphant seems to critique Patmore and the concept of the Angel in the House in her book on Victorian literature. She describes Patmore as “the poet of love, but of that chastened and dignified love of marriage” (*The Victorian Age of English Literature*, 448). She describes his poetry as focusing on the “happy” and the “ideal” or “sweet perfection, loveliness and truth, scarcely ruffled by a lover’s doubts” (449). She advises readers “this is not the place to come” for “strong effects or the high lights and shadows of passion” (450). Oliphant implies a flatness and an unreality. She says his poetry is “suffused with the warmest sunshine, the light of happiness and household love” (450). Given her interest in realism, her depiction of him as idealizing household life and marital relationships acts as a slight if not an outright insult.

Even in the novels where the central female character does marry, there is little ease or comfort with the position. Yonge, more so than Sewell or Oliphant, includes romance and marriage, but her representations are mixed, especially of marriage. In Yonge’s *The Heir of Redclyffe*, death ends one couple’s marriage, and deceit sours another’s. Yonge’s *The Clever*

Woman of the Family comes the closest to idealizing the role of the woman and marriage's potential to improve a woman who errs in her religious pursuits. One of the minor characters does act as an Angel in the House, but even that character edits a magazine and writes widely-read religious materials. More often in these novels, including in *The Clever Woman* up until the final chapters, the heroines of the religious novels feel uneasy with their position as women. They might long to be a man or to have a man's position. They want to effect change in the Church of England or their communities, and they do not see supporting a man as effecting change. While some might assume religious novelists would support the ideology of the Angel in the House, the authors considered in this dissertation express a lack of ease with its restrictions on the abilities and position of women. These novels do not make typical "feminist" claims,¹² but they do often make a feminist move in removing women from patriarchal relationships or positions of inferiority.

Given assumptions about religion or readings of some religious novels, women's religious fiction was assumed by modern scholars to be anti-feminist or set apart from the narrative of an intellectual march to feminism. In their revised introduction to *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar explain that they hoped to "recover not only a major (and neglected) female literature but a whole (neglected) female history" (xii). However, their recovery work, as discussed earlier, does not include religious novelists or much discussion of religion. Increased attention to religion can be seen in the work of scholars like Elisabeth Jay. Her book-length

¹² For example, the religious novels considered in this dissertation do not discuss the right to vote or the Contagious Diseases act. However, the authors do at times take up politics such as Sewell's references to colonialism and Yonge's treatment of child lace makers.

study *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* argues for the importance of understanding evangelical religious novels in order to understand the importance of religion in people's lives as well as in canonical novels. She suggests the evangelical novels fostered a "strain of introspection" (2). The High Church novelists considered in this dissertation also emphasize introspection and provide examples of how religion played an important role in people's lives. More importantly, the novels that I consider address the role of women. To adapt the famous W.T. Stead quote¹³ about New Woman novels, the novels in this dissertation are by religious women about religious women from the standpoint of a religious woman. As he suggests occurs with the New Woman novel, the central women in these religious novels have a "soul of their own" (Stead 64).

If the novels do not go so far as suggesting the coming of the New Woman novel at the end of the Victorian period, the religious novels at least have the potential to alter previous views of women's fiction and the representation of celibacy and faith. While the religious heroines may not ride a bike, they do dirty their petticoats. The religious novelists do not mount a full rebellion against the patriarchy or advocate for suffrage, but they do address women's duty and role in the family and community. Rather than being simply didactic, the novels seek to entertain and to educate readers about religious thought and practices. The authors and their characters address doubt and conversion to Catholicism with delicacy and respect. The novels also downplay the

¹³ In "The Novel of the Modern Woman," W.T. Stead writes, "The Modern Woman novel is not merely a novel written by a woman, or a novel written about women, but it is a novel written by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman."

role of male clergy in order to emphasize the power of women, particularly young women, to think for themselves.

Chapter Two examines the early novels of Elizabeth Missing Sewell. Her first major novels, *Amy Herbert* (1844), *Gertrude* (1845), and *Margaret Percival* (1847), focus on the spiritual development of young women. The pro Oxford Movement novels by Sewell emphasize the importance of education, as has been noted by Frerich in particular, but she also confronts the concept of the Angel in the House by representing religious young women who must consider the appropriateness of traditional duties if not also reject them. *Amy Herbert* is significant due to its continued popularity during the second half of the nineteenth century, and *Margaret Percival* presents a fairly pro-Catholic view for a Church of England novel.

Chapter Three analyzes the three Charlotte Yonge novels that have been revived in the past twenty years. *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1854), *The Daisy Chain* (1856), and *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865) were all popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. *The Heir of Redclyffe* in particular is referenced in other nineteenth-century novels. While some have assumed Yonge acts as a “mouthpiece” for the male leadership of the Oxford Movement, I note how her recorded interactions with Keble do not support this view. Some scholars have ignored the religious context of her works. I read her novels as religious and conflicted about the position of women. Her novels are not anti-feminist, but *The Clever Woman* does dampen some of the possibility of being a single woman, as Yonge suggests in *The Daisy Chain*.

Chapter Four considers Oliphant’s *Chronicles of Carlingford*, a series of short stories and novels, published from 1861 to 1876. My analysis focuses on the works that emphasize the Church of England. While Oliphant did not have the same didactic focus or connections to the

Oxford Movement as Yonge or Sewell, the *Chronicles of Carlingford* must be understood as interacting with the period's religious literature, which she references explicitly. Her novels emphasize the interactions between the High Church, Low Church, and Dissenting movements, and she addresses religious controversies like conversion to Catholicism.

Finally, Chapter Five analyzes a selection of novels by Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. First, I explore the similarities between Sewell's *Amy Herbert* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. I then examine how the final volume's representation of missionary work and marriage can be understood within the context of the religious controversy of celibate marriage. Second, I analyze the representation of religion through the depiction of clergymen in Gaskell's *North and South* and *Cranford*. Third, I evaluate Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda* within the context of religious novels. I begin by examining her comments on "silly" religious women novelists and then turn to her depiction of religion. I end with an analysis of gender and religion in *Daniel Deronda*.

This dissertation contributes to the understanding of women's fiction as well as church history and religious novels. Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant wrote novels of elevated ideals, and they contributed to the understandings of the main religious controversies of the day. Their representation of lived religion helps to explain what mattered to women if not parishioners more broadly during the Oxford Movement. Clergymen wrote much of men's religious fiction as Showalter also notes. She suggests "The religious novel was the essential instrument of female participation in the male monopoly on theological debate" (Showalter 144). Julie Melnyk argues that these religious novels could "almost be thought of as the sermons Victorian women could never preach" (110). Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant all had connections to the Church of England,

but they did not act as “mouthpieces” for the male religious leaders of the day. They did not write “silly” novels but instead entered into discussions or representations of the conflict created by the position of women. Just because these women represent some religious ideals upheld by a patriarchal church system does not mean their ideals preclude the possibility of encountering, critiquing, and rejecting patriarchal control. Where religion does not offer power for the characters in the novels, they “step over” the cultural boundary and find ways to take authority, whether in their own homes or in their communities. The authors all took upon themselves a personal religious authority.

The novels of Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant directly engage religious controversy and illuminate the divisions between the High and Low Church as well as Dissenters. Understanding how they represent controversy, duty, and clergymen helps to inform readings of those representations in the works of authors like Gaskell, Bronte, and Eliot. The religious novels counter a narrative of a progression toward twentieth-century secularization by demonstrating the importance of religion in these women’s lives and the interest in and knowledge about religion on the part of their audiences.

This dissertation does not focus on audience and reception, but further work could help to demonstrate—as has been done with modern romance novels by Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*—how women used these books during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the writing of this dissertation, several women told me that their grandmothers or aunts would give them these religious novels, particularly those by Sewell, as examples of appropriate conduct. The popularity of the religious novels did not simply end with the close of the Victorian period.

Finally, the readings of the novels by Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant enhance previous understandings of women's place in the home, in the culture, and particularly in the history of religious thought and practice. Many of the main characters in the religious novels considered in this dissertation question or resist their "duty," which generally meant household concerns like childrearing, teaching, or caring for weak or ill siblings or parents. Most of the novels question a woman's place; the novels do not accept a simple subservient position for women as wives and daughters. The novels also imply a questioning of the authority of the Church of England. The female characters may not typically question male authority outright, but they do question the leadership of the church by critiquing the outcomes of its policies and suggesting changes.

CHAPTER 2

ELIZABETH MISSING SEWELL'S RELIGIOUS YOUNG WOMEN

"[...] indeed I never can understand heavy books, except at night."

"But you do not mean, my love," said Mrs Courtenay, with a start of horror, "that you ever sit up at night, reading."

"Oh yes, frequently, replied Edith; "but there is no fear, I assure you; I am extremely careful."

"It is very well to talk," exclaimed Mrs Courtenay, with a degree of energy unusual to her; "we shall be burnt, I know we shall; it is in the family. [...] you must remember old Sir Lionel Courtenay, in Henry VIII's time—he was burnt at the stake. And there was his grandson, in Queen Mary's; and your two little cousins, last year, in Kent. So Edith, I must beg you won't read any more by candle-light. You know quite enough." (*Gertrude*, Vol. I, 149-150).

The young women of Elizabeth Missing Sewell's novels address many of the "heavy" ideas of the book that Edith eventually decides too heavy to read in bed. Mrs. Courtenay's comments, which draw laughter from those in the room, invoke the fear of girls knowing too much as well as the fear of becoming apostate, being burnt at the stake for converting to Catholicism. Rather than depicting a state of religious superstition, intolerance, or the idea that girls can know "enough," Sewell emphasizes personal responsibility and reason no matter one's gender. Her earliest novels, which are religious and didactic, focus on young women who must take individual action and be held accountable for their decisions about faith and family. They have

come of religious age and must decide who will influence them and how they will act. These decisions make up the drama of her lengthy, religious-didactic novels that support an allegiance to the Church of England as a matter of personal duty. This chapter considers the young adult novels that make up three of her first four books: *Amy Herbert* (1844), *Gertrude* (1845), and *Margaret Percival* (1847).¹⁴ While her earliest works, they were popular, being reprinted in 1886, and referenced in her byline on her fictional works and sometimes even the titles of her nonfictional works. As discussed in the final chapter, *Amy Herbert* seems to have influenced *Jane Eyre*. Some readers now may find her novels rather didactic, pro-Church of England, and binary. I argue that Sewell experienced doubt, expressed ambivalence about a firm pro-Church of England position, and entered into religious controversy. Her novels reflect her concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the middle and upper middle class, and for the educational and spiritual lives of the women and young girls who read her novels as an alternative to either mainstream or more conservative and didactic religious fiction. Sewell downplays the role of male clergymen and emphasizes female influence and personal relationships. Further, Sewell counters what would be called the “Angel in the House” during the decade after the publication of her novels. While Sewell does not dismiss completely the role of Angel for some women, she does point out its potential to fail her bright, religious, and self-educated heroines.

Sewell’s family was politically as well as religiously well connected. Her father had parliamentary control of the Isle of Wight including during the passage of the 1832 Reform Act

¹⁴ The fourth novel, *Laneton Parsonage* (1846-1848), is a children’s novel rather than a novel about or for young adults. I classify *Amy Herbert* as a young adult novel given the subject matter and the central character’s age.

when the family home's windows were broken; the locals assumed Sewell had made money off of the act. However, he left the family in deep debt at his death, and Elizabeth as well as her siblings worked to repay his losses in a bank failure. Her family included twelve siblings, including Henry, the first Premier of New Zealand; William, founder of Radley College, still an elite boys boarding school; and James Edward, warden and later Vice-Chancellor of New College, Oxford. Perhaps fitting with some lines that critique colonialism in her novels,¹⁵ Sewell never mentions Henry's political or legal positions in her autobiography, and only makes passing references to New Zealand in her journals that are included with her autobiography (*Autobiography*, xi). Despite a religious upbringing and attending a girls' school, Sewell states that she experienced skepticism and "phantom doubts" into adulthood (*Autobiography*, 38); reading Joseph Butler's *Analogy* (1736, argued against deism and disbelief)—despite her brother's claim that she could not understand it—bolstered her faith (*Autobiography*, 55). She began writing after reading religious author Mary Martha Sherwood, and contrary to her brother/editor's claims that she wrote for a young family member, she wrote a portion of *Amy Herbert* and set it aside because she did not know what she wanted to do with the novel. She met or knew Keble, Newman, and Wilberforce, as well as Charlotte Yonge, who was ten years younger than her (*Autobiography*, 62-64). She first published *Stories on the Lord's Prayer* anonymously; she did not even tell her father about its publication. She continued writing *Amy*

¹⁵ For example, in *Gertrude*, Sewell suggests one wealthy character's wealth should be returned to India as part of his duty as a Christian to be charitable (Vol. I, 161-162): "[...] India, with its enormous heathen population, its fearful ignorance, and scantily endowed Church, stood before [Dacre] as the land from whence his property was derived, there could be no limit to the demand upon his resources [...] India had been the source of Mr. Dacre's wealth; and to India he desired it should return."

Herbert as her father's finances and health failed (*Autobiography*, 68). After she finished writing *Amy Herbert* and began writing *Gertrude*, she states that the Oxford Movement was "in its full strength" in the mid 1840s (*Autobiography*, 80). She writes, "Everyone seemed waking up to a sense of unfulfilled duties, and the question constantly discussed was, which had the primary claim, home, or church services, and works and charity" (*Autobiography*, 80). Her later works include fiction and nonfiction. She published religious and historical works for children and young adults in addition to writing for periodicals and tracts. She called her novel *The Experience of Life* (1852) her most popular work (*Autobiography*, 114). She assumed financial independence in the early 1850s and began taking pupils at a house she purchased in her own name (*Autobiography*, 140). Although she neither married nor had biological children, she, with her mother, assumed the care of nine nieces and nephews, some of whom were orphaned (*Autobiography*, 142). Her brother Henry told her that his children were "more your children than mine" (*Autobiography*, 206). However, her interest in the education of young people went beyond her own extended family; her journals and correspondence reflect her concern for the education of upper- and middle-class girls. In Sewell's edited autobiography, her niece in the conclusion adds that Sewell was foremost a teacher of girls and calls her novels "didactic in tone and intended to illustrate the truths of the Christian faith as practiced in English homes" (*Autobiography*, 224). In comparison, that same niece considers Yonge to be the author of the "harmless novel" that aims for entertainment (*Autobiography*, 225). Sewell continued writing until the death of her sister and lifelong companion, Ellen. As Frerich notes in her important 1970s dissertation on Sewell (now available through VictorianWeb), no extensive biography of

Sewell existed then or exists now, and no full book-length projects look at her works, which span the reign of Queen Victoria.

When the novels were published, some critics and publishers considered Sewell's earliest works to be religious texts and children's novels. After the end of *Gertrude*, a section advertising other books includes Sewell's works with "Religious and Moral Works, Etc." *Amy Herbert* and *Gertrude* are included with collections of liturgy, sermons, Greek lexicons, criticism, and the novels of clergyman Charles Benjamin Tayler (1797-1875; *Margaret; or the Pearl; Sermons; Dora Melder; and Lady Mary*). However, the novels were also considered children's works; the author of the 1850 review "Puseyite Novels," which discusses Sewell's first five novels, calls *Amy Herbert* and *Laneton Parsonage* "children's tales" ("Puseyite," 515). He states that the novels succeed in "painting the minds of children (at least of girls)" and "seldom becom[e] didactic beyond what is agreeable to childish taste (which is not averse to serious thoughts where there is a practical case under discussion that interests their feelings)" ("Puseyite," 515). The reviewer sees *Gertrude* and the *Earl's Daughter* as for older girls or young women ("Puseyite," 515). He calls *Margaret Percival* "the most theologico-didactic" and "the only distinct failure" ("Puseyite," 516) because of the novel's reliance on church authority. While the novel concludes in deference to church authority, the bulk of the novel questions the role of the church and male leadership. The failure of the novel may have been its progressiveness in granting authority to women to make their own decisions about religion. As "children's" novels, the books address significant themes important to the lives of young adults, and adults—including male clergy—read the novels for spiritual and religious guidance. For example, at the end of Sewell's autobiography, her niece includes letters from men in leadership of the church; one clergyman

thanks Sewell for inspiring him to remain true to the Church of England (Sewell, *Autobiography*, 227). Her novels reached an audience beyond spiritual young women or children.

Through the marketing of the novels, Sewell positioned herself as under church authority, specifically that of her brother. Sewell's early novels highlighted the editorship of her brother, William Sewell (1805-1874), and left off her name. An 1850 review of Sewell's novels refers to the novels as "by a lady" rather than by her name and "Edited by the Rev. W. Sewell, B.D., Preacher at Whitehall." Typically, the advertisements and title pages of the volumes of *Gertrude* emphasize the male editor of the novels rather than the female author. At the time of the publication of the novels, William Sewell was a Fellow of Exeter College at Oxford and decidedly high church. He published his sermons, including those he preached at the Chapel Royal, and fiction, most importantly the novel *Hawkstone: A Tale of and for England in 184-* (1845). Like many other High Churchmen, William left the Tractarian Movement in 1841 after the publication of Tract 90 by Newman (Griffin 20). Susan Griffin, in her important work on anti-Catholicism, sees William Sewell as ultimately putting forth a male-focused plan: all-male colleges for religious instruction, and obedience to male church authorities (63-64). His editorship could have been quite limited, and he states as much in the preface he writes for *Amy Herbert*. He explains: "The following little tale was written by a lady for the use of a young member of her own family" (Sewell, *Amy Herbert*, 5). The language minimizes the scope of the novel as "little" and suggests that his sister did not intend to enter into the public sphere but wrote for "young" members of her family. He qualifies that he has only recommended the publication of the book and made "a few verbal corrections," but expands that he has also "undertaken to revise the publication" given that books for the young should "be superintended

by some clergyman, who may be responsible for their principles” (Sewell, *Amy Herbert*, 6). However, he contradicts his statements about the novel as a “little” work for family, given that he boasts the novel is “no valueless addition to a class of literature now much needed” (Sewell, *Amy Herbert*, 5). He sees *Amy Herbert* as an important literary endeavor that influences the principles of young people. Given his position in the Church of England, the use of his name as a function of marketing the book could have boosted sales in comparison to an unknown author or a female author not under male supervision.

The use of a male editor may have been needed for the early novels to give the works a religious significance or propriety, or to market the books as religious texts as opposed to novels of questionable origin. For example, *Gertrude* includes mention of novel reading as something high-minded people would not do (Vol. I, 178). Sewell’s works needed some justification for some of her readers. Later works by Sewell often use the byline “By the Author of *Amy Herbert*” rather than Elizabeth Sewell, even after the editorship of her brother has been dropped. For example, *Thoughts for the Age* (1870) does not include her name but instead includes “By the Author of *Amy Herbert; Passing Thoughts on Religion; Preparation for Holy Communion*” as her byline; the work offers explicit theological ruminations with no mention of or deference to her brother who was still living.¹⁶ However, Sewell’s novels present a different perspective than that of her brother despite his supposed editorial oversight. Although her work appears under the editorship of Sewell’s brother after he left the Oxford Movement, she includes aspects of the

¹⁶ Some libraries still defer to her brother; a search of WorldCat entries for *Amy Herbert* found some that listed William Sewell as an author alongside Elizabeth Missing Sewell. For example, the Harry Ransom Research Center at the University of Texas lists William Sewell as an “added author.”

Oxford Movement like church building and an emphasis on personal works, and she warns against behaviors like joining a convent or brotherhood, while noting they could be ideal for some. In addition to engaging elements of the movement, her novels present a more balanced and nuanced view of Catholicism with less suspicion than her brother's writings and little emphasis on all-male religious instruction. She addresses doubt and disbelief softly and with compassion, and she sidesteps some stereotyped views. For example, the Jesuit priest in *Margaret Percival* is one of the book's most likable and social characters. In contrast, Griffin explains that William Sewell's novel *Hawkstone* includes "a crude, passionate, violent cleric with bloody hands" that threatens "modern Christian politics" and a Whipping Room (66, 77). Future archival research or further analysis of William's publications and writing could answer the question of his influence, but even a basic examination of the siblings' works shows significant differences that emphasize Elizabeth as an original thinker as opposed to a "parrot" of what the "great religious man" in her life believed. For example, Wolff's work, discussed in the first chapter, calls him an "overpowering presence" who "underlined the importance of submission" (140). However, while the title pages of her novels published during the 1840s defer to male authority, Sewell's characters and plotlines do not default to an overwhelming submission to authority.

In part because of their didactic purpose, Sewell's books lack some of the typical excitement of secular and even some religious novels. For example, in her early novels, no great romances take place. No one attends fabulous balls; the dancing and small parties disappoint the central characters. Little attention is given to dress, and visiting the poor generally takes the place of visiting the wealthy. Instead of considering whom to marry, the central characters

engage in deep consideration of duty and faith. *Amy Herbert* shifts back and forth from didactic and conversational chapters to events that further the plot. Large sections of *Margaret Percival* focus on her thoughts or conversations about religion. What “happens” is figuring out how one should live as a young lady and adult. Siblings or neighbors may participate in more typical plotlines, but the heroine of a Sewell novel does not seem to dance, to dress up, to dine, or to long for a man or marriage. Indeed, her closest relationships and the relationships that create the most conflict are with women. The books work more on the reader’s reasoning than on her emotions, particularly in *Margaret Percival*. However, Frerichs points out that Sewell differed from other religious novelists of the period. Sherwood, who was considered Low Church, had the children in the novels quoting long passages of scripture or quoting texts (Frerichs, and *Autobiography*, 55). Sewell’s novels offered a new form of entertainment and more realistic characters in comparison to other religious novels for people uninterested in reading very didactic religious fiction or nonfiction works like *Tracts for the Times*.

Sewell’s first novel, *Amy Herbert*, follows three months of 12-year-old Amy Herbert’s life. She lives with her mother; her father, Colonel Herbert, has gone to India and not made contact for an extended period. They live in a “cottage” with several servants nearby the mother’s childhood home, Emmerton Hall, which Sewell based on Northcourt Manor on the Isle of Wight (*Autobiography* 75). After an extended absence, Mrs. Herbert’s brother, Charles Harrington, has written that he and his family will return to Emmerton due to the death of his eldest son, Edward. Mrs. Herbert worries that Amy will be swayed by her cousins’ companionship since they lack a religious background and seem superficial and materialistic, or by envy of her cousins’ circumstances and class position. Her cousins include two girls her age,

Dora, 14, and Margaret, 13, and a young girl, Rose, 3. While they first seem distant to Amy, she earns their respect and learns to love their beleaguered governess, Emily Morton, the orphaned daughter of a clergyman. Through some minor misadventures, Amy angers her aunt and realizes her class position as beneath her cousins and Lucy Cunningham, who lives at nearby Rochford Park, one of the nicest properties in their area. Amy and her cousins visit Rochford Park where Amy meets George Cunningham, a young man with a speech impediment. The Cunninghams and other guests later come to stay at Emmerton for Christmas, and Lucy divides the girls and encourages activities inappropriate for their mourning state. Lucy Cunningham's ignorance and poor education is often shown. After a visit from a conjurer,¹⁷ Amy's father returns just as her mother has become increasingly ill. Soon after, Emily Morton and Rose visit an old family servant, and Emily asks Lucy and Margaret to watch Rose. Rose climbs a gate and falls down a hill into an icy stream. Once Rose is pulled from the stream and returned to Emmerton, Lucy and Margaret blame Emily Morton, who is asked to leave immediately. However, Amy discovers part of the truth and asks George Cunningham to press his sister for the full story. The truth comes out in time for Emily Morton to be with Rose as she dies. Eventually, Emily decides to live with the Herberts as Amy's governess, and Dora and Margaret long for Emily's quiet life as they prepare to go to London. A postscript states the Harringtons come back to Emmerton and hold daily worship services, and everyone is generally happy.

The chapters alternate between activities that further the plot and religious lessons given by Mrs. Herbert, Emily Morton, and Mr. Herbert. While Mr. Herbert has a few, short lessons

¹⁷ Sewell presents the conjurer without religious comment on the practice. See chapter five for a discussion of the conjurer scene in *Jane Eyre* (1847, three years after the publication of *Amy Herbert*).

including on one's duty, and Emily Morton explains some character traits, the mother takes the primary role for religious education in the family structure. The elderly rector plays a minimal role in the novel; Amy visits him and his wife but does not discuss religion or seek his advice. Mrs. Herbert discusses God's will, envy, compassion, the sending of afflictions including wealth, riches, controlling one's inclinations, hosting guests, God's will about affections, being nearer to God in times of grief, and witnessing to others. Mrs. Herbert plays an active role in the education of Amy; the "education" includes accomplishments like singing and drawing, but extends to reading and religious knowledge that focuses on behavior within one's family and social circle. Mrs. Herbert worries through much of the book about the influence of the Harrington girls upon Amy. The novel never makes outright claims about the role of motherhood but does contrast three bad mothers with the ideal mother as religious instructor.

As the representative bad mother, Mrs. Harrington has not focused on religious education; for example, her daughters do not understand the role of baptism and generally have defects of character, including acting older than one's age, being vain, and treating the governess Emily Morton cruelly. They lie, influence Amy to have misadventures like ringing the church bell, and look down upon other people for having less money or social status. After explaining that Mr. Harrington was indolent and allowed Mrs. Harrington to have her own way perhaps too often, Sewell's narrator explains:

[...] Mrs. Harrington had good judgment, superior sense in all worldly affairs, and a never-failing activity. Her establishment was the best ordered, her dinners were the best dressed, her farm and dairy were the best supplied of any in the country—all was in a style of elegance, without any pretension or extravagance; but when

she attempted to apply her sense and her activity to the management of her children, she failed essentially, for the one thing was wanting—she had no real principle of religion. (34)

For example, she taught her children the catechism but did not explain its meaning. She has them pray in the morning and evening, but she does not explain the solemnness of the duty. They read a chapter of the Bible on Sunday mornings but do so hastily. She emphasizes the show of faith with empty duty. Sewell says she could be a capable educator given her children's accomplishments; for example, her children are well read, but only so they might participate in society. Finally, Sewell explains that Mrs. Harrington does not connect the role of education to general character. Her daughters have "their natural inclinations unchecked" and the "good unimproved" (Sewell 35). The exclusion of male authority through having Mr. Herbert in India, Mr. Harrington as passive and removed, and a priest or rector almost absent furthers Sewell's argument that the mother takes the primary role in the religious education of her child, in this case a girl.¹⁸

Lady Rochford, the mother of Lucy Cunningham, complicates the good mother / bad mother dichotomy set up by Mrs. Herbert and Mrs. Harrington. Lady Rochford's daughter Lucy acts the worst of the set of girls. Her negative influence culminates in the death of Rose, but Lucy takes no responsibility and lies about what happened until her brother forces the truth. Lady Rochford, an invalid, plays almost no role in the novel aside from hosting one visit at Rochford Park. Sewell seems to treat her as an exception given her status as an invalid; Sewell describes

¹⁸ The Harrington boys are dead or absent, removing the need to address the education of male children.

her as kind, sweet, and wishing to “make every one about her happy” (120). Mrs. Herbert describes Lucy as having a faulty education but does not blame Lady Rochford. For example, Lucy learns her catechism for confirmation but states she has never thought of the words since then. Sewell blames Mrs. Harrington for her poor education of her children, but she does not blame Lady Rochford. In contrast, Mrs. Herbert has taught Amy to think about scripture daily and end every day with thoughts of God and faith before she sleeps. Sewell connects this practice directly with good behavior and a happy life. A good mother has the possibility of raising a spiritual and well-behaved child, but whether due to circumstances or possessing a certain immutable character, mothers cannot absolutely be held to blame for their children’s failings in a Sewell novel.

The novel, as a book written for girls, does not address the role of the mother in relationship to the son, but Lady Rochford’s son acts honorably and Mrs. Harrington’s living son behaves like a “typical” schoolboy in Amy’s view. The reader learns nothing of their religious views or actions. Instead, the book focuses on female relationships and influence. The ultimate goal seems to be independence from parental supervision. By the middle of the novel, Mrs. Herbert’s influence becomes less prominent as Amy must navigate her relationships on her own. Sewell repeats this theme in *Margaret Percival* but emphasizes the role of the priest or rector as needing to prepare people for religious independence as long as that independence remains within the church’s official stances. This differs from what John Tosh identifies about patriarchal roles and Methodism during the 1840s in his important book *A Man’s Place*. He writes:

If the husband reflected the authority of the Father in Heaven (often unseen but ever-present), the wife stood for Christian love and spiritual intuition. It was an

open question whether the bedtime prayer of mother and child was not more important than the family prayers led by the father. (Tosh 73)

Sewell does emphasize the importance of prayers led by the mother, but she goes further and eliminates the father as authority. In *Amy Herbert*, *Gertrude*, and *Margaret Percival*, the patriarchal/husband figures have been removed by circumstance: death or near death. Amy Herbert's father returns but takes a secondary role to the leadership of Amy's mother. Sewell answers the "open question" by removing the father figure in order to emphasize the wisdom and capability of the mother and of the individual girl character, but her mothers do not always act as matriarchal leader/angels. A "good" Sewell mother acts as both authority figure and a figure of affection and spiritual knowledge.

Further, unlike those beliefs about motherhood held by many secular novelists, Sewell's religious beliefs about the nature of sin heighten the importance of a mother's role, and the concept of sin emphasizes what religious practices matter for Amy. Sewell emphasizes the importance of the mother as religious educator role by arguing that childhood habits become lifelong habits. She states that negative behaviors by children can be sins. She does not exempt children from responsibility for their own choices. Children must learn early to control their inclination before the negative behaviors or invasive thoughts become sins in adulthood. Sewell writes that Mrs. Herbert "had taught [Amy] that the days of her childhood were the most important of her life, for they were those in which habits must be formed either for good or evil, which would be her blessing or her curse forever" (80). Sewell sets up life as a struggle between good and evil from the point of being sensible of right and wrong: "And thus Amy had learned to look upon what are often considered trifling faults in a child—ill-temper, indolence, vanity,

greediness, and similar evil dispositions—as real sins” (81). This increases the pressure on the mother figure to minister to her children, as their childhoods are foundational for their spiritual lives.

The pressure for women to act as religious educators, influencers, and authority figures extends even to Amy, despite her age. She must monitor her own actions in addition to being a positive influence on those around her. Sewell points out that Amy does not judge her cousins as much as she judges herself. One’s monitoring of oneself must come before advising others. Because of her choices to pray, read the Bible, and be nice to the nanny among other practices, her parents discuss her influence on her cousins as positive. Mr. Herbert states the importance of Amy’s influence and early development of character:

[...] we are not at all aware of the real strength of principle in the mind of a child who has always endeavored to do right. Children injure themselves for their whole lives by indulging in what are called trifling faults—a little vanity, or a little selfishness, or a hastiness of temper. If they could only be made to see the infinite importance of subduing these feelings early, they would grow up with confirmed habits of goodness, which, by the blessing of God, would never leave them, however they might be tempted in after life. (Sewell 296)

Mrs. Herbert replies that Amy has been a positive influence and hopefully will continue to be so. This reiterates the female influence as an important type of religious structure. For adolescents, the role of the mother decreases as the role of the peer and relative increases. *Amy Herbert*, like Sewell’s later novels, aims to prepare female readers for ownership of their own beliefs and influence.

Using the peer/relative influence in place of a patriarchal, hierarchical figure, Sewell includes numerous minor references to religious practices throughout the novel; she addresses church attendance, visiting the poor, baptism, witnessing, and daily prayer. On visiting the poor, Sewell uses Emily to stress the importance of what can be learned through the practice. Emily states, ““A visit to a sick person, in want, will often do more to make use contented and grateful than all the sermons that ever were preached”” (167). Amy excitedly hopes that the practice of seeing sick and poor people will bring her additional, personal happiness in her attempt to avoid envy of her cousins’ lifestyle and class position. Sewell circumvents traditional authority by downplaying the role of male sermon giver and emphasizing the opportunity women held to enrich themselves outside of traditional, hierarchal means. However, she does so by focusing on class distinctions; her audience is not the lower classes but those who would visit the poor beneath them for enrichment. Sewell does not offer an opportunity for all women to escape “all the sermons ever preached”, but she does see a way for some women to do so and includes a focus on *all women* in her later novels like *Margaret Percival*.

The need for reverence of the chapel and daily prayer is also removed from wider, hierarchical concerns like lack of church staffing or male family control, and instead focuses on personal religious practice and spiritual devotion. At one point in Emmerton’s history, the family and their staff used the chapel daily (Sewell 9-10), but Amy has never seen this in her lifetime. Even after the Harringtons reopen the home, the chapel remains closed, “apparently forgotten, except when visiters (sic) were in the house, and it was exhibited as a show, for the purpose of passing away a few idle moments” (Sewell 80). Sewell gives the chapel positive qualities, including the light, but includes an uncared for Bible and moth-eaten, decayed prayer books.

Emphasizing the death of the practice of communal worship, Sewell states that only the marble statue of the first lord of Emmerton with hands clasped “bore the semblance of devotion” (80). Amy’s cousins consider the place gloomy (Sewell 95). Later, Sewell connects their lack of practice and lack of understanding to a wider neglect of faith. Sewell emphasizes baptism and daily prayer as practices that Amy’s cousins neglect to understand and to implement into their daily lives. For example, Amy stresses understanding of the role of baptism as a determiner of daily actions, and she encourages her cousins to pray as a “duty,” connecting God’s granting of prayers to whether their daily actions have been without fault (Sewell 179-181). Fitting with the Oxford Movement’s emphasis on repeated daily prayer, Dora states that she has “never heard before of any one saying prayers in the middle of the day” and asks why doing so would be necessary (Sewell 182). Amy explains that many people did so in “the old times” and in the Bible (Sewell 182). Further, Amy suggests reading the Bible and attending church daily (Sewell 183). Sewell connects the acts to historical practices by noting the Prayer Book dictates all of these things plus the observance of saints’ days. Sewell returns to these religious duties in *Margaret Percival*; in her later novel, she sees following church practices as a way of negating the need for engaging in the devotional practices of the Catholic Church. In *Amy Herbert*, Sewell sets forth these practices as a duty that bring forth God’s blessings at times. Overall, the novel takes a softer approach to major issues of the Oxford Movement and instead nudges readers to heighten their personal awareness of important religious practices. Sewell refines her explanation of several of these demands to take up female religious authority and to attend to practices in her next two major novels.

Sewell wrote her second novel, *Gertrude*, during what she considered the peak of the Oxford Movement, and she expresses an intent to illustrate the need to balance involvement with the movement with one's duty to the family. In some ways, this echoes Reed's analysis of women's involvement in the Oxford Movement as discussed in the first chapter. He states women's involvement, which he suggests focused on embroidery, concerned people who felt women were no longer under patriarchal control. Sewell is less concerned about patriarchal control than one's contribution to the family more widely. She writes in her autobiography that "I heard it said that young ladies rushed about to visit the poor, and were constant at daily service, whilst they were neglectful of their parents" (*Autobiography*, 80). Sewell saw misunderstandings on the part of the daughters as well as the parents, but she wanted to avoid daughters considering "family duties of secondary importance" (*Autobiography*, 81). Her novel uses a binary for the main female characters: the daughter who prioritizes family duties and the daughter who neglects family duties. Sewell does not suggest women submit to their family duties as a means of submitting to patriarchal control. Instead, she uses the novel to emphasize the importance of female relationships and the importance of the family more broadly.

Gertrude focuses on the Courtenay family. Sewell moves away from some of the didactic back and forth chaptering of *Amy Herbert* and its emphasis on dialogue; *Gertrude* uses a more traditional novelistic form where the plot carries more importance. The father has died, leaving his property to his son, Edward, but also providing for his wife and four daughters who live together in a house called The Priory (a nunnery at one point). The oldest daughter, Gertrude, lives with her ailing aunt in the first volume and inherits her estate. The second oldest daughter Edith is the focus of the first volume; she spends her time on charitable and religious acts but

does so at the expense of things like accepting social calls, reading to her mother, focusing on accomplishments, and befriending her new sister-in-law. The excitement of the first volume focuses on Edward, who leaves for the city and marries the London season's "it" girl. Beautiful and wealthy, his new wife Laura has been denied nothing, but she has no property of her own. Edward begins living far beyond his means to maintain Laura at the level to which she is accustomed. His inheritance is encumbered; rather than the 6,000 pounds per year expected, he must "economise" and live on 2,000 pounds per year. He does not, and this creates a rift between him and Laura and Edith, who knows the truth about his financial position and over expenditure. Edith does not befriend Laura, who instead becomes close to Miss Forrester, who encourages excessive spending in part due to a conspiracy with her father to trap Edward into their political party. The second volume directly connects this unnamed political party to sinful practices. Meanwhile, Edith, her mother, and her sisters make each other miserable at home due to their different personalities and Edith's emphasis on good works external to the home. In the second volume, Gertrude returns from her aunt's house and begins to repair the family structure. She sets a positive example that encourages her sisters and mothers to create a positive relationship, and she befriends Laura, who confesses her own personal debts to Miss Forrester. The climax comes when Edward leaves to pledge himself to the political party. Laura, distressed due to the need to tell Edward about her debts, develops a brain fever right as Edward is signing a declaration to the political party. He rushes to her side, sees the error of his ways, and acts rather rudely to everyone, including Gertrude who offers him her fortune for him to retain his honor and good name. Laura recovers; she and Edward take Gertrude's money, and the three go abroad for a year so that Edward can return with a fresh reputation and begin to work, living with "no

luxuries” and only the “necessities” (Sewell, Vol. II, 243). The book ends with the building of a church near the Courtenay family. Its construction had been the goal of Edward and later Gertrude, and a minor but moral character, Mr. Dacre, instead accomplishes the building and is renowned in the future. Edward never regains his political and social position in the county, and Edith and Gertrude rejoice as “the memory of the just is blessed” while the “great and powerful” have sunk (Sewell, Vol. II, 248). The happy ending comes not in the righting of the family’s position but in the community’s realization of the true source of honor, a man’s faithful allegiance to his country and to his church.

Like Sewell would later do in *Margaret Percival*, *Gertrude* addresses church building, but *Gertrude* uniquely impresses upon the reader personal responsibility for dedicating one’s funds to the construction of buildings that will serve the poor. Sewell explains the novel was written during a “rage for church building,” but one in which some people constructed churches in “utter ignorance of architectural rules” (*Autobiography*, 81). Edward and Edith desire to build a new building that will enable the poor people of their area to attend church, and Edward has drawn up plans for the building. Dacre sees Edward’s “splendid design for Torrington church,” but Edward states that “it is only a plan: to realize it would require thousands; therefore, it can be a matter of amusement” (Sewell, Vol. I, 166). Edward sets aside his plans for a church for politics (Sewell, Vol. I, 220). When Gertrude returns, she watches the “groups of squalid children” and asks if Edward has done nothing for them. Edith counters that he has repaired houses, given them clothes, and excused some rents. However, Gertrude states “It is clear what they want [...] a church, and a resident clergyman” (Sewell, Vol. I, 241). Gertrude considers giving up her own fortune to build the church and worries whether this goes “beyond her

appointed sphere of action” (Sewell, Vol. II, 12). However, Sewell says that this fear comes from being “young” and “frail,” not female. Gertrude dreams and prays for the building that she eventually discusses with Dacre (Sewell, Vol. II, 28-30). However, she gives up her fortune and the church so needed by the poor in her view, so that her brother might escape disgrace and poor public opinion. Dacre builds the “fitting temple,” Torrington Church, by leaving plans and money to build the church. A “neat and orderly” (Sewell, Vol. II, 248) population is present at the end of the book, in comparison to the dirty and disorganized poor people at the beginning of the first volume. The town remembers Dacre’s influence rather than Edward’s limited care for the poor. Involvement in architectural decisions and the placement of church buildings enables women to take an important role in church government without taking public authority, which would have been seen as inappropriate.

