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# Clerical portraits in the nineteenth century British novel

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CLERICAL PORTRAITS  
IN THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
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## PREFACE

Because there were only four recognized professions which a nineteenth century respectable English gentleman could enter and still maintain his family reputation--the army, the navy, and church, and the bar--it is natural that clergymen should appear frequently in the novels of the period. Through the eyes of numerous novelists one can come to understand better the roles and the personalities of the men of cloth during the 1800's.

A study similar in intent to that herein presented was published in 1959 by Horton Davies: A Mirror of the Ministry in Modern Novels; but only two of the five English novelists he included--William Hale White and Mrs. Humphry Ward--wrote during the period represented in this paper. I have encountered only one other book treating the English clergyman in fiction. William Addison's The English Country Parson (1948) gives a panoramic view of the rural clergyman from the Middle Ages to the mid-twentieth century, interspersing fictional with actual personages. Here again, however, clergymen of nineteenth century novels are not treated in any detail.

By way of limiting myself to a reasonable amount of material, I have chosen to concentrate on those novels in which a clerical scene provides the major characters and action. In some cases the titles and authors are likely to be unfamiliar, and some of the minor but memorable clergymen created by such major "secular" novelists as Jane Austen, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray have been omitted. If the reader fails to find the caricatures that he had expected to meet here, I hope he will forgive me and will be inspired to seek them out again for himself.

CHAPTER ONE  
SURVEY AND BACKWARD GLANCE

Most nineteenth century clerical novels are, unsurprisingly, grounded on the framework of the Church of England. It is true that Scottish and Irish authors did not often write of Anglicans. James Gibson Lockhart pictured the Calvinists in Adam Blair and the Methodists in Matthew Wald; James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner was a satire on the extremes of Calvinism; John Ackworth's Glogshop Chronicles emphasized Methodism; John Banim set The Nowlang in a Roman Catholic background. By and large, however, evangelical and Popish characters in the nineteenth century are but incidental sketches drawn more in ridicule than in any effort toward accurate portrayal.

Familiarity with the Church of England hierarchy<sup>1</sup> is essential to an understanding of the place of the clergyman in the novels to be discussed. The basic unit of organization is the cathedral church. Relatively simple at first, the cathedral hierarchy tended to become more complex when parishes<sup>2</sup> necessitated the formation of chapters to administer cathedral matters while the bishop was occupied with diocesan or state duties. The chapter, composed of local church dignitaries, acted as trustees of church property, determined financial matters for the diocese, and in 1215 assumed the sole authority for electing their own bishop. Usually the dignitaries of the chapter consisted of the dean, who acted as president; the precentor, who was in charge of music;

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<sup>1</sup>The following outline of organization and history is drawn from the 1895, 1910, and 1958 editions of The Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>2</sup>A glossary of ecclesiastical terms appears in the appendix.

the chancellor, who served as chapter secretary and supervisor of cathedral schools; and the treasurer, who looked after physical necessities associated with cathedral functions. In addition, each chapter had one or more archdeacons and a fixed number of canons or prebendaries. It was not unusual for the latter to designate vicars to perform their duties for them. In time vicars serving in such capacities came to be known as minor canons, differing from regular canons in being denied a vote in chapter affairs.

Only one significant change in the organization of the chapter occurred before the nineteenth century. Henry VIII, in his sweeping cathedral reforms, decreed that the precentor, who had formerly been second only to the dean, should be relegated to the role of a minor canon. By the Cathedral Act of 1840, Parliament gave to all the cathedrals of England and Wales a uniform constitution calling in most cases for a dean and four canons.

By the close of the nineteenth century, English cathedrals fell into four classifications. Churches not reorganized by Henry VIII were York, London (St. Paul's), Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, Salisbury, and Wells. Churches whose constitutions Henry VIII had altered were Canterbury, Durham, Winchester, Carlisle, Ely, Norwich, Rochester, and Worcester. Cathedrals founded by that monarch--Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Oxford, and Peterborough--compose the third category. The final classification, that of modern cathedrals founded during Victoria's reign, included Manchester, Ripon, Southwell, St. Albans, Southwark, Truro, Newcastle, Wakefield, Birmingham, and Liverpool. As their titles indicate, the churches are situated in cities; their ecclesiastical jurisdiction encompasses the surrounding countryside.