Like *Margaret Percival* and *Amy Herbert*, *Gertrude* also emphasizes the importance of women’s friendship and a woman’s influence upon her friends and family. The book, split into two volumes, begins in the first volume with an emphasis on Edith while the second volume follows Gertrude. In the first volume, Edith fails to befriend and influence Laura. Miss Forrester becomes a bad friend to Laura. Laura, who is weak and flighty, appears throughout. In the second volume, Gertrude presents a positive relationship. Edith and Gertrude both want to build the church and to do good, but long before Gertrude appears in the novel, Sewell emphasizes Gertrude as the truly good sister. The reader may feel a connection to Edith but must leave her, recognize her failure, and follow Gertrude’s positive influence instead. The structure of the novel itself forces the readers to break with a “bad” influence friend to make a “good” influence friend.

Sewell makes the role and importance of personal, indirect influence the primary religious message of the novel. This emphasis presented an opportunity to female readers to wield religious power and control no matter their education, position, or opportunity to be heard publicly or privately. For example, Mr. Dacre tells Edith: “There is an indirect influence, though, which no one is beyond the reach of, and I think it is always more powerful than advice” (Sewell, Vol. I, 61). Edith asks what influence, and Dacre states, brotherly or sisterly “affection” (Sewell, Vol. I, 61). He does not recommend direct advice and foreshadows the coming problems in the novel when he states “I believe we often commit fatal errors from the belief that we have no influence” (Sewell, Vol. I, 62). Although Edith sees the errors committed by the new wife Laura, Edith assumes she could not effect change or be an influence (Sewell, Vol. I, 97) and later refuses to do so when asked by her brother (Sewell, Vol. I, 139). In contrast, Miss Forrester is presented as “peculiarly observant of the influence of others” (Sewell, Vol. I, 152), but she uses her influence to encourage waste and dissension. Dacre attempts to counter this by encouraging Edith to recognize that she has influence that matters:

“I cannot tell you how you may influence your brother, but I know that a great power has been placed in your hands, as it has been in the hands of every human being, and that we shall have to render a most strict account for it: and I own I am very anxious to impress this truth upon you.” (Sewell, Vol. I, 169).

Using one’s influence becomes not only an opportunity to do something positive but also an opportunity to sin if neglected. The influence is not limited to one’s closest female companions as in *Amy Herbert*; when Edith protests, Dacre reminds her that she can not only influence men but also women (Sewell, Vol. I, 171). Sewell places the blame for Edward’s failure disastrous

behavior, wasteful spending, and poor political choices upon Edith (Vol. I, 172). Sewell contrasts Edith with Gertrude, who acts as the example of good influence:

The magic of her influence was to be found, not in words—scarcely in actions—but in her inward, unceasing remembrance of the God in whose presence she lived. It was her earnest endeavor never to forget Him, and the recollection purified her heart, and hallowed her daily conduct, until the careless and worldly-minded felt that the atmosphere with which she was surrounded was one in which they could not venture to dwell. (Vol. I, 227).

The book heavily emphasizes the sisterly and female influence. For example, Edward chooses to befriend a local politician rather than accept Dacre's assistance. He is not held accountable for his decisions; Edith and Gertrude are. Truly, Edward is ruined by his own poor choices, but Sewell does not focus on Edward's agency in the situation. Instead, Gertrude saves Edward and Laura. Edward explicitly blames Edith, and Gertrude allows for his accusation to stand with little correction. The young, female family member holds greater responsibility for a man's actions than the man does himself. While *Amy Herbert* argues for one's personal influence on other women, in *Gertrude* Sewell expands the push for influence. Sewell's focus on female power encourages her female readership that their actions, words, and even silent influence matter even to an extreme point of holding blame for negative actions of adult, male family members.

Like with the emphasis on influence as a type of natural duty enabled by God, Sewell includes moments that critique how women should use their time, a particular concern during the Oxford Movement, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Edward sees the need for his wife to engage in charitable work like Edith, but Laura prefers pleasurable activities or traditional

accomplishments. For example, Laura resists going to visit the servants at their home. Edward tells her, “[...] as I conceive that a woman’s greatness consists in the proper management of her husband’s home, I must insist upon thrusting it on you” (92). She still resists. Part of the financial ruin of the family is because Laura does not conceive of her duty as having to be an invested part of the management of the household. She would rather tear down a cottage that mars her scenic view than visit its resident, Edward’s childhood nurse. Sewell does directly address how women should use their time. Generally, Sewell uses Edith as a mixed example. Edith visits the poor and sick, teaches children, reads sermons, and sews practical clothes, but she neglects her own family. For example, Edith states that music “takes up so much time” (Vol. I, 100). Her sister Laura asks, “But what is time given us for? [...] except to enjoy ourselves? I mean a lady’s time. Gentlemen and poor people are different” (Sewell, Vol. I, 100). After they joke about how Edith does spend her time, Edith responds: “no one would deny that it would be a more profitable way of employing oneself than in music, and drawing, and worsted work” (Sewell, Vol. I, 101). Laura thinks that Edith’s model is distasteful as “in primitive days, women occupied themselves in necessary domestic duties, and works of charity” (Sewell, Vol. II, 101). Laura says now women should follow the newer fashions, which include drawing flowers and doing cross-stitch, which her husband considers a corruption of society that misunderstands self-denial and will lead to the fall of the church. Edith and Laura neglect their duties to their families and to the people who live in the community around them by focusing on actions as an accomplishment rather than a duty or charity for the wider good.

Edward’s downfall comes in an Adam and Eve-like moment when his wife does far more than draws and sews; she uses her influence to pressure him to pursue worldly attention. Edith

fails to influence Edward, and he ignores Gertrude. When Edward resists running for parliament because of the expense, Laura pressures, “‘For your wife’s sake, Edward; it is the first wish of her heart’” (Sewell, Vol. I, 212). Gertrude presents the contrast to this demand upon one’s heart in the second volume. When Gertrude disagrees with Edward, he tells her “‘You forget [...] a lady, and a young lady, may surely give way’” (Sewell, Vol. II, 165). Laura does not give way. Gertrude also persists in making her point, and Sewell presents Edward as backwards in his view as he lacks the sense to see the sensible advice of a lady, even a young lady. Gertrude brings knowledge to Edward of his “dishonor” that he could not see before (Sewell, Vol. II, 172). He learns that women do have influence—for good or for bad. Gertrude retains all of the power in the book over Edward’s life even as she attempts to redeem his social position and finances. Sewell counters a general understanding of domesticity. Tosh explains a typical view of the duties domestic sphere as follows: “To establish a home, to protect it, to provide for it, to control it, and to train its young aspirants to manhood” (4). He expands that domesticity becomes something more complicated, “a web of obligations” (Tosh 4). Edward fails in his duties, obligations, and attachments. Instead, Sewell inserts Gertrude into the role of the Angel of the House and of the Domestic Father Protector. Gertrude enables Edward to have a home, provides the financial backing to keep him and his wife from ruin, provides spiritual guidance for all of her family members, and does so while upholding her traditional duties as an eldest daughter. Sewell thus suggests that a woman who understands the force and possibility of her influence can replace a failed domestic leader. Sewell certainly does not end with Gertrude in a position of authority in the public sphere, but Sewell does end with Gertrude as matriarchal leader.

Sewell's fourth novel, *Margaret Percival*, focuses directly on religious controversy, the Oxford Movement, and Roman Catholicism. Long sections of the book explore theology and doctrine in detail, and the primary plot of the book is the title character's consideration and rejection of conversion to Catholicism. The book opens with 18-year-old Margaret's disinterest in teaching her younger siblings; however, her uncle shows her that she can include religious lessons and strategies to improve their focus. She sees progress before leaving to visit France with her sister who plans to marry Colonel Clive, an older and disagreeable bachelor with an attentive sister, Mrs. St. Aubyn. In France, Margaret visits and marvels at Catholic churches and first sees Countess Beatrice Noverra, whose family property is near Margaret's family home in England. The churches lead Margaret to consider church unity, the "romish controversy," and the lack of reverence in the Church of England. The Countess also returns to England after affirming her Catholic faith to her confessor Father Andrea and ward Lucia, who have lived with her in Italy, where the Countess's Italian husband died. For a long section of the book, Margaret talks with her brother, Craven, or her uncle, Father Sutherland, or visits the Countess. In the chapters when she does not visit with them, she thinks about the conversations she had or is not having. During this time, the Countess and Father Andrea attempt to convert Margaret, who increasingly is interested in the Catholic church. Her uncle falls ill and goes on an extended trip, and leaves her open to their increased influence. Margaret's sister, who married the Colonel, becomes unhappy. Craven gambles away a fortune and plunges the family into near poverty and causes their father to fall ill and die. Margaret becomes more open about her doubts, and finally her uncle returns to defend the English church. Margaret decides to break with the Countess who has become suspicious of Margaret's intentions, but Margaret's letter to the Countess is destroyed by

her jealous ward Lucia. After a period of worrying about seeing the Countess, moving from the family home, and supporting the “good” brother through religious training, Margaret sees the Countess one final time, during which she asserts the English Church is a true branch of the Catholic Church. Before going to work to support her brother, Margaret visits her uncle’s parish and sees how the English church can work effectively. In the final chapter, the Countess has died, and Margaret has left service because her brother has finished school and is becoming ordained.

The book enters directly into the major religious controversies of the day. In some ways, Sewell’s first two novels focus on women’s issues in relationship to religious duty and include reference to religious controversy, but *Margaret Percival* is about religious controversy. The novel directly and thoroughly addresses the role of Roman Catholicism in the Oxford Movement and theological topics like apostolic succession. The preface to the 1858 “cheap edition” of *Margaret Percival* states, “It was written with the view, not of entering into the Romish controversy but of setting before young person the difficulty of engaging in such a controversy” (Sewell vii). However, the novel does directly enter into the controversy and shows that even young people must be made aware of the issues, including socializing with English people—particularly the upper class—who have converted to Catholicism. Sewell grants that allowing “affections” with excellent Catholic people can “lead us into errors of the faith” (vii). She explains this is why she presented the Countess and Father Andrea in “an amiable light, in order to avoid any appearance of prejudice or harsh judgment” (Sewell vii). The argument becomes not one of superstition of the secret plans of Jesuits or sneaky Catholics or of personal attacks, but instead one of reason and theological and doctrinal argument. Sewell states that she can attest

to the “outward attractions of Rome” because of her faith in the Church of England. In the 1858 preface, Sewell confirms that the book was criticized for its depiction of Catholics for being favorable to them.¹⁹ She ends her short preface by “expressing publicly” her “deep prayer” that “God would grant her grace to live and die a devoted member of the English Church” (Sewell viii). Her statement suggests that readers questioned her allegiance to the Church of England despite the novel’s conclusion with the rejection of conversion.

Sewell intended to avoid anti-Catholicism; she instead wanted to use a positive argument in favor of the Church of England. As noted earlier in this chapter, this counters her brother’s anti-Catholic approach in his novels. Wolff suggests the “purpose of the book was to show how misleadingly attractive Catholicism may be made to seem” (141). However, the book instead seems to note the benefits of Catholicism while pointing to an ultimate duty to the Church of England. Margaret spends more time pointing out and considering the virtues of the Catholic Church than she does the Church of England. Ultimately, what prevents Margaret from converting to Roman Catholicism is not the virtues or merits of the Church of England but the danger of committing the “sin of schism.” Since Margaret could not prove the Church of England was less than a true branch of the Christian church because of apostolic succession, Margaret had to remain with the Church of England as a form of duty and to stay within the role that God had placed her at birth. Her uncle explains:

“Your first duty was with your own Church, and your own teachers. It is an universal duty, binding upon every one.”

¹⁹ In the 2nd edition preface, William Sewell states that the book is to help young women to argue (Wolff 141).

“Heathens, Mahometans, Jews, Christians, every one?” exclaimed Margaret.

“Yes, every one; because the circumstances of our birth are to us, at first sight, the evidences of the will of God.”

Sutherland continues that Heathens, Mahometans, and Dissenters would ultimately find their belief systems unsatisfactory as “Two religions equally true cannot exist at the same time.” (473). He states that schism, leaving one church for another, is a sin like sedition or hardness of heart, and although the “popular prejudices” against Roman Catholics are “often exaggerated and unfounded,” the doctrines are distinct (474). Sewell’s defense of the Church of England relies upon apostolic succession, a core tenant of the Oxford Movement, as discussed in the introduction. Sewell writes that the church is not an “act of parliament church” because “its very essence consists in apostolic ministry, a succession derived from the primitive Church” (476). Understanding controversial topic enables Margaret to see the foundation of the English Church as valid. This education on religious controversy comes not from external learning but self-improvement. For Margaret to overcome her disadvantage of a lack of instruction as a woman (Sutherland points this out), she must read “the great English divines:” a list of church scholars. Unstated is how limited this defense would be to the average English teenage girl; few people much less young women would have had access to the works of these scholars, the training to read them, or the time to do so. Earlier, Sewell comments that Church history was only a small part of Margaret’s education, and the danger of a lack of religious training increases given how the current generation had grown up “in the midst of dissent, both Romish and Sectarian” without sound argument in support of the Church or an understanding of apostolic succession.

For Sewell, education about religious controversy, particularly apostolic succession, is her answer to the problem of secularization or conversion to Catholicism.

Sewell critiques numerous aspects of the Church of England: its ugly architecture that diminishes reverence, its lack of participation in scheduled festival and fasting days, and its uninvolved leadership. Because of her local church's lack of attention to the traditional days or patterns of devotional and Bible reading, Margaret is attracted to the Catholic Church. However, Sewell does not wish to advocate for the "high Church cant" where people "enter upon Church architecture, daily services, and rubrics, peculiar preachers, and peculiar books" and eventually join convents or monasteries or live as ascetics (308). She advocates for what she conceives of as a balance where people, specifically women, remain in their own communities and do work according to their own skills. Further, the key characters in Sewell's early novels remain single like apostles (see final chapter for a discussion of singleness and the role of the apostle as seen in Elizabeth Barrett Browning). Near the end of *Margaret Percival*, Sewell offers a counterpoint in one chapter to her earlier critique of the Church of England. Margaret visits her uncle's parish. As a bachelor, he keeps a simple, small, and convenient vicarage free of excess and waste. He holds daily services because they bring peace to the poor people, specifically the mothers, who can find "quietness of mind" at church to help bear "the troubles of their lot" (Sewell 585). Sewell notes that the women share childcare or bring their children to church in order to attend. The men are dismissed by Sutherland as "out of the question" as "'The spirit of the world has encroached upon the Church, and their time is not their own disposal'" (Sewell 588). In short, men must work. His church has been refurbished to avoid "large square pews, darkened by galleries, and disfigured by blocked-up windows" (Sewell 587). Instead, the building was

changed to have an “irregular” style with “aisles being divided on one side by short massive pillars, supporting early pointed arches, and on the other by columns of a later period” for a somber effect countered by the light from the stained glass windows (Sewell 587). The “mellowed light” softened and heightened the colors of the scrolls with verses painted around the altar. At the beginning of the book when at the church near her home, Margaret sits in her family’s traditional pew and feels no pleasure from attending, lacks focus on the sermon and prayers, and thinks the building is “hideous” (Sewell 24). The church interior is so “dirty,” “crowded,” and “dark” with the altar hidden by three large pulpits that Margaret thinks she prefers the plain chapel of the Plymouth brethren (Sewell 24). This history of attending a neglected church leaves her open to her “whole soul” feeling an “intense awe” when she visits the ornate, Gothic cathedral Saint-Ouen in France (Sewell 84-85). The comparison of the two leads Margaret to question the lack of “intense devotedness” and “abstraction” invoked by the architecture and visitors praying in Saint-Ouen. At the end of the book, in Sutherland’s refurbished church, Margaret experiences what Sewell sees as appropriate reverence and awe:

The solemnity of the church was felt by Margaret instantaneously, and it prevented her from allowing her thoughts to be distracted by admiration. The change from the business of life to the sanctity of religion was brought vividly before her; and with comparatively little effort her attention fixed itself upon the service. (587)

Sewell focuses on women’s experience of church architecture and decoration as she addresses one of the concerns of the Oxford Movement. At the most practical level, a renovated church

inspires focus and desire to attend, which are two things of particular concern as the church ministers to poor mothers.

Finally, Sutherland's ministry presents an example of how Sewell thinks the Church of England should minister to people and of what type of faith it should promote: a faith that links to the national character. Ultimately, being a Christian in the Church of England is like what Sewell considers being English: reserved, reasonable, and concerned for the good of the nation. While Sewell generally provides a comparatively balanced view of the Roman Catholic Church, she does see emotionalism as the main danger. In contrast, Sutherland does not think he should manipulate or impress himself upon poor people. They should guide their own lives with information provided and not be reliant upon someone else like a priest to guide them. The aforementioned reviewer of Sewell's novels saw Margaret Percival as a failure because of its emphasis on one's inability to use one's conscience to make decisions and relying instead upon church authority ("Puseyite Novels," 517-518). Doreen Rosman in her book on the English church states that typically in the Oxford Movement leaders believed that "people who tried to comprehend the Bible without assistance all too often lapsed from orthodoxy" (182). She sees this as a reaction to Evangelicalism that emphasized personal interpretation of the scriptures without an authority to mediate them. Instead, Rosman explains, people should follow the model set by the apostles in which a church authority informed their beliefs. Sewell uses Sutherland to suggest this, but Margaret ultimately does make her own decisions.

Throughout the book, Sewell contrasts what one can and what one cannot fairly judge given one's emotional state. The emphasis on emotional states culminates with a contrast between Margaret and two sick young women she visits. Both girls are near death, but one is a

Catholic and the other is a Protestant. Catholic Rhoda has Dissenter parents, and she is highly emotionally involved in her newfound faith. She *feels* a firm confidence in her Catholic beliefs. Protestant Esther Stevens, introduced at the end of the book, is a “fallen girl” who had lived in the city and returns to live with her aunt and uncle. She reads the Bible on her own and receives comfort from John 14, where Jesus comforts his disciplines that they will persevere without him. Likewise, Uncle Sutherland emphasizes his role as preparing Esther to read and to grow in her faith without him rather than directing her conscience or her actions (Sewell 598). Spiritual independence within the church’s foundational authority is prioritized over complete dependence on an individual. Sewell resists an easy understanding of the Oxford Movement as a reaction to Evangelicalism. While Rhoda appears very ill, Esther’s appearance even near death seems better to Margaret. Esther “was very different from Rhoda, older and more subdued, with a quiet intelligent eye, and very gentle expression of the mouth” (Sewell 599). Sutherland states he provides Esther hope through her ability to read the Bible; Rhoda fears missing final rites and being damned. The contrast emphasizes the final importance of remaining English, which means remaining in the Church of England. While Catholicism might improve one’s feelings in the short term, a correct and English Protestant faith gives a true final rest, especially for the lower classes.

The novel overall acts in ways similar to a triangle or three-party romance narrative. Frerich in her dissertation on Sewell sees Margaret as in a romance with the Countess, and Margaret does have a moment of being transfixed by the sight of her in a Cathedral in France. However, the Countess introduces Margaret to Father Andrea, who spends more time with Margaret than the Countess does. I suggest the plot of the book seems to be Margaret’s decision

between two lover-type figures: Father Andrea and Uncle Sutherland. The two of them, not the Countess, battle for Margaret's attention and devotion to their churches and faiths. The men have a moment where they awkwardly meet at the end of the novel, and Sutherland sees how the worldliness and social suaveness of Father Andrea could attract one's attention. However, Sutherland's process of convincing Margaret emphasizes rejecting the whims of feelings and emotionalism, and focusing what is true and right, her duty to her original and very reserved English faith. Father Andrea starts to seem more like a traditional soldier character who has no property or income to offer as the Catholic Church is not established in England; Uncle Sutherland can show his parsonage and church, which deeply impress Margaret and help to finalize her conviction that she should remain with the Church of England. After learning of her family's fall into poverty, Margaret has a moment where in many novels the suitor who would save her would appear. She sits in the garden, and the "intensely sultry" weather and "unnatural calm seemed the precursor of some great change" (Sewell 516). While contemplating her future and limited prospects, the door opens to reveal Father Andrea: "Margaret's first blush of surprise and delight told the welcome which her words could not express" (Sewell 519). However, the conversation does shift to the Countess, who Margaret "dares" not see again (Sewell 520). Sewell also compares Romanism to being "in love" (Sewell 373). When Margaret begins reading Catholic devotional materials and considering conversion, one of her friends states that although she wishes Margaret acted more "cheerful," she did "think sometimes she must be in love" (373). Margaret falls in love with Catholicism and the ideal if unreal faith that blends the Church of England with Roman Catholicism and that she imagines could be possible. Ultimately, she

does her duty as an Englishwoman, rejects these feelings, and remains devoted to the Church of her homeland.

In addition to reading the book as a type of love triangle, other scholars have suggested a type of paternal triangle. In her article on fatherhood, Meaghan Cronin suggests that the Father is a father figure for Margaret, “an active competitor with the familial father for power over the daughter’s virtue” (96). In this reading of the book as evoking patriarchy, Margaret does not follow her emotion as she desires, but instead must choose between two father figures, her uncle and the Jesuit priest. While the Jesuit priest does refer to Margaret as “my daughter,” he may do so simply as a convention of speaking to women; while the uncle feels “fatherly,” he also feels like a brother to Margaret. The bulk of the book does not focus on Margaret deciding whose authority to follow but instead focuses on which church to follow. The figures, while of course part of the patriarchy, are the only figures that Sewell could use as church leaders. A female novelist who guides Margaret would not be appropriate for a reading audience already suspicious of novels or female authors. Margaret is given opportunities to go beyond traditional patriarchal restraints in that she acts as an educator and makes numerous comments that critique the patriarchy. Cronin sees Margaret as a good girl because she rejects emotionalism to follow patriarchy. Further, Margaret ultimately sacrifices her own time and life to support her mother and brothers. This can be read as upholding patriarchy because she must work, but Margaret is happy to work to support her brother’s ministry. She does not work to support her other brothers. Margaret is independent of an authority figure. She depends on her own will and mind, and her ability to read and to discern. She doubts the Church of England and does not accept what she is told by her uncle until she sees proof of how the Church of England works. Going into service to

support her brother is a break before the final chapter much like the final “bow” endings in other Victorian novels where everything must be finished in a traditional happy ending way. The happy ending of the novel in some ways rejects traditional formats that uphold patriarchal views in that Margaret ends a better person for having worked and remained single. She enables her brother’s ministry and sees this is a good work, a way that women can participate in a form of ministry.²⁰ While supporting a man as a form of ministry may seem somewhat weak, it also seems somewhat like the ending of *Jane Eyre*. On its ending, Gilbert and Gubar write that the “indecisive endings of Bronte’s other novels suggest that she herself was unable clearly to envision viable solutions to the problem of patriarchal oppression” (368). No one, even Wollstonecraft, could envision an ideal society according to Gilbert and Gubar. Likewise, the ending of *Margaret Percival* may fail to set forth a new society, but parts of the book do offer solutions for women and other points do critique patriarchal leadership.

Margaret Percival contains multiple levels of commentary on gender and women’s position. Margaret herself wishes she were a man for the opportunity to participate in the public sphere, to participate in the practices recommended as part of the Oxford Movement, and to earn money. When considering religion and the communions of various branches of the Christian church, Margaret feels being restrained from knowing the world creates “narrow worldly ideas” for her and her sisters from which her brothers are protected by their participation in a wider sphere (116). Religion and gender are linked but ultimately unsatisfactory:

²⁰ The first female Bishop was ordained by the Church of England in 2014. The first female deacon was ordained in 1987, and the first female priest was ordained in 1994. Sewell’s characters would have had a long wait to obtain any official position in the church.

Ought she to require more than had been given her? Would it not be better to concern herself with the simple duties before her, and not wish for anything greater? Home was a woman's sphere, the world was a man's. If she could govern her own heart, and teach the children to govern theirs; or, more truly, if she could trust the work in His hands who alone can order "the unruly wills and affections" of sinful beings, she ought to be satisfied (116).

Margaret Percival like the other early religious novels by Sewell all address the idea of one's duty, but Margaret faces duties that exceed those of the previous heroines. She has educational, familial, spiritual, and financial burdens. She experiences no satisfaction in the early chapters as a caregiver and educator of her younger siblings. However, the theme of dissatisfaction with the position of women continues throughout the book:

Margaret said to herself, what many of her age and sex have said before her; what hundreds, thousands, have acted upon, and in sincerity and humility have fulfilled the duties of their station, and gone to their graves in peace, followed by the tears of their friends, and the blessings of the fatherless and the widow. But there are others, the gifted, the enthusiastic, the poetical, conscious of high intellectual powers, and believing themselves, perhaps justly, equal to men in all but physical strength, and sobriety of judgment, whose whole life is a struggle between the inferiority of their natural position and the cravings of an ardent, highly-cultivated mind. [...] The wish, "if I were but a man," passes the lips, and raises a smile, and is forgotten; but it is no transitory feeling which prompts. (Sewell 117)

Not isolated to an individual or a certain age, dissatisfaction with gender acts as a widespread and common concern that can be lived through in peace through attendance to duty for most women. However, for the “others,” those mostly equal to men, the desire grows. Sewell says this desire begins and grows into a “cankering evil” and the “neglect of small duties because great ones are not within reach” (117). However, realizing that women are equal to men does not necessarily result in evil. Sewell states that Margaret wanted something great and could find that in religion but does not know this yet. Sewell sees the solution to the problem of being isolated in the woman’s sphere as finding an outlet in a religious sphere as Sewell does as an author. However, Margaret has practical duties that consume her time and is pressed to improve herself at odd or off times. Part of Sutherland’s appeal is that he understands with “almost a woman’s knack” the role of “trifles and their influence upon daily happiness” (Sewell 138). However, when Margaret considers herself “womanish” in her thinking for separating reason from feelings, Sutherland encourages her to create a distance from emotional thinking (Sewell 270). His ministry to Margaret and later to another character focuses on the educational improvement of women and the shift of their duties from “trifles” to service.

Margaret also saw the gendered distinction between herself and her uncle. Margaret links religion, gender, and the Oxford Movement:

As a man, he was independent; he might attend daily services, and keep fasts and festivals, and few persons would say anything about it; or, if they did, he could smile at the observation he attracted, and pursue his own course unheeding. But, with a woman, a young girl, one of a large family, professing no deeper religious

principles than those of the world around it, the case was widely different. (Sewell 299)

Margaret feels her uncle can take part in religious controversy without attracting significant attention. She feels drawn to elements of the Oxford Movement but worries that consideration of Catholicism will violate societal norms, which matter more for her as an unmarried woman than for an unattached and bachelor uncle. She desires a “strict rule of life” that would be open to her in the Oxford Movement but feels kept from those practices (Sewell 299). A man might be able to “dabble” in those practices, but a woman would be less able to do so, in part because of her lack of access to the university. Sewell writes: “Margaret had often wished herself a man, in order that she might do good on a large scale; now she wished it most earnestly for another reason—that she might not care for being talked about” (Sewell 300). Further, she envies how the Countess can access the church through the act of confession, a gender-leveling act in her view. Margaret envies the Countess’ intimacy with Father Andrea (Sewell 301). This leads her to think “the Romish Church would suit her particular disposition much better than the English” (301). In this, her “disposition” can be read as being a woman.

Finally, Margaret longs to be a man so that she could have financial independence. After her brother gambles away their money, Margaret’s parents meet with a financial advisor who specialized in “failing fortunes” (Sewell 436). Margaret knows what her brother has done and its financial impact on her family. Sewell then writes, “Margaret did then wish herself a man—able to work, to gain money in any way. It seemed that as a woman she could only be a burden” (436). Margaret mostly grieves for her brother George because of her knowledge of his desire to finish college. After her father’s death, she does decide to go into service, against which she is

warned by several people because of its natural difficulties. However, she persists and does go to work in order to support her brother. The book ends with Margaret satisfied with the duties open to her as a woman in a “simple and retired” life and conflating the English and the Catholic churches:

She had realized her high calling, as a member of the Catholic Church; and as no earthly honour could add to that dignity, so no earthly humiliation could detract from it. By it all duties were alike ennobled; and whether exerting herself actively for the poor, cheering her mother’s loneliness, instructing the children, or studying for the improvement of her own mind, Margaret felt herself labouring for the advancement of Christ’s Church, and her highest ambition was satisfied.

(Sewell 619)

Margaret offers herself as a sacrifice to God “in the Church and the home which He had appointed her” (Sewell 621). Sewell seems to play with the concept of leaving the home to offer oneself as a sacrifice to the Catholic Church in a nunnery. Instead, Margaret can live the life of a nun at home. The final line in the book is a line spoken by Margaret: “Happiness to-day for all. Yet there was a time when I could not have believed that truth and peace were to be found in the English Church” (Sewell 621). Whether a weakness of Sewell’s writing style or an editorial intrusion by her brother, the need to state Gertrude’s happiness so directly and to point out the happiness to the readers seems curious. The rest of the book seems more nuanced in its approach to religious controversy. Further, the final pages encourage submission to the church and to Margaret’s uncle or perhaps Sewell’s brother, but these suggestions come directly after a chapter in which Margaret falls senseless in a carriage after parting from Father Andrea for the final time

and resisting his last conversion attempt. Margaret's desire for Father Andrea's religious influence and the relationship with the Countess do not fit with a one-chapter turn to complete, sane, rational and passionless commitment to the Church of England. Like in her previous novels, Sewell sees a happy ending in submitting to one's duty, class position, and family position, but she does not expect her readers never to fall senseless in a carriage after resisting the temptations of class movement or religious conversion. She does not expect good girls to read about good girls; she sees religion and life with more nuance than previous religious novelists as well as those to follow her. The books may conclude with tidy endings, but the conflict comes in determining one's position and faith for oneself and by oneself. For example, in Yonge's novels, the risk of controversy is one to be avoided at all costs even for men but especially for women. Sewell rejects much traditional hierarchy in favor of encouraging readers, specifically young women but extending beyond that, to "dabble" in doubt and consideration of Catholicism as long as they do not stray from an original duty to the Church of England. Her answer to the controversy of the Oxford Movement then is to proceed with caution.

While have some assumed Sewell fell under her brother's authority, her autobiography and the content of her novels suggest otherwise. The power of women to act as a voice without men as influencers continues through the three novels considered in this chapter. In *Amy Herbert*, Sewell stresses the importance of the mother as religious authority with the potential to guide children to or away from faith. By removing the father for most of the novel and clergymen for all of the novel, Sewell argues for the importance of 12-year-old Amy's role as influencer and educator in her family circle. In *Gertrude*, Sewell stresses duty to family in balance with religious practices. She suggests readers must choose which practices make the

most sense for their lives given the importance of one's personal influence on men and women around them. Finally, in *Margaret Percival*, Sewell dramatizes doubt and conversion to Catholicism, and in justifying allegiance to the Church of England, Sewell notes the difficulty of being a young woman who may not have access to religious education or the opportunity to "dabble" in other beliefs.

Sewell's first three young adult or adult novels set forth a generally pro Oxford Movement agenda that encourages young women to consider their beliefs as individuals. Like Elisabeth Jay suggests in *Religion of the Heart*, Sewell encourages introspection in addition to religious practices like visiting the poor, praying, and attending church services. Sewell sees a danger of going too far in one's interest in church architecture or daily observances when attention to those matters results in a neglect of relationships. However, she answers these critiques of the Oxford Movement by relying on church history such as the doctrine of apostolic succession and a general sense that one does one's duty for and within one's class and position. The danger of neglecting one's wider duties in pursuit of participation in religious practices does not seem as imperative as the danger of doubt. *Margaret Percival* stresses doctrine and knowledge, but *Amy Herbert* transitions between application of doctrine through female conversations and discussions, and examples of lived religion. Throughout all three novels, women not only have responsibility for their own spirituality, but are encouraged by Sewell's other characters to take further responsibility for themselves and those around them, including men who stray from religious or societal propriety. Her novels include numerous details about how her readers lived out their faith or should do so in order to remain faithful to the Church of England and to do their duty as Christians.

Sewell uses the controversies of Oxford Movement to locate the consideration of religious practices as she shifts her heroines away from the typical Angel of the House role. The shift does not immediately bring happiness to the characters rejecting traditional duties, especially to the church, creates personal and spiritual conflict. In order to answer some of this tension, Sewell upholds part of the Angel of the House but gives her “Angel” roles that extend beyond the household. Similarly, Sewell does not push for blind allegiance to patriarchal authorities but instead sees the value of female community, particularly in family relationships. While female community as with the Countess in *Margaret Percival* can also present a danger, Sewell sees young women as ultimately able to avoid the danger of conversion to Catholicism. Sewell’s novel does not emphasize women’s weakness or the danger of falling prey to suave Catholic priests. Instead, she suggests women because of their intellects can consider conversion and make the appropriate decision. Their decision must be subject to their duty.

CHAPTER 3

CHARLOTTE YONGE'S CONFLICTED ANGELS

“Not a paper do I take up but I see something about wretchedness and crime, and here I sit with health, strength, and knowledge, and able to do nothing, nothing--at the risk of breaking my mother's heart! I have pottered about cottages and taught at schools in the dilettante way of the young lady who thinks it her duty to be charitable; and I am told that it is my duty, and that I may be satisfied. [...] And here am I, able and willing, only longing to task myself to the uttermost, yet tethered down to the merest mockery of usefulness by conventionalities. I am a young lady forsooth!--I must not be out late, I must not put forth my views; I must not choose my acquaintance, I must be a mere helpless, useless being, growing old in a ridiculous fiction of prolonged childhood, affecting those graces of so-called sweet seventeen that I never had--because, because why?” (Yonge, *The Clever Woman*, 37-38)

In Charlotte Yonge's novel *The Clever Woman of the Family*, the central character Rachel opens with a complaint about the requirements for young women. The 25-year-old, unmarried Rachel looks for a mission, any mission, and states that she would “throw” herself into becoming “the founder of some establishment that might relieve women from the oppressive task-work thrown on them in all their branches of labour” (Yonge, *The Clever Woman of the Family*, 38). Rachel ends up erring in her pursuit of her mission, but Yonge—as her mission—takes up throughout her literary work the concern about women and religious duty. Yonge saw her own duty as supporting the Oxford Movement and did so in extensive publications throughout her long literary career. However, while much scholarship grants that Yonge was religious, few scholarly works examine her religious views. This chapter explores a small sample of the work of Yonge,

sometimes called “The Novelist of the Oxford Movement.”²¹ This chapter looks at her religiously informed views of women and class by isolating instances of the practice of religion and by examining gendered depictions of religious practices and involvement with the church hierarchy. This chapter closely reads *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1854), *The Daisy Chain* (1856), and *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865) for representations of lived religion and for the treatment of women’s role in religion and in the family. Three of her most popular novels, all three have been reprinted in the past twenty years. While Barbara Dennis and other scholars have looked at what Yonge’s life says about her own religious preferences, this chapter further considers what religion in the novels would have meant beyond the traditional view of Yonge as a religiously uncritical mouthpiece for Keble. Most importantly, this chapter considers the role of religion in some of the major issues and themes in Yonge’s early novels: her use of Angel-in-the-House invalids and clever young women, her depiction of the Oxford Movement as concerned about sisterhoods and church placement, and her attention to “The Woman Question” or the issue of surplus women. For Yonge, all of these controversies must be considered within the context of her religious beliefs and the Oxford Movement as the religious practices represented cannot be separated from the religious thought of the period. This consideration demonstrates how Yonge makes arguments about religious practices, gently recognizes the role of doubt, and points out the difficulty of being a bright, religious young woman.

²¹ For example, both popular sources like page descriptions on Amazon and encyclopedias, and academic ones like at least to books use this title in 2016. Barbara Dennis uses this as the subtitle of her book on Yonge.

While attention to Yonge's work has increased in the past 30 years, religion often is not considered or is considered as a secondary factor in the analysis of her works. In *The Novel and the Oxford Movement* (1965), Joseph Baker argues Yonge emphasizes works and writes a "novel of manners" rather than a "novel of controversy" (110, 111). Her heroines do act more "mannered" than those of Sewell, but a close reading of Yonge's novels shows that she addresses religious controversy, particularly the place and the role of the religious, talented, and intelligent woman. The first major book-length study about Yonge, by Barbara Dennis (1992), focuses on Yonge as part of the Oxford Movement and does not perform close readings of the works. Dennis further downplays what Yonge does say about religion and dismisses references to religious practices. Dennis states: "Often enough the information [about the Oxford Movement] in the fiction is coded, for reticence in religious matters was a firm principle with the Tractarians, and there is never any open discussion of dogma or doctrine, or even observance and custom, in the novels" (2). Dennis emphasizes the use of "domestic realism," which other scholars like Talia Schaffer and Kim Wheatley address in better relationship to religion in more recent scholarship. However, as this chapter will show in more detail, Yonge includes obvious representations of religious practices and a consideration of elements central to the Oxford Movement. While she limits her statement with a suggestion that Yonge's work "merits a deeper reading than this," Siv Jansson writes that Yonge "has a clearly didactic purpose in her work, which is primarily to maintain the status quo" (31). I counter that Yonge sought to maintain the middle class but wanted to uplift the lower classes and to improve the Church of England. For example, *The Daisy Chain* includes criticism of the Church of England and advocates for reform: church building, leadership shifts, and the education of women. While Yonge does not make

radical critiques, her didacticism fits within her larger goals. The more recent book-length critical study by Gavin Budge focuses on aesthetics, realism, religion, and *The Heir of Redclyffe*. As others like Budge have suggested, Yonge's position is more c than being truly antifeminist, and her treatment of religion must be considered when evaluating her stance on women's issues. Focusing on antifeminism ignores the opportunities Yonge offers to her female characters and in turn the readers of her novels.

Unlike Sewell whose novels are still being rediscovered, much more scholarly attention has been given to Yonge's personal life in addition to her expansive body of fiction and nonfiction. To a degree, analysis of her work may have suffered during the past twenty years because of the labeling of her as The Novelist of the Oxford Movement or as antifeminist author. Some may dismiss her as a religious author while others may dismiss her as not contributing to the understanding of women's progress during the century. Not all of Yonge's works focus in an obvious way on the Oxford Movement; however, it must be considered the context of her novels. Dennis explains Yonge's early connection to the Oxford Movement: Yonge comes from a family of "minor gentry and landowners," several of whom were High Church clergymen (Dennis 2). John Keble became the vicar of Yonge's parish in 1836 and supposedly remained in "daily" contact with Yonge for the next 30 years, just past the publication of the last novel considered in this chapter (Dennis 3).²² Because of Yonge's remaining in this geographical region, some have presented her life as dull and limited. For example, Margaret Maison's important early work on religious novels describes Yonge's life as "secluded and uneventful" (31), and Maison suggests

²² As discussed later in this chapter, Yonge's nonfiction writings and autobiography demonstrate that they were not truly in "daily" contact although they were very close.

Keble acted as Yonge's "Pope" and "censored her manuscripts" (31). This depiction of Yonge as redundant to Keble has been continued despite Yonge's actual career history or her comments on her professional relationship with Keble.

Yonge's life was neither secluded nor without major event. Yonge entered fully into popular culture and the religious sphere of her day with her authorship of 200 novels and four decades of editorship of *The Monthly Packet*.²³ If her social life were secluded or limited to Keble's circle, her intellectual output would certainly not be limited or narrow. Unfortunately, much of Yonge's writing and correspondence was destroyed by her biographer, Christabel Coleridge. Dennis suggests that Coleridge particularly worked to "disregard or even suppress [...] Charlotte Yonge's unique significance in the history of the Oxford Movement" (5). For example, Baker's important 1936 work on religious novels downplays Yonge as the novelist of "domestic manners" and propaganda (101) even while saying she "was the greatest of all purely Anglo-Catholic novelists in the Victorian Age (102). Further, as discussed in the introductory chapter, Yonge's work may have been seen as less significant given some scholars considered the Oxford Movement to have ended in the 1840s rather than sustained an influence in the 1850s and 1860s. However, her novels were extremely popular, and the full weight of her influence as editor of the *Monthly Packet* needs further research.

Some scholarly and popular sources heavily weight Keble's influence on Yonge's works and downplay her as an original voice of the Oxford Movement. Dennis calls him "the foremost influence on her literary life" (3). The article in *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*

²³ The Charlotte M Yonge Fellowship provides a list of most of her works at https://community.dur.ac.uk/c.e.schultze/works/all_works_date_order.html.

states Keble “supervised” her writing (Avery). Yonge expands on her relationship with Keble in her essay “Musings over ‘The Christian Year.’”²⁴ Yonge states that one did not look upon Keble as an “external” part of one’s life but as *part* of one’s life (i). She says that she was in “awe” of him from their initial meeting and took great “delight” in spending holidays at events with Keble (ii). Further, she explains she had the opportunity be one of Keble’s “catechuman,” someone in preparation for baptism, and had twice weekly visits with him (iii-iv). This does not appear to be typical for women or young girls; Yonge states that she assumes she was “his first young lady scholar” (iv). However, he appears to have taught her, at least in Yonge’s view, as he would typically do so for any young man. Yonge also gives an autobiographical explanation to one of the religious problems that young people must address in her novels: she felt she had been “*taught* orthodoxly” (emphasis hers) but confused by “the indiscriminate reading of Tract Society books” (iv). The “indiscriminate” reading also appears in Sewell’s novels but is an issue for young men and women in Yonge’s fiction. Yonge states that Keble gave her two warnings: “the one against much talk and discussion of Church matters, especially doctrines, the other against the danger of loving these things for the sake merely of their beauty and poetry” (v). Yonge describes that period in the late 1830s as a time when the church “was still in its positive ugliness, and few advances had been made, but when all was vigour, hope and progress” (v). More importantly, she names the “chief perils” of the Oxford Movement as “unrestrained talk and mere aesthetic admiration” that lead “to false impressions from without, and to unreality

²⁴ An interesting physical detail of the book is that Yonge’s name appears higher up and larger than Keble’s name even though the collection is to honor Keble. The collection was probably published in 1871, but no date is given in the work.

within” (v-vi). Along with the Keble family, her family considered church matters that included architecture (viii), the use of choirs (viii), and schools (xiv), which all appear as concerns in the novels analyzed in this chapter. Yonge does suggest an intellectual intimacy with Keble, who must have influenced her views on religious controversy and practices.

In addition to her praise of Keble and his family, Yonge also gives an explanation of his relationship to her authorship and in doing so counters the depiction of her as his mouthpiece. This is significant when considering the depiction of Yonge as in his shadow. She states that from about 1845 to 1857 or 1860, she “never did any literary work without talking it over with Mr. and Mrs. Keble, referring difficulties to them” and getting “little touches of pencil” or a “list of references” for words and phrases back (xxiv). Significant here is that Yonge appears not to have sought out or received significant suggestions on content, and she describes the influence of the Kebles as “slackened” over time so that she only “submitted passages that might be doubtful” (xxiv). This differs from Wolff’s depiction of Yonge’s work as perpetually under Keble’s editorship (118). Yonge claims that Keble gave the most input on *Conversations on the Catechism*, a work that perhaps more than her others needed a patriarchal “stamp of approval” given its overt theological content. In her explanation of his input, she includes a curious letter as one of several examples of Keble’s influence. She sets up the letter as her understanding how to explain something about religious truth but doing a less than ideal job of doing so. In his letter, Keble gives her ideas for clarification.²⁵ This points to the pressure put upon Yonge to temper

²⁵ The more interesting part of the letter comes at the end, when Keble write that “when the ladies quote Greek, they had not better say they had heard their fathers and brothers say things” (xxvi-xxvii). This shows a clear recognition of women’s capabilities but the need to limit publically their recognition as scholars.

her writings. That said, Yonge gives away rather indirectly that even *Conversations* was not read in whole by Keble. He states in a letter that “I have not seen, as a critic, the whole of it” (xxviii). She states that she does not understand what he means given how much she thought he read. However, she adds that “He certainly did not give advice as to the general plan, or subjects; all he did was to read the proofs and mark what was wrong” (xxix). This brings into question how much of any of Yonge’s works Keble actually read. Yonge claims that he read *Conversations on the Catechism* more than any other work that she read. However, she purposefully includes a letter in which he states he did not read the work. She may have used the selected correspondence to downplay subversively his role in her publishing history.

Some scholars have considered Yonge’s works to be anti-feminist. Revisiting the representation of lived religion in Yonge’s work expands upon previous scholarship on her “feminism” or lack thereof. Wolff’s early reading of Yonge’s novels describes her as “gladly submissive,” and he explains that her books feature “intellectual girls [who] give up their own educational and scholarly ambition if family or church duties call them, and they yield to their brothers” (118). Like Maison, Wolff sees her life as “narrowly provincial” (118). The essays about Yonge in *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel* (2009), edited by Tamara Wagner, focus on gender and domesticity but neglect religion. Four of the collection’s fifteen chapters focus on Yonge. Budge explains:

Critics have often described Yonge as an ‘antifeminist’, but this characterization fails to do justice to the duality of Yonge’s Tractarian position, in which the acceptance of women’s natural inferiority to men is balanced by a claim that this

very physical weakness makes women potentially more receptive to the immaterial intuitions of divine grace. (213)

Budge connects this to the emphasis on women's need for self-control, a "self-discipline [...] rewarded by the quasi-supernatural power of female 'influence'" (213-214). Budge focuses on realism, aesthetics, and typology in Yonge's works and suggests they are not anti-feminist particularly when read in context of the *Monthly Packet*. I agree with Wolff that on the surface, the young women in the novels seem to set aside their cleverness and submit, but they do so with grief and struggle. Yonge does not suggest that the women are inferior, but she does point to how social and familial pressures push women into positions of inferiority. Further, the three novels considered in this chapter all contain men made weak by illness, injury, or loss. The women must provide strength to make up for their deficiencies. Yonge does not present a true antifeminist view but a much more complex view of women's roles.

Yonge not only had views on the role of reading for young women but on the role of reading in promoting morality and religion more broadly. While I want to avoid relying too much on what Yonge said about her own work, an excellent example of her view of her literature comes from her 1870 guide, *What Books to Lend and What to Give*. The 120-page book introduces Yonge's philosophy of the use of reading in a parish and suggests readings on everything from junior classes; religious works; mythology; historical fiction (Walter Scott); fairy tales (Lewis Carroll, Kingsley's *The Water Babies*); science; magazines; penny readings, which were books read aloud and made available to working class audiences (Tennyson Cowper, Hannah More, Shakespeare, Gaskell); and works for boys (Defoe, Stevenson, Verne),

missionaries, and mothers (Gaskell).²⁶ Yonge calls “wholesome and amusing literature” a “necessity among the appliances of parish work” (5). She explains: “The power of reading leads, in most cases, to the craving for books. If good be not provided, evil will be only too easily found, and it is absolutely necessary to raise the taste so as to lead to a voluntary avoidance of the profane and disgusting” (5). Books were the means of “superior cultivation” in her view and the way to avoid “garbage” (5). She thought the establishment of a library near a school could prevent “playing questionable games” at night away from their homes. Thus for Yonge, books could improve morality at even the basic level for all ages. She states that boys should avoid “‘Jack Sheppard’ literature,” and girls should avoid “‘the penny dreadful’” (6). Further, Yonge points to the importance of writing for young women, who she sees as “for the most part indiscriminate devourers of fiction” but for whom there is “more hope” of raising their ideals and refining their notions (10). Yonge was not *merely* a writer for young girls but did write for them intentionally as part of her intent to improve them. She suggests that girls more often than boys “will read simply to pass away the time” (29). She includes some of Sewell’s novels and *The Heir of Redclyffe* and *The Daisy Chain* in a section on Novelettes and Novels for “growing girls” (Yonge 70). Yonge does not seem to intend her works to be for children generally (except for the Langley series) and does express a clear didactic purpose, one focused not simply on religion but on a class-based morality. However, she also seems to intend to make her novels readable and entertaining. In *The Oxford Movement*, C. Brad Faught explains her novels’ popularity: “she made her characters interesting, sympathetic, and virtuous without making them priggish or

²⁶ This is a very small selection of what appears in each section and focuses on the authors most studied today.

propagandistic” (113). His comments feel applicable when comparing the Sewell novels considered in the previous chapter to the ones in this chapter. Gone are the chapters of thinking, talking, and listening as in Sewell; Yonge replaces those chapters with ones full of more traditional novelistic elements like love interests, balls, and potentially heroines who would share characteristics in common with some of the reading audience.

Yonge’s first major novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), was widely popular and includes a theological emphasis on sin as well as representations of lived religion, including sisterhoods and church leadership and management. In her introduction to the novel, Catherine Wells-Cole outlines some of the differences of Yonge’s novel from other popular fiction of the time: it is “concerned with the struggles of religious life, it has no happy ending, it offers only subordinate roles to women” (Yonge, *Heir*, viii). Unlike the other novels considered in this dissertation, the religious life is less of a widespread struggle, and the struggle is that of a man rather than a woman: Guy Morville. The women do not experience the same doubt or struggle with sin as the men do. Wells-Cole grants the novel’s extensive popularity in part because of the character of Guy. Wells-Cole explains that “Guy’s saintly life and early death moved army officers in the Crimea, inspired Morris, Rossetti, and Gladstone and brought pleasurable tears to Jo March, heroine of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*” (Yonge, *Heir*, v). Early analysis of the novel supported him as the “moving” figure of this novel. Margaret Maison explains the novel’s popularity based on Guy’s appeal:

[T]his High Church Heathcliff, this Byron made virtuous, this new type of gentlemen-saint with the passionate temper of a Bronteesque hero, the face of a Sir Galahad and the conscience of a Hurrell Froude, conquered the Victorian

public and drew tears even from readers not possessed of Anglican sympathies.

(33)

Whereas some have found religion to detract from the readability of some of Yonge's novels, Guy's general concern for women in sisterhoods and his concern about sin without much direct reference to the Church of England appear to have appealed to readers and perhaps modern critics. The success of the novel enabled Yonge to help to finance the *Southern Cross*, a missionary ship in New Zealand (Dennis 32). Dennis called *The Heir of Redclyffe* "one of the most popular novels of the century" and "imbued with Tractarian principles (56). The novel, published in 1853, was of course more representative of the later part of the Oxford Movement rather than Tractarianism. Dennis suggests the "Tractarian" ideals of obedience to the church and to parents is "a major part of the plot" (58). However, parents play a minimal role in the novel. The novel is important given its popularity and its support of the establishment of sisterhoods. The novel does not make any particularly pro-woman arguments, but Yonge does offer opportunities for women to take a leadership role in the sisterhood and a spiritual leadership in marriage.

The plot of the novel focuses on "young" Guy Morville who inherits an estate and its spiritual curse. The novel opens with the death of Sir Guy Morville, whose grandson, 17-year-old Guy Morville, inherits the estate and moves to live with his guardians Edmonstons until he comes of age. Guy's cousin Philip Morville also lives with the Edmonstons, including daughters Laura and Amy. Guy's education, though faulty, focuses on ancient literature, and he possesses a depth of feeling and innate talents in things like singing. Guy believes that he has inherited a family curse of bad temper. One relative committed forgery and murder, and the "old" Sir Guy

killed people in duels. Philip and Laura fall in love, but Philip and Guy begin to feud. Two years pass with Guy studying at Oxford and Philip in the army. Guy and Amy become engaged, enraging Philip. Philip's sister Margaret writes of her suspicions that Guy has been gambling, and Guy has recently asked for 1,000 pounds without explaining his purpose. The reader knows that Guy has met with and decided to support the daughter of a man killed by old Sir Guy in her mission to start a sisterhood and hospital. Guy denies gambling but refuses to explain the sisterhood. Philip visits Guy at Oxford and generally covets Guy's position and property. Philip finds nothing to prove Guy a rogue, half proposes to Laura, and leaves for the army. Guy returns to Redclyffe where he plans for improvements to the area, the church, and the school. Right after Christmas, a ship wrecks near his property, and Guy helps to save the lives of all the crew members and is generally considered a hero and "true knight" (285). Other people clear Guy's name of the gambling charge, and he becomes engaged to Amy. Philip is upset, but the wedding moves forward. The narrative skips forward two months to Amy and Guy in Europe where they meet up with Philip. Philip wants to guide their travel to an area with fever; they refuse, but Philip goes and falls ill. Guy nurses Philip back to health but contracts the fever and dies after revealing to Philip the truth about the sisterhood. Amy returns to England and has a baby girl, and Philip inherits Redclyffe. Philip and Laura become engaged but delay marriage, and Philip takes a parliamentary seat before falling ill again. Amy and her brother Charles, an invalid, go to Redclyffe to nurse Philip back to health. Philip and Laura marry, and Amy remains single and a companion to Charles. Because of their hidden love and half-engagement, Philip and Laura live somewhat unhappily ever after.

While ancestral sin and sisterhoods take a more important role when considering religion in the novel, the use of the parish church also introduces several key religious controversies critical to the Oxford Movement. The church in Coombe Prior is run by a “fox-hunting parson” who lives six miles away and gallops over for the services. Yonge here stresses the importance of local involvement. The foxhunter’s absence and a general deference in the community to traditions set by dead religious leaders prevent progress in Coombe Prior. The town as well as the church are in a state of degradation. Yonge gives this description:

Wild-looking uncombed women, in garments of universal dirt colour, stood at the doors; ragged children ran and shrieked after the coach, the church had a hole in the roof, and stood tottering in spite of rude repairs; the churchyard was trodden down by cattle, and the whole place only resembled the pictures of Irish dilapidation. (Yonge 244)

In the same sentence, Yonge links personal poverty to Catholicism (Irish dilapidation), church architecture, and poor agricultural practices. However, her solution is simple: Guy helps to establish Ashford, a young “energetic” clergyman. The clergyman starts daily services and wants to set up a Sunday School for which a second teacher would be needed (Yonge 250). Markham, the keeper of the Redclyffe properties, has prevented some of this progress, but Guy sees to the hiring of the teacher. The Ashford family wishes to live closer to the church in order to establish a Sunday school, and Guy enables this. Yonge further connects the funding of a sisterhood to improvement for the town. Yonge writes: “he had made up his mind what was the first step to be taken about Coombe Priory, and had remembered with rejoicing that whereas he had regretted leaving the chapel at college which had so comforted and helped him, there was now daily

service at Redclyffe Church” (252). In addition, Guy sets up Mr. Wellwood in a curacy at Coombe Priory after he takes orders. When dying, Guy reveals that he has taken on Wellwood’s pay himself and wishes for Philip to continue the practice in addition to respecting practical needs of the people (for example, not creating a park where they liked to “turn out” their donkeys). While Guy’s day-to-day involvement with the parish church remains limited while he lives, he demonstrates a financial concern for the people, and the few scenes of him at a church show it as a place of spiritual renewal for upper-class characters and stability, and class improvement for lower-class ones.

Guy’s work to help the Wellwood sisters establish a sisterhood in order to benefit the lower classes plays an important role in the novel’s plot. However, Yonge sets up discussion of sisterhoods as socially inappropriate and rarely mentions them directly. However, she includes enough information to make clear to readers what she is discussing. In Rene Kollar’s book on Victorian convents, she explains people opposed sisterhoods due to “alleged evils” like “physical and spiritual abuse,” “the unnatural character of celibacy and sisterhoods,” and “other questionable practices” like “vows, auricular confession, liturgy” and more (xi). Kollar explains that some critics pushed for state inspection, which becomes more important in Yonge’s *The Clever Woman*. Livia Woods further explains the role of sisterhoods in the novel as “vital yet unimpinging,” “an ideal vision of what Anglican Sisterhoods might be to British Society” (156). *The Heir of Redclyffe* introduces sisterhoods without naming them directly. For example, in a letter to Philip, his sister Margaret explains:

“There are two Miss Wellwoods here, daughters of that unfortunate man who fell in a duel with old Sir Guy Morville, who seem to make it their business to

become the general subject of animadversion, taking pauper children into their house, where they educate them in a way to unfit them for their station, and teach them to observe a sort of monastic rule, preaching the poor people in the hospital to death, visiting the poor at all sorts of strange hours.” (177)

Margaret suggest others admire them but clearly dislikes them herself, and she never directly references the concept of a sisterhood. The Wellwood sisters work directly with poor girls and engage in activities heralded by the Oxford Movement such as preaching to and visiting with the poor. In response to “the sin, and misery and ignorance” around her, Elizabeth Wellwood develops a scheme of “the foundation of a sort of school and hospital united, under the charge of herself, her sister, and several other ladies, who were desirous of joining her, as a sisterhood” (Yonge 197). Guy asks about startup costs and came up with “a bright scheme,” for which he requests from his financial guardian without explanation £1,000 (Yonge 197). He reveals to the public the use of the money twenty chapters later in the novel when writing his will: he leaves five thousand pounds to Wellwood. After Guy’s death, Margaret states that “everyone” has been talking about Guy’s will and his intent to establish a convent. She says, ““The last story I was told was, that it was £20,000, to found a convent to pray for his grand—”” (Yonge 448). Philip counters the money goes to the hospital not the “convent,” but Guy does not say so in the course of the novel. Further, Philip cuts off Margaret as she enters into the suggestion that Guy wished to participate in a Catholic practice: the nuns praying for a dead relative. Philip’s counter negates Guy’s intents to form a convent, but the reader, who has been set up to admire Guy and distrust Philip, knows Guy’s intent. The sisterhood becomes Philip’s project. He remains depressed and takes his only pleasure in the building of the sisterhood (Yonge 452). Further, he exerts himself

only when “folly in conversation” occurred related to the building or Wellwood’s project: “he silenced some of the nonsense talked about her, and evinced his own entire approval of the proceedings” (452). While Yonge references other topics like music repeatedly in the novel, the sisterhood plays a major role without being a major topic of conversation. Guy’s request for the money to fund the sisterhood spurs Philip’s dislike of him, and Guy’s revelation of the purpose of his request acts a moment of reappraisal and conviction for Philip. While the novel emphasizes the spiritual lives of Guy and Philip, Yonge emphasizes the opportunity for and the importance of sisterhoods. She downplays the role of male clergy and expands the understanding of the context of the Oxford Movement by providing an opportunity for female religious leadership.

Yonge also uses Philip to emphasize the role of personal influence in society and of inappropriate male influence over women. Philip and Laura’s non-engagement love affair drags on for much of the novel as he stalls a formal engagement and urges hiding the relationship. Several things prevent their relationship in his views: Philip is about 22 years old to Laura’s 17 at the start of the novel, and he has little property or means to earn any. The major critique of their relationship comes through the engagement of another character. A minor character, Lady Eveleen or Eva, is the daughter of Lord Kilcoran whose house in Ireland the Edmonston family visits regularly. Previously, Guy recommends the sons of Lord Kilcoran study with Wellwood, but Philip recommends a tutor whom Guy dislikes. The tutor, Mr. Fielder, is ugly and does a poor job at managing the boys. However, Eva rejects an engagement to a wealthy man of her station in favor of an elopement with the tutor. She justifies her choice by citing the hidden engagement of Laura and Philip. Philip sees himself particularly to blame for Eva’s decision and

Laura's poor influence. He blames his emphasis on their relationship as hierarchical with him as the one to be respected. Philip tells her:

“It was the fault of our whole lifetime, Laura [...] I taught you to take my dictum for law, and abused your trust and perverted all the best and most precious qualities. It is I who stand first to bear the blame, and would that I could bear all the suffering! But as it is, Laura, we must look to enduring the consequence all our lives, and give each other what support we may.” (Yonge 517)

To a degree, this scene supports the reading of the novel as advocating deference to paternal authorities, but ultimately, the hidden engagement rather than disobeying a parent's order causes pain. Laura seems to regret but justify her “blind obedience” to him, but Yonge's narrator states much more “peace and truth” exists between them with Philip's being removed from a position of awe for Laura (517). Yonge certainly keeps Laura in a subordinate role as the wife of a landowner and politician, but Laura's position elevates from earlier in the novel when she considers Philip an all-encompassing expert whose word she should follow. Following his ideas about delaying and hiding their attachment creates disorder in the family and overturns social and class norms for the Kilcorans. In his reading of this scene, Budge points out that Yonge includes a discussion of idolatry in the *Monthly Packet* in 1855, and the articles set up women as particularly at risk (185-186). Budge explains the description of idolatry in the *Monthly Packet* “carries an implicitly feminist message—although men may be ‘guides’, their advice is to be regarded critically in the light of religious teaching, something which Laura has singularly failed to do in the case of Philip” (186). Laura must reject her idol. However, the novel shows no other “religious teaching.” Church attendance and prayers can be assumed to exist for Laura, but

Yonge does not include didactic scenes in which Laura is “taught” not to idolize men by a patriarchal figure. Unlike Sewell, Yonge de-emphasizes the importance of some of the smaller religious practices. Instead, Yonge warns her female readers against indiscriminate male influence and the dangers of idolatrous romances.

More importantly, the novel focuses on the influence of sin and its origins, and suggests the importance of engaging in positive religious practices as an opportunity for spiritual renewal. Early in the novel, Guy reveals some peculiarities such as his refusal to play games like billiards. The reader learns that Guy believes in a form of ancestral or inherited sin: he tells Amy and Laura that the “sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children” (63). He sees this as part of the Redclyffe Curse of bad temper. This plays into the title of the novel as the “Heir of Redclyffe” in that Guy feels he has inherited not just the Redclyffe property but the Redclyffe temperament. He insists he bears a striking resemblance to old Sir Hugh, but when Amy sees the portrait of him, she sees few similarities. Instead, Philip looks more like Sir Hugh, and, of course, Philip must live with the burden of the Redclyffe Curse. Charlotte, the youngest Edmonston daughter, says that Guy does not wish to keep up the “deadly” feud between the Morvilles who were the ancestors of Philip and the Redclyffe Morvilles. Charlotte rather simply says, “it was very wrong, and ought not to be kept up now” (77). When they begin to argue, Philip insists that Guy keeps up the feud rather than himself, but the reader knows of Philip’s snubs and dislike of Guy. Yonge then uses a type of spiritual and non-violent feud rather than a traditional duel. Philip wounds Guy with letters and with rash statements about him, and Philip kills Guy in a way due to Philip’s refusal to listen to reason and his continued distrust of Guy and subsequently Amy. After Philip’s first written and personal attack on Guy’s character, Guy questions: “Was the

Redclyffe doom of sin and sorrow really closing in upon him?" (Yonge 243). The narrator answers that chapel and study sustain him. He also participates in a series of good acts that work to restore him if not spiritually then publicly. These include the rescue of the men involved in shipwreck but of course the forming of sisterhood and taking on a ward as well. The rescue of the men restores Guy's reputation, but Yonge points to the private religious practices as restoring and improving Guy's character and spiritual life.

Finally, while the novel focuses in the first three quarters on the development of the male characters, Yonge gives Amy a more prominent role in the final sections as she comforts Philip after the death of Guy, refuses to take the property from Philip, and acts as a caregiver to her brother. The old Sir Guy entailed the property to male relatives to spite a female one. Philip offers to restore the property to Amy, but she refuses to "burden" her child with the lands and money. Others have seen this as anti-feminist, but Amy seems to see wealth and property management as potentially decreasing her or her child's happiness. She has enough money to be comfortable and has a space in her parents' home as her brother's caregiver. Further, Amy's financial concerns are practical. On the estate, Philip's sister points out to him the difficulty of managing such a large property without much ready money, which Amy would lack. More importantly, Amy provides the example of the appropriate way to act in the novel. Philip calls Amy an "angel of pardon and peace" (481). He does so within the context of speaking of her kindness and her choice to retreat from public life. Because of this, Amy does seem to most closely reflect the Angel in the House. She offers support and gives forgiveness. She rarely complains and questions nothing. Further, when she is depressed after the death of her husband and the birth of her child, Charles suggests additional duties at home would improve Amy; she

does improve in spirits during her increased role caring for him, her baby girl, and the household while her parents travel. Unlike Yonge's later heroines, Amy takes no public action and has no role in the public sphere. Her duty as a widow is entirely within her family's home as she does not even participate in guiding the sisterhood funded by her husband's estate. This makes a sharp contrast to Rachel, the central character of *The Clever Woman*, and to Ethel in *The Daisy Chain*.

In her preface to *The Daisy Chain, Or Aspirations*, Yonge describes the book as "neither the "tale" for the young, nor the novel for their elders, but a mixture of both" (Vol. I, v). The book began as a "series of conversational sketches," according to Yonge, but "outran both the original intention and the limits of the periodical in which it was commenced" (Vol. I, v). Her original readers of the multi-volume work would have been familiar with the central characters of the May family. Like Sewell who emphasizes early inclinations as part of character formation, Yonge sees the novel as:

a domestic record of home events, large and small, during those years of early life when the character is chiefly formed, and as an endeavour to trace the effects of those aspirations which are a part of every youthful nature. That the young should take one hint, to think whether their hopes and upward-breathings are truly upwards, and founded in lowliness, may be called the moral of the tale. (Vol. I, v-vi)

For Yonge, the book's audience splits between the young who would see the various personal and vocational decisions made by the children of the novel, and parents or guardians who would guide young people to "upwards" pursuits. The novel acts as a type of coming-of-age novel that would also entertain those guiding the ones who come of age. Yonge offers a variety of pursuits,

including naval, medical, and religious, for her characters, but the religious pursuits receive the most positive attention. However, the suggestion of pursuing a religious vocation comes alongside warnings about venturing too far into religious controversy (for men) or too far from one's home and family duties (for women). In contrast to the view of Yonge as uncritically supportive of the Oxford Movement, in this novel she warns against its potential to create doubt or to distract women from their expansive if stifling duties.

The Daisy Chain follows seven years of the lives of the May family beginning with a carriage accident and ending with the coming-of-age of the central characters. Yonge spends most of the novel on the oldest of the eleven children: girls Margaret, Flora, and Ethel; and boys Richard, Norman, Henry, and Tom. The carriage accident kills the mother and injures Margaret, who remains disabled until her death at the end of the novel. The action of the book follows the development of the children under the not-so-watchful eye of their father, a doctor. Invalid Margaret becomes engaged to a seaman who dies. Agnostic Flora marries a gentleman, George Rivers, and gives birth to a child who dies. Ethel helps to found a school and church at nearby Cocks Moor. Religious Richard becomes the curate at Cocks Moor. Studious Norman nearly loses his faith at Oxford but holds fast to become a missionary in New Zealand with his wife, Meta Rivers, the sister of Flora's husband. Rambunctious Henry goes to sea with the seaman who dies; however, he lives to return and become famous. Dutiful Tom follows in his father's business to become a doctor. The book follows most closely Ethelrod ("Ethel"), who begins as a tireless academic, keeping pace with her older brothers, but ends caring for her family and doing charitable work to support the school and church at Cocks Moor. However, sections of the book present the adventures and misadventures of the siblings as they attend school, form alliances,

and determine their futures. The family borders on middle to upper middle class as the characters interact with the upper classes in their area and only nominally mention nurses and other household staff. The doctor, though, can only afford to send so many boys to school; the family is not wealthy. The book retains the limited point of view of Ethel and spends the most time on her life as a bright, religious young woman who must determine her duty and role.

As in Sewell's novels, Yonge diminishes the role of the professional male religious figure. The vicar retires during the course of the novel, but only the father, Dr. May, seems to care because of loss of tradition. The vicar plays no real role in the lives of the children or the family as a whole. At the end of the book, the new vicar is of interest in as much as his job could have belonged to one of the May children, and only at the conclusion of the novel does the action defer to church authority. However, the authority at that point is also a sibling, Norman, who is presented as the best possible counselor for Flora, who is agnostic for much of the book. Mr. Wilmot, who takes over the vicarage at the end of the novel, is more intimate with the family. Yonge describes the schoolmaster Mr. Wilmot as a close family friend to the Mays. He visited every "ten to twelve days," "was Mary's godfather, and their most intimate friend in the town, and he had often been with them, both as friend and clergyman, through their trouble" (Yonge, Vol. I, 176). Further, Mr. Wilmot rather than his brother the vicar remains in the area for the holidays. He involves himself in the community in an active way, unlike the vicar. Dr. May describes the vicar as "indolent enough by nature, and worse with gout" and unable to help with the situation at Cocks Moor (Yonge, Vol. II, 151). Further, Mr. Wilmot does the curate's work without pay and despite much "mistrust" from the Vicar. Given Yonge's emphasis on Cocks Moor, she subtly critiques the leadership of the church with a suggestion that those unable

to care for local people or those who rely on curates a bit too much should retire and give way for a younger generation. She does not suggest giving leadership to the youngest religious figure, Richard, given his inexperience. She instead suggests a gentler transition. Clergymen act as part of the general society and take a minor role in family life. Despite her proximity to Keble, Yonge does not give male leadership an unchecked supremacy in the lives of her characters.

Much of the religious debate in the novel focuses on the impoverished region of Cocksmoor: church building, church staffing, architecture, caring for the poor, and missionary work. One of the characters describes the city as “a bad wild place for a girl to grow up” (Yonge, Vol. I, 30). A foreman tells the boys “of the lawlessness of the people” (Yonge, Vol. I, 31). Yonge explains there is “no visible means of improvement” given the distance of the parish church, the poor living, and the appropriation of the tithes to a monastery. Further, Yonge writes that the church has “fallen into possession of a Body that never did anything for the town” (Vol. I, 31). The incumbent “had small means, and was not a high stamp of Clergyman, seldom exerting himself” and leaving the work to the schoolmasters, of which Mr. Wilmot was one. Yonge’s narrator states “There was no hope for Cocksmoor!” (Vol. I, 31) In the next line, Ethel counters the narrator and states “There would be a worthy ambition [...] to build a Church on Cocksmoor!” (Vol. I, 31) The book then considers the means of building a church: Flora considers a subscription, and Ethel considers writing to pay for the church (the central character in *The Clever Woman* attempts both methods for another purpose and fails). Yonge uses a series of lower-class people to illustrate the problems of Cocksmoor: a lack of education, a lack of health resources, and a lack of caring from those who live in the wealthier cities surrounding the town. For example, a young boy stops Ethel and Richard and asks them to visit his grandmother

who lives in a “hovel,” “groaning over the fire” with half-clothed children on a bare floor (Yonge, Vol. I, 69-70). She refuses to leave for the hospital, given no one else could care for the children, and the family lives off the wages of a teenage brother. When Ethel and Richard leave, Richard remarks: “A wretched place [...] I don’t know what help there is for the people. There’s no one to do anything for them, and it is of no use to tell them to come to Church when it is so far off, and there is so little room for them” (Yonge, Vol. I, 70). Ethel resolves to make Cocks Moor “a Christian place” rather than a place where “hives of children grow [...] up in heathenism” (Yonge, Vol. I 70). She vows to see Cocks Moor have “a Church and a Clergyman”, and since she cannot give money, she realizes that she has time and intellectual ability to “give” (Yonge, Vol. I, 72). She aims to set up a Sunday school with Richard but sees by the end of the novel that Sunday Schools are insufficient. She explains there is:

“Such want of truth, such ungoverned tongues and tempers, such godlessness altogether! It is only surface-work, taming the children at school, while they have such homes; and their parents, even if they do come where they might learn better, are always liable to be upset, as they call it--turned out of their places in church, and they will not run the chance.” (Yonge, Vol. II, 214).

While the Oxford Movement emphasized the necessity of Sunday Schools, Yonge here argues for a permanent church with official, recognized leadership through the Church of England as necessary. In several of the religious novels, including Sewell’s *Gertrude*, women may not lead churches, but they do help to found them.

The establishment of a church opens the novel for Yonge to discuss church architecture and philanthropy. Stoneborough, where the May family lives, is set up as a contrast, a “a fine old

town” (Yonge 10). The town includes convent buildings, and a school, “which had survived the Reformation, and trained up many good scholars; among them, one of England’s princely merchants” (Yonge 10). In contrast, Cocksmoor lacks the historical buildings and the opportunity provided by tradition and history. For example, the boys at the school aim to attend Oxford on a scholarship given to a Stoneborough boy, but no such scholarships would exist for Cocksmoor. Yonge suggests church architecture is a wide interest in the novel. Margaret even says “Architecture is all our rage at present” (Yonge, Vol. II, 362). In the building of the church, they bring in French church adornments. When giving a tour of the finished building, Ethel explains “Old Mr. Rivers, knowing no better, once bought all the beautiful carved fittings of a chapel in France” (Yonge, Vol. II, 365). While Yonge seems to grant that Rivers could have “known better” than to buy carvings from a Catholic chapel, Yonge suggests the decorative elements improve the church. Julie Melnyk explains that “The rise of ritualism in the latter half of the century contributed to a trend toward more elaborate decoration of church interiors” (75). The Cocksmoor church also has stained glass and interior woodworking that resemble the ribs of a ship. Finally, the church is built in a two-aisle plan, which was standard, but with the opportunity for a third-aisle. Interestingly, while the novel ends with church architecture, the novel’s opening pages address home “architecture.” Yonge describes the May home as typical, with the girls “in such a room as is often to be found in old country town houses” (Vol. I, 2). The fireplace has Dutch tiles with scriptural references, and schoolroom furnishings appropriate to the middle or upper middle classes: three desks, a globe, a piano, “loaded book-cases,” and additional chairs (Yonge, Vol. I, 2). The May home appears throughout the novel as Yonge stresses the private versus the public places. Margaret as an invalid often remains in the private

places away from public involvement and available only to her family members. Indeed, much of the above description of the church comes from Margaret's viewing of a model of the church rather than actually visiting the building. She literally looks upon a church from within a home.

The book also includes positive numerous references to missionary work. In her article on Melanesia, the island region in the Pacific Ocean, and *The Daisy Chain*, Talia Schaffer connects England to New Zealand. She argues that "the Loyalty Islands are repeatedly and explicitly connected to a fictional impoverished hamlet in England called Cocks Moor; the two dangerous spaces are reformed simultaneously and by the same set of characters, using the same techniques" (205). Schaffer explains that Yonge had a personal connection with George Augustus Selwyn, the first Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, and wrote his biography in the 1870s (204). The novel uses the Loyalty Islands as the location of the rescue of one of the brothers and where Norman decides to go as a missionary. Most of the references come at the end of the novel. Teresa Traver builds upon Schaffer's work and suggests that the novel works to "remake colonial endeavours into religious projects" (264). For example, Harry doodles religious and national symbolism onto his work (Traver 263), and the physical salvation of Henry in the tropics comes from a missionary. Traver and Schaffer both see the Loyalty Islands as connected to Cocks Moor for Yonge as sites of opportunity for missions work. In contrast to the suggestion that missionary work leads to death in *Jane Eyre*, *The Daisy Chain* presents missionary activity as positive and important work for men and women.

While a brother goes to be a missionary, Yonge spends more time considering the role of women's work in the church. For example, Ethel reads sermons at home to Margaret, participates in building work, and helps with a school. Yonge ultimately suggests long-term

teaching fits a professional schoolteacher rather for a middle to upper-middle-class girl like Ethel, who remains involved instead in charitable work. In her article on professionalization in *The Daisy Chain*, Leslee Thorne-Murphy emphasizes the role of philanthropy, particularly the Stoneborough ladies' fair that raised money for the Cocksmoor school and church. While noting the role of religion in Yonge's life, Thorne-Murphy emphasizes the nonreligious role that charity can take and did take in Yonge's life. Importantly, Thorne-Murphy shows how Yonge linked charitable work to marketing as part of a "seamless whole" of literary works that needed to balance the role of professional women with the role of religious women (895). However, religious controversy does underpin the bazaar scenes and can provide an even deeper reading of how Yonge needed to manage her reputation as a non-professional religious leader. In the bazaar scenes, Yonge splits the charitable duties between Ethel and her sister. In doing so, the book emphasizes the demands of sociable charity versus "on the streets" charitable work with the poor. Ultimately, the sociable charity becomes unsustainable for Flora due to her pursuit of charity for social standing rather than to benefit society. Later in the novel, Yonge suggests that women can take on leadership roles. The women who spar over the management of the Stoneborough Sunday School and interfere with Cocksmoor are set into leadership positions of clubs or lending libraries. Even Ethel is "surprised to find how much unity of action was springing up now that the period was over, of each "doing right in her own eyes" (Yonge, Vol. II, 216). Further, Yonge points to the necessity of providing opportunity to women to remain active outside of the home. In what initially reads as a sexist statement, a doctor friend from London says: "when women have enough to do, they are perfectly tractable" (Yonge, Vol. II, 317). In that line, Yonge suggests the answer to the problem of women fighting about church

business or interfering in charitable actions: give the women more to do. Yonge finds women to be capable of church work and business, and she suggests sociable charity like bazaars or subscriptions and fund raising ultimately fails women in that they lack adequate amounts of meaningful work to do.

Yonge's treatment of young women's participation in the church must be understood within the context of religious controversy and how it functions in the novel. Yonge further stresses women's capabilities with her depiction of Ethel's intelligence. Ethel attempts to "keep up" with her brother's schooling, to operate a Sunday School, to find a way to start a church, and to maintain her household duties given the invalid state of her older sister and death of her mother. Ethel first fails to maintain her studies and then nearly kills the baby, who is burned by the fireplace. In an important conversation at about the midpoint of the book, Margaret and Mr. Wilmot discuss Ethel within the context of her failure to watch the baby. Margaret describes the church at Cocksmoor as Ethel's "great wish" and "a sort of call" but questions the appropriateness of taking on "so much" at her age (Yonge, Vol. I, 191). Wilmot counters:

"There seems to me to be such a spirit of energy in her, that if she does not act, she will either speculate and theorise, or pine and prey on herself. I do believe that hard homely work, such as this school-keeping, is the best outlet for what might otherwise run to extravagance--more especially as you say the hope of it has already been an incentive to improvement in home duties." (Yonge, Vol. I, 191)

Ethel's work in Cocksmoor then suppresses her desires to go beyond her "position" as a woman and improve her ability to focus on her duties at home in a more effective way. Wilmot sees the school as an opportunity and positive outlet for Ethel, and he warns against "prudent friends,

who dread to let young people do anything out of the common way” (Yonge, Vol. I, 191).