The process by which clergymen obtain positions in the hierarchy is known as patronage, either public or private. The higher dignitaries are appointed through public patronage, i.e., the crown through the prime minister. Private communication of the new appointee's name to the chapter for routine vote and public announcement maintains the ancient form of election by the chapter. Minor positions are filled through nomination by private patrons, whose candidate the bishop is obligated to accept unless proof of incompetence is presented. Such a candidate, when duly appointed, holds a life tenure on the endowment of the parish. He may elect to have one or more curates to administer the parish if the opportunity arises for him to be appointed to another parish or to cathedral duties; in some cases the income from his parish is sufficient to allow him to place the parish in the hands of a perpetual curate and retire to a life of leisure. The parish reverts to the private patron on the death of the duly appointed clergyman, regardless of who may be actually performing the parish offices.

In order to appreciate the criticisms of the clergy that are implied or openly declared by nineteenth century novelists, one must also know something of the actual state of clerical affairs during the period.<sup>3</sup> One of the major problems was widespread neglect of the parishes. In 1813, for example, 6,311 out of 10,800 livings were without resident incumbents.<sup>4</sup> A second problem was the sharply drawn division between rich

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<sup>3</sup>This account represents a condensation of the clerical situation as viewed by William Addison in The English Country Parson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1948.)

<sup>4</sup>Addison, p. 132.



and poor within clerical ranks. Curates particularly suffered from inadequate wages. Yet the Church of England drew nominal support in the early part of the century because citizens, apprehensive about the effects of the French Revolution, looked to their national church as an antidote to radicalism.

As the century progressed, evangelical practices such as hymn-singing crept into the Anglican church and were the cause of many bitter clashes between clergymen of High- and Low-Church sentiments. Another subject of contention was the so-called "sporting parson," who tended to place more value on the hounds in his kennels than on the sheep in his spiritual fold. With the rapid advances of the industrial revolution the church had difficulty keeping pace; when it lagged behind, speculation arose as to whether the Parliament of 1833 should "at once take measures to disestablish and disendow it."<sup>5</sup>

The Oxford movement brought needed stimulation, but for the most part the issues which it raised were above the head of the average layman. Furthermore, local clergymen tended to keep silent rather than risk offense by taking a positive stand that might have put them in controversial positions in their communities. Men with such widely divergent views as the High-Church Keble, Low-Church Kingsley, and Christian Socialist Maurice, outstanding churchmen in this period of turmoil, at last managed to encourage their brother clergymen to support and advance social reforms and thereby get back into the mainstream of thought and activity.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

But by 1870 it again appeared that the church was on her deathbed:

By this time it was clear that most of the best minds in the country were outside the Church. Never before had its fundamental dogmas been attacked with so much force and cogency. Those who led these attacks were men of the highest moral and intellectual credit. Belief in the infallibility of the Bible had been at the heart of Protestantism. Research had now, it appeared, rendered such belief untenable. It could not yet be seen that the new infallibility of science might prove no more absolute than scriptural or papal infallibility.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that the rise of scientific knowledge also brought with it an increase in secular opportunities that caused even fewer enterprising young men to enter clerical orders, a revival was again effected, this time through Bishop Wilberforce's emphasis on the active role of the clergyman in his parish. When Wilberforce died in 1873, Richard Crouch, dean of St. Paul's, continued to prod the church towards discarding its old, narrow, provincial attitudes. An able diplomat, he tempered his reforms with a genuine appreciation of the conservative traditions which were hindering clerical effectiveness. The transformation that was wrought caused an upward trend of favorable support that lasted to the end of the century and restored the church to a position of leadership. Joseph Henry Shorthouse mirrored the passing of the crisis in his novel John Inglesant, written in 1881:

"The English Church, as established by the law of England, offers the supernatural to all who choose to come. It is like the Divine Being Himself, whose sun shines alike on the evil and on the good. Upon the altars of the Church the divine presence hovers as surely, to those who believe it, as it does upon the splendid altars of Rome. Thanks to circumstances which the founders of our Church did not contemplate the way is open; it is barred by no confession, no human priest.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

Shall we throw this aside? . . . It is not even a question of religious freedom only; it is a question of learning and culture in every form. I am not blind to the peculiar dangers that beset the English Church. I fear that its position, standing, as it does, a mean between two extremes, will engender indifference and sloth; and that its freedom will prevent its preserving a discipline and organizing power, without which any community will suffer grievous damage; nevertheless, as a Church it is unique; if suffered to drop out of existence, nothing like it can ever take its place."<sup>7</sup>

One further area of introductory material is pertinent--that of predecessors to the nineteenth century clerical novel. The two most obvious are Fielding's Joseph Andrews and Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield. By looking carefully at their style and intent, one can more easily see the evolution of the clergyman from Fielding's picaresque character and Goldsmith's romantic representation to the more refined and realistic presentations of the 1800's.