Margaret counters that “Still girls are told they ought to wait patiently, and not to be eager for self-imposed duties” (Yonge, Vol. I, 191). However, Wilmot states that while that would be nice for girls, that is not effective and causes unnecessary trials. Yonge gives a cautionary support to girls, even teenage ones, having religious calls, and generally supports these women taking action without interference of their friends. Yonge does not wholeheartedly support these actions given the conversation between Wilmot and Margaret, but Yonge seems to suggest no alternative exists to give women a position within the church. She opens the concept of a “call” to women rather than just men and suggests the call can benefit rather than detract from other duties to family.

Yonge also sees scholarship and academic pursuits as available to women as long as they retain a careful attention to balance. Ethel and Norman both suffer due to their over-attention to academic studies. Both of them must find a balance. Norman over-indulges in unnamed inappropriate books at Oxford. Dr. May states: ““Foolish boy, what business had he to meddle with those accursed books, when he knew what they were made of--it was tasting poison it was running into temptation! He had no right to expect to come out safe--”” (Yonge, Vol. II, 229). For Ethel, the balance must fit reasonable expectations for a girl of her age and class. Margaret scolds Ethel as she advises her not to attempt to “keep up” with her brother, Norman. Margaret explains:

You see Norman is much cleverer than most boys, and you are a year younger; and besides doing all his work at the head of the school, his whole business of the day, you have Cocks Moor to attend to, and your own lessons, besides reading all

the books that come into the house. Now isn't that more than is reasonable to expect any head and hands to do properly? (Yonge, Vol. I, 228)

While setting up limitations on Margaret, Yonge first acknowledges her capabilities. Ethel has been doing all of Norman's schoolwork despite not attending school and being involved in childcare and charity. Norman eventually has a mental breakdown from academic overwork. Margaret further explains: "[...] we all know that men have more power than women, and I suppose the time has come for Norman to pass beyond you. He would not be cleverer than any one, if he could not do more than a girl at home" (Yonge, Vol. I, 229). However, Ethel counters that he has more time to study. Yonge allows that women do have the capacity to maintain the same academic standards but lack the time to do so. Margaret grants that Ethel may be able to keep up but would need to live life in a rush and hurry to do so. She asks: "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" (Yonge, Vol. I, 229). Margaret sets up a generational shift with this comment: Ethel's dead mother wishes for a certain "sort" of woman, but that mother, as representative of her generation, has died. The father, who at times stresses punishment over nurturing, takes less of a role guiding the children than Mr. Wilmot.

The generational push for a woman constrained to being a good daughter or wife gives way in this novel to a woman who will do more. For example, Ethel later in this conversation asks if she must give up learning Greek and Latin, and Margaret says that Ethel can continue learning but should consider fixing a time such as thirty minutes for the pursuit of languages. Ethel is not pushed to give up her charitable work but to give up pursuing an equal education with her brother. While Patmore's *Angel in the House* cleaves to her husband's breast, Yonge

does not see marriage as the end-point for Margaret or Ethel. However, at this midpoint in the novel, Margaret seems to take the position of the Angel in the House or act as a representative of ideal single womanhood more generally. As an invalid, she acts as the static, moral compass for the household and takes the maternal role vacated by her mother's death. The mother and Margaret act as the "death angels." Gilbert and Gubar explain that death angels like Eva from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* must "surrender" self. They enact a positive influence but are removed from the action of the novel in order to do so. Margaret as an invalid particularly examples this as a character who provides spiritual guidance while supporting her father. However, by the end of the novel, Ethel takes up the mantle of ideal womanhood, an ideal that does not constrain her to being the married or maternal Angel in the House. Instead, she must balance her duties with her talents and her religious "call." Gilbert and Gubar write that "Honorias essential virtue, in other words, is that her virtue makes her man 'great'" (22). Ethel does support her brother, but her essential virtue and her attention to religious practices are not tied to making a man great. Her virtue comes in her own actions and living up to her own duty, a concept that becomes more important and sophisticatedly argued a decade later in *The Clever Woman of the Family*.

Yonge's novel *The Clever Woman of the Family* includes a series of "clever" women, but of them, Rachel appears at the center of the narrative. While some (Wheatley, for example) have read the novel as featuring a small group of types of clever women, the book begins and ends with Rachel's life, and most of the major points of action center around her. The novel focuses on a small community of characters: Rachel; her mildly impoverished sister and mother; Rachel's widowed cousin Lady Fanny Temple; Fanny's husband's friend Colonel Keith; his brother Alexander "Alick" Keith; Keith's socialite and debt-ridden sister Bessie; Fanny's

governess's sister and invalid Ermine, who was engaged to Colonel Keith; and finally Ermine's disgraced brother Edward. Rachel attempts to counsel Fanny on parenthood when Fanny returns to their neighborhood after the death of her husband. Rachel also writes about religious controversy and related matters in journals to help sustain the family. Unknown to her, Ermine acts during part of the novel as a temporary editor of the journal. When Colonel Keith and his brother appear to assist Fanny and her seven children, Rachel is highly suspicious of military society. She is surprised to discover Alexander, or Alick, has earned the Victoria Cross for bravery. In order to solve the local problem of young girls making lace in poor conditions, Rachel opens the Female Union for Englishwoman's Employment (F.U.E.E.). She appoints a man, "Mauleverer," who had been painting near her mother's house and whose name appears in the Clergy List (however, as a cathedral canon in 1832, a date that hints at his lies). He and his lover, Maria, neglect and starve the children. Lady Temple removes the children, and Rachel decides to use homeopathy to cure what turns out to be diphtheria. The child, Lovedy, dies, and Rachel feels immense guilt. Mauleverer turns out to be Maddox, who swindled Edward, whose position is righted. Rachel marries Alick, and they spend a portion of their honeymoon tour at his uncle's parsonage near where his sister Bessie has moved after marrying Lord Keith (the uncle of Colonel Keith). During a croquet match, Bessie trips over a croquet hoop, gives birth, and dies. Rachel cares for the infant and realizes all the errors of her clever women ways before she gives the baby to Ermine, who marries Colonel Keith. Given the discovery of Bessie's financial debts and flirtations suggests the need for her to die, the novel ends happily for all the major characters.

Like Yonge's earlier novels, her approach to religious practices and religious controversy takes a partially critical approach of the Church of England. Like in Sewell's *Margaret Percival*, the local religious authority, Mr. Touchett, lacks the skills or the mental ability to lead and to direct smart members of the community to appropriate behavior or belief. However, readers must balance what Yonge presents about Touchett and what Rachel unfairly says about him. Touchett focuses on the attention of female parishioners, engages in frivolity like playing croquette, and does little to stimulate the intellectual pursuits of Rachel. In short, he lacks the capacity to "put her in her place." The novel gives an explanation for this deficit: in short, he was all they could afford. While Yonge does not say so directly, she implicitly attacks the Church of England and its reliance on lesser educated curates. The use of curates was a priority for members of the Oxford Movement. The Additional Curates Society sought to prevent the use of laymen (Faught 114-115). Keble supported the ACS, which emphasized social responsibility, particularly in urban areas (Faught 115-117). Touchett fails in social responsibility, removing himself from the need to meet the wants of even the young girls involved in lacemaking. In contrast, the full member of the clergy reads Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, engages in deep and independent thought, and focuses on his parishioners' needs rather than on activities that might earn him acclaim. Further, Mauleverer is listed as a cathedral canon, something readers would have understood to be a lay position. Rachel fails in not finding out Mauleverer's true identity and further fails by trusting, essentially, a layman. Yonge's positive model of a clergyman critiques established views of the Oxford Movement, and she does so by suggesting a hierarchy of religious practices. Study and education should come before focusing on external matters for the purpose of external and often female praise.

Focusing on the religious themes in the novel helps to explain the sense that others have noted that Yonge prioritizes male church or government authority as ultimate and necessary forms of guidance, a contrast to the earlier novels of Sewell. One of the main plays upon this idea in the novel is that of Curatolaty, a word invented by Rachel, who wants to write an article about the concept for a journal called *The Traveler*. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a later date than Yonge's novel as the first recorded use of the word. In the 1871 reference in the OED, the author who uses the word Curatolaty discusses a curate as a type of matrimonial shark who seeks the attention of wealthy girls. Rachel first uses the word Curatolaty to describe the "mission" of those ladies who idolize their clergyman, in Rachel's sister's case, Touchett. Yonge describes Touchett as "small, dark, thin young" man who felt nervous about shaking hands with Rachel. Rachel criticizes him for being "not born a gentlemen" and states "his mind does not measure an inch across" (Yonge 59). When Lady Temple compliments his gentlemanlike behavior, Rachel counters that his behavior is just such as to "delight" those "curatolattress[es]." Further, he focuses on a small choir, which Rachel sees as a waste of time. Readers would understand that Yonge supports the implementation of choirs but also wishes for attention to education. The danger of Touchett's actions lies not in the choir but in his reasons for setting one up. Yonge writes: "One deemed praise in its highest form the prime object of his ministry; the other found the performance indevotional [sic], and raved that education should be sacrificed to wretched music" (98). He does not privilege the internal and introspective devotion important to those involved with the Oxford Movement, but he instead seeks outward attention and praise. Like the character in the later reference in the OED, he is also single and surrounded by single women of greater fortune than his own, and Rachel states that the young women would be in "a

flutter at the approach of the spruce little figure in black” (Yonge 99). He does not represent an ideal clergyman or an ideal masculine man like Alick or Colonel Keith; Yonge instead presents introspective Mr. Clare as the ideal. No young women flit about him. Yonge further writes: “[...] so many volunteers were there for parish work, that districts and classes were divided and subdivided, till it sometimes seemed as if the only difficulty was to find poor people enough who would submit to serve as the corpus vile for their charitable treatment” (99). Touchett’s church has an active membership, which Sewell and others of the Oxford Movement thought would improve the congregations and communities. However, people have joined for the external recognition and as a form of praising Touchett rather than out of a true charitable impulse. In the novel, the community’s seafaring men and lacemaking women needed charity, but Yonge explains they were given “over-visiting, criticism of dress, and inquisitorial examinations,” which had resulted in “more than one Primitive Methodist” (99). Touchett has attracted volunteers but not put into place a meaningful system of reform, which Yonge presents for poor girls and women as either sisterhoods or making use of already established charitable organizations. Yonge presents no explicit solution to the problem of a poorly prepared curate other than removing oneself as a parishioner from the situation. Outside of the scope of this novel, Yonge does suggest reading can correct misinformation, though. In *The Clever Woman*, Yonge suggests those who live in Touchett’s parish are simply resigned to their fates, but she gives Rachel an opportunity to leave and find a better outlet and control for her intellectual and religious energies.

The problem of Rachel’s cleverness, her intellectual abilities in particular, gives the novel its title and acts as one of its other major themes; I suggest the theme of the clever woman is

ultimately a religious rather than a pre- or anti-feminist problem. In her useful analysis of the novel as a type of domestic fiction and a type of didactic work, Kim Wheatley argues that “a woman’s cleverness requires both masculine and divine guidance” in Yonge’s most conservative novels (895). Wheatley, like others, has read *The Clever Woman of the Family* as an anti-feminist novel. Jane Sturrock connects the problem of cleverness to the want of work, which Rachel needs to keep herself busy as well as to support her family (“Something to Do”). However, Rachel ends the book a non-working and subservient wife, the clever woman brought low in a revision of Austen’s *Emma* (1816). Sturrock explains about the *Emma* connection: “Both novels connect the qualities and the position of their protagonist’s vitality, a privileged position, and comparative intellectual isolation with the blunders on which their plots depend” (“*Emma*,” 326). Sturrock reminds readers of Eve Sedgwick’s reading of *Emma* in which the reader takes part in “the spectacle of the Girl Being Taught a Lesson” (qtd. in Sturrock, “*Emma*,” 329). Unlike Emma, Rachel has public projects to do and more avenues to display her creativity, particularly in the press. She hopes to prevent romantic relationships rather than create them. Yonge directly references Austen when Ermine tells Rachel: “In Miss Austen’s time silly girls ran to balls after militiamen, now, if they run to schools and charities more for the curate’s sake than they quite know, is not the alternative better?” (104) The humor in the line comes in that Rachel does “run” to schools and charities as the solution to her perception of the problem of poverty and servitude. Further, Rachel “runs” without any patriarchal guidance, which the novel implies could have prevented her from trusting the swindler characters. The main male swindler had also tricked men, but the novel assumes a greater capacity to detect error among those working for the Church of England. Given Ermine’s position as the idealized invalid and true

clever woman, Ermine's comment affirms Rachel's critique of Curatolatry, but Ermine does not see the pursuit of poorly motivated charitable work as problematic. Instead, Yonge uses Ermine to suggest that most religious practices offer viable opportunities for women.

Yonge suggests being a clever woman arises from one's nature as well as how one has been nurtured. Rachel then not only possesses a natural intellect but has been positioned as the "clever" one in her all-female family. After Colonel Keith says Rachel resembles Ermine before her accident, Ermine explains:

"all that is unpleasing in [Rachel] arises from her being considered as the clever woman of the family; having no man nearly connected enough to keep her in check, and living in society that does not fairly meet her. I want you to talk to her, and take her in hand." (Yonge 168)

Later, Ermine tells Bessie that Rachel's capabilities burden her. However, Yonge uses this moment to emphasize how one's community can shape one's character; Colonel Keith tells Bessie: "Quite true. She has always been told she is the clever woman of the family, and what can she do but accept the position?" (Yonge 274). Cleverness brings about several problems: Rachel cannot support herself by writing and fails at teaching. Yonge explains: "The Clever Woman had no marketable or available talent" (374). Rachel longs for something to do, but she lacks the guidance or the full knowledge and worldliness necessary to do things like set up a charitable organization on her own. Yonge does not seem to suggest the failure comes from Rachel's incapacity but from her lack of training. However, being a woman—even one so influenced by one's nature and one's community—does not absolve Rachel from responsibility when the F.U.E.E. fails. Colonel Keith states, "This Clever Woman has managed matters so

sweetly, that they might just as well try her as him for obtaining money on false pretenses” (Yonge 364). Yonge then uses the courtroom scene to humiliate Rachel in public fashion and to demonstrate to all of the community the limits to Rachel’s cleverness. Rachel’s interest in medicine further emphasizes this point. When Lovedy dies, Rachel takes the power upon herself: using “women’s arts” of homeopathy rather than relying on traditional, therefore male, medicine. In contrast, near the conclusion of the book when Bessie dies, married Rachel takes a position not of authoritative force or doctor, but of friend, sister-in-law supporter as she has learned to recognize her mental and personal limits.

Religion and marriage act as a counter to being brought low in a public fashion. Rather abruptly, Rachel and Alick become engaged and marry. As part of their honeymoon, Rachel and Alick go to the parsonage of his uncle Mr. Clare. There, Rachel realizes more fully her position: “Rachel felt her flight of clever womanhood had fallen short. It was quite new to her to be living with people who knew more of, and went deeper into, everything than she did, and her husband’s powers especially amazed her” (Yonge 445). Here, Yonge moves the burden of failure onto Rachel’s community; she was surrounded by inferior minds and kept—for example Touchett restricted the lending library—from expanding her own knowledge in appropriate ways. This echoes back to the importance of reading the right sort of books in Sewell’s *Margaret Percival*. However, Margaret had access to texts unavailable to less affluent Rachel, and Margaret had a man’s access and collection. Rachel does not have a man, a patriarchal leader, to gain access to controversial and important texts. Instead, she has access to serialized publications that also accept her as an author. In short, she is the cleverest of the bunch besides Ermine, who is not particularly close to Rachel. While Rachel’s marriage marks the moment that Rachel can be

restored to her position in the community, Rachel's true improvement comes when she learns how to care for others as an essential religious practice.

Chapter XXX, called "Who is the Clever Woman?" directly establishes that the true clever woman has always been Ermine. Granted, Ermine is in the same community with the same lack of access to intellectual works. However, she is not widely considered by the community as THE clever women. Like Margaret in *The Daisy Chain*, Ermine is also an invalid and removed from some of the day-to-day pressures of social calls and charitable work. In this chapter, during a discussion of the improvement of Rachel after her marriage, Colonel Keith suggests that Ermine could write an article called the "Benefits of Ridicule," which Ermine counters could be "Against Clever Womanhood." Colonel Keith sees the trial as having improved Rachel given that she has been brought down from her original perceptions of herself. However, Ermine explains: "[...] chief of all the pleasures has been the sight of Rachel just what I hoped, a thorough wife and mother, all the more so for her being awake to larger interests, and doing common things better for being the Clever Woman of the family" (Yonge 545). Being a clever woman is not a fault for Rachel or for Ermine. Being a married mother has turned the fault of being a single, financially needy, and clever woman into a benefit as Rachel and Ermine can do more good.

The book does not end the problem of cleverness here, though; instead, Yonge introduces the reader to the next generation of clever women and suggests how her education can be made better than the education available to Rachel. Rachel and Alick have a child, eight-month-old Una, who can impressively speak clearly and identify all of her letters at an age most cannot

walk or speak. Their conversation emphasizes that Rachel's "plodding" intellect could be a problem for their infant as well:

"I am between the horns of a dilemma. Either our young chieftain must be a dunce, or we are rearing the Clever Woman of the family."

"I hope not!" exclaimed Rachel.

"Indeed? I would not grudge her a superior implement, even if I had sometimes cut my own fingers."

"But, Alick, I really do not think I ever was such a Clever Woman."

"I never thought you one," he quietly returned.

She smiled. This faculty had much changed her countenance. "I see," she said, thoughtfully, "I had a few intellectual tastes, and liked to think and read, which was supposed to be cleverness; and my willfulness made me fancy myself superior in force of character, in a way I could never have imagined if I had lived more in the world. Contact with really clever people has shown me that I am slow and unready."

"It was a rusty implement, and you tried weight instead of edge. Now it is infinitely brighter." (Yonge 546-547)

Rachel does not wish the weight of cleverness upon her own child, and her husband supports her by stating that he never found her very clever. Rachel smiles at his statement but explains very softly that she is clever but "slow and unready." Still, Yonge preserves the idea of a match in which the man has a superior intellect or at least training. Thinking and reading have not made Rachel clever, given the deficits of her character. Marriage, motherhood, and patriarchal

guidance have made Rachel truly clever in that they have improved her character so that she can see her faults and intellectual needs. Alick agrees that her mind has become brighter, and Yonge gives Rachel the potential for future greatness as a woman who does possess an intellect. The novel ends with Rachel telling Alick: “[...] may she never be out of your influence, or be left to untrustworthy hands. I should have been much better if I had had either father or brother to keep me in order” (Yonge 547). Rachel hopes that Una will capture Ermine’s cleverness despite her preference that Una not be clever. He replies:

“You are right. If we are to show Una how intellect and brilliant power can be no snares, but only blessings helping the spirits in infirmity and trouble, serving as a real engine for independence and usefulness, winning love and influence for good, genuine talents in the highest sense of the word, then commend me to such a Clever Woman of the family as Ermine Keith.” (Yonge 547)

Yonge emphasizes her point that cleverness is not the problem; lack of paternal guidance and misapplication are the problems. On duty, Budge explains:

Ultimately, the concepts of ‘duty’ and ‘obedience’ represent for Yonge the attainment of an absolute existential authenticity, although the conservative social and religious message of her fiction is that this personal authenticity is more likely to be attained within existing forms than by following potentially delusive individual feelings” (285).

The church and her community have failed Rachel, but she has found a new purpose and duty in motherhood. Importantly, Ermine did not need marriage to become clever. Rachel needed the shift in her personal position given her failure to establish a school or to support her family.

The novel addresses two other elements central to women's issues and the Oxford Movement: the use of reformatory homes for poor girls' education and the opportunity for women to join a sisterhood. Jane Sturrock explains that sisterhoods enabled "the church more effectively to educate, nurse, and generally help the poor" in addition to providing "for certain women a channel for their energies, by broadening their narrow range of opportunities, and perhaps more importantly demonstrat[ing] that the church supported women's claim to effectiveness and responsibility" ("Something to Do," 29). She sees Yonge as expressing the frustrations of "being without appropriate work" in *The Clever Woman* (36). Further, Sturrock--in her reading that focuses on Rachel and the Woman Question--points out that Yonge considers Rachel's activities appropriate "if suitable (religiously) done" (38). However, Yonge's use of sisterhoods extends beyond Rachel's own problem of what to do. Indeed, the novel only briefly mentions sisterhoods, but Yonge does so at an important moment. Maria worked as a nanny but tormented her charge in addition to enabling the robbery and disgrace of her employer before the start of the novel. In the novel, she runs the day-to-day operations of the F.U.E.E. After being imprisoned, she eventually joins a sisterhood where "temptation will not again be put in her way" (Yonge 502). Yonge suggests the sisterhood offers a near-imprisonment that is preferable for a woman like Maria who has succumbed to "temptation" multiple times. This shifts from Yonge's more positive representation of sisterhoods in *The Heir of Redclyffe*. A sisterhood is never an option for Rachel or the other middle-class, single women in the novel. Instead, Yonge keeps them active within their communities in a public way, including by publishing in magazines.

Rachel's work with the F.U.E.E. reflects the concerns of the Oxford Movement as well as the ultimate failure of Rachel. She saw the F.U.E.E. as the solution to the employment of a group of young girls in lacemaking. The woman to whom they were apprenticed worked the girls in a "sort of cupboard" for 10 hours a day. Lovedy, the girl who dies, was the brightest of the group, but her reward books from Sunday School were taken from her and sold. The "lace mistress" points out that the learning has "spoilt" her (Yonge 100-101). The F.U.E.E. was to offer an apprenticeship in wood cut printmaking. The F.U.E.E. does not fall under any official church supervision, given the limited the distance to the nearest parish (12 miles). Rachel sets up a type of limited supervision with the couple who supply the coal. Further, Yonge explains, "Clerical interference was just what Rachel said she did not want; it was an escape that she did not call it meddling" (239). The home was for three young girls (Lovedy, Maria's daughter, and a widow's daughter), and Rachel attends to things like the look of the home and the beds. Yonge gives numerous warning signs like the girls' inability to return home for the holidays, the refusal of admittance of visitors, and the probable plagiarism of woodcuts shown as proof of the progress of the establishment. However, Rachel is not worried, and no one else steps in to interfere until the reader discovers too much time has passed to save the young girls from death. Yonge critiques Rachel's management in addition to the lack of a guiding religious establishment in that town as the leadership may have helped avoid that outcome. Of course, the leadership in Rachel's town does not or cannot help Lovedy. Rachel and Fanny assume that Maria, known as Mrs. Rawlins, will care for the spiritual guidance of the young girls:

Mrs. Rawlins, whose husband had been a trained schoolmaster, was to take the children to church, and attend to their religious instruction; indeed, Mr.

Mauleverer was most anxious on this head, and as Rachel already knew the scruples that withheld him from ordination were only upon the absolute binding himself to positive belief in minor technical points, that would never come in the way of young children. (Yonge 241)

However, Maria (Mrs. Rawlins) has been selected by Maddox (Mr. Mauleverer) for her discretion rather than her actual ability to instruct anyone. Using the awareness of clergymen having left the Church of England because of doubts related the Oxford Movement, Maddox basically “shrugs” away his lack of ordination. Rachel does not question this in her eagerness to set up the F.U.E.E. quickly and with as little interference as possible. While the novel does importantly address the perceived problem of the Surplus Woman and her work, for Yonge, Rachel’s work connects to her desire to take part in religious activity, which includes bettering the life of bright Lovedy. Of course, Rachel’s interference results in the literal death of Lovedy rather than figurative salvation from the lower class.

In contrast to Rachel’s work, Yonge gives the work of two men as an example of the appropriate way to set up a charitable endeavor. Rachel begins by soliciting donations; the men begin with planning. Unlike Rachel’s F.U.E.E., which seems to come together at a whim, Yonge points out the “infinity” of labor put in by the two men who start the new convalescent home. As Wheatley notes, the convalescent home creation attaches to male effort rather than female output. Further, the more official nature of the home meets the expectations in the 1850s for additional oversight, as addressed earlier in the chapter. The two men spend four years to create a convalescent house with a matron and a dozen young girls. A Sergeant watches the male convalescents, and the Colonel Keith and Ermine, now his wife, supervise everything. Yonge

quips that Rachel can now practice what she learns from books on childcare on the youngest girl. Rachel is demoted from originator to a redundant helpmate dependent on popular books. However, Yonge does not limit all women from active participation and leadership; invalid Mrs. Ermine Keith retains an important position. Livia Woods, in her readings of sisterhoods in Yonge's novels, argues that Yonge gives the "possibility of spiritual vocations for unmarried and widowed women" in contrast to Patmore's angel who blesses "her husband's home" (155). Rachel is limited in her opportunities for a spiritual vocation not because of her marital status but because of her personal failures and personality. As a married woman, she still seeks to implement a bookish knowledge even at the end of the book. The novel suggests opportunities for women outside of marriage but ultimately limits the ideal for moral, middle-class women to marriage and work alongside a man.

In conclusion, analyzing the representations of lived religion and religious practices in this sample of Yonge's most important early novels shows how some in the Oxford Movement prioritized religious practices and speaks to the role of women in the movement. First, Yonge's treatment—even more so than Sewell's—of invalids complicates the understanding of the Angel in the House. While some may assume that the mother should be an Angel in these novels, invalid 20-something women like Margaret in *The Daisy Chain* and Ermine in *The Clever Woman of the Family* takes that position instead. Additional work on spiritual invalids could help to explain religion and disability in the nineteenth century and improve understandings of the religious Angel in the House. Second, Yonge's novels ultimately seem uneasy with the position of women. She grants them limited public power but full personal possibility. She removes male authority figures but prevents women from taking on "men's" roles besides that of publishing, a

public power which Yonge assumed for herself. Gilbert and Gubar argue that Yonge, like Home Lee and Mrs. Craik, “strenuously suppressed awareness of how their own professional work called into question traditional female roles” (Gilbert and Gubar, 169). However, Gilbert and Gubar suggest duplicity does exist. This duplicity may be most obvious in the works where Yonge contrasts an Angel in the House character with a “wish to be a man” character. Further, this chapter demonstrates how Yonge does confront some of the limitations to her heroines rather than participate in an “exuberant evasion of the inescapable limits,” as Gilbert and Gubar state (169). Through this small sample of her work, one can see how Yonge’s views changed on women’s position. In *The Heir of Redclyffe*, she recommends sisterhoods and sets up marriage and motherhood as positive for one of the female characters. In *The Daisy Chain*, Ethel is as smart as any of her brothers and faces the distasteful challenge of sacrificing one duty for another, given the pressures put upon her as the oldest non-invalid sister. In *The Clever Woman of the Family*, Rachel’s work as an author is questioned for some of its play upon words but not for its role as a means of support for her or Ermine, who acts as a publication editor and is revered throughout the novel. Yonge’s works do not suggest a static anti-feminist view but instead a view that changes from the 1850s to the 1860s. As further work on *The Monthly Packet* and Yonge’s other novels becomes more available, I suspect Yonge will increasingly be seen less as anti-feminist and more as complex in her views on women’s position and the opportunities that should be offered to them.

Finally, while she may be called “The Novelist of the Oxford Movement,” Yonge does not uncritically accept of all Keble said. Yonge’s relationship to him and her editorial interactions with him were more complicated than has been previously suggested, and additional

archival work could expand upon their intellectual relationship. Her support of the Church of England does not mean that she dismissed doubt or saw agnosticism or a struggle with sinful behaviors as outside of the norm for a religious family. Yonge does not simply fictionalize Keble's "National Apostasy," his most famous sermon. Instead, as she writes about and for young women thirty years later, Yonge considers how women should practice religion, approach their roles in the family, and manage varieties of doubt about the role of religion or their role in the religious hierarchy. By downplaying the role of male clergymen in the novel, Yonge emphasizes personal introspection, and by focusing more on plotting and character development, Yonge focuses on entertaining as well as educating her readers.

CHAPTER 4

MARGARET OLIPHANT'S CARLINGFORD CRITIQUES OF THE CHURCH

“Perhaps you can reconcile freewill [sic] and predestination—the need of a universal atonement and the existence of individual virtue? But these are not to me the most difficult questions. Can your Church explain why one man is happy and another miserable?—why one has everything and abounds, and the other loses all that is most precious in life? My sister Mary, for example,” said the Curate, “she seems to bear the cross for our family. Her children die and yours live. Can you explain to her why? I have heard her cry out to God to know the reason, and He made no answer. Tell me, have you the interpretation? [...] You accept the explanation of the Church in respect to doctrines, [...] and consent that her authority is sufficient, and that your perplexity is over—that is well enough, so far as it goes: but outside lies a world in which every event is an enigma, where nothing that comes offers any explanation of itself; where God does not show Himself always kind, but by times awful, terrible—a God who smites and does not spare. It is easy to make a harmonious balance of doctrine; but where is the interpretation of life?” (Oliphant, *Perpetual Curate*, Vol. III, 112-114)

“Not that I object to Mr Beecher because he is a Dissenter,” Mr Morgan said, “but because, my dear, you know, it is a totally different class of society.” (Oliphant, *Perpetual Curate*, Vol. II, 155)

“You have been behind the scenes too much perhaps,” said Sophy Dorset, shrugging her shoulders, “but don’t think any worse of the world than you ought, if you can’t think very much better. No class is good or bad, Ursula. Men are but men all over the world.” (Oliphant, *Phoebe, Junior*, 338)

In the Chronicles of Carlingford, Margaret Oliphant gives her “interpretation of life,” in which class, career, and faith matter in foundational ways. Unlike those of previous religious novelists, her characters face deeper, darker questions about doubt and the role of the church, but she places those issues within larger, more sensational and realistic plots. She also demonstrates that men are men, and while some may be in different classes in the church or in society, they are still subject to life and death, and happiness and misery. Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant’s work

has undergone revival. Perhaps because of the elusiveness of some of Oliphant's statements on religion and her own history switching from Presbyterianism to Anglicanism, some scholars consider religion not even as secondary but as unimportant in her works. The major exceptions are the book-length studies by Elisabeth Jay and Birgit Kämper; several other scholars have considered religion in specific ways like the use of the prodigal son or the role of the clergy. However, scholars sometimes consider her an "outsider" Scottish Presbyterian, despite the fact she spent her adulthood as an Anglican and sent her children to schools affiliated with the Church of England. Kämper's book (2001) on class, religion, and gender in the Carlingford series looks at the intertextuality of Oliphant's work and provides excellent readings that connect the works to extensive outside sources. However, she does not include religious novelists like Sewell or Mrs. Ward, and Kämper only briefly considers Yonge, whose novels Oliphant references within her work. Similarly, Elizabeth Jay's earlier important book-length analysis of Oliphant references Yonge in a footnote. This chapter places Oliphant within the context of the body of religious novels. Reading Oliphant's work within this literary context expands on Kämper's useful analysis of religious controversy in Oliphant's work. For example, while Kämper sees the references to religious doubt as a problem in Oliphant, characters in Yonge and Sewell express much deeper doubt or even agnosticism. My analysis focuses on a selection of works from Oliphant's *Chronicles of Carlingford*, which address a variety of religious controversies, including conversion to Catholicism, the role of Dissent, the importance of and timing of visiting the sick, and sisterhoods. In contrast to Sewell and Yonge, Oliphant focuses less on duty and more on career and political opportunity for men and for women. While the heroines of novels by Sewell and Yonge struggle with their own religious beliefs and their roles

as women in the Church of England, Oliphant focuses on the social and professional lives of clergymen and of women who chose to marry clergymen or politicians as an opportunity to effect the change that the Church of England has been unable to achieve. In doing so, Oliphant's selection of solutions and positive religious practices aligns her with the Oxford Movement and demonstrates a consistent argument in favor of practical religious skills like comforting the sick and dying. While she notes a decline within the Church of England, she suggests that crossing the boundaries of class, poverty, and religion, and reducing emphasis on scholarship can improve the church and its reach. Although others suggest Oliphant does not take a position in religious controversies, I argue that her position as generally pro Church of England or possibly even pro High Church can be seen by examining religious practices within the context of the Oxford Movement. Further, this chapter reflects on the role of gender and sees Oliphant within the tradition of religious novelists for the Carlingford series as opposed to another realist or a "community builder" like Eliot.

While Oliphant saw her own life as rather uneventful, she made a significant literary contribution and financially supported herself and her family with her literary career. In the introduction to the most recent revised edition of Oliphant's autobiography, Elisabeth Jay gives a useful brief biography. Merryn Williams published a longer biography in 1986. Margaret Oliphant Wilson Oliphant was born in Scotland. Williams explains Oliphant probably did not attend school but did have the benefit of her mother's expansive literacy and access to authors like Shakespeare and Scott (8). In 1843, her parents joined the Free Church of Scotland (Jay, "Introduction," 8-9). Williams explains that while Oliphant felt enthusiastic about the Free Church as a teen, she regretted its divisiveness as an adult (6). After marrying her cousin Frank

in 1852, she gave birth to six children, four of whom died in infancy. The two boys who survived depended upon her financially before their deaths in their 30s. Oliphant sent her sons to Eton, affiliated then as now with the Church of England. Before her marriage, she began writing for *Blackwood's Magazine*. Her husband created stained glass windows until he became ill. Once he could not work, the family relocated to Italy where her husband died, leaving her pregnant with their final son and stranded in Italy. Oliphant published to support her family, before and after the death of her husband. Jay states that Oliphant wrote "some 98 novels, 50 or more short stories, nearly 400 articles, and 25 non-fiction works, including biographies, literary histories, and historical guides to great cities" (Jay, "Introduction," 8). At least an additional 25 fictional works have been discovered and made available since Jay wrote. For example, additional short stories have been discovered in American publications in the past five years.

The popularity Oliphant enjoyed in the second half of the nineteenth century faded quickly in the early 1900s, and she perhaps became best known for a time as the subject of Virginia Woolf's criticism. Jay explains that Oliphant's novels remained popular through the end of the nineteenth century, but the "tide of literary fashion turned more swiftly against her," given Oliphant wrote, like Dickens, for a general audience (Jay, "Introduction," 21). However, Oliphant's "general audience" was the same as that of canonized authors; George Eliot and Oliphant both published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Further, those subject to Oliphant's literary criticism seem to have turned against her after her death. Jay quotes Henry James, who after Oliphant's death wrote in her obituary, "I should almost suppose in fact that no woman had ever, for half a century, had her personal 'say' so publicly and irresponsibly" (qtd. in Jay, "Introduction," 21). Jay also notes that Thomas Hardy, who praised Oliphant in 1882, called her

literary criticism “the screaming of a poor lady in *Blackwood*” in 1912 (qtd. in Jay, “Introduction,” 21). Famously, in *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf uses her as an example of wasted genius. Woolf first establishes that Oliphant was “an educated man’s daughter who earned her living by reading and writing” (84). Oliphant’s father worked as a clerk and was unable or unwilling to provide an education for his daughter. Woolf states that by earning a living, Oliphant supported herself and educated her children, but Woolf notes that Oliphant did little to protect her “culture and intellectual liberty” (84). Woolf writes:

Has it not on the contrary smeared your mind and dejected your imagination, and led you to deplore the fact that Mrs. Oliphant sold her brain, her very admirable brain, prostituted her culture and enslaved her intellectual liberty in order that she might earn her living and educate her children? (84)

Woolf suggests Oliphant wrote for necessity and profit—committing an “adultery” of the brain—rather than for any greater good. In her biography of Oliphant, Williams further suggests that the financial and familial demands upon Oliphant prevented her from ever writing a masterpiece (xi). However, Oliphant set out to write as a career, and some scholars seem particularly harsh in noting her personal life and need for money as an impediment when they may not do so with writers like Hawthorne. Further, Elsie Michie’s book, *The Vulgar Question of Money*, suggests that Oliphant saw a literary career as a “professional like any other” rather than a selling out of one’s brain, as Woolf suggests (177). She points out that Oliphant sees taking a salary for work as an acceptable middle-class option (Michie 177-178). The role of work and women’s careers appears frequently in the *Chronicles of Carlingford*. Earning a living and educating one’s

children does not seem to be a failure for Oliphant's male or female characters, but a necessity for the children of poor managers of money, for non-heirs, and for unmarried women.

Perhaps because of the legacy set up by authors like Hardy and Woolf, Oliphant's writing attracted little scholarly focus until the mid 1980s. An excellent example of the disinterest in her work appears in the missing years in John Stock Clarke's bibliography's table of contents. He refers to the period from 1904-1948 as the "Extinction of Mrs. Oliphant" and has no section for the period from 1948-1967. In 1967, one dissertation was published on her criticism; QD Leavis also wrote on Oliphant during this time. Attention to Oliphant's work increased in the late 1970s and 1980s. However, Jay notes that the first wave of feminist scholars did not pay much attention to Oliphant's writing:

Partly because her novels did not consistently supply the "images of strong women" then in vogue; partly because her analysis of women's disempowerment seemed unattractively conservative; and partly because, with the virtual disappearance of her work from library and bookshop shelves, potential readers relied upon the opinions current at the time of her death and looked no further.

(Jay, "Introduction," 22)

Interest in Oliphant's work has been renewed since the mid 1990s. Jay notes that four conferences on Oliphant took place in 1997, and since the publication of Jay's work, editions of Oliphant's work and the digitization of her texts have expanded readers' and critics' ability to reevaluate her output. For example, "The Margaret Oliphant Fiction Collection" Web site—which declares "This brilliant Victorian novelist is popular once more!"—has 176 of her fictional works available to read online. Jay and Joanne Shattock, among others, have edited and are

currently releasing a six-part, 25-volume critical edition of Oliphant's fiction and non-fiction. Expanded availability of those volumes and increased cataloguing of Oliphant's writing in publications like *Blackwood's Magazine* and other publications may increase the ability to assess her work.

Oliphant's church affiliations changed throughout her life, but she seems to have spent most or all her adulthood as an Anglican. Jay's book includes one chapter on Oliphant's religious life, and William's biography includes some brief details about religion. As mentioned earlier, Oliphant's parents were Scottish Presbyterians. Several scholars use Oliphant's biography of Presbyterian minister Edward Irving as proof of her beliefs. Knight and Mason suggest Oliphant of critiques his Evangelicalism as "arrogant" in believing he possesses a more "authentic Christianity" than other believers (Knight and Mason 122). Some scholars seem to note her biography of Irving as support of her interest or belief in Scottish Presbyterianism. However, I argue this dismisses Oliphant's choices as an adult as she joined the Church of England. In his early work on her, Robert Wolff writes that Oliphant "worshipped in the Church of England all of her mature life [and] took no sides in the internal Anglican controversies" (157). While she focuses on realism in her novels, I argue she does favor the High Church. Knight and Mason explain Oliphant attended Christ Church, a central location for the Oxford Movement and attended by Pusey and Rossetti (98). Her selection of where to attend services and where to send her sons to school points to a High-Church affiliation.

The novels considered in this dissertation fall into the period when Oliphant was affiliated with the Church of England, although her later work shifts away from some traditional church doctrines. Oliphant's later fiction, written after the period considered in this chapter,

shifted to the supernatural, including ghosts and spirits. Susan Colon points out that Oliphant made vague comments about spirituality and religion, particularly in her 1895 article “Fancies of a Believer” (66). For example, Oliphant writes that her religious beliefs could be considered “not what is called orthodox, nor is it unorthodox,” but she affirms the “core doctrines” of the Church of England (qtd. in Colon 66). Even in her shift away from the Church of England, she aligns herself with it.