The full title of Fielding's work, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams, gives a clue to the content of this early (1742) specimen of the novel. In his preface the author apologized for and defended his choice of Mr. Adams' profession as a foil for his activities in the following words:

As to the character of Adams, as it is the most glaring in the whole, so I conceive it is not to be found in any book now extant. It is designed a character of perfect simplicity; and as the goodness of his heart will recommend him to the good-natured, so I hope it will excuse me to the gentlemen of the cloth; for whom while they are worthy of their sacred order, no man can possibly have a greater respect. They will therefore excuse me, notwithstanding the low adventures in which he is engaged, that I have made him a clergyman; since no other office could have given him so many opportunities of displaying his worthy inclinations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 194-195, quoting the title character in Shorthouse's novel.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Fielding, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his Friend Mr. Abraham Adams (New York: The Century Co., 1907), pp. xxii-xxiii.

It is at once apparent that Mr. Adams is a clergyman through convenience to the plot rather than through any desire of his creator to draw an accurate portrait of ecclesiastical life.

An excellent scholar who could read and translate half a dozen languages, Mr. Adams was "a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature."<sup>9</sup> If he had a fault, it was his complete ignorance in worldly matters: "simplicity was his characteristic."<sup>10</sup> When the tale opened, he was a fifty-year-old country curate endowed with the grand sum of twenty-three pounds per year and "a little encumbered with a wife and six children."<sup>11</sup> His connection with Joseph stemmed from the fact that the youth was apprenticed to Sir Thomas Booby, chief landholder in the parish which Mrs Adams served. Sir Thomas "regarded the curate as a kind of domestic only, belonging to the parson of the parish."<sup>12</sup>

Sir Thomas's sudden death was followed by Joseph's discovery that his master's widow had amorous designs upon him, but by remembering Mr. Adams' excellent sermons and advice on chastity he resisted the temptation to reciprocate. Thrown out on his own resources by his spurned admirer, Joseph, who had accompanied Lady Booby to London, determined to return to Sir Thomas's distant country estate where he had left behind his childhood sweetheart Fanny. He had proceeded only a short distance, however, when he was attacked by robbers and left for dead. Meanwhile, Mr. Adams had started out on a journey to London in order to publish

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

some sermons. He happened to come upon the house where Joseph had been carried and offered him every cent in his pocket. He even tried to pawn his saddlebag of sermons in order to obtain funds for conveying Joseph to a better place for recovery, but the local parson assured him that his treasure was worthless because "the age was so wicked that nobody read sermons."<sup>13</sup> As things turned out, Mr. Adams discovered that his wife had removed the sermons from the saddlebag in favor of articles of wearing apparel which she thought would be more serviceable to him, and he was obliged to return home.

The homeward journey, which he commenced in the company of Joseph, constitutes the main portion of the novel and is the background for a number of picaresque experiences along the way. During the first part of their trip the two companions were separated by their mode of travel; Joseph, because of his injuries, rode the parson's horse while that gentleman walked. The two friends were united frequently at alehouses, and it was at one of these establishments that Mr. Adams had his first adventure--he got into a fist fight with the innkeeper and "laid him sprawling upon the floor."<sup>14</sup> Next he encountered a gentleman to whom he felt disposed to tell the history of his life. He explained that he was a poor curate because the rector whose assistant he had formerly been had placed the retention of his position on the condition that Mr. Adams persuade his nephew to vote for the rector's favorite candidate in a local election. When he refused to do so, he was dismissed and "lived a full month on one funeral sermon."<sup>15</sup> Later he was allowed to resume

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

his curacy and had been waiting ever since for the living which Sir Thomas before his death had promised him and promptly forgotten.