Returning to the period considered in this chapter, Oliphant’s shifting affiliation seems to have enabled her to critique abuses within the church and to refute Dissent. Elisabeth Jay’s analysis of Oliphant’s magazine articles about religion gives more useful evidence than the biography. As the close readings in this chapter support, Elisabeth Jay suggests Oliphant disliked doubt (139), ignored disbelief (140), saw the “average worshipper’s need” as important (140), disliked excessive focus on scholarship (141), and disliked Dissent (146-147). In her analysis of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*, Wilson suggests Oliphant’s “Presbyterian background enabled her to see that in England the established church was closely involved with the status quo and that Dissenters were made to feel socially inferior” (71). However, as this chapter shows, Oliphant does present Dissenters as “socially inferior.” In *The Perpetual Curate*, the rector states that he does not object to the Dissenting minister “because he is a Dissenter” but because “it is a totally different class of society” (Oliphant, Vol. II, 155).

Within the history of religious novelists, Oliphant has been considered in rather secondary ways. The early important religious novel scholars like Maison and Wolff saw her as an outsider or as shallow in comparison to other Victorian religious writers. However, the two early critical works discussed earlier in this dissertation do make excellent if brief points on

Oliphant's writing. For example, Maison writes "Mrs. Oliphant's many scenes of Nonconformist life are extremely entertaining, but from a religious point of view her novels lack depth. Like Trollope, she is interested in the social rather than the spiritual life of her ministers and their congregations" (193). In comparison to an author like Sewell, Oliphant does focus on social interaction and wider religious, personal engagement. Sewell's main female characters are of the most religious interest in her novels; Oliphant often focuses on clergymen and how they live their social and professional lives. Oliphant spends less time on inner thoughts and includes details that emphasize without heralding scholarship as in Sewell and Yonge. Yonge's positive clergyman figure in *The Clever Woman* seems buried in his translations and books. Oliphant makes an argument through the Carlingford series that the social practice and involvement in one's community matters as much as or more than the inner, spiritual and hidden lives. As a second example of early critical response to religion in Oliphant, Wolff presents Oliphant as "An Outsider's View" on the Church of England (154) and sees the Carlingford series as the best of her work.

Recent scholarly approaches to the Chronicles of Carlingford have considered the works as participating in the realism wars, as revisiting the marriage plot, or as presenting a type of parable. Joseph O'Mealy has noted that Jerome Meckier's book on rivalries and the realism wars fits Oliphant's reworking and interaction with Eliot and Trollope (Meckier does not include Oliphant). Meckier sees "nineteenth-century British fiction [...] as a honeycomb of intersecting networks" within which authors "rethink and rewrite other novels as a way of enhancing their own credibility" (2). Notable is that Oliphant rewrites Yonge in the Chronicles of Carlingford, particularly in *Phoebe, Junior*. Given Meckier's argument, Oliphant could be seen as rewriting

and rethinking within a vein of religious fiction. Meckier suggests one should consider the “veracity” of the realism of the authors and ask oneself as a reader which version “most closely reflects the actual world” (3). Michie argues that Oliphant uses the thinking of John Stuart Mill in order to critique the marriage plot. About the *Chronicles of Carlingford*, Michie writes “In her later novels [Oliphant] moves beyond the sentimentality inherent in the marriage plot by representing the choice of spouses as a matter of rational calculation rather than emotional impulse” (Michie 142). Michie sees Oliphant as “consciously” addressing “the overlap [...] between economic self-interest and marital choice” (143).

Not only women but also clergymen must make pragmatic decisions about money and love. In *The Perpetual Curate*, the main character must consider finances, future career options, and his position as the third son when deciding whether or not to marry. Another way that Oliphant incorporates religious discourse is through the use of parable. In her article on Oliphant’s use of the prodigal son, Susan Colon suggests Oliphant uses “the parable in her fiction to think through moral, relational, and existential dilemmas” in an autobiographical way (63). Colon suggests that Oliphant, like Yonge, used the parable as a form “for simultaneously challenging casual or platitudinous religious conventions and for affirming distinctively Christian truth claims about the nature of God, the power of forgiveness, and the possibility of repentance” (91). Colon focuses on the prodigal son in *The Perpetual Curate*, but sons separated from their fathers also appear in *Phoebe, Junior*. Joseph H. O’Mealey has written on the representation of clergymen in the *Chronicles of Carlingford*. He argues Oliphant’s abilities can be seen in “her creation of clergymen who accurately reflect the mixed impulses of the mid-Victorian churchman, alive to the competing claims of professional achievement and spiritual

calling” (“Scenes of Professional Life,” 246). Referencing Showalter’s work, O’Mealy suggests that Oliphant, unlike Sewell or Yonge, did not want to be a clergyman. Like O’Mealy, I focus on the religious practices as representations of belief. This chapter expands on his reading to consider not only her depictions of clergymen but also her references to other religious practices and controversies.

Oliphant published the *Chronicles of Carlingford* from 1861 to 1876. “The Executor” (1861) and “The Rector” (1861) are novellas or longer short stories, and they were followed by *The Doctor’s Family* (1861), *Salem Chapel* (1862), *The Perpetual Curate* (1863), *Miss Marjoribanks* (1865), and *Phæbe, Junior – a Last Chronicle of Carlingford* (1876). Everything but *Phæbe, Junior* was published serially in *Blackwood’s Magazine*. In her autobiography, Oliphant calls the body of work “a series pretty well forgotten now, which made a considerable stir at the time, and almost one of the popularities [sic] of literature” (*The Autobiography*, 135). At the time, readers and critics connected the series to the work of George Eliot. John Blackwood published Eliot as well as Oliphant. When Oliphant started on her longer *Chronicles of Carlingford* fiction, she told Blackwood she was “hoping no one will be imagining me to be copying George Eliot” (qtd. in Williams 43). When people assumed Eliot wrote the anonymously published *Salem Chapel*, Williams points out Oliphant took the connection as a compliment, while Eliot reacted in a less flattering manner. Eliot wrote:

I am NOT the author of ‘The Chronicles of Carlingford’. They were written by Mrs Oliphant [...] I have not read ‘The Chronicles of Carlingford’ but from what Mr Lewes tells me, they must represent the Dissenters in a very different spirit from anything that has appeared in my books. (qtd. in Williams 57)

After the publication of *Salem Chapel*, Blackwood gave Oliphant the large sum of 1,500 pounds for *The Perpetual Curate* (Wilson 58). *Miss Marjoribanks*, which Wilson calls Oliphant's most comic novel of the series, was written after the death of her daughter and while Oliphant lived in France with her two remaining children (65). The novels also resemble Anthony Trollope's *Chronicles of Barsetshire*, which were published from 1855-1867. O'Mealy explains that *Phoebe, Junior* particularly resembles Trollope's *The Warden* in that both have clergymen in peril about career selection and use forgery to further the plot.

Religion in the series has been considered, but using the lens of lived religion and focusing on religious controversy within the context of other religious novelists expands upon the two major readings of religion in the novels. Oliver Lovesely's article on Victorian sisterhoods provides an excellent summary of the lack of scholarship on religion in the *Chronicles of Carlingford*:

Margarete Rubik, for example, has argued that "Oliphant cannot really be regarded as a religious writer" (226), and Lance St John Buffer that neither *The Rector* nor *The Doctor's Family* "is a religious novel in the usual sense of the term" (15); for John Stock Clarke, in *Miss Marjoribanks*, "[t]he religious theme is ... of no importance" (5), and Elizabeth Langland's study of this novel and *Phoebe Junior* does not touch on the novels' religious context. (21)

In contrast, Lovesely sees the *Chronicles of Carlingford* as "religious novels, engaging themes from the genre of popular religious fiction, though frequently setting them on their head" (21). Kämper's analysis of religion in the series leads her to argue that the representations of religion must be considered as ironic. Kämper sees the depictions of Dissenters as relatively fair and

those of clergymen as balanced. She suggests “Margaret Oliphant does not try to get across a clear-cut message. Quite to the contrary, her use of irony enables her to avoid unequivocal narratorial guidance” (110). Kämper sees Oliphant as rising above commonplace arguments or firm divisions. However, I suggest the turn away from Dissent in *Phæbe, Junior* by a major character and the focus on the High Church Anglican clergymen as superior does place Oliphant in a clear religious position.

Not all of the Chronicles of Carlingford take up religion explicitly. For example, “The Executor” focuses on a lawyer, a family that does not inherit, his eventual engagement to that family’s daughter. Some of the novels seem more like a “clergyman novel” akin to the style of Trollope rather than the “religious novels” of writers at the time like Yonge and Sewell. The first five works (“The Executor,” “The Rector,” *The Doctor’s Family*, *Salem Chapel*, and *The Perpetual Curate*) focus on a male central character of influence, primarily a clergyman. In *Phæbe, Junior*, clergymen continue to take a primary role in society, but the novel focuses on women rather than men. O’Mealy points out that Oliphant particularly focuses on a more well-rounded depiction of clergymen: “Part of Mrs. Oliphant’s talent was to be able to depict with humor and with sympathy the changing nature of the mid-Victorian clergyman’s dual roles as spiritual guide and professional aspirant, and to demonstrate that the two were not mutually exclusive or contradictory” (“Scenes,” 247). Oliphant provides readers with flawed versions of clergymen, pastors, and curates, but most of them have potential to follow the correct path, which for Oliphant entailed honesty to self and others and caring for one’s community. “The Rector” introduces these religious themes that continue throughout her Chronicles of Carlingford novels. While I do not go as far as Lovesely does in considering Oliphant to be acting as a

religious authority, I do expand upon his reading of the novels as part of the tradition of religious fiction. Her works are less religiously didactic than those of Sewell and Yonge, but Oliphant does make unironic arguments about religion, including Dissent, church leadership, religious scholarship, and the role of the clergy in parishioner's day-to-day lives, and about women and religious work.

Oliphant published her long short story or short novella "The Rector" serially in *Blackwood's Magazine* and later in book form with the novella "The Doctor's Family." The 1863 work seems in some ways similar to George Eliot's "Scenes of Clerical Life," published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1857. Like Eliot, Oliphant focuses on the life and maladjustment of a clergyman to life with parishioners, and she considers the conflict created by Dissent. (The final chapter of this dissertation considers Eliot's work more specifically.) In Oliphant's "The Rector," a small group of people in Carlingford highlight the transition of the new rector, Morley Proctor, from an academic life at All Souls College, Oxford, to being the head of the Carlingford church. The story opens with the parishioners wondering whether the new rector would be High or Low church, and the introduction of 40-year-old Miss Wodehouse and 20-year-old Lucy Wodehouse, the daughters of the churchwarden. Proctor becomes infatuated with the Wodehouse girls. Lucy seems coupled with the "perpetual curate," Wentworth, but as he may never advance from his curacy, he distances himself from her with the arrival of Proctor. Proctor fears the female parishioners and working with people generally, but he has taken the living to support his elderly mother. He realizes his inability to care for people when called to a deathbed. He waits for the curate and realizes how he is like the elder Miss Wodehouse. While concerned about the futility of his scholarship, Proctor so dislikes his "false position" working with people and failing to win

souls that he moves back to Oxford with his mother. However, he feels discontent, quits, and learns to labor with “a mild wife in dove-coloured dresses,” revealed in another novel to be the elder sister, his mother’s choice for a partner.

Oliphant represents Proctor as humorously sheltered and romantically or sexually repressed. He finds the presence of women distracting and considers marriage at his mother’s insistence that he must do so as part of his duty. He notices women, particularly the Wodehouse sisters, but he does not even know what a ribbon is (Oliphant 26). Oliphant repeats the ribbon error several times. Later, in *The Perpetual Curate*, Morgan, the rector who takes Proctor’s position, calls Proctor an “elderly celibate” (Oliphant, Vol. II, 218). When first in Carlingford, Proctor bolts home because of “These parishioners! -- These female parishioners!” (Oliphant 20). He not only retreats to but also hides in his study to avoid contact with women. He calls the Wodehouse girls the “enemies of his peace” (38). When his mother suggests he may want to marry one of the Wodehouse girls, he “jumped to his feet, thunderstruck” because “the idea was too overwhelming and dreadful” (26). Proctor has spent fifteen years with men at Oxford and is nearing fifty years of age, but Oliphant sets him up as embarrassed at even the consideration of marriage, much less intimacy with a woman. Proctor considers the potential of a relationship with Lucy an “unexpected dilemma” (Oliphant 28) from which he has a “narrow escape” that he recollects and trembles at (Oliphant 29). Further, Oliphant suggests he feels the same pressure to marry as a woman might feel when sexually harassed: “No woman was ever so dismayed by the persecutions of a lover, as was this helpless middle-aged gentleman under the conviction that Lucy Wodehouse meant to marry him” (29). He worries that he may go too far, suggesting passion, until Oliphant counters immediately that he might marry “before he knew what he was

about” (29). Finally, Oliphant suggests that for the elderly, celibate rector, marriage is not only akin to murder but to a Biblical final judgement. She writes, “He lived not in false security, but wise trembling, never knowing what hour the thunderbolt might fall upon his head” (Oliphant 37).

Oliphant could be criticizing the trend toward celibacy, popularized or at least made known by John Newman, who remained celibate. (Keble and Pusey married and had children, and Froude died relatively young.) In his article on Newman’s celibacy, B.W. Young points out that some viewed the choice not to marry as a form of Catholic perversion, or as an unwillingness or sexual peculiarity. Young suggests that the movement toward celibacy revolted against a domestic understanding of Christianity as connected to family life (24). The elimination of the requirement of celibacy for Oxford dons, of which Newman was one, came in the late nineteenth century. In a statement that seems appropriate for Oliphant’s Proctor, an anonymous author in 1790 writes that the celibacy requirement “occasions many persons spending their whole life in a College, without doing any the least service to their country, but to their own hurt, being generally as they advance in years, over-run with spleen or taking to sottishness” (qtd. in Young 26). Proctor is not given to gout or drunkenness, but he does spend his life in All Souls College and cannot do service to his country, as discussed in the next paragraph. Even 70 years later, the pressure for dons to remain celibate can be seen when Proctor states that he could have let a fellow All Souls College colleague have the Carlingford living as that man wished to marry. In his decision not to marry, Proctor can return to All Souls College. Oliphant suggests the self-imposed requirement to remain celibate is an inappropriate quirk on the part of Proctor and an impediment to him doing his duty as a clergyman. The focus on celibacy seems to suggest

Proctor holds High Church tendencies, but Oliphant declines to place him into one category.

Oliphant seems to suggest All Souls acts as a type of unsustainable all-male paradise ultimately unconnected from the day-to-day lives of those living under the influence of the Church of England.

The vagueness of the new rector's beliefs adds humor to the story as well as sets forth an argument by Oliphant about religious affiliations. The rector before Proctor had been "profoundly Low—lost in the deepest abysses of Evangelicalism" with a "determined inclination to preach to everybody" (Oliphant 8). The townspeople complain that he went to the poorest people rather than waiting upon the middle classes. Oliphant's use of the word "lost" stresses the blinding of the rector to his duties by focusing on ministering to the poor or to those not or only loosely affiliated with the Church of England. In contrast, the curate Frank Wentworth at the nearby Chapel of St. Roque is "on the very topmost pinnacle of Anglicanism" (8). Here, Oliphant uses the word "pinnacle" as opposed to "lost." She plays upon the High position but also suggests a High Church superiority. Oliphant plays upon the assumptions by the people of Carlingford that Proctor will either be Evangelical or aligned with the Oxford Movement. Oliphant uses a set of divisions or contrasts, primarily binaries, writing that before Proctor arrived, "whether he was High, or Low, or Broad, muscular or sentimental, sermonising or decorative, nobody seemed able to tell" (9). Even after his arrival, the parishioners cannot fit him into an easy category. Proctor makes no "innovations" but is not Evangelical; further he "never preached a sermon or a word more than was absolutely necessary" (23). He is disinterested in Dissent as well as in upholstery. In short, he was neither interested in the low controversies of the expansion of Evangelicalism or the high controversies in which an emphasis is put on

decorative items. Further, Proctor dislikes the daily work required of him as a clergyman without a curate. Proctor calls “visitation,” to which the Evangelical Rector had accustomed the people, “murder” (51). Throughout the series, Oliphant stresses the importance of at least the most important “visits,” when people are ill or near death.

In the climax of the short work, Proctor follows the Wodehouse girls and ends up needing to pray with a dying parishioner. He wishes to send for the minister of Salem Chapel or for the curate, Wentworth, rather than they resort to him “in such an emergency” (39). Oliphant writes that he would rather “have made his appearance [...] before the bench of bishops or the Privy Council” than enter “that poor little room” (39). In order to avoid his duty, he insists the woman is not that sick or that she could call for the doctor. Lucy gives him “a troubled, disapproving, disappointed look” (41). Oliphant reveals that Proctor can do nothing in this situation. She writes, “If he had known anything in the world which would have given her consolation, he was ready to have made any exertion for it, but he knew nothing to say—no medicine for a mind diseased was in his repositories” (42). Oliphant uses this moment to critique him as a mid-church ambivalent with neither a set of words to say, as the high church curate does, or a mode of prayer as the Dissenting minister might have. Oliphant states that when Wentworth presents “truth and everlasting verity” as a means of hope to the woman, Oliphant states that Proctor learns more in those thirty minutes than his decades at Oxford. She writes, “To-day he had visibly failed in a duty which even in All-Souls was certainly known to be one of the duties of a Christian priest. Was he a Christian priest, or what was he? He was troubled to the very depths of his soul” (Oliphant 47). While Oliphant seems to use humor in the case of Proctor’s ambivalence about taking religious positions, she strongly critiques Proctor’s inability to minister to those in need.

At the writing of this work, Oliphant's husband and several of her infant children had died so she had recent, intimate experience with deathbeds and grief. Oliphant suggests that schools fail clergymen, who must obtain basic skills either through practice or possess them innately. This connects to a sense of selecting a career appropriate to one's skills and abilities. Oliphant further writes, "Can one *learn* to convey consolation to the dying, to teach the ignorant, to comfort the sorrowful? Are these matters to be acquired by study, like Greek verbs or intricate measures?" (48). The answer for the rector is "No" (48). Oliphant does present a solution for Proctor. His mother suggests that taking a wife and appointing a curate would improve Proctor's abilities as Rector, but Proctor calls marriage "impossible" and returns to All Souls (56). His revelation from his time in Carlingford and his return to Oxford is that "Life after all did not consist of books, nor were Greek verbs essential to happiness" (59). An interesting aside is that Pusey was a life-long fellow at Oxford and a Hebrew scholar. Without using lengthy sections of "deep" religious thought, Oliphant still presents a strong argument on religious controversy. First, she suggests the controversy is unimportant aside from providing people with labels to affix to their ministers. Neither the high churchman nor the low churchman possesses any superior qualities in ministering to those on their deathbeds. Second, the practical skills of ministering to people in their times of greatest need for religious comfort matter more than one's ability to preach or to parse a verb. Oliphant repeats the critique of the apt clergyman but privately inferior man in *Phæbe, Junior*, published years later, and turns her attention to the Oxford Movement and High Church clergy in *The Perpetual Curate*.

Set in the time after Proctor leaves Carlingford but before he returns, *The Perpetual Curate* focuses on Frank Wentworth, a High Churchman with some Oxford Movement views.

Like she would do with *Phoebe, Junior* and *The Daisy Chain*, Oliphant plays upon Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. Deidre Lynch suggests Oliphant "braids" together *Persuasion* and *Emma* into *The Perpetual Curate* and *Miss Marjoribanks* (253). Lynch notes that Oliphant revisits the question of whether to educate or to romance as suggested by Austen. Like Frederick Wentworth, Frank Wentworth cannot marry because of his financial position. Wentworth has impeded on the territory of Morgan, the new rector who replaces Proctor, and continues his infatuation with Lucy Wodehouse as introduced in "The Rector." He is unable to marry her due to his financial and career position as a curate with no further prospects. His Evangelical aunts, who temporarily move to Carlingford, have the power to grant a living but refuse to do so because of his High Church beliefs. Frank's brother and family heir Jack, a rascal, returns to visit him and brings the Wodehouse brother. Their father suffers from what seems like a stroke when he learns of his son's return and dies, leaving the girls subject to their brother's disinterest in their prospects or finances. The sensational plot of the novel focuses on the daughter of the local news monger. Rosa, a pretty girl of seventeen, is seen being walked home by Frank, who disapproves of her being alone in the streets. Rosa disappears, and the town assumes that Frank has run away with her. Meanwhile, Frank is at his family home where he learns his brother Gerald plans to become a Catholic priest, which would isolate if not impoverish his wife and children. An inquest commences into Frank's behavior, and the town generally assumes his guilt thanks to the machinations of the rector and Rosa's uncle. With the help of his aunt, Frank finds Rosa, whom he brings to the inquest to prove that Wodehouse has seduced her with false promises of marriage. At the insistence of Jack, Wodehouse leaves the family home to Lucy and Mary. Proctor proposes to Mary. Gerald decides to become a Catholic and leave the Church of

England, but he does not become a priest because of his duty to his family. Morgan leaves Carlingford for a country living as he feels he has lost to Frank, and he encourages the leadership at All Souls to give the living to Frank, enabling him to marry Lucy eventually.

At the beginning of the novel, Oliphant explains her focus on the problem of perpetual curates and the importance of the clergy as the center of society in a place like Carlingford. Oliphant writes, “But in every community some centre of life is necessary. This point, round which everything circles, is, in Carlingford, found in the clergy” (2). She sees the clergy as giving “a sharp outline to life” because of their “indispensable work” and by providing people “whom everybody knows and can talk of” (Oliphant 2). Thus for a small town, “an enterprising or non-enterprising rector made all the difference” (Oliphant 3). Evangelical rector Bury had allowed Wentworth to assist him given Wentworth’s connection to his aunts, well known as Evangelicals and supporters of missionary efforts in London and abroad. Bury later discovers Frank Wentworth holds “‘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 him to be” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 4). Bury gives Frank control of an impoverished district near the canal where bargemen congregate. Frank and Lucy hold classes and services at least three days a week. Wentworth has also established a Provident Society and enabled a sisterhood, identified by their grey cloaks. Oliphant writes that before the new rector arrived, Frank “had been more than rector, he had been archdeacon, or rather bishop, in Mr Proctor’s time” (Vol. I, 33). His position changes with the consistently changing leadership in Carlingford: “Now, to be looked upon as an unauthorized workman, a kind of meddling, Dissenterish, missionizing individual, was rather hard on the young man” (Vol. I, 33). The leadership has

shifted, as have their views of the men given the comparison to the other ministers and pastors in the community.

Oliphant does not present the clergy as a necessarily positive influence on society and suggests worries about the negative influence of unspiritual men. Even her generally positive depiction of Frank notes his weaknesses in the final pages. Oliphant writes that “He knew of men who had been cheerful enough when Mr. Morgan came to Carlingford, who now did not care what became of them; and of women who would be glad to lay down their heads and hide them from the mocking light of day” (Oliphant, Vol. III, 293-294). The dispute between the rector and the curate over territory, and its subsequent fallout due to the suspicion placed on Frank, has created doubt and dismay among the people of Carlingford. As Mrs. Morgan notes, Mr. Morgan’s leaving Carlingford after six months was fairly unusual. Oliphant states that Frank knew how the people felt; she writes, “it touched his heart with the tenderest pity of life, the compassion of happiness; and he knew too that the path upon which he was about to set out led through the same glooms” (Vol. III, 294). While Oliphant spends a significant portion of the novel on the theological differences between the two men, she suggests at the end that the men ultimately seem the same to the community. She notes the one difference that the parishioners see: Frank made sure “no unauthorized evangelization should take place in any portion of his territory” (Vol. III, 295). Ultimately, for the community, Oliphant suggests the High Church versus the Low Church makes little difference in their day-to-day lives, but she represents the Low Church position as weak.

Oliphant introduces the Oxford Movement early in the novel, and she connects Frank and his brother Gerald to it as part of her critique of Evangelicalism. Frank must decide whether to

uphold Oxford Movement views or appease his Evangelical aunts. The flowers and the chorister's surplice mark his preferences as High Church even in a poor area, and he wishes for a stained glass window. His aunt accuses him of preaching the Tracts for the Times, and she calls Carlingford given up to "Puseyism and Ritualism" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 149). His Evangelical aunt takes issue with his use of flowers during the Easter service, his lack of preaching in favor of reading the liturgy, and even the word "priest." Oliphant rather jokingly sets up Wentworth as deciding between Easter lilies and marriage. The concern about religion or marriage continues with her consideration of Gerald. Frank's aunt Leonora holds staunch Evangelical views. She states, "The Church is a missionary institution, that is my idea. Unless you are really bringing in the perishing and saving souls, what is the good? And souls will never be saved by Easter decorations" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 75). The novel gives evidence of Leonora's interest in missionary efforts several times. For example, she collects and disseminates letters about missionary efforts overseas, and she writes in favor of shutting down gin palaces. However, Oliphant shows Leonora to be a hypocrite in her Evangelicalism. When Rosa is brought to the inquest, everyone but Leonora offers her forgiveness, and Leonora disapproves of Frank going into the wharf district, where he does take up her preference of "bringing in" of unchurched peoples. Leonora further possesses a weak understanding of Evangelical views. She critiques the flowers as being unable to save souls, but she assumes that the clergy can save souls by preaching. Generally, Evangelicals would assume that only God, rather than the preaching of Evangelical clergymen, could save souls. Leonora also disapproves of those who have converted given that Frank does not receive permission from the rector. Oliphant's narrator explains the outrage: "Six little heathens brought into the Christian fold in his own parish without the permission of the Rector!"

It was indeed enough to try any clergyman's temper" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 80). Oliphant critiques throughout the novel the emphasis on church hierarchy.

Oliphant also uses Leonora to critique Evangelical views on prayers with the ill and dying. Leonora disapproves of Frank using his prayer book when visiting the sick. She asks, "I wonder if he can't pray by a sick woman without his prayerbook [...] How is it he doesn't know better? His father is not pious, but he isn't a Puseyite" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 88). Leonora hopes for extemporaneous prayers rather than a reading of standard ones, but in this novel as in "The Rector," Oliphant sets up Frank as superior to others in his ability to comfort those who will die. She seems to suggest that a High Church brand of Evangelicalism would be effective in improving the lives of the poor. Finally, as she would repeat in *Phoebe, Junior*, Oliphant critiques Evangelicals for their refusal to "break bread" so to speak with the destitute and unrespectable. Even his aunt Dora, who generally supports him, tells Frank:

"still I have a feeling that a clergyman should always take care to be respectable. Not that he should neglect the wicked [...] for a poor sinner turning from the evil of his ways is the—the most interesting—sight in the world, even to the angels, you know; but to *live* with them in the same house, my dear—I am sure that is what I never could advise." (Oliphant, Vol. I, 133).

As Dora is generally a sympathetic if slightly hysterical character, Oliphant builds upon the earlier critique of Evangelicals as ultimately hypocritical. Frank takes part in activities that would typically please Evangelicals such as caring for the poor, setting up multiple services, and performing visitation. But because Frank does this with a High Church bent, his aunts reject his efforts. Oliphant also suggests Evangelicals care for the "sight" of the poor converting from evil

even more than they would care for the “sight” of an angel on earth. Living among the poor violates class norms for the Evangelical aunts. Later, Leonora realizes that she may be “harder to please than her Master,” an idea that distracts her even from her focus on closing gin-palaces (Oliphant, Vol. I, 232-233). Oliphant’s depiction of Evangelicals is a critique of class in addition to a critique of belief. Unlike in some of the other works in the series, Oliphant presents Evangelicals as upper middle class in this novel. However, their economic position and lack of awareness of the true poverty makes the aunts hypocritical and harsh.

Like Sewell, Oliphant addresses the concerns about the conversion to Catholicism as an extension of the Oxford Movement and as connected to a poor system of mentoring at Oxford. While Sewell rejects conversion to Rome based on theology, Oliphant uses a more practical approach and focuses on the soon-to-be neglected wife. Leonora calls Gerald’s conversion “a bad attack of Romishness” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 51). She suggests his conversion is “owing to the bad advisers young men meet with at the universities” due to administrators selecting professors for their learning rather than their principles (Oliphant, Vol. I, 51-52). Leonora continues that the university is “a slavish system [...] and a false system, and leads to Antichrist at the end and nothing less” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 53). Like in Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain*, Oliphant suggests that the university is not only the place of positive Oxford Movement views but also the location where young men begin to read inappropriate materials that may ultimately cause them to convert to Catholicism. Without calling for a purging of All Souls or other colleges, both authors do place blame on unnamed authority figures despite their general support for High Church beliefs and the movement. Oliphant writes 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” (Vol. II, 74). However, Oliphant notes that Wentworth is more of a “man than a thinker, even before he became a high Anglican” (Vol. II, 74). Oliphant continues her subtle critique of the focus on religious education over practical training that she began in “The Rector.” She suggests that thinking too much without guidance can lead to trouble. However, Oliphant presents this as a male danger in contrast to the danger that can face men but particularly women as in Sewell. For example, Sewell and her brothers founded schools, including Radley College, and attended schools. Oliphant’s parents did not make use of schools in educating their children although Oliphant did send her boys to school.

Oliphant builds her argument against conversion to Catholicism based on her representation of conversion as problematic for men. Frank sees “no such difference” “between Rome and the highest level of Anglicanism” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 242) and views discussing the differences between the Church of England and Catholicism as a “waste of time” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 279). Instead, Oliphant has him use the only argument that she seems to think makes a valid protest: Gerald’s duty to his wife. When Frank attempts to dissuade his brother from conversion, the argument focuses on one’s duties in marriage, a shared sacrament. If Gerald were to become a Catholic priest, then his wife would be in a perilous position. Gerald’s wife explains the difficulties: “when your husband is a Romish priest [...] I would just ask anybody what are you? You can’t be his wife; and you can’t go back to your maiden name, because of the children; and how can you have any place in society” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 240). She points out she would lack the “satisfaction of being a widow” and her children’s prospects would also be devastated (Oliphant, Vol. I, 241-242). Given the position of women in the 1860s, a woman without a

husband lacks some legal and financial protections, and she would only have her fairly small inheritance to live upon. The book implies she gets several hundred pounds a year. More importantly, the children would have career, education, and marriage difficulties given the perception of Catholics during that time period. Her husband sees these problems but still intends to become a priest. Gerald says of his wife: “She is called upon to make, after all, perhaps, the greater sacrifice of the two; and she does not see any duty in it—the reverse indeed. She thinks it is a sin [...] Hers will be an unwilling, unintentional martyrdom; and it is hard to think I should take all the merit, and leave my poor little wife the suffering without any compensation!” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 253). Gerald notes that his conversion leaves his wife without any benefit. One of the more interesting moments in his quote is his assumption that he would receive “merit” for switching from the Church of England to the Catholic Church. Oliphant begins to present a theological critique as well as a critique of the position of women. Gerald states that “God reckons with women for what they have endured, as with men for what they have done” (Oliphant, Vol. I, 253). Ultimately, Gerald must choose between his beliefs and his career as a priest. He sees remaining a priest as easier than leaving the career path that he had chosen and had been chosen for him as the second son. Oliphant writes that for him, “who was nothing if not a priest” that “to stand aside [from the priesthood] in irksome leisure was a harder trial, at which he trembled” (Vol. II, 133). His career potential and ability to work matter to him as much as his beliefs. He decides to become a layman, as he was “too wary and politic to maintain in a critical age and country the old licence of the ages of Faith” (Oliphant, Vol. III, 71). Oliphant suggests he could face no “great trial, and he becomes “nothing, a man whose career was over” (Vol. III, 71). Oliphant suggests Catholicism as a career is inappropriate, but she does allow for Gerald to

convert without critiquing his choice very harshly. Unlike Sewell's Margaret Percival, Gerald does not change his mind about converting.

Oliphant extends the conversation between Frank and Gerald about the differences between the Church of England and the Catholic church in order to discuss what she may see as the weakness of both. Gerald states most in England believe "all human institutions are imperfect" or that "every man may believe as he pleases," and he desires "a Church which is not a human institution" (Oliphant, Vol. III, 110). Gerald sees the Catholic church as true because of its "authority clear and decisive" (Oliphant, Vol. III, 110). He points out that in England, people believe what they will while "in Rome we believe what—we must" (Oliphant, Vol. III, 111). This seems similar to Sewell's *Margaret Percival*, in which Margaret wishes for more distinction in what should be believed, but freedom of belief is used to sway Margaret back to support of the Church of England. Frank then realizes the reason for his brother's conversion. He says, "it is because there is no room for our conflicting doctrines and latitude of belief. Instead of a Church happily so far imperfect, that a man can put his life to the best account in it, without absolutely delivering up his intellect to a set of doctrines, you seek a perfect Church, in which, for a symmetrical system of doctrine, you lose the use of your existence!" (Oliphant, Vol. III, 111-112). Gerald sees the Catholic Church as offering a "rock of authority." Here Frank gives the closest thing to a sermon in the novel. As quoted in the opening of this chapter, Frank points to some of the most difficult Protestant theological questions, including free will, predestination, universal atonement, and individual virtue. However, he goes further to question why God would make one man happy and another sad, or let one woman's babies die and another's babies live. Oliphant here makes the argument that neither the Church of England nor the Catholic Church

can offer sufficient answers. After Frank asks how Gerald can find an “interpretation of life,” Gerald responds that one must simply “Trust God” and not ask such questions (Oliphant, Vol. III, 114). Gerald has found comfort in the Catholic church’s consideration of “every doubt to be sin” (Oliphant, Vol. III, 114). The concept of “interpretation of life” may help to explain Oliphant’s disdain for higher education and the focus on scholarly work, which has focused on abstract controversies rather than what Oliphant suggests matters in one’s life.

In the novel, Oliphant also considers the role of sisterhoods and women’s work. Oliver Lovesey’s article provides a strong reading of the series and sisterhoods. Lovesey states that Oliphant advocates “the authority of religious fiction on controversial matters such as Anglican Sisterhoods and female religious vocation” (21). Oliphant sets up the importance of women before the book begins. The title page dedicates the novel to women in Italian: “Alla padrona mia; ed a te, sorella carissima! Consolatrici gentillissime della desolata” (iii). Joan Richardson translates this as “To my lady; and to you, dearest sister! [Both] the gentlest of consolers of one who is desolate.” As mentioned earlier, Oliphant’s husband died in Italy, and she may have been comforted by women or nuns during his death. The novel gives a very positive representation of sisters, particularly during times of great illness and death. Lucy Wodehouse and her sister take part in charitable actions as Sisters of Mercy under the possible guidance of Wentworth. Their gray cloaks and works among the poor are noted in “The Rector,” but in *The Perpetual Curate*, Oliphant addresses their actions more specifically. The loose sisterhood counters the highly organized, successful sisterhood in *The Clever Woman* or the well-funded one in *The Heir of Redclyffe*. Lucy and Mary take part in charitable actions as in Sewell’s *Gertrude*, but they do so without the neglect of other duties. Oliphant removes one of the major barriers for the young

women in the others novels considered this dissertation; she removes the younger siblings, needy father, or invalid relatives. By doing so, Oliphant can focus less on duty to family and more on what a woman can chose to do if she remains single. Frank's Evangelical aunts represent those who would critique not the choice of singleness with church involvement but the choice of joining a sisterhood. Dora says Lucy looks "sweet and nice" but asks "what is the meaning of that grey cloak?" She tells Frank, "I hope you don't approve of nunneries, and that sort of thing. It is such foolishness. My dear, the Christian life is very hard, as your aunt Leonora always says. She says she can't bear to see people playing at Christianity" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 67). Later, Leonora tells Frank that Sisters of Mercy "only get young clergymen into mischief" (Oliphant, Vol. II, 183). Oliphant notes but passes over their critiques, which the novel shows as baseless. Further, given the aunts remain single and take part in missionary efforts and church leadership, they show themselves again to be hypocritical.

The Sisters of Mercy do not get any clergymen into mischief, but both sisters do seem to shift their careers from working as nuns to working as the wives of clergymen. Oliphant removes a possible critique of the choice of celibacy through ending her novel with the women, even in their 40s or older, opting to marry elderly clergymen. To a degree, Oliphant seems to suggest this resolves any earlier emphasis on celibacy. The couples can take up childless if not also celibate partnerships. Frank's response further presents Oliphant's support of sisterhoods. He says, "Your Exter-Hall men, aunt Dora, are like the old ascetics—they try to make a merit of Christianity by calling it hard and terrible; but there are some sweet souls in the world, to whom it comes natural as sunshine in May" (Oliphant, Vol. I, 67). Oliphant presents a critique of Evangelicalism in addition to a support of sisterhoods. She sees Evangelicals as believing in a harsh and

unnecessarily difficult version of Christianity in order to justify their time and effort participating in it. Oliphant instead suggests that “sweet souls” will find Christianity much more natural. This returns to her de-emphasis on formal education and her desire for people who have a natural vocation for working in branches of the ministry. Her next entry in the series would shift to women’s vocation.

Probably the most reprinted during the twentieth century of Oliphant’s works, *Miss Marjoribanks*, the second-to-last novel in the series, turns to a female protagonist. QD Leavis rediscovered the novel in the 1960s and wrote an introduction to it. She sets up the novel as one that “bridged the gap” between Austen and Eliot (135). Like Kämper, Leavis sees Oliphant as using irony throughout the novel, and writes that it is “full of wit, surprises, and intrigue, its heroine a classic addition to the English Comic Characters, subdivision female” along with Emma and other “women of ability and presence” (157). The novel opens with the death of Lucilla Marjoribanks’s mother, an invalid, and Miss Marjoribanks’s wish to be a comfort to her father. After three more years of school and some travel, nineteen-year-old Lucilla returns for an “illustrious and glorious reign at home” in Carlingford (18). She decides to begin hosting social Thursday Evenings. Her cousin, tall, dark, and handsome Tom Marjoribanks, moves into the home at the same time and proposes soon after. She rejects him, saying she has “not the least intention of marrying anybody” (75). Her Thursday Evenings set up the daughter of a poor teacher with a more middle-class man, and Mrs. Chiley, who seeks to find Lucilla a suitor, finds Lucilla repeatedly rejecting offers of marriage. She continues reigning in society and acting as a sort of “independent”: “Ten years had passed, during which she had been at the head of society in Grange Lane, and a great comfort to her dear papa; and now, if there remained another

development for Lucilla's character, it was about time that it should begin to show itself' (Oliphant 336). She decides to support a Reform candidate, Mr. Ashburton. Her father dies in his sleep, and his financial position as a very poor man despite being a doctor becomes evident. Lucilla later marries her cousin Tom in hopes of placing him into politics in order to reform the impoverished community of Marchbank.

Clergymen appear early in the novel but are quickly overruled and placed into a position of non-authority. The novel includes the Rector and an Archdeacon. Oliphant uses them to establish Lucilla's position as well as to critique rather softly the Evangelical and Broad Church positions. Rector Mr. Bury is an Evangelical, for which Oliphant presents disdain throughout the series. Oliphant writes that "The Rector was a very good man, but was Evangelical" (64). Similar to Touchette in Yonge's *The Clever Woman*, Bury is the subject of curatology as he "had a large female circle who admired and swore by him; and, consequently, he felt it in a manner natural that he should take his seat first, and the place that belonged to him as the principal person present" (Oliphant 64). However, like Yonge's Rachel, Lucilla does not respect Bury's position. He suggests that her father marry someone in the community in order to create a person of authority to monitor or mentor her. Bury suggests Lucilla be watched by the young widow Mrs. Mortimer:

A situation to take the superintendence of the domestic affairs, and to have charge of you, would be just what would suit her. It must be a great anxiety to the Doctor to leave you alone, and without any control, at your age. You may think the liberty is pleasant at first, but if you had a Christian friend to watch over and take care of you [...]" (Oliphant 66).

Mrs. Mortimer faints at the prospect. She later marries the Archdeacon in a move that builds upon her admiration of members of the clergy. The rector's suggestion that Lucilla requires additional "control" and restriction of "liberty" seems absurd to both women. Mrs. Mortimer's response leaves the rector appears "foolish" in contrast to Lucilla looking "quite self-possessed" (66). Bury leaves Lucilla to attend to Mrs. Mortimer and displays an inadequacy of administering comfort, a theme in Oliphant's works. Further, Lucilla points out that she rejects the rector's personal authority. She tells him, "It is very dreadful for me that am so young to go against *you*" (Oliphant 65). Notably, Lucilla does not assume she should not "go against" the rector due to her gender or her position but because of her age, the one indisputable point in the argument. Sewell often removes clergymen from the novel in order to remove their influence and to focus on women's abilities and rights to self-possession; Oliphant introduces the clergy but restricts their abilities.

Miss Marjoribanks particularly critiques Evangelicalism, Dissent, and the Broad Church position. Kämper points out that Archdeacon Charles Beverley's name plays upon that of Charles Kingsley, a well-known Broad Churchman (102) and novelist. Further, Kämper notes that Oliphant critiqued Dissent in magazine articles and saw the movement as tampering with the "essence of Christianity" (104). Oliphant introduces Beverley as a potential marriage candidate for Lucilla. In what can be read as a rather limited endorsement, Mrs. Chiley tells her, "you know a nice clergyman is always nice" (Oliphant 127). Mrs. Chiley further points out his property, his rectorship, his living, and his position as Archdeacon of Stanmore. He takes a visitation in Carlingford as he may be made bishop if a bishopric is created. While he has not called himself Broad Church, the Carlingford residents can tell his position from his demeanor.

Oliphant rather gently points out his deficits regarding being Broad Church. The narrator states that he speaks “in his Broad-Church way, as if there was nothing more to be said on the subject” and “had a way of talking on many subjects which alarmed his hostess” (Oliphant 139). The “Broad-Church way” seems to eliminate public discourse and violate conventional, societal norms for the middle and upper middle class. Oliphant writes:

It was not that there was anything objectionable in what he said—for, to be sure, a clergyman and an archdeacon may say a great many things that ordinary people would not like to venture on,—but still it was impossible to tell what it might lead to; for it is not everybody who knows when to stop, as Mr Beverley in his position might be expected to do. It was the custom of good society in Carlingford to give a respectful assent, for example, to Mr Bury’s extreme Low-Churchism—as if it were profane, as it certainly was not respectable, to differ from the Rector—and to give him as wide a field as possible for his missionary operations by keeping out of the way. But Mr Beverley had not the least regard for respectability, nor that respect for religion which consists in keeping as clear of it as possible; and the way in which he spoke of Mr Bury’s views wounded some people’s feelings.

(139-140)

Oliphant makes several important points about discourse on religious controversy in this paragraph. (She also returns to the necessity of not discussing controversial subjects in “polite” company with a central character in *Phoebe, Junior*.) First, she suggests that appropriate discourse involves knowing when to stop talking about a subject. Clergymen and those in the church hierarchy may be able to speak about subjects like Evangelicalism, and they can

generally expect assent even if the listening audience were not to agree. Second, Oliphant advocates for staying “out of the way” of the temporary efforts of the transient clergymen, curates, and pastors. Unlike the long-standing members of Carlingford society, the clergymen and curates provide a temporary social addition and a religious function. Generally, the moderate Carlingford congregation may dislike Bury, but they expect him to leave and to receive some respect as part of his position. Finally, Oliphant suggests critiquing Evangelicals is inappropriate; one should show “respect” for religion by not talking about it. Of course, Oliphant critiques Evangelicals and Dissenters in the novel, but she allows that they may do some good in their missionary efforts to impoverished areas that lack an official presence by the Church of England. Oliphant does not “keep clear” of religion in her novels, and her final entry in the *Chronicles of Carlingford* develops her views on agreement between clergymen and the role of critiquing others’ practices. Her final Carlingford novel suggests a weariness with religious controversy and a hope for unification among the branches of the Church of England.

Phæbe, Junior addresses Dissent and reworks or revises the most popular novels by Charlotte Yonge, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. The novel begins with the early life of Phœbe Beecham, Junior, whose mother was the daughter of the Carlingford grocer and chief deacon of the Dissenting chapel. Phœbe’s father, a Dissenting reverend, moves from Carlingford to London where he mingles with wealthy people, including Mr. Copperhead. Copperhead, who has made his fortune by building railroads, marries his nanny who gives birth to Clarence Copperhead, who is interested in Phœbe. They dance at a ball attended by Ursula May, the daughter of a poor Anglican clergyman in Carlingford. Phoebe feels snubbed at the ball, and her mother sends her to live with her grandfather, Tozer, whose house and class station make a sharp

contrast to the lifestyle to which Phœbe has become accustomed. Ursula returns from London to Carlingford and dreams of being a great lady. The novel then introduces her brother, Reginald, who has been offered a “sinecure” position as the head of a small “college” for old men. Their father, Mr. May, is deep in debt and unable to sustain their household. He takes loans in someone else’s name, and eventually he borrows 150 pounds from Tozer. Meanwhile, Horace Northcote, a Dissenter, comes to Carlingford and preaches against Reginald and the Church of England. In order to repay his debt, Mr. May takes on Clarence Copperhead as a pupil, and Clarence invites Northcote into the May home. A love triangle develops between Phœbe, Clarence, and Reginald. The Tozer bill comes due, and Mr. May has a mental collapse. Northcote rescues the May family and proposes to Ursula, who accepts. Phœbe comes engaged to Clarence, whose father fights the arrangement until he begins to respect Phœbe for her “brains.” Ursula and Northcote marry, and he gives up Dissent.

The interaction between Oliphant and Charlotte Yonge’s novels demonstrates Oliphant’s commitment to realism, as O’Mealey argues. However, I argue Oliphant focuses less on a public morality and inner conflict about religious conflict when considered alongside Sewell and Yonge. Oliphant plays upon Yonge’s work in extensive ways. The main characters of *The Daisy Chain* and *Phœbe, Junior* are both named the Mays, and both families have an absent mother and large group of children mostly raising themselves. Yonge’s May children characters are generally well behaved to the point of absurdity. For example, one of the young boys refuses to walk a certain way to school in order to avoid the danger of engaging in foolish games. In contrast, Oliphant suggests the children characters in her novels are more like “real” children. Phœbe tells the elder May sisters how memorable their name “because of a family in a novel that

I used to admire much in my girlish days” (Oliphant 141). Janey, Ursula’s younger and outspoken sister, exclaims that she must mean *The Daisy Chain*. However, Janey counters, “We are not a set of prigs like those people. We are not goody, whatever we are” (Oliphant 141). The youngest children are not particularly disobedient, but they are not focused on pleasing their father or on spiritual growth like Yonge’s May children. Later, Yonge’s narrator addresses the reader directly about the children, who are called “unruly” several times in the novel: “And it would be giving the reader an unfair idea of the children, if we attempted to conceal that they did take advantage of their opportunities, and were as unruly as well-conditioned children in the circumstances were likely to be” (Oliphant 275). Oliphant resists many specifics about the youngest children, but earlier in the book, the narrator states that the unruliness was visible even outside of the house. When Ursula comes home, she considers the house a “muddle,” with broken dolls and ragged school books, and not a homely or comfortable place (Oliphant 63-64). Yonge’s May children act more concerned about the appearance of the home and of themselves. For example, Yonge’s Ethel May worries about carelessness in dress and muddying her skirts. Oliphant pays little attention to these smaller details. In an often-cited passage, Phœbe says:

“One reads Scott for Scotland (and a few other things), and one reads Miss Yonge for the church. Mr. Trollope is good for that too, but not so good. All that I know of clergymen’s families I have got from her. I can recognize you quite well, and your sister, but the younger ones puzzle me; they are not in Miss Yonge; they are too much like other children, too naughty. I don’t mean anything disagreeable. The babies in Miss Yonge are often very naughty too, but not the same.” (Oliphant 175).

Oliphant suggests Yonge creates either better or more easily categorized and stereotyped representations of clergymen and their families than Trollope. Since Phoebe speaks, the reader must be somewhat cautious in assuming her an authority. However, Oliphant suggests that Yonge goes too far in creating ideal children when “real” children do “naughty” things like drop their books or leave toys.

The critique of Yonge and of clergymen and their families can be read as part of an effort to present realistic depictions. In his article on the politics of the realism wars, O’Mealy sees Oliphant’s comments as taking up an “assault” on Yonge and Trollope (125).²⁷ O’Mealy writes, “Phoebe’s naive confidence that clerical life mirrors clerical novels stands as a charge that Yonge has created images of family life among Church of England clergy and expectations about their moral character that blind readers to the real, more complex picture” (134). I counter that Yonge was unashamedly creating didactic literature that would set a standard of living for the readers, particularly the ones who obtained her books through Sunday School projects. Oliphant herself affirms that Yonge’s characters did have faults even if generally they represented an ideal. In *The Victorian Age of English Literature* (1892), Oliphant writes that Yonge’s

[...] series of books have added quite a new world of excellent Church people, good, noble and true, with all their fads and little foolishnesses, all their habits of

²⁷ O’Mealy explains that Trollope (*The Warden*), Eliot, Gaskell, and Wilkie Collins all attacked Dickens at first and later other authors. The realism wars began in the 1850s and continued into the 1860s and 1870s by novelists who considered themselves realists (Meckier 276). Meckier writes that novelists “wanted to further themselves and their perspectives on life by preventing a contemporary’s technique of philosophy from attaining a reputation they thought incommensurate with its merits” (276). O’Mealy puts it as these authors among others “rewrote his fictions to try to prevent his versions of social possibilities and realities” (130). He explains that Trollope would later attack Eliot, and Oliphant attacked Trollope. Meckier sees secularization as one of the positive aspects of this period.

mind and speech, their delightful family affection, and human varieties of goodness, to an existing universe, in which with all its faults there are so many such, that a sympathetic and interested audience can never be wanting. (494-495)

Further, Oliphant had a professional relationship with Yonge. Oliphant published short stories in Yonge's *Monthly Packet* after the publication of the Carlingford series. If tension ever were to exist in their relationship, then by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, that tension would seem to have faded.

Beyond Oliphant's emphasis on the representation of family in Yonge, she also looks at marriage, partner selection, and women's non-professional work. O'Mealy suggests Phoebe differs from Yonge's characters in *The Daisy Chain* due to her practical choice of a spouse (136). While Yonge's Flora makes a similar practical selection based on wealth and social position, Yonge punishes Flora with the death of a child and unhappiness in her marriage. Phoebe differs in her selection of Clarence as a selection of a career rather than of love. She does not pick Clarence simply for his wealth but for an outlet or something to do, a duty rather than an affair of the heart. The character type from Yonge whom Phoebe does recognize is Reginald, whom she compares to Guy Morville in *The Heir of Redclyffe*, which Oliphant references in regards to marriage. When Reginald worries about his father taking a pupil and not watching his daughters, Phoebe counters, "you need not be afraid of Clarence Copperhead. He is not the fascinating pupil of a church-novel. There's nothing the least like the Heir of Redclyffe about him" (Oliphant 175). Guy Morville was not a pupil but a wealthy ward who came to live with a family whose daughter he eventually marries. To a degree, Clarence and Reginald can both be considered Guy-type figures in the novel. Both Oliphant male leading characters must overcome

family difficulties. Reginald's inheritance is not property but a clerical position in Carlingford. The novel ends with him taking his father's position in the church and acting as a father for his younger siblings, and earlier in the novel, his father points out that his position, even if a sinecure, comes due to his father's position and influence. However, Reginald does not exhibit what some have seen as the romantic tendencies of Guy. Reginald faces no great internal conflict. He does not sing and lacks an ear for great music. He falls in love with Phœbe but does not fight or counter Clarence when he proposes to her. Mr. May displays a terrible temper and greed, but Reginald does not see these things as family curses or possible inheritances. Oliphant would later write that *The Heir of Redclyffe* was a "sweet youthful tragedy of piety and devotion" (*The Victorian Age*, 494). This reading of Guy does fit Reginald who acts much more like an ideal model of a clergyman, particularly when compared to Proctor in "The Rector" or his own father. Phœbe tells Reginald she knows all about him based on the "church" novels²⁸ that she has read:

"Oh, I know everything about you. You are a fine scholar, but you don't like the drudgery of teaching. You have a fine mind, but it interferes with you continually. You have had a few doubts—just enough to give a piquancy; and now you have a great ideal, and mean to do many things that common clergymen don't think of. That was why you hesitated about the chaplaincy? See how much I have got out of Miss Yonge. I know you as well as if I had known you all my life; a great deal

²⁸ Oliphant appears to use the term to refer to High Church novels.

better than I know Clarence Copperhead; but then, no person of genius has taken any trouble about him.” (175)

As Yonge predicted in her works on the influence of literature upon young women, Oliphant’s Phœbe sees the world through fiction. A little doubt has become socially or publicly appropriate if not also romantic rather than a great crisis, as it would have been in the 1840s. Phœbe cannot know Clarence because fewer authors have taken up overweight, wealthy, and new money young men who must leave Oxford due to poor academic performance. Unlike a Guy Morville or Reginald May, Clarence lacks a romantic appeal. He lacks the mystery of a clergyman’s life and has few accomplishments that were not also available to women personally or professionally. He is educated in the May home, follows his parents’ guidance, and has no career.

Oliphant focuses, as in other Carlingford novels, on the role of the clergyman and appropriate career selection. When the reader first encounters Reginald, he has been offered a position at a chapel that offers a home for poor, elderly men. He dislikes the offer, which his father encourages him to accept, given the salary of 250 pounds a year. Reginald says to Ursula: “how do you suppose I can be pleased? Thrust into a place where I am not wanted--where I can be of no use. A dummy, a practical falsehood. How can I accept it, Ursula? I tell you it is a sinecure!” (Oliphant 66). Ursula does not know what a sinecure is, but most of Oliphant’s readers would: A sinecure is a position that requires little or no labor but was supported by a generous salary. Trollope also includes a sinecure and small old men’s home in *The Warden* (1855). Critics had sought to abolish these since at least the late eighteenth century. For example, an 1832 document titled “The Devil’s Menagerie of State Paupers” lists sinecures, grants, and compensations that could be eliminated. However, Reginald’s position would probably not

legally be considered a sinecure but a valid position that had shifted due to depopulation. Mr. May does not consider the position a sinecure or the criticism to be valid. He tells Ursula that sinecures are “A piece of outrageous folly [...] all springing from the foolish books boys read now-a-days, and the nonsense that is put into their minds” (Oliphant 70). He calls Reginald an “ass” for wanting to turn down the position (Oliphant 70). Ursula persists in wanting to understand why. Oliphant writes:

In the course of the evening, however, Ursula took advantage of a quiet moment to look into the dictionary and make herself quite safe about the meaning of the word sinecure. It was not the first time she had heard it, as may be supposed. She had heard of lucky people who held sinecures, and she had heard them denounced as evil things, but without entering closely into the meaning. Now she had a more direct interest in it, and it must be confessed that she was not at all frightened by the idea, or disposed to reject it as Reginald did. Ursula had not learnt much about public virtue, and to get a good income for doing nothing, or next to nothing, seemed to her an ideal sort of way of getting one’s livelihood. She wished with a sigh that there were sinecures which could be held by girls. But no, in that as in other things “gentlemen” kept all that was good to themselves. (73)

Oliphant uses sinecures to critique the position of women as well as the clergy. She connects rejecting a sinecure to upholding “public virtue.” Ursula seems to have heard the term but used in a variety of ways, connecting to the general sense that an Oliphant character, even the daughter of a clergyman, would have exposure to a variety of viewpoints without necessarily having or needing firm convictions of her own. Oliphant uses her as an example of an average

churchgoer and as a contrast to Ethel in *The Daisy Chain*. Ethel reads extensively and studies Greek, and she of course would have been aware of sinecures. Ursula sees the sinecure not as an impediment to virtue but as a means of providing for Reginald, as he already acts as his father's unpaid curate. Reginald has been doing church work without pay, and taking the sinecure position would enable him to continue to work for the church officially *and* unofficially. Ursula sees a practical solution that would probably be rejected based on church tradition and funding allotments.

Oliphant further uses Dissenting Northcote to critique the sinecure. In his speech he expands on the situation at the "College." There are six elderly men, and the duty given to Reginald is to "say their prayers for them" and to read the services (Oliphant 124-125). Northcote points out that an elderly clergymen could do this as his retirement, but the position has been given "to a young gentleman, able-bodied," "fresh from Oxford" (Oliphant 125). Northcote sees this not as Reginald's failure as much as the failure of the church who "so crows the spirit and weakens the hearts of her followers that a young man at the very beginning of his career, able to teach, able to work, able to dig, educated and trained and cultured, can stoop to accept a good income in such a position as this" (Oliphant 125). Northcote estimates the position, with daily and evening morning prayers, would take about one hour per day. He ultimately sees the position as an instance that "cuts honesty and honour out of men's hearts" (Oliphant 125). Northcote does not limit his criticism to sinecures; he spends the first ten minutes of his speech on an unnamed "controversy." Oliphant states that he "laid hold of some of those weak points which the Church, of course, has in common with every other institution in the world" (124). Oliphant demonstrates that the church suffers from worldly faults, but she does not

elaborate on them outside of the examples given by the day-to-day lives of the clergyman in the series. Even with the concept of a sinecure, Oliphant does not suggest outright elimination of the positions. Phoebe later states that the sinecure may do good, but not all clergymen can or should hold them. Oliphant points out that one can hold a position like that and still do work. Northcote comes to admire Reginald, who continues to work for the good of Carlingford even after he also accepts his father's position.

Mr. May probably acts as the most negative representation of a Church of England clergyman in the series. Public opinion in Carlingford is lukewarm in regard to him, and he holds more respect outside of the community. Oliphant describes him as not unkind but an inadequate father. He writes "very pleasant 'thoughtful' papers for some of the Church magazines" (Oliphant 67). The publications come at the sacrifice of family life as he "could be very savage" when he was writing. Unlike the other clergymen at St. Roque's, May finds himself unable to advance and to make friends. Oliphant writes, "He preached better than any other of the Carlingford clergymen, looked better, had more reputation out of the place; and was of sufficiently good family, and tolerably well connected" (67). He holds "moderate" opinions that shifted from High to Low "as circumstances required, though never going too far in either direction" (68). Oliphant then turns in this paragraph to reveal the true problems with May: his private life that, while hidden, seems to prevent advances. Oliphant reveals an ultimate optimism about the clergy in her assumption that hidden character flaws can still prevent advances in the church hierarchy. May remains in debt throughout the novel and has used a congregation member to borrow additional funds. He also holds the conviction that "his affairs came first, and were always to be attended to" (68). The attention to one's own needs makes the sharpest

contrast with single father Dr. May from Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*. Dr. May mildly alienates his children due to his temper and high expectations, but he generally offers advice and supports his children's education and spiritual lives. Oliphant's Mr. May does not support his children or provide for their education. Mr. May fails within the Church of England not for his religious beliefs, but for his lack of personal discipline.

While Oliphant may be more gentle to Dissent in *Salem Chapel*, I argue she strongly critiques and dismisses the movement in *Phæbe, Junior*. Oliphant presents the Tozers and Phoebe Junior's family in lukewarm terms, but she suggests Phoebe's father is motivated in his attentions and affections by those in his congregation who give money. Clarence's father Mr. Copperhead has even given her father a bust of himself (after the bust turned out poorly) and which is placed in a position of honor in their house. In doing so, the Dissenting minister sets up an idol to commerce and trade in his home. Oliphant's choice of name for the Copperhead family invokes both David Copperfield and the poisonous snake, the copperhead. Copperfield is sent to Salem House; Salem Chapel is the name of the Dissenting chapel, but Copperhead does not attend Salem Chapel. Throughout the novel, the elder Mr. Copperhead is presented as a distasteful character who abuses his wife and does not participate in society in a proper way. He has made his fortune through commerce and finds acceptance and reverence in the Dissenting community. His actions are never charitable, and Oliphant suggests he is like a vulgar, spoilt child who only receives admiration from the Dissenting minister (Phoebe's father) due to his wealth. For example, Phoebe's father tells her:

“Mr. Copperhead's manner is not pleasant sometimes, that is quite true. We must make allowances, my dear. Great wealth, you know, has its temptations. You

can't expect a man with so much money and so many people under him to have the same consideration for other people's feelings. He says to this man go and he goeth, and to that man come and he cometh." (Oliphant 31)

The final line quotes Matthew 8.9. In the parable, a centurion parallels his authority over his servants to Jesus' authority over all men as proof of his faith. Phoebe's father grants authority based solely on wealth and uses the Bible to support his misguided views. When Phoebe counters that Mr. Copperhead is rude, her father defends him even though Copperhead has slighted him and Phoebe. This section in particular may contain humor but does not feel like an ironic depiction or a warm representation of Dissent. While Sewell uses theological arguments when considering Catholicism, Oliphant focuses on social engagement and personal behavior with less evident references to religious beliefs. Instead, Oliphant takes on irreligious behavior on the part of the minister and Mr. Copperhead, one of the "major" members of his congregation. Oliphant's second major critique of Dissent comes in the short career of Dissenting minister Northcote, who returns to the Church of England at the end of the novel. He ultimately sees Dissent as doing little good for anyone. He is "released from the charge of Salem Chapel" when the minister returns, "to the great delight of the congregation, though they had not been very fond of their old pastor before" (Oliphant 339). Oliphant sharply mocks the Dissenting congregation, which rejects Northcote for making friends with Reginald rather than continuing to preach against him. The congregation wishes for Northcote to violate social graces and propriety in addition to what would be considered a Christian practice of forgiveness. In the final chapter, Oliphant states that the congregation only liked Northcote when he preached against Reginald. Oliphant writes:

“All his friends was Church folks,” said a third; “he was a wolf in sheep’s clothing, that’s what I calls him; and a poor moralist as a preacher, with never a rousing word in them things as he called his sermons. We’re well rid of the likes of him, though he may be clever. I don’t give much for that kind of cleverness; and what’s the good of you, minister or not minister, if you can’t keep consistent and stick to your own side.” (339)

This paragraph includes a series of congregation members, all of whom speak in a vernacular not used often elsewhere in the series. Oliphant depicts the congregation as uneducated in addition to wishing to be “roused,” rather than taught or edified. Further, Oliphant sees the emphasis on remaining on “your own side” rather than considering an issue fully as a negative practice, given her next comments on Northcote. Finally, Tozer, who at this point has been paid off by Northcote, casts what he sees as the definitive “vote” on Northcote’s character. Tozer tells the congregation that the problem is “clever” men: “it’s my conviction as clever young men ain’t the sort for Salem. We want them as is steady-going, and them as is consistent; good strong opinions, and none o’ your charity, that’s what we wants here” (Oliphant 340). Oliphant mocks the ignorance of a congregation that would reject someone for his intelligence and his charitable work. Oliphant’s *Salem Chapel*, which focuses on the Congregationalist chapel that appears throughout the series, also depicts Dissenters and their leaders as full of “arrogance and narrow-mindedness” (Kämper 61). Kämper’s analysis of *Pheobe Junior* does not include Northcote’s final decisions in the novel. Not only does Northcote give up being a minister, but he gives up Dissent as well. Oliphant writes: “Northcote took this very quietly, but he retired, after he had married Ursula, from the office of pastor, for which he was not fitted, and from the Liberation

Society, and various other societies, coming to see that Disestablishment was not a panacea for national evils any more than other things” (340). Oliphant ends the series with a critique of Dissent and a suggestion that people may ultimately leave the movement. An 1877 review sees the novel as teaching Northcote that “Church has advantages, and Dissent disadvantages” (“Phoebe Junior,” 758). However, the reviewer suggests people “are not partisans; we represent neither Church or Dissent” (Contemporary Review, 758). However, the reviewer contradicts himself or herself by suggesting Northcote would have never spoken to Reginald. Partisanship did exist, and Oliphant seems to suggest that by crossing the party lines, Northcote can see the failures of Dissent and return to the Church of England.

The answer to the “national evils” seems to be Phoebe’s political work rather than work in a small chapel or church. Oliphant includes a pointed chapter toward the end of the novel in which she further critiques Copperhead and solutions to poverty and the care for the elderly. Mr. May grants that “our poor little Carlingford is not much of a place; no trade, no movement, no manufactures” (Oliphant). In response, Copperhead suggests eliminating the city and reducing charitable efforts that he sees as sustaining unnecessary lives. He dislikes not only the poor but the country, which shows his lack of care for the national character. Oliphant writes:

“The sort of place that should be cleared off the face of the earth,” said the millionaire; “meaning no offence, of course. That’s my opinion in respect to country towns. What’s the good of them? Nests of gossip, places where people waste their time, and don’t even amuse themselves. Give me green fields and London, that is my sort. I don’t care if there was not another blessed brick in the country. There is always something that will grow in a field, corn or fat beasts—

not that we couldn't get all that cheaper from over the water if it was managed as it ought to be. But a place like this, what's the good of it? Almshouses and chaplains, and that kind of rubbish, and old women; there's old women by the score." (263)

Mr. May tells Copperhead that they cannot kill off the population, and Copperhead explains that he does not wish for people to be killed off. Instead, he remarks that people have carried "Christianity too far" by creating almshouses and "encouraging those old beggars to live" (Oliphant 263). Oliphant uses Phœbe to counter Mr. Copperhead and to suggest an alternative. Phœbe states: "I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of Euthanasia [...] but then it would have to be with the consent of the victims. When any one found himself useless, unnecessary to the world, or unhappy in it—" (Oliphant 263). Phœbe tells Clarence Copperhead that he can "take up your father's idea and work it out" (Oliphant 264). She immediately alters her approach and remarks upon seeing a Paris hospital that kept elderly people alive. She laughs that "What a speech you might make when you bring a bill into Parliament to abolish almshouses and all sorts of charities!" (Oliphant 264). While Clarence is confused, his father understands that she mocks his views and is "cowed" at her insolence. Oliphant uses this scene to emphasize one of the novel's major religious arguments: running almshouses and caring for the poor and elderly are important tasks. Copperhead sees care for the poor as taking Christianity "too far." Copperhead seems to invoke aspects of Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* (1851). Spencer suggests eliminating the state church and poor laws, and reducing the number of doctors since the sickly and weak would be better off perishing so that stronger and healthier people breed (233-234). By invoking these views in connection with Mr. Copperhead, Oliphant makes an even

sharper critique by connecting these beliefs with Dissent and the lower-class businessmen who have risen to the middle classes.

Oliphant's solution is Phœbe's management of Clarence as a happy ending and as a career opportunity. Women gaining opportunities through their husbands repeats throughout the series. In "The Executor," Bessie rises from poverty through her marriage. In her discussion of *Miss Marjoribanks*, Kämper writes, "The happy ending for Margaret Oliphant's heroines does not consist in finding a husband who will protect and shelter them for the rest of their lives but rather in finding a sphere of usefulness, i.e. an outlet for their remarkable talents" (245). For all his faults, Oliphant shows Clarence as superior at the end of the novel by his choice of Phœbe as a choice of a political helpmate. Oliphant writes, "She would get everything up for him, if he went into parliament [...] 'There ain't many girls that could do that,' [...] She would save him worlds of trouble; save his money even, for coaches and that sort of thing cost money" (233). Clarence makes a practical as well as emotional choice, given the other scenes in which he appears infatuated with her beauty and musical talents. However, her lack of wealth and social position cause him to need to justify his choice of her. Phœbe likewise makes a practical choice in her selection of Clarence over Reginald May. Oliphant writes:

He was not very wise, nor a man to be enthusiastic about, but he would be a career to Phœbe. She did not think of it humbly like this, but with a big capital—a Career. Yes; she could put him into parliament, and keep him there. She could thrust him forward (she believed) to the front of affairs. He would be as good as a profession, a position, a great work to Phœbe. He meant wealth (which she dismissed in its superficial aspect as something meaningless and vulgar, but

accepted in its higher aspect as an almost necessary condition of influence), and he meant all the possibilities of future power. Who can say that she was not as romantic as any girl of twenty could be? only her romance took an unusual form. It was her head that was full of throbbings and pulses, not her heart.” (234)

Like she does in *Miss Marjoribanks*, Oliphant ends the novel for Phœbe in hopes of or in love with the thought of a career. In the conclusion, Oliphant suggests Lucilla marries with the idea of “a vision of a parish saved, a village reformed, a county reorganised, and a triumphant election at the end, the recompense and crown of all, which should put the government of the country itself, to a certain extent, into competent hands” (*Miss Marjoribanks* 495). Lucilla and Phoebe can effect the most change by entering the political realm through influencing their husbands and elections. Clarence goes into Parliament, and Oliphant suggests her readers have seen Phœbe’s writing in the morning papers (439). While Phœbe’s career is hidden behind her husband’s name, Oliphant sees this political activity as a way that women can use their influence to work for the better good, in this case for the poor and elderly. Another fifty years would pass before a woman would take a seat in Parliament, and given Oliphant’s commitment to realism, her placement of Phœbe as an important public character acts as a significant move in favor of the position of women. Kämper’s reading of gender throughout the series agrees that Oliphant sees women as capable and not in need of a man to tell them what to do (282). However, Phœbe and Lucilla Marjoribanks must link themselves to a man in order to gain a position from which they can effect change. Sewell and Yonge put less emphasis on marriage as an element of development. Oliphant seems to suggest that marriage does not restrict one’s potential, as in Yonge’s *The*

Clever Woman, but instead Oliphant allows for marriage as providing a “behind the scenes” opportunity for middle- to upper-middle-class women.

Somewhat similar to Yonge, Oliphant does not present her female characters with opportunities for wide religious influence. The opportunities for women extend beyond the private sphere to the public sphere by the end of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*. Unlike many of the girls and young women considered in this dissertation in the works of Sewell and Yonge, Oliphant’s female characters seem to lack an interest in religious matters. As a woman, Oliphant does enter into religious controversy, but she notes women’s potential while bemoaning the lack of access women have to any form of religious power. Phœbe comes the closest to obtaining power, in that she manages her husband and considers her relationship with him to be part of her career. She counters the elder Copperhead’s beliefs on the treatment of the poor, and the book ends with Phœbe writing Clarence Copperhead’s speeches and guiding his political involvement. To a degree, the female characters in Sewell and Yonge take similar opportunities to guide religious discourse by involving themselves in ministries, as influencers in their families, or as supporters of their male siblings who need religious guidance or support. Additional research could help to determine if this was a trend during the 1860s within the church to suppress women’s involvement. Alternatively, the busying of women could be specific to Oliphant’s beliefs on the position of women. However, Oliphant is generally considered to be more feminist than Yonge, whose role as an “anti-feminist” author was considered in the last chapter, and Sewell’s “feminism” or lack of feminist beliefs has not been developed by scholars. Rather than pointing to a simple secularization of Britain, Oliphant’s works might instead suggest an increased repression of women’s involvement within the church. Oliphant herself acts as an

authority on religious controversy, but she does not allow that same opportunity to her female characters, even those in search of a career.

CHAPTER 5

BRONTË, GASKELL, AND ELIOT: REWORKING, REBUKING, AND REVISING RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIONS

In her book-length study *The Brontës and Religion*, Marianne Thormählen suggests that religion as an academic focus presents several problems for scholars:

Not only is he/she working in, and inevitably affected by, an intellectual climate which affords little scope for religious enquiry, as well as little readiness to allow for the potential power of religious feeling and experience in the context of artistic creation; the historical context itself is problematic, too: religious life in early nineteenth-century Britain was characterized by enormous complexity and variety which often threaten an investigator's foothold.

As seen in their religious novels, Sewall, Yonge, and Oliphant, all resisted simple identifications with all beliefs held by the Church of England or leaders of the Oxford Movement. Of course, not all leaders of the Church of England agreed; neither did all members of the church. However, some of the scholarship on religion in the work of canonical authors may identify them as connected to a movement without considering the complexities and development of their beliefs, how they comment on religion in their novels, and how the context of religious novels expands the understanding of their work. This chapter examines a very small selection of works by Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. While much has been written on religion and these authors, this chapter furthers the understanding of the religious and literary context of their works. Like Thormählen's analysis of the Brontës, this chapter is not simply interested in tracing shifting denominational or religious allegiances. Instead, I examine

how these canonical works that include religion in important ways can be better understood by being considered as part of a wider literary dialogue about religion in religious novels.

Secondarily, I implement my original methodology of placing close readings of religious practices within a wider understanding of religious controversy at the time, and I suggest different ways in which the lens of reading for lived religion can be effective. In these authors, reading for lived religion complicates understandings of these authors' views of the Church of England and the representation of gender and religion.

Some scholars have considered the relationship between or the influence of religious novelists on more canonical authors. Knight and Mason's book places Brontë, Gaskell, and Eliot into one of two categories: Unitarianism for Gaskell and Evangelicalism for Brontë and Eliot. As their analysis demonstrates to a small extent, the three did not limit themselves to these affiliations. Instead, they wrote about the Church of England and other churches. In her book-length study of spiritual crisis and Victorian women writers, Ruth Jenkins explores the connections between Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels, in particular *Robert Elsmere*, and Florence Nightingale, Brontë, Gaskell, and Eliot. She notes that *Robert Elsmere* focuses on "a man's spiritual doubt" (Jenkins 148). In contrast, she points out "the women examined in this study all write about *women's* stories, *women's* spiritual crises" (Jenkins 148). Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant also all make use of *women's* stories and interactions with religious controversy or spiritual crises, and they therefore have the potential to expand upon both what was happening in Victorian religious novels and the canonical works of Brontë, Gaskell, and Eliot. In his book on *Jane Eyre*, Jerome Beaty further notes that these three authors "all use sacred imagery and allusion to criticize a patriarchally misappropriated institutionalized religion" (150). Beaty links

the spiritual crises of these authors to the “culture’s political and clerical complicity” (154). I agree that the authors criticize patriarchal control of religion, but I suggest the authors’ depictions of religious practices, clergymen, and women’s duty act as the means of their critique.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Brontë’s use of religion in *Jane Eyre*, particularly in the final paragraph, has often been downplayed, given what some scholars see as a sharp critique of evangelicalism in the first volume. A number of important scholars have considered the role of religion in *Jane Eyre*. Susan Gallagher’s essay “Jane Eyre and Christianity” (1993) argues for the importance of Christianity as a context. She suggests Brontë “emphasizes feminine spirituality” rather than “the masculine images of God so prevalent in her own society” (67). Gallagher argues the “characterization of God in feminine terms is unusual (although not unprecedented in women’s writing)” (68). Gallagher concludes, “The novel’s religious assertion of a woman’s right to self-identity and its depiction of marriage as a relationship of equality rather than of dominance and submission anticipate twentieth-century Christian feminism” (68). While this dissertation has shown ways in which authors have viewed God as nurturing rather than punishing, Gallagher very rightly points out the significant difference in the representation of marriage and equality in male/female relationships. Yonge’s *The Clever Woman*, published after *Jane Eyre*, offers equality to one of the couples but not to another. As Griesinger notes in her article on *Jane Eyre*, John Maynard’s chapter, “The Brontës and Religion” in the *Cambridge Companion to the Brontës* (2002), in many ways dismisses the importance of religion rather than explaining its connections to the Brontës’ lives and works. Griesinger points out that Maynard and later biographer Lyndall

Gordon focus on *Jane Eyre* as a sexual awakening in which religion hinders progress.

Griesinger's article emphasizes the positive role of Evangelicalism for women and uses Elisabeth Jay's concept of Evangelicalism as a "religion of the heart." Jay analyzes *Jane Eyre* within the context of a religious novel, Emma Jane Worboise's *Thornycroft Hall*. Jay suggests that novel is "an Evangelical answer" to Brontë's novel; she explains Worboise's novel hopes "to isolate the Evangelical experience in life and stress the compelling need for total dependence on the Divine Friend and Counsellor" (Jay 245). Jay explains that Worboise argues against Brontë's depiction of Lowood. Given other religious novelists like Yonge also critique poorly managed religious girls schools, Worboise's reaction may have to do with her support of the Evangelical movement but may also deserve additional research in order to understand why she reacted so strongly against Brontë's representation of her schooldays. As discussed in this chapter, even Sewell took up the critique of poorly run girls schools.

In *The Brontës and Religion*, Marianne Thormählen argues that the Brontës were familiar with religious controversy. She looks at denominations (Evangelicals, Dissenters, and Roman Catholics) and theological issues like "salvation versus damnation and the underlying question of Divine love and the Atonement of Christ" (Thormählen 5). She notes that in the Brontës' time as well as now, they have been considered "anti-Christian" in error (Thormählen 7). Thormählen also argues that "while faith and everyday practice are separable, faith and doubt are not" (7). However, my readings do take into consideration the everyday practices that help to explain religion in their work as well as how the works should be read. I agree with her conclusion in that some doubt does not preclude Christian beliefs. The role of doubt in the novels of Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant all point to doubt as unideal but also a real part of one's religious life.

Thormählen notes Charlotte read *The Soul: Her Sorrows and Aspirations* by Francis William Newman (John Henry Newman's brother) and J.A. Froude's *The Nemesis of Faith*. Thormählen calls both works "associated with anti-Established-Church currents" (8). Newman worked at a Dissenters' college, and Froude at the time of the publication of *Jane Eyre* was associated with the Church of England. *The Nemesis of Faith* was published in 1849 (Sewell's brother William publically burned the novel). However, Brontë read much more that supported the church, and that includes at least one novel by Elizabeth Missing Sewell but probably more.

The Brontës' father began as a curate in the Church of England and went so far as to break off an engagement with a nonconformist in fear of the relationship's effects on his career (Green 36-37). He was a perpetual curate at the death of his wife (Green 38). Dudley Green's description of him sounds remarkably like the father in Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior*; Green explains that Brontë was seen as "a strange, obstinate old man who did not like children and who was subject to fits of bad temper during which he performed actions of extreme eccentricity" (38). Green notes that Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë set up this depiction, which Brontë himself would critique in a letter to her. Typical for an Evangelical in the Church of England, Patrick Brontë placed a heavy emphasis on preaching for the appropriate reasons (Green 40). As is well known, Charlotte and her sisters attended an Evangelical school, Cowan Bridge or the Clergy Daughter's School, which Brontë depicts as Lowood in *Jane Eyre*. Two of her sisters died after the four sisters were removed from the school. While he was in many ways Evangelical, Emily Griesinger notes that Patrick Brontë aimed to maintain a middle ground in his beliefs and religious controversies (44). She explains, "Mr. Brontë was neither Calvinist nor

Arminian but tried to hold the best of both views in tension” (Griesinger 44). He was not the only religious influence in the girls’ lives, though.