Entreated by his hearer to spend the night with him, Mr. Adams consented but was sidetracked by the sound of a woman's shrieks. He successfully protected her from her would-be ravisher; but when assistance arrived in the form of some local youths, the assailant accused Mr. Adams and the woman of dragging him off the highway and trying to attack him. The youths immediately took into custody the parson and the woman, who turned out to be none other than Fanny. Having heard of his misfortunes, she had set out to find Joseph. While they were before the justice, the parson was drawn into an argument involving Latin scholarship and would have entered into a wager about a certain quotation if the lack of money in his pocket had not hindered him. The pair was acquitted, and very soon Joseph and Fanny were reunited in a passionate embrace while Adams was "dancing about the room in a rapture of joy."<sup>16</sup>

The horse having been left behind in the excitement, the trio progressed on foot from alehouse to alehouse, entering into conversation with the natives in exchange for free beer. Usually Mr. Adams inquired after the local parson; upon one occasion he received this reply from a prosperous-looking gentleman:

"I am sorry to say the parson of our parish, instead of esteeming his poor parishioners as a part of his family, seems rather to consider them as not of the same species with himself. He seldom speaks to any, unless some few of the richest of us; nay, indeed, he will not move his hat to the others. I often laugh when I behold him on Sundays strutting along the church-yard like a turkey-cock through rows of his parishioners, who bow to him

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

with as much submission, and are as unregarded, as a set of servile courtiers by the proudest prince in Christendom. But if such temporal pride is ridiculous, surely the spiritual is odious and detestable; if such a puffed-up empty human bladder, strutting in princely robes, just moves one's derision, surely in the habit of a priest it must raise our scorn."<sup>17</sup>

When Mr. Adams declared his agreement, the gentleman revealed that he was the parish patron and would bestow the living, with three hundred pounds yearly, upon him at the decease of the aged and infirm incumbent. The next day, however, the poor parson discovered that the promise had been only a cruel joke at the expense of his naivete.

During his travels Mr. Adams had personally encountered two parsons who did nothing to dissuade him from his opinion that Christian clergymen like himself were scarce. The first had been Mr. Barnabas, whose frank opinions on the worthlessness of sermons had unnerved him. Fielding's treatment of Mr. Barnabas made it quite apparent that that gentleman's first love was his liquor; called to administer the last rites when it was thought that Joseph was dying, he had questioned the sufferer perfunctorily about his sins and then proceeded to prayer with all the expedition he was master of, some company then waiting for him below in the parlour, where the ingredients for punch were all in readiness; but no one would squeeze the oranges till he came."<sup>18</sup> Reputed to be somewhat of a community nuisance, he habitually proclaimed himself an authority on law and medicine as well as theology. His opinion was very pronounced on heretics such as Whitefield, to wit:

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

"He [Whitefield] would reduce us to the example of the primitive ages, forsooth! and would insinuate to the people that a clergyman ought to be always preaching and praying.. He pretends to understand the Scripture literally; and would make mankind believe that the poverty and low estate which was recommended to the church in its infancy, and was only temporary doctrine adapted to her under persecution, was to be preserved in her flourishing and established state."<sup>19</sup>

It might be noted in passing that Mr. Adams also objected to Whitefield, but for a different reason:

"I am, myself, as great an enemy to the luxury and splendour of the clergy as he can be . . . . But when he began to call nonsense and enthusiasm to his aid, and set up the detestable doctrine of faith against good works, I was his friend no longer; for surely that doctrine was coined in hell; and one would think none but the devil himself could have the confidence to preach it."<sup>20</sup>

The parson who offended Mr. Adams even more than Mr. Barnabas was Parson Trulliber. He found that representative of the cloth one day just returning from feeding his hogs, animals which Fielding says his physical appearance resembled. A parson only on Sunday, Mr. Trulliber had as his chief occupation and delight the sale of his beasts at county fairs. Mistaking Mr. Adams for a prospective hog dealer, he shoved the curate into the pig-sty and demanded that he handle the merchandise. The visitor obligingly and unquestioningly grasped a handy tail—with disastrous results to his personal appearance. This was followed by a lengthy discourse from Parson Trulliber on the dignity of the clerical profession and the shabbiness of Mr. Adams' attire, to which the latter humbly replied that he had torn his cassock about ten years before while crossing a stile and had

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.



been unable to obtain a new one. Parson Trulliber bragged that he was rich enough to buy both the vicar and the rector, but when Mr. Adams asked for the loan of fourteen shillings, his brother clergyman haughtily replied that he knew "what charity is, better than to give to vagabonds."<sup>21</sup> Mr. Adams smiled, told him distinctly that he was unfit to call himself a Christian, and took his leave. He later learned that his ungracious host "was reputed a man of great charity; for, though he never gave a farthing, he always had that word in his mouth."<sup>22</sup>

A strong believer in apparitions, Mr. Adams on another occasion found himself late at night in unfamiliar territory amid what he thought were malevolent spirits plotting his murder. He began to think of charms to ward them off, only to be apprised by a native of the territory that they were no more than real-life sheep-stealers.