While additional archival research may be able to note exactly whether and when Brontë read Sewell’s novels, an important biographical connection does link her to Sewell. Brontë’s schoolmistresses, Margaret Wooler, lived in the Isle of Wight where she was said to have been close with Elizabeth Missing Sewell. In his collection of primary source documents in *Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle* (1896), Clement King Shorter quotes a letter from a relative of Wooler. The relative writes that Wooler was “very intimate with the Sewell family, one of whom was the author of *Amy Herbert*” (260). In an 1853 letter, Brontë asks Wooler to write and tell her how she liked Sewell’s *The Experience of Life* (*The Letters*, 204). As discussed in chapter two, Sewell’s work was generally attributed to “The Author of *Amy Herbert*.” Since Brontë seems to have read Sewell’s later work, then Brontë would have at least been aware of *Amy Herbert* as the title appears on the title page of *The Experience of Life*. However, given the relationship to Wooler, the popularity of *Amy Herbert*, and the reference to *The Experience of Life*, I find the suggestion that Brontë read *Amy Herbert* to be highly likely even without considering the similarities between the novels.

Brontë published *Jane Eyre* in 1847, three years after Sewell’s *Amy Herbert* (1844). While my reading considers some the broader characteristics of religious novels’ representation of religious practices, my analysis of *Jane Eyre* first focuses on how the novel reworks or revises sections of *Amy Herbert*. Like *Jane Eyre*, *Amy Herbert* includes a poorly managed girls’ school, a beleaguered governess, and a conjurer scene at a critical point in the novel. *Amy Herbert* spends time with her male cousin and two female cousins, all of whom treat her rather shabbily.

Amy's aunt scolds her, and the church is a closed off space. Jane, of course, lives with her male cousin and two female cousins, who are much meaner to her than Amy's cousins were. Jane's aunt abuses her, and first the uncle's chamber and later the attic act as closed-off spaces. In her dissertation on Sewell, Frerichs analyzes the role of the governess in connection with *Jane Eyre*, and she points out that *Amy Herbert* sold tens of thousands of copies. The novel was readily available and well known. Thormählen suggests considering Yonge to understand the Brontës, but she does not discuss Sewell. Jerome Beaty's book *Misreading 'Jane Eyre': A Postformalist Paradigm* expands on the governess connections but argues for *Jane Eyre* not as a reworking but as operating in similar ways. In noting the similarities between the death of the child in Amy Herbert and of Helen in *Jane Eyre*, Beaty argues:

The source, the authorization of 'narratability,' is the convention, not necessarily the particular scene or situation in some other single work or author [...]

Elements, scenes that we find common to Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, are more often than not discoverable as well in more than one minor novel of the time: they are scenic topoi or commonplaces, conventions of the period and novel genre, or of the genre as it manifests itself in that period. (42)

Given Beaty's explanation of the potential for conventions to develop during this period, the analysis of the use or manifestation of the "commonplaces" can help to show how Brontë creates a different type of argument about religion and how Sewell emphasizes singleness and the autonomy of women. Finally, scholars have also noted similarities in other Brontë novels.²⁹

²⁹ Frerichs points out that Robert Colby's *Fiction with a Purpose* (1967) explores the similarities between Brontë's *Villette* (1853) and Sewell's *Experience of Life* (1852).

Further considering the connections between the depiction of the school and the conjurer scene leads me to look at the first half of *Jane Eyre* as a reworking of *Amy Herbert*. I use my normal method of considering lived religion to analyze the St. John proposal and the final pages of the novel, which I place within the context of religious novels.

While both authors emphasize the role of the governess, *Amy Herbert* differs from *Jane Eyre* in the final treatment of the governess. Frerichs points out that the governess who would have otherwise been a middle-class woman had become a sort of stock character by the time of the writing of *Amy Herbert*. In his book, Beaty references several similarities: Emily Morton, the governess in *Amy Herbert*, has parents who die within two months of each other as does Jane Eyre. Both governesses are socially humiliated (Beaty 112-113). Frerichs also suggests that Jane Eyre, in contrast to Emily Morton, has a generally happy time as a governess given she has no mother figure to abuse her. Emily Morton is subject to insults and dismissals by the elder children and the mother, who often blames Emily for the girls' mistakes. The major difference is the resolution of the position of unhappy governess. Jane's position becomes unsustainable because of her romance with Rochester. The governess in *Amy Herbert* does not engage in a romance; her great struggle is the death of the child that she was watching. The child's death results in Emily's dismissal, which Amy prevents at the last moment. However, Emily chooses to leave the family and to live with the Herbert family. The end of the novel suggests the best of Emily's life was yet to come, as she lived in the cottage with the Herbert family for years. Rather than using a marriage relationship to remove the heroine from work as a nanny, Sewell uses non-sexual and non-romantic domesticity. Emily's celibacy, isolation, and faith bring her to a point

of happiness. Brontë alters this ending to suggest that religious duty and happiness can come through a marriage relationship.

While Brontë clearly based much of Lowood on personal experience, as scholars have shown, Sewell references a girls' school in *Amy Herbert* with several of what probably are "commonplace" representations of the conditions. The short section in *Amy Herbert* presents the concept of a girls' school to the scene's upper-class listening audience when a visitor, Julia Stanley, tells Amy about her school. Amy initially considers the stories "amusing" (Sewell 189) as Julia inserts humor to make Amy and the other girls laugh. Julia's sister defensively counters her, though, saying "You must not believe everything Julia tells you exactly" in an attempt to support the importance and seriousness of the school (Sewell 190). Julia then suggests that the young ladies "have no second course at dinner, no curtains to their beds, nor fires in their rooms" (Sewell 190). However, her sister responds, "We always have puddings on Saturdays; and we have fires when we are ill; and there are curtains in the largest room, only we have never slept there" (Sewell 190). She reveals that many of the girls are ill, but only the most seriously ill are allowed to sleep in warm rooms. Sewell then reveals additional details such that as the treasured weekly rice pudding is served cold and is the only thing generally served. Sewell uses the eldest Cunningham sister to state, "as for ladies being brought up in such a way, how is it possible for them ever to know how to behave, if they are not taken more care of?" (Sewell 190). As discussed earlier, Sewell and her extended family highly valued education and were involved in the establishment of schools in the years during and after the publication of *Amy Herbert*. Julia explains that the girls at the school do not worry about the food given "if you were up at six o'clock every day, as we are, and had nothing but hard lessons from morning till night, you

would think cold rice-pudding one of the nicest things you had ever tasted” (190). Finally, the girls ride to their school alone on stagecoaches, much to the shock of the more upper-class girls who were listening.

Brontë of course did not need additional information in order to create Lowood, but the depiction of Lowood and that of the school in the short scene in *Amy Herbert* have several similarities. Some scholars have read Lowood as purely biographical. Jerome Beaty states that “Cowan Bridge School, the Reverend Carus Wilson, and the death of her own sister Maria supplied Charlotte Brontë with all the material she needed for the creation of Lowood Institution, the Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst, and the poignant presentation of the last days of Helen Burns” (33). However, Beaty notes that some reviewers saw connections between Dickens’ Dotheby Hall in *The Life and Adventures of Nickolas Nicklby* (1838-1839) and Brontë’s Lowood. Critiques of poorly run and dangerous boys and girls schools had become much more mainstream. As may already be evident, *Amy Herbert* is also similar. One of the first similarities comes in the transportation to school. Jane must ride the fifty miles alone in the carriage. The Porter’s wife acts surprised, and Jane fears being kidnapped. Sewell points out the class distinction in the way the poorer girls speak of coaches rather than stagecoaches, and Brontë has Jane talk of the “coach” rather than the stagecoach as well. Sewell implies the danger of abduction or assault during the journey, but the girls who attend the school counter that riding alone has become the more modern way of doing things. Jane certainly does not see riding alone as the more modern way of traveling to school but as an insult and a danger to a young girl. Several smaller details seem similar as well. The girls at Lowood also eat “rice pudding” as in *Amy Herbert*, but Brontë and Dickens call it “porridge.” The Lowood students receive

inadequate amounts of bread and oatcake as also is the case in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Brontë mentions the cold and disease, but does not give details about the room as Sewell does, like its lack of curtains and insulation. Brontë does note the presence of curtains in Miss Temple's room for the comfort of Helen as she dies. Finally, Brontë includes details about the overall squalid conditions of the institution. She explains that typhus fulfills "its mission of devastation" (Brontë 70). She gives a number of reasons for the spread of illness: "the unhealthy nature of the site; the quantity and quality of the children's food; the brackish, fetid water used in its preparation; the pupils' wretched clothing and accommodations" (Brontë 70). Sewell's depiction ends without a resolution; she does not make the girls' school a significant point in the novel or a focus of one's potential religious work. Brontë's use of a religious school extends the critiques initiated in the Dickens and Sewell texts, her depiction becomes part of the popular discourse about the inadequacy of subscription boarding schools for boys and girls. Brontë critiques Evangelicalism, but Sewell implies the superiority of female instruction by a mother or governess.

As has been shown to be a frequent theme in religious novels, Brontë uses a hyper-religious, hyper-moral, or hyper-spiritual ill character to guide the others in the book. In a way, Helen Burns acts as an "Amy Herbert" figure. Burns provides a religious education for Jane Eyre, instructs her on how to act, and teaches her scripture. Like Sewell, Brontë downplays the male religious educator and uses a girl to educate those (all women or girls) around her. Burns tells Jane to read the scripture and to learn to love those around her. Similarly, Amy in particular spends long sections of the Sewell novel telling her cousins how to love other people and how to overcome their prejudices. When contrasting the Sewell school description to Brontë's much longer focus on Lowood, one notable absence is that of a male, religious authority figure in

Sewell's work. While she critiques the religious girls school as inadequate and dangerous, Sewell does not note the problem or source of the mismanagement. Instead, she implies that the religious leadership and the girls' father fail to provide an adequate environment for personal or spiritual growth. This important difference in what may be an increasingly typical representation of these schools points to the importance of Brontë's critique of the school's conservative Evangelical leader. No religious novel considered for this dissertation presents a religious leader so flawed as to care little about the deaths of those under his care. The most similar figure considered in this dissertation would be the con man in Yonge's *The Clever Woman*. The non-religious man takes the money provided for the care of the girls but does not use that money for food or fuel. However, Yonge blames the main character Rachel for the girls' treatment as much as she does the man who actively starves the children. Further, in *Amy Herbert*, Sewell never mentions "hell" directly, while Brocklehurst uses hell as a scare tactic in his first conversation with Jane. Indeed, in part because of their non-Evangelical stance, the novels considered in this dissertation by Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant either sidestep or dismiss the concept of eternal damnation. They probably assume a degree of faith and allegiance to the church, but they also do not use fear in order to motivate religious conversion or behavioral changes as Brontë's Brocklehurst does.

Another interesting parallel between *Amy Herbert* and *Jane Eyre* appears in how both authors use a scene with a conjurer. In *Amy Herbert*, Sewell uses the scene as a moment in which Amy's father returns from India. The chapter begins with "the whole party engaged in decorating" for that night's appearance of a conjurer. Amy's cousin calls him "a celebrated conjurer just arrived in the neighborhood" (Sewell 172) and who could provide entertainment for

the young people. In the party scene, Amy is placed into a “rather elevated situation” so she could see everything (Sewell 218). One of the partygoers considers the “tricks” as “nonsense” (Sewell 218). The tricks include “seeing flowers grow out of eggshells, chickens hatched in a gentleman’s hat, rings and brooches found in the possession of every one but their right owners, and all the other wonders which made the conjurer appear to possess some unearthly power” (Sewell 218). By the end of the performance, Amy thinks she could “believe the marvelous stories of fairies and genii” or even the reality of “Aladdin’s lamp” until “they were again left to the realities of every-day life” (Sewell 218). Feeling out of place, Amy does not participate in the dancing and instead overhears at the party that her father may not return home, and her mother may die (Sewell 221). Unlike Jane Eyre, Amy worries about whether the party will miss her when she retreats from their company. Unable to sleep, Amy hears a carriage outside and later learns her father has returned in it. The conjurer scene acts as a shifting moment from a book with no significant male presence to an increased male presence as the father returns. While generally Sewell’s characters do not take part in many “worldly” entertainments, Sewell presents the viewing of the conjurer without moral judgment. No one questions letting in a probable gypsy when that person’s admittance is connected with the entertainment of the upper classes.

The scene in *Jane Eyre* in which Rochester appears as a gypsy operates in some similar ways. Like in *Amy Herbert*, the party has reached a lull and looks for new entertainment, and the moment of the entertainment marks revelations and the return of an important character. Brontë’s use of a gypsy differs in its interactivity and gives Rochester opportunity to isolate, interrogate, and investigate the female characters. Like the character who doubts the tricks in *Amy Herbert*, Miss Ingram doubts or at least claims to doubt the “science of palmistry” performed by

Rochester. Jane at first seems to trust Rochester as fortuneteller as Amy does the conjurer. Like Amy being awoken that night by the noise of the carriage and her father's return, Jane is awoken that night by Mason yelling for Rochester's help. While Sewell uses the scene to move the book in a positive direction, Brontë shifts the narrative in a much more negative or at least revealing one.

The repetition of the plot device when considered alongside the other similar elements points to an important literary influence—if not also a reworking—of Sewell's *Amy Herbert*. First, the potential reworking becomes significant when considering the place of Sewell in Victorian literature. Her works were probably more widely read than scholars have previously considered. However, of all the authors considered in this dissertation, Sewell has received the least amount of scholarly attention. Second, Sewell's similar representation of the girls school in her brief sections suggests either that those details have become part of the cultural currency or that Brontë may have taken up those details as particularly appropriate to repeat. Third, *Amy Herbert* like *Jane Eyre* emphasizes the importance of female communities. Most of the similarities between the two novels occur in the first half of *Jane Eyre* when Jane takes part in female relationships that enable her personal development. Jane's entrance into a romantic relationship marks the end of the similarities between the two books. The end of the similarities emphasizes the stunted life of a Sewell's heroine. Jane's life continues after her religious development while Amy's life seems halted at the end of *Amy Herbert*. Where Jane learns to love another person who can return her affections, Amy learns to love others better through her religious development.

The final volume of *Jane Eyre* should be considered within the context of the Oxford Movement's debate about celibate marriage. Celibacy appears in religious novels either through women remaining single or through marriages that could be celibate given the lack of children. For example, Sewell's main characters *Amy Herbert*, *Gertrude*, and *Margaret Percival* all remain single at the end of the novels. Remaining unmarried allows them to manage their sometimes needy family members. The young women can also continue to participate in church work or local "missionary" activities without taking on formal positions. Oliphant's female characters who marry clergymen do seem particularly asexual. For example, the wife of the rector regrets having a ten-year engagement because of how she can do less as a person in ministry. She does not regret the lack of children or the lack of intimacy. Instead, she sees her husband as coming down from his religious pedestal and becoming more like a regular man. They could still be of childbearing age, but Yonge's characters do not get pregnant. The lack of babies and children in her novel suggests an adult focus but also a lack of sexual activity. The characters who do have children and therefore sex are presented as inferior. In Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior*, Mr. Copperhead, who marries his daughter's governess, has an additional son with the much-younger woman, and he is a consistently negative character. Oliphant's Mr. May, who has five children and no wife, is presented as a poor father who uses outbursts to manipulate his children's behavior. As Gallagher explains, Brontë's use of marriage makes *Jane Eyre* unique, but Brontë contrasts Jane's marriage with a relationship between Jane and St. John Rivers.

Celibate marriage was a trend related to the Oxford Movement and, as was often the case, connected to a revisiting of what was understood as historical church practices. Some people

focused their understanding of marriage and celibacy on instructions to the church in 1 Corinthians 7. The passage recommends marriage but with the option to stop having sex in order to focus on fasting or prayer for a time. Celibate marriage was a tradition from the time of Christ up until the 1500s (Elliott 3, 301). Also known as a “spiritual marriage,” in a celibate marriage a couple decided mutually to have a chaste life (Elliott 4). The practice became less popular during the Reformation and Counterreformation (Elliott 297). One of many themes in Tractarian poetry was celibate marriage (Dau 77-78). Another literary example exists in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh*. Browning asserts a woman’s right to divine God’s will and invokes apostolic language. The language includes describing herself as an apostle, which Jane does as well. Some have suggested Browning borrows from the *Jane Eyre* proposal scene for the proposal scene in *Aurora Leigh*. As part of the debate, some men criticized celibate marriage as providing “physical autonomy and self-definition” for women (Elliott 5). The opportunity for autonomy, independence, and self-action enables the single heroines in religious novels to pursue activities that would further the Church of England.

Like many of the religious novelists who use a female protagonist, Brontë includes a clergyman in order to discuss duty and career for women, but she also considers the role of love and romance for men and women. St. John engages in Evangelical practices like visiting the poor and the sick in his parish, and he states he preaches. His first words to Jane counter the focus on hell and death. Brontë immediately establishes him as a different type of Evangelical. St. John says, “All men must die [...] but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want” (Brontë 286). However, he lives apart from his parish in a practice frequently critiqued in religious novels.

Brontë consistently portrays St. John as reserved and cold in his interactions with women; he evaluates them based upon their potential as “female apostles” rather than as romantic partners. Consider how St. John describes an interaction with Rosamond:

“Fancy me yielding and melting, as I am doing: human love rising like a freshly opened fountain in my mind and overflowing with sweet inundation all the field I have so carefully and with such labour prepared—so assiduously sown with the seeds of good intentions, of self-denying plans.” (Brontë 318)

He emphasizes self-denial as part of his plan to become a missionary. The denial would include romance but also financial position and personal comfort. However, his language in the paragraph points to his emphasis on romantic or sexual denial. He calls the consideration of marriage to Rosamund “delirium,” “delusion,” and “temptation” that would lead to “a lifetime of regret” (Brontë 318). Further, he uses the concept of a female apostle, possibly signaling the role of celibacy in marriage to describe her. He tells Jane, “Rosamond a sufferer, a labourer, a female apostle? Rosamond a missionary’s wife? No!” (Brontë 318). Jane also affirms that she is “no apostle” (Brontë 343). The emphasis on apostleship invokes the concept of a celibate apostle, and in this understanding, Jane’s rejection of his proposal could be the rejection of a celibate marriage. Her alternative is a celibate brother and sister relationship, but he rejects the connection because of what could be considered practical concerns like isolation in India and the impropriety of single men and women traveling and living together.

The discussion of missionary work as vocation emphasizes labor over pleasure. St. John sees missionary work as his vocation; Jane states that she has “no vocation” for it (Brontë 343). He then tells her that “God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal,

but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign's service" (Brontë 343). St. John contrasts labour and love, and service and pleasure. He explicitly tells her that he seeks an engagement not for his *pleasure* but for a helpmate and coworker on the missions field. The de-emphasis on pleasure can suggest a de-emphasis on sexual relationships. St. John's explanation of the purpose of the marriage focuses on a permanent and legal connection: "I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death" (Brontë 346). He also calls her a "coadjutor," another nonsexual relationship, between two bishops in the Church of England (Brontë 346).

The most sexual language comes not from St. John but from Jane, in her narration of what she would endure as his wife. As narrator, she explains, "If I *do* go with him—if I *do* make the sacrifice he urges, I will make it absolutely: I will throw all on the altar—heart, vitals, the entire victim. He will never love me; but he shall approve me; I will show him energies he has not yet seen, resources he has never suspected" (Brontë 345). She further states, "Can I receive from him the bridal ring, endure all the forms of love (which I doubt not he would scrupulously observe) and know that the spirit was quite absent?" (Brontë 346). This line by far goes the furthest from the idea of a celibate marriage. Jane suggests that he would perform "all the forms of love" perhaps implying that they might at some point have a sexual relationship. However, her further explanation seems to suggest that he would consume her as a martyr might be consumed in a fire. The language could be read, then, as sexual but alternatively as connected to the potential of death on the mission field. Jane explains the core of her problem with St. John: "as his wife—at his side always, and always restrained, and always checked—forced to keep the fire

of my nature continually low, to compel it to burn inwardly and never utter a cry, though the imprisoned flame consumed vital after vital—*this* would be unendurable” (Brontë 347). This line suggests repression rather than expression of “all forms of love.” Further, the focus on restraint and being checked presents a very different view of partnering on the missions field than in the religious novels, which suggest an important role for some women. However, the restraint does align with some of the religious authors’ representation of women as having greater potential in local rather than international ministry when they remain single. Brontë does not seem to criticize St. John’s decision to engage in missionary work overseas. Instead, she critiques its appropriateness for Jane who lacks the calling to that particular religious duty.

The final page of *Jane Eyre* could almost be the final page of a religious novel. The book’s final lines focus not on a “happy ever after” marriage but a “happy ever after” union with God for St. John. He remains unmarried, and Jane tells readers that “he never will marry now” (Brontë 385). This suggests death but also a potential choice to remain celibate rather than marry a woman also interested in missionary work, as could have been possible through missionary organizations. In some ways returning to the emphasis on religion and death present throughout the novel, the last line returns to death as a reward and a reunion as happens during the Helen Burns death scene. Brontë uses apostolic language to describe St. John. She says that “his is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he says—”Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” (Brontë 385). While Brontë suggests that a marriage to Rochester acts as Jane’s cross to bear, Brontë does not criticize St. John for his decision to engage in international missionary work or for his choice to end his life prematurely through his choice.

Understanding the role of celibate marriage as an apostle complicates some traditional readings of the end of *Jane Eyre*. Maria LaMonaca explains that “Classic feminist readings have tended to view St. John as one-dimensional patriarchal villain; accordingly, Jane rejects not only her pious cousin, but also the Christian worldview he represents” (245). LaMonaca argues that understanding religion in *Jane Eyre* can lead readers to see how Jane rejects the patriarchal control of an Evangelical husband. However, St. John elevates the importance of his potential marriage partners by calling them “female apostles” rather than only calling them helpmates. Brontë does not end critical of the entire institution of missionary efforts in India, but she instead positions missionary work as inappropriate for Jane. Overseas missionary work as inappropriate for a central heroine or possibly a middle-class, bright young woman can be seen as a theme in the novels considered earlier in this dissertation. These novels typically extend the opportunity for overseas missionary activity to minor characters. Alternatively, in Oliphant, the Evangelical aunts in *The Perpetual Curate* support missionaries financially and by the passing of letters. Of course, these aunts would not venture out into a district of poor people, much less go overseas themselves. Charlotte Yonge, who as discussed earlier supported missionary works financially, does include two women involved in missionary work. The Mays’s Aunt Flora does missionary work as the wife of a prominent farmer in New Zealand. While one of the May children describes Aunt Flora’s life as “very funny,” Yonge in the next sentence explains that the woman’s house was burned during the Heki’s rebellion. While not a missionary, Yonge explains the woman does missionary work as the wife of a farmer. Yonge does send one somewhat significant character to the missions field at the end of the *The Daisy Chain*. In Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain*, an upper-class neighbor, Meta Rivers, becomes involved with Norman, who

decides to go into missions. Norman suggests Meta takes him not simply because of his own personality but because she wants to marry a missionary. When another character implies Meta may die overseas, Ethel May dismisses the judgment of women's abilities based upon their looks and instead emphasizes the importance of having a woman to center the male missionary and to provide housekeeping efforts. Aunt Flora not only helped to improve the health of the villagers but also helped to cut them appropriate clothes to sew. Most important about Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* is the affirmation of Meta as going overseas with a supportive partner whom she loves and chooses to support. None of the characters in Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* rejects missionary work overseas simply for the "funny" dangers of rebellion or disease. Brontë notes the danger of typhus at Lowood but not the danger of illness in missionary work. Similar to Yonge's characters, while Jane mentions potential of missionary work to cause her to die prematurely, she rejects missionary work not because of the practical difficulties but because of the position she would take as the wife of St. John. Brontë does not reject Christianity or missions in the final chapters of *Jane Eyre*, but she instead rejects the potential for loveless or even celibate marriage.

ELIZABETH GASKELL

Elizabeth Gaskell frequently used the Church of England as a point of analysis in her novels. Gaskell was married to a Unitarian minister. Most simply, Unitarians view the doctrine of the trinity as not scripturally founded. While Unitarianism relates to Dissent, the movements are not the same during the time period that Gaskell wrote. In religious fiction, Evangelical Mrs. Humphry Ward has Robert Elsmere reject Unitarianism, which she depicts as unsuccessful. In Unitarianism during this period, Knight and Mason explain, William Paley "insisted that God

had given human beings the capacity to undergo pleasure in order that they experience their own and that of others, morally obligating us both to each other and to feel good” (Knight and Mason 53). As an example of how this differs from one of the previously discussed novels, the emphasis on architecture in *Yonge* is due to the potential for architecture to focus parishioners on faith. The parishioners’ pleasure or displeasure is less significant than how pleasurable things can function for the church. Further, Knight and Mason suggest that Gaskell does not present a hard Unitarian position. They point to her “presentation of Dissent in her novels [as] always tempered by her sympathy towards any religious position expressed with conviction, itself a defining characteristic of the Unitarian Christian” (Knight and Mason 53). This section examines the representation of two clergymen: first, the father who leaves the Church of England in *North and South* and how Gaskell’s depiction shifts throughout the novel, and second, the central *Cranford* clergyman, who plays an important role in local society even as he is ultimately removed from action within the circle of women.

Religion in the novels of Elizabeth Gaskell has yet to be the focus of a major study. However, in the past twenty years, several excellent articles consider aspects of religion in her work. John Chapple’s chapter on “Unitarian Dissent” in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Gaskell* explains the context of Unitarianism during the first half of the nineteenth century. He focuses on biographical details about her early life and makes brief connections to her work. He notes that from her early work to that published after the 1850s or around 1860, Gaskell shifts to a position of increased tolerance, particularly for Roman Catholicism. Several articles examine the role of religious orders or work for a church (McArthur, Handley, Bridgham). Graham Handley considers the connections between Gaskell’s depiction of clerical life and the depictions

in Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Handley argues that Gaskell's "scenes of clerical life" are "striking" (33). He suggests her early depictions of clergy in novels like *Ruth* and *North and South* "focus upon both the specifically Christian pressures upon Benson and Mr Hale and their individual suffering" (Handley 34). Handley sees Gaskell and Eliot as elevating "aspects of what was, after all, the central strand of Victorian life" above "the cheap, romantic, trivializing sentimentality" of High Church or Evangelical novels (38). Some scholarship has also made broader connections between Gaskell's use of religion influences and other aspects of her writing. In his article on religion and science, John Kucich points out "messages of reconciliation between social classes were also framed in the language of religion, as in Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South*" (111).

Gaskell's representation of Richard Hale's religious beliefs shifts throughout the course of *North and South*. Published serially from 1854 to 1855, the work begins with Hale as a parish priest who works in the Church of England and has been passed over or refused promotions or preferments. The second chapter stresses his poverty and his inability to "outfit" his wife to a degree that she could feel comfortable participating in middle to upper-middle-class social activities. At the opening of chapter two, the reader learns that Mrs. Hale resists attending a wedding of a family member due to her husband's inability to "equip his wife afresh" in a new gown (Gaskell 16). Rather than go among her family in an older or worn out dress, she refuses participation in social events. Other people also consider the family poor. For example, even the maid describes him as a "poor country clergyman" (Gaskell 22). Gaskell notes that Hale maintains an extensive visitation schedule. This typically denotes a Low Church or Evangelical affiliation. Further, Gaskell suggests that his wife considers him "one of the most delightful

preachers she had ever heard, and a perfect model of a parish priest” (Gaskell 17). The emphasis on him as a preacher and the elimination of other Mid-church or High-Church concerns suggests a representation of someone who is Low Church or at least fairly Evangelical.

Gaskell’s representation of Hale remains vague during his explanation of why he must leave the Church of England but becomes clearer later in the novel. Hale says the family must leave Helstone “Because I must no longer be a minister in the Church of England” (Gaskell 35). Margaret assumes the bishop has learned of her brother’s probable conversion to Roman Catholicism, but her father explains he has “painful, miserable doubts” that cause him “suffering” (Gaskell 35). Margaret, shocked, asks whether they are “doubts as to religion” (Gaskell 35). However, he counters, “No! not doubts as to religion; not the slightest injury to that” (Gaskell 35). Gaskell sets his decision to leave his position within a wider view of church history. He first reminds his daughter of The Great Ejection of Puritan or Nonconformist ministers from the Church of England in 1662. Gaskell then has Hale quote Joseph Oldfield as recorded in a number of Nonconformist histories³⁰ that Gaskell must have had access to reading. Hale quotes as follows:

“When thou canst no longer continue in thy work without dishonour to God, discredit to religion, foregoing thy integrity, wounding conscience, spoiling thy peace, and hazarding the loss of thy salvation; in a word, when the conditions upon which thou must continue (if thou wilt continue) in thy employments are

³⁰ For example, the quote here appears in a note in *Memoirs of the Late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey, M.A. Including a Brief Analysis of His Works; Together with Anecdotes and Letters of Eminent Persons, His Friends and Correspondents: Also a General View of the Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine in England and America*. The work was published in 1820.

sinful, and unwarranted by the word of God, thou mayest, yea, thou must believe that God will turn thy very silence, suspension, deprivation, and laying aside, to His glory, and the advancement of the Gospel's interest. When God will not use thee in one kind, yet He will in another. A soul that desires to serve and honour Him shall never want opportunity to do it; nor must thou so limit the Holy One of Israel as to think He hath but one way in which He can glorify Himself by thee. He can do it by thy silence as well as by thy preaching; thy laying aside as well as thy continuance in thy work. It is not pretence of doing God the greatest service, or performing the weightiest duty, that will excuse the least sin, though that sin capacitated or gave us the opportunity for doing that duty. Thou wilt have little thanks, O my soul! if, when thou art charged with corrupting God's worship, falsifying thy vows, thou pretendest a necessity for it in order to a continuance in the ministry." (Gaskell 36)

As seen in the discussion of religious novels, consideration of doubts is not atypical even for a member of the clergy. What differs here is Gaskell's rather vague depiction of doubt. She also does not emphasize the father's duty to his wife or his daughter. For example, he does not tell his wife about his doubts or, more practically, his decision to move the family from their southern home to a northern city. His selection of the northern city is also the selection of a decreased quality of life and an increased pressure on his wife to "make ends meet" in housekeeping. The unhealthy atmosphere of the northern town leads to her death. She acts as a martyr for his doubt.

In comparison to the male clergy in the religious novels, Hale seems most like the brother, who converts to Catholicism in *The Perpetual Curate*. Both men seem to invoke the

argument present in the end of David Strauss' *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, translated by Eliot in 1846. Strauss points to the danger of clergymen being considered hypocritical as the community discovers the differences between the clergyman's beliefs and his use of texts to elicit a moral. Strauss concludes:

In this difficulty, the theologian may find himself driven either directly to state his opinions, and attempt to elevate the people to his ideas: or, since this attempt must necessarily fail, carefully to adapt himself to the conception of the community; or, lastly, since, even on this plan, he may easily betray himself, in the end to leave the ministerial profession. (900)

Hale and the brother in *The Perpetual Curate* both opt to leave the ministerial profession. The choice to have doubters recognize their error and leave the church promptly does two important things. First, the presence of doubts supports the commitment to realism by Gaskell and Oliphant. They recognize the presence of doubt, but they suggest it as the position of the minority.³¹ Gaskell ascribes doubt to the father but not to the daughter, who is the main focus of the novel. Instead, Margaret says to her father ““And may He restore you to His Church,” responded she, out of the fulness of her heart” (Gaskell 41). Doubt is important in *North and South*, but Margaret does not doubt. Second, Gaskell and Oliphant both suggest a prompt removal of doubters from their positions within the Church of England. The quick elimination of

³¹ Sewell and Yonge include characters who doubt the positions of the Church of England, but their characters are women rather than clergymen. Doubt for these women lingers and creates mental and physical conflict.

clergymen who doubt maintains the authority of the church, despite Gaskell's non-allegiance to the Church of England.

While the second installment of *North and South* does not say so, later sections of the book imply that people consider Richard Hale to be a Dissenter. For example, the maid, Dixon, says that Hale is becoming a Dissenter. When Margaret later reads a letter from her aunt, she notes the aunt's assumption that the Milton Dissenters will not like the coral jewelry that she has sent. Margaret laughs that her aunt assumes all Dissenters are like Quakers, but she does not laugh or counter the assertion that she surrounds herself with Dissenters. Finally, at the end of chapter 18, the narrator describes the characters as "Margaret the Churchwoman, her father the Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel" (Gaskell 230). Gaskell has all three kneel down together and pray. She suggests a religious unity even while Margaret does not convert to the Dissenting position of her father. Immediately after, Margaret receives a letter in which a family friend further expands upon assumptions about the fathers' beliefs. The letter states that Mr. Hale would not like to let his wife visit the writers "because, I dare say, he disapproves of war, and soldiers, and bands of music; at least, I know that many Dissenters are members of the Peace Society" (Gaskell 231). His dissenting position could signal a shift to Unitarianism, which would be called Dissent by some. An important difference in the scene is Margaret's retained faith and positioning of herself and her mother as separate from her father. While the representation of the father's religious views seems to differ through the course of the publication of *North and South*, Margaret's position as aligned with the Church of England does not change.

Finally, Gaskell carefully notes that Richard Hale does not convert to Catholicism or align himself with the Oxford Movement. When Margaret tells her mother of her father's

decision to leave the church, she clarifies that her father could not go to Oxford, as her mother implies. In other words, his doubts do not align him with the Oxford Movement or Catholicism. Later, in speaking with Frederick, Margaret sees that “his opinions were tending in exactly the opposite direction to those of his father” (Gaskell 253). After his marriage to a woman in Spain, Frederick has probably converted to Catholicism. This reinforces Gaskell’s suggestion of Richard Hale as Dissenter given that the position would be near opposite that of a High Churchman. John Chapple points out that while Gaskell herself remained Unitarian, she does not offer a sharp criticism of Frederick as Roman Catholic in the novel. Instead, she represents Frederick as sympathetic to the father due to an understanding of the pressures involved with leaving the Church of England. However, his character overall does suggest a negativity. Due to his perceived involvement in a mutiny, he remains in the shadows, does not take part in society, and accidentally kills a man. The last major scene in which Margaret and Dixon discuss him ends with him in Spain and never to return. Further, Gaskell also repeats the anti-Catholic theme that romantic relationships may be used to influence people. The maid, Dixon, says “well! I can preserve myself from priests, and from churches; but love steals in unawares!” (Gaskell 395). Gaskell invokes a more traditional anti-Catholicism fear of personal influence.

While *North and South* invokes religious controversy, *Cranford* focuses on the social role of religion in a small town. Gaskell includes two important clergymen in *Cranford*: the deceased father of Miss Jenkyns and the current isolated rector. Miss Jenkyns’ father is best known for his beating of his son, Peter, who was dressed as his sister at the time. However, his presence is felt throughout the book, due to the narrator’s repeated reference to Miss Jenkyns as the deceased rector’s daughter. Early in the novel, the narrator explains how Miss Jenkyns claims an authority

from her father's position. The narrator explains that Miss Jenkyns "was daughter of a deceased rector of Cranford; and, on the strength of a number of manuscript sermons, and a pretty good library of divinity, considered herself literary, and looked upon any conversation about books as a challenge to her" (Gaskell 13-14). This is part of her defense of Samuel Johnson and *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* as literature superior to that of Dickens. Later, she uses her father's position to justify her adherence to traditions in minor things like mealtimes (Gaskell 40). The repetition of her so-called title as the daughter of the deceased rector points to the vulnerability of the women who remain single as seen in the religious novels. Miss Jenkyns' position and some distant relations also prevent her marriage, so the community says (Gaskell 45-46). She seems to have taken on a duty as a daughter of a rector to the community, but her duties limit her potential. The death of her father eliminates the patriarchal protection, and her financial vulnerability is revealed through the course of the novel. As an example of her sense of duty, when explaining why she must "buy a new cap and go to the party," she cites her "duty, as a deceased rector's daughter" (Gaskell 118). While the removal of a patriarchal figure's influence enables the young women in religious novels, the death of Miss Jenkyns' father leaves her in a static if not stranded position in which she possesses neither religious nor personal authority. Gaskell suggests the women in the community may defer to Miss Jenkyns' views of books, but the first savvy male character reveals Miss Jenkyns' inadequacies and dated views.

The flogging of the son for dressing as a woman also has an important religious context: sermon publication. The narrator reveals Miss Jenkyns' father published one sermon. A painting displays him as "stiff and stately, in a huge full-bottomed wig, with gown, cassock, and bands, and his hand upon a copy of the only sermon he ever published" (Gaskell 70). The narrator

describes the publication of the sermon as “the culminating point—the event of his life” (Gaskell 73). The publication of the sermon and its reception becomes part of one of the book’s more memorable scenes. Earlier in the work and before the flogging scene, Peter dresses as a woman and looks for the Rector of Cranford who had published that sermon. As a woman, Peter also asks for copies of the Napoleon Buonaparte sermons. Later, Peter dresses as one of his sisters, and makes himself appear pregnant in the rectory garden. The rector strips Peter of Deborah’s clothes and the pillow he wears, and beats him in view of those nearby. The flogging scene connects to sermon publication. The novel does not say, but one could infer that the father would have discovered not only the cross-dressing in that moment but the earlier moment of the strange woman who of course never returned to collect the copied sermons. Peter Jenkyns “fails” his father then not only by disrupting traditional depictions of gender but also by overturning his father’s great accomplishment, the single published sermon. Peter’s dressing as a woman invokes curatology skewered in Yonge’s *The Clever Woman*. A woman rather than a man takes an interest and seeks out the rector for his intellectual work. Peter’s crossdressing intersects with a critique of his father’s legacy, the published sermon, and the unpublished sermons. This creates a sense of intellectual impotence on the part of male clergymen who cannot achieve the publication success. The lack of wider influence as represented in these novels sharply contrasts the wider influence achieved through the publication of religious fiction.

GEORGE ELIOT

In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the Countess who lives with Amos Barton seeks his companionship for its social position and because of her interest in religious matters. After the

Countess realizes she has not been and will not be received warmly in the community, Eliot writes:

A woman always knows where she is utterly powerless [...] And she was especially eager for clerical notice and friendship, not merely because that is quite the most respectable countenance to be obtained in society, but because she really cared about religious matters, and had an uneasy sense that she was not altogether safe in that quarter.” (42)

Unlike in the religious novels where the role of the clergy becomes secondary to the role of female communities or self-directed learning and introspection, the Countess sees Barton as “a man of learning” with “power as a spiritual director” (Eliot 42). Placing *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Daniel Deronda* within the context of the religious novels demonstrates how Eliot represented religion and belief differently in her own writing and helps to contextualize her famous comments on religious novels. Eliot has been described by scholars as an agnostic, an atheist, a seeker, and even deeply religious. While some recent scholars have analyzed religion in her writings as “religious [...] without a religion” (from a contemporaneous reviewer in *The Saturday Review*), others have seen her as a religious thinker or a type of theologian throughout her works. Some scholars have treated Eliot’s writing as a static representation of her lack of faith or of her skepticism (Livingston). I closely read instances of lived religion as opposed to looking for intellectual thought (Fleishman) or theology (Hodgson) to show how Eliot represented and treated religious practices. Eliot focuses less on the preservation of the Church of England than the religious novelists do, but she does not take up an anti-church point of view in her depiction of lived religion.

Considering Eliot's works in relationship to the content of religious novels enables a re-evaluation of her stance on religion. I suggest Eliot, particularly within the context of her critique of religious novels and certain religious practices, is neither fully anti-religion nor pro-Church of England. Instead, Eliot critiques aspects of lived religion as the religious novelists do. Representations that may seem like harsh critiques are occasionally typical in women's novels—even in novels by authors who wrote religious fiction to support the Church of England. However, Eliot critiques with a different aim and a different result: less imitative, less focused on Christian warfare, and more intent on improving the minds rather than the religious lives of her readers. If the domestic religious novels were "monsters," then understanding what would redeem Eliot's highly religious fiction is of critical importance to comprehending her complicated but not fully anti-religious views. Finally, understanding Eliot's use of religion related to gender suggests a way in which the religious novels can be read as suggesting a way to resist the patriarchy.

Several of George Eliot's works take up religion as a major theme, and understanding her works in the literary context of religious novels expands the understanding of her comments on silly lady novelists. In her 1856 essay, which was quoted at the opening of this dissertation, she critiques religious novels on a number of points. She begins with improbable plots. Her plot summary in the opening section of the essay has only a few similarities to the religious novels considered in this dissertation. For an example of a correct similarity, Eliot points out the religious heroines read Greek or Hebrew, and the young women in Sewell and Yonge often but not always did so. However, the plots in their novels differ dramatically from the standard plot that Eliot critiques. There are no heiresses or vicious baronets as Eliot suggests. The heroines do

not focus on martial relationships, engagements, or class ascension. However, they are, as Eliot notes, often “the ideal women in feelings, faculties, and flounces” (180). Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant did not present perfect or doubt-free women, but they often do set up an expectation of the achievement of perfection at some point. Eliot also accurately notes the focus of these novelists on middle and upper-middle-class situations and these authors’ failure to represent the lower classes or tradesmen with accuracy. The lower classes are often not seen or appear only in times of great illness during visitation in the novels of Yonge and Sewell. Oliphant, who published the first entry in the *Chronicles of Carlingford* five years later, does include people from the lower classes, but they often do seem exaggerated in their diction or interests. Next in her essay, Eliot critiques the use of dialogue, the plotting, the diction, and confusion of purpose. She considers the “oracular species” the most “pitiable” (sic) and includes in this category “novels intended to expound the writer’s religious, philosophical, or moral theories” (Eliot 188). Eliot later explains that the oracular series is often tied to High Church principles. She distinguishes between the High Church and Evangelical novels; Eliot writes, “[the latter] are a little less supercilious and a great deal more ignorant, a little less correct in their syntax and a great deal more vulgar” (196-197). Eliot makes the same critique of unlikely dialogue attributed to children as Oliphant does of Yonge’s novel *Phoebe, Junior*. Minor details aside, more importantly, Eliot also suggests these religious novelists are deficient in their description of religious controversy. She writes:

You will rarely meet with a lady novelist of the oracular class who is diffident of her ability to decide on theological questions—who has any suspicion that she is not capable of discriminating with the nicest accuracy between the good and evil

in all church parties—who does not see precisely how it is that men have gone wrong hitherto—and pity philosophers in general that they have not had the opportunity of consulting her. Great writers, who have modestly contented themselves with putting their experience into fiction, and have thought it quite a sufficient task to exhibit men and things as they are, she sighs over as deplorably deficient in the application of their powers. (189)

While Eliot gives specific examples of failures in diction and dialogue, she does not give examples of the problem of poor discrimination or a lack of knowledge in religious matters. Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant do suggest some differences between good and evil, and where they do not give precise examples of evil, they spend a great deal of time on ways that men should behave as members of the clergy. More important and not mentioned in Eliot is how Sewell and Yonge in particular suggest how women rather than men go wrong. Unlike in Eliot's example of plotting, these heroines do not rush after rich men or position in society. Instead, they often flee the appearance of vanity and spend much of their time on religious instruction and study, at times to an impractical extent as Eliot notes with the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. In one of Eliot's most cutting critiques, she suggests the novels fail the readers by not providing enough instruction:

If, as the world has long agreed, a very great amount of instruction will not make a wise man, still less will a very mediocre amount of instruction make a wise woman. And the most mischievous form of feminine silliness is the literary form, because it tends to confirm the popular prejudice against the more solid education of women. (195)

Eliot suggests the amount of religious education fails the readers by not developing them into “wise” women. Given the focus on the development for young women and the positive reception even by male clerical readers, Eliot’s critique seems to neglect the function of these novels. They provided an alternative entertainment for readers, and they probably did educate some readers about religious controversies. Eliot seems to suggest that a limited knowledge gained by reading these novels increases the prejudice more generally against women’s education. However, without this limited education, how can she know that these readers would receive any education? As can be seen by examining the reading materials referenced in the novels, the women who had the most access to religious analytical works were those women with brothers in school. For example, in *The Clever Woman*, Yonge points out the deficiencies of the limited lending library, which was further edited down by the clergyman. The deficient education of Rachel in that novel comes not from reading religious novels but from restriction from reading more widely, among other things. Finally, Eliot’s article does invoke the argument used later, including by Showalter, that women become writers without additional training because “society shuts them out from other spheres of occupation” (Eliot 204). However, Eliot concludes that these novels are written from a point of vanity rather than for financial support; while women can take up writing and equal men, Eliot suggests the “trashy” and “rotten” novels are not a function of labor but of idleness. Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant all benefitted financially from their publications, and they were shut out from taking up a religious career, as would have been appropriate for them if they were men who did not stand to inherit.

Eliot’s views of religious novels help to inform a reading of *Scenes of Clerical Life*. In her earliest work of fiction, Eliot develops the relationships between three clergymen and three

women (two wives and one who partnered with the clergyman after her husband's death). The scenes include attempts to depict realistically the difficulties of operating as a clergyman in a small town. The three short stories were published serially in *Blackwood's*, as Oliphant's work would be four years later. Eliot takes a much blunter approach in describing the deficiencies of the clergy. For example, she gives specific amounts for salaries rather than implying the ability of a salary to sustain or not to sustain someone. Barton must borrow money, given the man who provides him with the living only gives him a small portion of the money allocated by the Church of England for that position.

In the first scene, "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton," Amos Barton struggles financially, juggling various creditors while the people in the parish flourish, and struggles against popular opinion about his "Track Society" (15), preaching, and decision to house the "Countess," who taxes the family's limited resources. After winning back popular opinion upon the death of his wife in childbirth, he loses his curacy and community support for his family. Eliot presents Richard "Amos" Barton as a conflicted Evangelical. He preaches off the book but does better when he reads a sermon, considers parishioners to be sinners and in need of mercy, and likes the singing of hymns. He establishes a Track Society in which the young women dirty their petticoats, a problem of walking in public also included in Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, which was published one year earlier. He edits the lending library selections in order to critique Dissent but only provokes a response from Dissenters rather than those he seeks to influence. He also preaches at a workhouse called The College but earns nothing from that position, as the brother in *Phoebe, Junior* would for his work at the men's home called The College. Eliot further explains Barton's slightly conflicted position: "He preached Low-Church doctrine—as

Evangelical as anything to be heard in the Independent Chapel; and he made a High-Church assertion of ecclesiastical powers and functions” (Eliot 18). In terms of religious practices, he focuses on a choir and the refurbishment of the church, both of which tended to be High Church concerns. Further, Eliot shows Barton to lack a true allegiance to the Church of England by suggesting he would have been happier, if less grammatically correct, as a cabinetmaker and a deacon in a Dissenting congregation.

In contrast to the optimism of some of the religious novels, Eliot includes sharp details about the poor morals of the district. She repeats references to the townspeople’s drunkenness and notes the “acrid Radicalism and Dissent” that makes Barton’s job particularly difficult (Eliot 24). This contrasts the suggestion that differences between denominations should be discussed gently and with respect in the religious novels. Eliot introduces the Oxford Movement at the end of the second chapter. She explains that Barton came to Shepperton as an Evangelical, tells stories like a Dissenter, and did not object to an Episcopalian Establishment. However, Eliot explains that “Tractarian agitation” and “satire on the Low-Church party” influenced even the “backward provincial regions” like where Barton lives (31). In response, he has started a Book Society with members of the region’s clergy. However, in doing so, he develops views distasteful to the High and Low Church members. In a later description of the group of clergymen and curates, Eliot sets up an ideal representative of the clergy: Reverend Martin Cleves. He looks less clerical but is “the true parish priest, the pastor beloved, consulted, relied on by his flock; a clergyman who is not associated with the undertaker, but thought of as the surest helper under a difficulty, as a monitor who is encouraging rather than severe” (Eliot 55). He preaches in a way that the lower classes can understand “because he can call a spade a spade,

and knows how to disencumber ideas of their wordy frippery” (Eliot 55). Finally, he seems somewhat removed from the confusion of religious controversy as Eliot represents it during this period. Eliot suggests that the ideal clergyman is not the one who comforts people in times of near-death or who preaches, perhaps, with a severe Evangelical focus on sin. While Fleishman suggests Tryan in “Janet’s Repentance” is Eliot’s good model of a clergyman, I suggest this brief mention of Cleves better represents Eliot’s ideal of a clergyman. Tryan fails because he is not beloved, which is a problem of personality as well as of inheriting a legacy from Gilfil and Barton.

In the second scene, “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story,” Mr. Gilfil falls in love with Caterina Sarti, an Italian orphan brought to England by Sir Christopher, who is also Gilfil’s patron (intending Gilfil, a clergyman, and Caterina, a singer, to marry). Caterina falls in love with another man, Captain Anthony Wybrow, who promises love but rejects her for another, monied woman. He dies waiting to reject Caterina, who was coming to kill him with a dagger concealed in her dress. Caterina, devastated, runs away, but Gilfil nurses her back to health at a relative’s parsonage and marries her. She dies in childbirth. He remains a widow but keeps mementos to her. Eliot sets up Gilfil as integral to the community. He is noted among the parishioners for performing baptisms and weddings, and is well-liked by the farmers as well as the “best houses.” He preaches sermons that “were not of a highly doctrinal, still less of a polemical, cast” and “did not search the conscience very powerfully” (Eliot 85). While some notice the simplicity of the sermons, most of those in Shepperton do not care. In contrast, the religious novelists imply the necessity of religious education. When the clergymen fail to provide this instruction, the heroines find information elsewhere, including in books and publications. At times, the authors imply this

critique of the clergy by simply emphasizing what means women do have to educate themselves once they can read.

Of the three scenes, Eliot spends the least amount of space on religion in “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story.” Gilfil frames the scene and takes an important role at the beginning and the end, but his religious views, life as a clergyman, or the role of religion in the community receive a fraction of the attention given to these topics in the other two scenes. Eliot does make several interesting references to religion. She includes a Vicar who essentially only shows up to “do his duty” in reading sermons and as to the spiritual functions of his office, “performed those functions with undeviating attention to brevity and dispatch” (81). This critique is found in several of the religious novels. Gilfil’s duties alternate, but he generally gives an evening service and sometimes a private service for the family who has taken Caterina as their ward. Eliot develops a theme of a religious man sacrificing deeper or rejecting reciprocated love to rescue a damaged woman (as happens in *Felix Holt*). Eliot does use the parsonage similarly to these in several religious novels; the parsonage acts as a location removed from worldly pressures and as a site of privacy for recovery. Yonge uses a parsonage for a location for Rachel to recover from the disappointment of her failed school and to learn about effective religious treatment. Similarly, Gilfil takes Caterina to his sister at Foxholm Parsonage. Eliot writes that “nowhere was there a lawn more smooth-shaven, walks better swept, or a porch more prettily festooned with creepers” (188). She calls the house “irresistibly calming” and “a nest of comfort” (189). The representation of the house as removed from or superior to other homes fits with the parsonage in Yonge’s *The Clever Woman*, but seems far more idealized than the representations in Oliphant or Gaskell. For example, Oliphant makes a point of how the curate lives in rented

rooms that help to make him susceptible to scandal. Overall, these two examples of Eliot's use of religion fit to a certain extent with the descriptions and usage in religious novels.

In the final scene, "Janet's Repentance," Eliot takes up spousal abuse, alcoholism, and the attempt of the clergy to "stir the hearts of the people" to believe in salvation through faith rather than works. Janet is beaten regularly by Robert Dempster, her husband; both drink heavily and find sport in making fun of the consumptive new curate Tryan, whom Robert accuses of being "methodistical" for wanting to start a new Sunday night service and for doing things like praying with old ladies. Janet does charity work, which she says makes her feel good, and does cross paths with Tryan. Similar to the protest in Eliot's *Felix Holt*, Robert organizes a protest only of Tryan's first church service, which does proceed and without violence. Dempster eventually evicts Janet, who converts, detoxing from her alcohol use with the help of Tryan. Robert falls in a riding accident and dies with Janet at his side (although he thinks she is evil). She is left all of his wealth and sets up Tryan in one of her houses and nurses him until his death of consumption. He dies after they kiss. Unlike the first scene, where the grave and her children are Milly's memorial, Janet lives on as a memorial to Tryan.

Eliot's representation of the clergy is not that significantly different from representations in the religious novels of Sewell, Yonge, and Oliphant. Fleishman says that publisher John Blackwood thought the clergymen are "not very attractive specimens" (97). Fleishman suggests the unattractive clergyman persists throughout Eliot's fiction:

Anglican ministers are regularly shown to fail to bring solace or improvement to their parishioners in moral need. The list includes Revs. Irvine of *Adam Bede*, Kenn of *The Mill*, Crackenthrop of *Silas Marner*, the mixed bag of Cadwallader,

Casaubon and Farebrother of *Middlemarch*, and Gascoigne of *Daniel Deronda*.

(Fleishman 97)

Fleishman suggests Tryan and Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede* are the two exceptions. Of the novels considered in this dissertation, Sewall includes few clergymen who bring about moral improvement or comfort. This includes after the death of a child. Yonge gives mixed representations. *The Daisy Chain* includes one positive clergyman and one rather worthless one. *The Heir of Redclyffe* has a positive moment at a church, but the clergyman plays no important role. *The Clever Woman* makes the most notable exception, with one clergyman who fails to improve or nurture the central character and one clergyman who does so. Oliphant's representations of clergy in the *Chronicles of Carlingford* are mixed as the men become distracted by women and duties. Like Eliot's representation of Casaubon, Yonge and Oliphant include clergymen or clerical students who overemphasize scholarship to the detriment of their own health and relationships with others. However, returning to Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Barton generally makes a positive contribution to the community. He does not violate any norms or disrupt the parishioners' religious practices or allegiances. He may not achieve Evangelical greatness, but he lives a normal life within the church's structure. The community admires and appreciates Gilfil, who "rescues" Caterina. Tryan does, as Fleishman notes, make an attractive specimen in his rescue of Janet and his attentions to practices appreciated rather widely like the attention to youth choirs and praying with the elderly even if High Churchmen and Low Churchmen might differ in how to pray with them. In conclusion, representing clergy as "mixed" was not an anti-church practice but typical even of didactic, religious literature.

Rather than the representation of the clergy, Eliot seems to differ most in the *Scenes of Clerical Life* in her critique of mistaken religious knowledge or application. She introduces the theme in her “Silly Women Novelists” essay and continues the critique in the scenes. Dempster acts as the greatest example of this. He gives a mistaken account of the origin of Presbyterianism and its connection to Dissent, and he simultaneously boasts of his involvement as a leader in numerous parishes. Dempster also espouses doctrines that contradict typical Protestant views. He says that Tryan “preaches against good works; says good works are not necessary to salvation—a sectarian, antinomian, Anabaptist doctrine” (200). Eliot depicts a character who despite his education influences others in negative ways with incorrect knowledge. Dempster continues, “Tell a man he is not to be saved by his works, and you open the floodgates of all immorality” (200). Beyond doctrine, Dempster dislikes Tryan’s focus on “praying with old women and singing with charity children” (200). While male characters in religious novels may act inappropriately or believe incorrectly, they do not tend to espouse mistaken religious information. They might hold ethically inappropriate views, but they uphold the doctrines of the Church of England. The religious novelists seem to want to avoid even the appearance of incorrect beliefs. Characters might lack knowledge, but those moments are corrected. Eliot does not correct Dempster but assumes her audience would understand his error. Fleishman notes that “Janet’s Repentance” “has been praised for accurately showing the strained relations within the Church of England between Evangelicals” (96). Sewell shows the most concern about Catholicism, and Yonge implies divisions in *The Clever Woman*. However, Oliphant addresses divisions explicitly through the Chronicles of Carlingford series. She connects Dissent to lower-class mannerisms and rising middle-class wealth, and she emphasizes the difficulties

Evangelicals and High Churchman face when relating to each other, not for the differences of their positions but for the differences of external pressures to conform.

While the female characters in *Scenes of Clerical Life* do hold significant roles, they do not take any religious precedence or authority. Gilbert and Gubar (484-491) see these women as powerful “angels of destruction” since all three scenes revolve around death: of Milly, Caterina, Dempster, and Tryan. Gilbert and Gubar do not mention their weaknesses: inability to assert herself for Milly Barton, anger and impulsiveness for Caterina, alcoholism for Janet. Gilbert and Gubar claim that childbirth ends in nothing but death in the series, but Milly Barton had five successful births. Amos Barton’s daughter Patty takes up the role of the single or widowed clergyman’s support literally and figuratively in the conclusion, but the reader learns little of Patty. Eliot’s narrator says rather simply that Patty had some of her mother’s “love” left in her heart. While these women have a power to destruct or perhaps to die and create conflict by doing so, they lack the religious and intellectual power attributed to them by Yonge and Sewell in particular. Their heroines—and Oliphant’s to a lesser extent—struggle with how and when to take religious authority and how to balance their desire to educate themselves and to act as religious authorities whether through writing, church building, or leading or creating schools. Eliot’s Janet comes the closest, but she does so through the guidance of Tryan rather than through relationships with or guidance from other women. Through her rejection by her husband and her conversation with Tryan, Janet recovers her relationship with her mother. Unlike the heroines of religious novels, Janet struggles with her past decisions rather than her beliefs or participation in religious practices. As a final example, at the conclusion of “Janet’s Repentance,” Eliot describes Janet as the “memorial of Edgar Tryan” (350). Sewell’s *Gertrude*

ends with a church building as a memorial to the man who made possible the female characters' desire to build a church.

Eliot's first and third scenes emphasize female communities, but the role of religion in these communities is greatly diminished when considering the representation of religion in women's relationships in religious novels. Sewell's novels throughout emphasize the importance of one's influence on another, the opportunity to effect good through reputation or conversation, and the education of women. Eliot's scenes depict women as part of religious discourse but as superficially involved in these conversations or as failing to effect a positive influence. For example, in "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," Caterina's guardian, Lady Cheverel, gives her a copy of Tillotson's Sermons. Eliot makes no reference to personal guidance on religion or love on the part of the other women in Caterina's life. John Tillotson was the Archbishop of Canterbury during the last part of the seventeenth century, and his sermons were republished several times. Eliot calls them "Excellent medicine for the mind are the good Archbishop's sermons, but a medicine, unhappily, not suited to Tina's case" (149). Gilfil's sister later seems to act as a positive influence on Caterina, but Eliot gives almost no details about their interaction. Eliot instead focuses on the "love story" rather than on Caterina's development, which is cut short by her death in childbirth. Fleishman suggests that "Janet's Repentance" develops Eliot's model of "the religion-of-humanity scene, in which one character opens him- or herself to another, so that both can overstep egoistic limitations and become more fully human" (97). However, particularly when considering Sewell's early novels, her female characters often have moments of self-revelation and near-confession about religious presuppositions or beliefs that may hinder them from achieving their goals or from forming relationships. Rather than becoming

“more fully human,” the heroine of a religious novel becomes a better community member, sister, daughter, or friend, or she starts to find her role, duty, or career within the Church of England.

The role of religious duty as a woman takes a primary role in most religious novels and appears in *Daniel Deronda* as well. In the religious novels, the young and older women must determine whether to understand their duty as to their families or to their work, a consistent debate on the empowerment of women within religion. Sewell’s Margaret Percival ultimately determines she should not convert to Catholicism because her duty to the Church of England. Men in religious novels must also consider their duties. Gerald Wentworth in Oliphant’s *Perpetual Curate* gives up his aspiration to become a Catholic priest not because of religious beliefs but because of his duty to his family. Eliot’s use of duty in relation to religion differs considerably. Daniel Deronda’s mother Princess Leonora Hamm-Eberstein Alcharisi feels “stuck” in religious beliefs that strangle her, opts to work, and leaves behind her first child. While some read her concealment of Deronda’s Jewish identity as stifling his national or religious heritage, Eliot suggests the patriarchal environment stifles her. The Princess wants to escape patriarchy and her religious and maternal duty, which Eliot thinks offers no choices for women.

Some have claimed that Eliot’s novels offer little in way of a solution to the construction of gender as societal construct (Flint), or, further, display a “feminine anti-feminism” (Gilbert and Gubar 466). Others have considered the role of Judaism in *Daniel Deronda* (Sypher, Fleishman, and several others). However, no one has considered how the religiously shrouded statement about patriarchal control by Princess Alcharisi offers a wider feminist claim about the

difficulty of living as a radical woman when encountering religious duty. Eliot positions Alcharisi far from the Victorian Angel in the House, but she cannot be read so simply as an “Angel of Destruction” (Gilbert and Gubar 478-545). In a central, climactic moment in the novel, Eliot presents the Princess Alcharisi as rejecting patriarchy, which links religion and motherhood. Eliot, like the religious novelists, sees this rejection as a necessity for women to escape the bondage and slavery to men and children. Most of the religious novels considered in this dissertation make a similar move in which women reject marriage and children.³² While *Daniel Deronda* uses the context of Judaism rather than the Church of England, Eliot’s depiction of the Princess helps to illustrate how women act radically in religious novels.

In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot uses Ezra Cohen, a shopkeeper, to offer the traditional patriarchal view, which considers women clearly and primarily mothers. On the position of women, he states “And we all know what He has made her—a child-bearing, tender-hearted thing is the woman of our people [...] and she’s not mushy, but her heart is tender” (Eliot 491). This statement shifts from a specific description of a Jewish woman to a more general statement about the mold for women in Victorian England. While Cohen says that God has created the women of his people in this way, the statement easily reads as an expectation not only for religious women but also for any Angel of the House. As others like Drouet argue, Cohen upholds a positive family structure, which—while representative in his view of the Jewish family—can be extended as a reading of any patriarchal family (grandmother, husband and wife,

³² Yonge’s *The Clever Woman of the Family* is the one major exception. As discussed in chapter three, Rachel’s choice to have children even more than her choice to marry teaches her to submit and to curb her cleverness.

and children, all of whom uphold traditions). However, Cohen's role in the novel is somewhat complicated, throwing doubt on his (patriarchal) authority. In a rather ambiguous statement, the narrator refers to Cohen's monologue here as an "oddly mixed speech" (Eliot 492). If, as some read, Deronda were to act as the moral center of the novel, and if his response to Cohen would be unclear, then Cohen himself and more so his statements on patriarchy should be doubted.

While Eliot sets this up as representing a perspective in Jewish thought, throughout the novel Eliot presents a nonreligious critique of the view of all women being tenderhearted mothers. In a remarkably blunt statement when Deronda meets his mother, the Princess Alcharisi says to him, "I am your mother. But you can have no love for me" (Eliot 536). Eliot implements an almost shocking realism by giving the mother a true-to-life view of her relationship to her son: one devoid of deep affection, given this is their first and possibly only adult meeting. This is certainly not a teary realization of long-lost and long-awaited maternal love typical of the period's Sentimental novels. Further, the narrator states Deronda feels as if "he were in the presence of a mysterious Fate rather than of the longed-for mother" as he watches her "from the spiritual distance to which she had thrown him" (Eliot 536).³³ To a degree, the distance spoken of here connects motherhood to Judaism. Deronda feels rejected by her refusal of her national and religious identity; however, in this, Deronda, not the Princess Alcharisi, seems to create this distance. She offers a (brief) non-religious relationship, but he rejects her offer.

In contrast to the representation of mothers as loving (like the novel's Mrs. Meyrick), the Princess Alcharisi said she "had not much affection to give you. I did not want affection. I had

³³ Drouet takes an alternate reading and sees this distance as being between Daniel and Judaism.

been stifled with it. I wanted to live out the life that was in me, and not to be hampered with other lives” (Eliot 536-537). Here, the motivation for her sending Deronda away shifts from wanting the best for him to wanting the best for herself. Marriage and motherhood meant bondage and unhappiness for her. In her *Daniel Deronda* notebooks, Eliot twice includes Lilith, and writes “Adam’s first wife, came to him against his will, & they were always wretched together,” resulting in her mothering devils (Irwin 59, 61). While this seems reminiscent of Gilbert and Gubar’s “Angel of Destruction,” the Princess Alcharisi makes these choices to avoid the wretchedness that must result from doing the duty of obeying a patriarchal figure and participating in a forced marriage.

Eliot uses the Princess Alcharisi to comment on marriage, patriarchy, and religion. Immediately after her comments on motherhood, she states in what the narrator calls “passionate self-defence in her tone” that she did not want to marry. Although she could “rule” her husband, she was unable to do so with her father (Eliot 537). Her father as the patriarchal head forces her marriage and continuance in a culture she despises. She continues, “I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage that I hated” (Eliot 537). Although she speaks of patriarchy, her next statement shifts to Deronda’s role in religion: “And the bondage I hated for myself I wanted to keep you from. What better could the most loving mother have done? I relieved you from the bondage of having been born a Jew” (Eliot 537). In doing so, she links her father’s patriarchal control of her marriage and Deronda’s race, conflating the two and representing them as a form of bondage. One can no more escape one’s race than one’s gender.

The Princess Alcharisi echoes Cohen’s comments about the singular way in which God made Jewish women, but introduces a radical concept of women’s self-repression in order to

achieve acceptance in society. The Princess Alcharisi says, “Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel—or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others” (Eliot 539). Although her choice to give her child to be raised by someone else can be read as monstrous, few modern readers would call abortion or adoption an act that would make one a monster. In fact, her comments seem particularly modern even though they had a nineteenth-century parallel: British men would leave to take a commission overseas or to enroll in the Navy. They would expect wives or close family to watch their children. Yonge did this for one of her brothers; she raised his children as her own. The Princess Alcharisi lacks a husband to care for her child and appears to have no close family she deems appropriate for the role of raising her son. While Deronda and certainly contemporary Jewish (and many modern) readers find flaws in this reasoning, that response seems to be based on Deronda’s longing for a place and identity as a Jewish *man*. Eliot has the Princess Alcharisi reject her identity as a Jewish *woman* from her childhood (Eliot 568). She neither fits the mold of a Jewish woman or girl nor fits the mold of an English girl and woman as expected in novels of this time. She may be cold and distant, but that emotional position enabled her to pursue a career.

In the sharpest critique of the role of women, Eliot directly aligns being a woman with being a slave in that above quote. The Princess Alcharisi tells Deronda that he will never know “the slavery of being a girl” and connects this to her father’s desire for conformity to the “pattern” of “the Jewish woman” (Eliot 554). She repeats the slavery rhetoric and the mold introduced by Cohen. Eliot connects this to Mirah’s character. After Deronda states that Mirah is beautiful, the Princess Alcharisi shows him her own picture, asking “Had I not a rightful claim to

be something more than a mere daughter and mother?” (Eliot 570). Eliot uses Mirah to demonstrate the problem of doing one’s duty as a daughter. However, Eliot gives her more opportunity (less *hard* duty) in her decision to be a wife. As scholars have noted, Mirah’s ideal Jewish community is female; she participates in mother/daughter synagogue attendance as a way of communing with her mother (Eliot 182). Her relationships contrast the very male community in which the Princess Alcharisi participates.³⁴ The Princess Alcharisi also directly sets up her father as a similar to Mirah’s father. Before Deronda gives Mirah’s history to his mother, the Princess Alcharisi states her father “never thought of his daughter except as an instrument. Because I had wants outside his purpose, I was to be put in a frame and tortured” (Eliot 567). Mirah and the Princess Alcharisi share a singing talent and a history of a forced marriage (attempted on Mirah’s part, succeeded on the Princess’s part). Deronda states that like his mother, Mirah was “brought up” to dislike her Jewishness but clung to her heritage instead. However, another major difference between Mirah and the Princess Alcharisi is the role of the female community. Mirah recovers from her negative experience with her father with the matriarchal Meyrick family, who are not Jewish. This echoes the frequent use of female communities in Sewell and Yonge as mentoring and nurturing young women. The Princess Alcharisi operates within a patriarchal community that restricts her. Deronda describes Mirah as “not ambitious” in contrast to his mother (Eliot 570). Daniel suggests the decreased sense of ambition represents a more positive way of being for women. This seems, at least given the point

³⁴ Mirah’s relationship to the female community during her time as a singer reacts against her father’s patriarchal control rather than the Princess who must participate in the religious community as part of her father’s control. The Princess’s community is also one of Orthodoxy and wealth, but Mirah’s connection, her Jewish landlady, is less wealthy.

of view of Deronda, to disregard Mirah's employment and pursuit of financial self-support in the novel. Eliot gives Mirah ambitions, and she is single at this point in the novel. She may not wish to be a major star like his mother but even her minor employment resists dependence on a man's support and protection.³⁵ Instead, she supports her ill brother with her "force of genius." Several of the main characters in religious novels also support their siblings; Sewell's Gertrude supports her brother financially, and Yonge's Ethel in *The Daisy Chain* works to enable her brother to become a clergyman. The heroines of the religious novels must face a duty to act beyond what might be typical for women of the period; like Mirah and the Princess Alcharisi, they must attain financial support and engage in work to fulfil their duties as daughters and siblings.

Through all the major female characters in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot highlights the cultural necessity for hiding one's true wishes and feelings. The Princess Alcharisi states, "when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be concealment" (Eliot 542). Mirah strongly reflects the necessity of what the Princess Alcharisi calls "concealment" when operating within patriarchal relationships. Mirah must hide her synagogue attendance from her father, hide her true wishes about going on stage and touring, and hide her desire not to marry a stranger. Like Mirah, the Princess Alcharisi must pretend to obey her father in order to gain freedom and succeed in a career. The Princess Alcharisi also runs away from her "duty" in patriarchy. Mirah, though, primarily conceals herself from her father. The Princess Alcharisi must conceal more broadly: from her father, from her husband, and from the world at large as she sends away her son in order to pursue her career. Similarly, the religious

³⁵ Curious is that Daniel at this point in the novel supports two dependent men: Mordecai and Hans Meyrick. Mirah stays with the Meyrick family but seeks her own financial support.

novelists' heroines often must conceal their intellectual ability or their desire for extended church pursuits like engaging in architectural improvements of church buildings. Like Eliot, the religious novelists typically do not offer options to these women to pursue their desires. Returning to the example of Sewell's Gertrude, she obtains financial freedom through her inheritance and wishes to participate in religious leadership through the building of a church, but she fears other people discovering her interest in architecture and building. Gertrude's sister reveals her interest in working with the poor and neglects her duty as a sister, and she faces estrangement from the community for doing so. Yonge's Ethel must conceal her interest in learning, but she has the option to choose between learning and working for the church. Oliphant's Phoebe generally conceals her desire for a political career, and some of her other female characters remain single in order to continue doing church work, officially or unofficially.

The Princess's dislike of her religious heritage comes from a continued subjection to religion that was connected to a patriarchal constraint, a slavery and bondage that forced her into a role incompatible with her abilities as a woman. Although Eliot does not seem to claim a far-reaching power for all women, she does offer the opportunity to some. Even though the three main female characters in *Daniel Deronda* differ significantly, they all achieve freedom and happiness through rejection of duty linked to traditional patriarchal control. Mirah rejects her father's control. Gwendolen rejects her husband's control. The Princess Alcharisi rejects her father's and husband's control. Mirah and the Princess Alcharisi end the novel in traditional marriage relationships, but Gwendolen ends with her mother and sisters. The rejection of patriarchal control as evident in *Daniel Deronda* echoes throughout the religious novels in the

female characters' rejection of patriarchal constraint related to marital and maternal duties. The young women cannot fully reject their duties as they have been placed, in their views, into roles and duties as sisters and mothers. Because of the timely death of her husband, Gwendolen comes closest to escaping patriarchy, but she is not revered in the novel. Unlike Janet in "Janet's Repentance," Gwendolen does not inherit the financial means to sustain herself in the same manner to which she had become accustomed. Still, the comments on the position of women made through the Princess Alcharisi by Eliot and the rejection of patriarchal control present a radical, proto-feminist view, which must be taken seriously when considering Eliot's views of women. The statements by the Princess echo some of the concerns raised about religion and gender in the novels discussed earlier in this dissertation. Sewell's Margaret wishes to be a man to avoid censure for considering Catholicism. As mentioned in the second chapter, Sewell says that Margaret, like many women, thinks "if I were but a man" (*Margaret Percival* 117). Like Eliot does with the Princess, Sewell suggests that some women are particularly gifted and struggle due to the "cravings" of their minds. Yonge's Ethel in *The Daisy Chain* must choose between religious study and religious activity, given the duties she has to her family. Yonge's Rachel in *The Clever Woman* chooses religious study and activity but blunders in her application, given her lack of access to education. Oliphant presents opportunities for religious and political duty, but the female characters must marry in order to obtain power. These examples demonstrate the radicalness of the representation of religious women in these novels but also provide an important context for understanding the Princess's statements about the constriction of religion.

Eliot saw her novels and treatment of religion as less silly than the treatment of religion in religious novels, but her depiction of patriarchal control and religious restraint echoes the complaints made by women in the religious novels. By suggesting the religious novelists and their readers were in some ways shallow, Eliot privileged the religious patriarchy rather than recognizing the duties that these religious novelists faced. Certainly, one cannot compare the plotting, dialogue, and realism of an Eliot novel to a Sewell novel. However, Sewell's novels still were popular and resonated with audiences despite their long diversions into the personal and religious development of young women. While the writing may seem silly at times in comparison to canonical novels, scholars' continued use of Eliot's description of these novels as "monsters" fails to recognize the contribution of female religious novelists. These women contributed to the understanding of women's position in the home and the community; the concept of the Angel in the House; and representations of the Church of England, the Oxford Movement, and Dissent. They frequently provided representations of religious practices that were not dramatically different from the representations in Victorian novels still popular today. Finally, the context of these religious novels provides a new and important way to read authors like Eliot, particularly her novels that engage religion directly.

The heroines of religious novels generally escape religious bondage by avoiding motherhood and marriage. While the novels may seem under-sexed and devoid of social pleasures, by avoiding the pleasure of male companionship, the young women avoid the necessity of bending to the will of a man. The religious novelists frequently resist patriarchal control by avoiding relationships that result in additional familial duties like childrearing or caring for a spouse. All of Eliot's main female characters in *Scenes of Clerical Life* die as a result

of marriage, through childbirth, except for Janet who suffers during marriage and finds freedom from its bondage after the death of her abusive husband. All of the central female characters in the religious novels that this dissertation considers search for their duty or career, and most of them struggle with the constraints not of a patriarchal religious system but of patriarchy more broadly. Their parents, siblings, children, and spouses create or would create a system in which they cannot work for the church. Early scholars like Margaret Maison may have considered authors like Sewell and Yonge to be “Spinster Novelists,” but their choice to remain single enabled them to work, to support family members, and to obtain an important voice within the Church of England. While some of these authors’ middling clergymen characters may have celebrated in the publication of one sermon, these women published extensively for decades and were widely read. They gave religious instruction on duty to the Church of England and one’s family, one’s personal influence, and concerns related to the Oxford Movement like creating access to church buildings, enabling focus on religion through means like architecture, and discerning truth in a period of religious controversy. To circumvent the patriarchal control of the church, these authors at times eliminated the church and its clergymen. Instead, they emphasize female communities, interpersonal relationships, and individual or interior thought about one’s situation within the community and family.

Understanding how women’s religious novels operate helps to provide an important literary and cultural context for Victorian women’s novels more widely. Expanded research on Low Church, Broad Church, Catholic, and Nonconformist novels has the potential to situate the representation of religious practices and followers more fully. The sample in this dissertation suggests the importance of the question of women’s work and duty for religious novelists, and

viewing those novels within the wider context of women's Victorian fiction demonstrates that these authors were far less anti-woman or anti-feminist than previously assumed. Further, these women were not mouthpieces of church leaders. They set forth unique and personal religious views. Where the novels lack an explicit theological focus, they instead offer representation of religious practices, which can be understood as pointing to an understanding of religion and women's role within the Church of England. Rather than suggesting a steady march to secularization or doubt, the religious novels suggest a changing understanding of women's access to power within the Church of England.

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Sarah E. Moore is a Senior Lecturer in the Business Communication Program in the Naveen Jindal School of Management at The University of Texas at Dallas. Moore grew up in the Dallas area and earned an BA in Communications with Print Media emphasis from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in 2002. She earned an MA in Humanities from The University of Texas at Dallas in 2007. Her research interests include Victorian studies, religious controversy and the novel, representations of business communication in the nineteenth century, and teaching bad news delivery strategies in business communication courses.

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Qualifying Exam Areas: American Women’s Literature from 1790-Present, Victorian Cultural History, and British Prose Fiction of the Long Nineteenth Century

M.A. in Humanities - Studies in Literature - May 2007
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Portfolio, with distinction: “Love Comes at a Cost: The Politics of Submission in Christian Romance Novels” and “Aurora the Apostle: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Tractarian Interaction”

B.A. in Communications, Graduated with honors - May 2002
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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The University of Texas at Dallas, 2008-Present

Senior Lecturer – Business Communication
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Courses Taught: Professional Development, Business Communication, and Advanced Business Communication

Teaching Assistant, Instructor of Record – Masterpieces of World Literature
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Lecturer 1 – Business Communication
The University of Texas at Dallas, Spring 2008 through Summer 2012, Summer 2015

Teaching Assistant, Instructor of Record – Rhetoric
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Collin College, 2007-2012

Associate Professor – Composition/Rhetoric I and II
Collin County Community College, Fall 2007 through Spring 2012

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

“Aurora The Apostle: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Religious Controversy.” South Central Modern Language Association, November 2016

“The Good Girl in Conflict: The Early Religious Novels of Elizabeth Missing Sewell.” The Victorian Interdisciplinary Association of the Western United States, September 2016

“Working Girls: Nineteenth Century Treatments of Gender and Street Labour.” Texas Center for Working-Class Studies Conference, March 2016

“Anti-Feminist Monsters and Women’s Nineteenth Century Popular Religious Novels.” Minding the Field: Women’s and Gender Studies in North Texas, October 2015

“Little Girls of the Street: Transatlantic Depictions of Nineteenth Century Prostitution.” Critical Voices Conference at University of North Texas, March 2015

“Holocaust Education: The Problem of Current Issue Application in the Primary School Classroom,” Research-Art-Writing Conference at University of Texas at Dallas, March 2015

“The Modern Her! Her! Her!: Feminism in George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*,” Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association, October 2014

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Currently at publisher. “Women and Religion, 1780-1820.” *Ashgate Research Companion for Romantic Women Writers*. Co-authored book chapter with Patricia Michaelson. Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Rev. of *Books and Religious Devotion: The Redemptive Reading of an Irishman in Nineteenth-Century New England. The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing Newsletter*. 25.1, 2016.

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Online Writing Tutor, Collin County Community College, Fall 2007 through Summer 2009
Provided feedback on all aspects of writing with the goal of improving written papers across the disciplines.

Writing Tutor, School of Management, University of Texas at Dallas, Fall 2006 through Fall 2007

Assessed student business case studies for writing and directed students in ways to improve their writing communication skills through the revision process.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Education Reporter, *McKinney Courier-Gazette*, McKinney, Texas, 2004-2005

Associate Editor, *Great Lakes Boating* magazine, Chicago, Illinois, 1999-2004