The parson took advantage of the long hours spent in travel to instruct Joseph on a number of subjects, especially education. "Public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality," he declared. "All the wicked fellows whom I remember at the university were bred at them. . . . The first care I always take is of a boy's morals; I had rather he should be a blockhead than an atheist or a presbyterian."<sup>23</sup> His preference was "a private school, where boys may be kept in innocence and ignorance."<sup>24</sup> So vociferous were his opinions that Fielding remarked editorially: "Indeed, if this good man had an enthusiasm, or what the vulgar

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

call a blind side, it was this: he thought a schoolmaster the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest of all schoolmasters. . . .<sup>25</sup>

After delivering himself of his ideas on the subject the parson fell asleep under a tree and was almost devoured by a pack of hounds that mistook him for a hare. The owner of the dogs, more out of desire for Fanny than concern for the parson, invited the party to his house. There Mr. Adams was subjected to a number of pranks which his good nature allowed to be imposed upon him. In addition to attaching a firecracker to his cassock, an action which nearly scared him out of his wits, the jesters also contrived to have him deliver a sermon, at the conclusion of which he was doused in a tub of water. Because in making his departure the parson did not linger long enough to dry his clothes, he contracted a fever that was almost fatal.

Apparently he had a strong constitution, for at the next roadside inn he was enough recovered to "talk shop" with a gentleman with whom he declared himself in perfect accord on theological doctrines; one suspects that he would have had a relapse had he known that this latest acquaintance was a Roman Catholic priest.

The following day the squire who had insulted him sent men to recapture Fanny. Mr. Adams fought valiantly (despite the fact that he had forgot to put on his breeches) but was eventually subdued and tied to a bedstead. In that position he comforted Joseph by reminding him that he was "to consider you are a Christian, that no accident happens to us without the Divine permission, and that it is the duty of a man, much more of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

a Christian, to submit."<sup>26</sup> Joseph derived more comfort in repeating Macduff's sorrowful lines from Macbeth; but Parson Adams indignantly condemned such—"heathenism," saying, "I never heard of any plays fit for a Christian to read, but Cato and the Conscious Lovers. . . ."<sup>27</sup> Fanny, meanwhile, had been rescued by an acquaintance who happened to come upon her and her captors before any mischief was done.

At length the party arrived without further mishaps at Adams' parish, where the villagers "flocked about him like dutiful children round an indulgent parent, and vied with each other in demonstrations of duty and love."<sup>28</sup> He did all in his power to hasten the conclusion of Joseph and Fanny's amorous affair, reminding them at the same time that "no Christian ought so to set his heart on any person or thing in this world, but that whenever it shall be required or taken from him in any manner by Divine Providence, he may be able, peaceably, quietly, and contentedly to resign it."<sup>29</sup> No sooner had he finished than someone brought word that his youngest son had drowned, and it became immediately apparent that it was easier for the parson to give advice than to take it. In a rage of grief he told Joseph that "No man is obliged to impossibilities; and the loss of a child is one of those great trials where our grief may be allowed to become immoderate."<sup>30</sup> Nor did his pride permit him to admit his fault, even after the distressing news was learned to be false.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

The parson's final adventure was his most scandalous. Lying abed one night at Lady Booby's, where all the principal characters were for one reason or another assembled, he heard cries of rape and villainy. In a hasty effort to rescue the unknown victim from the unknown assailant, he found himself sans clothing in bed with Lady Booby's lady-in-waiting, who was in an equally naked condition. His powers of discernment were amazingly dull, and he did not even realize that he was battling with a woman until Lady Booby's arrival threw some candlelight on the subject. His confusion was all the more confounded when, in embarrassed retreat, he entered Fanny's room instead of his own and crawled into her bed without perceiving her to be there. Joseph, having previously arranged a rendezvous with his lover, discovered the unlikely pair together when he entered. Mr. Adams emphatically blamed the entire affair on witchcraft and retired to his proper room.

The lovers forgave their friend and entreated him to perform their marriage without further delay, certain miraculous discoveries having removed the fear that the pair might be brother and sister. Fanny came into a fortune from Mr. Booby, Lady Booby's nephew, and that gentleman also bestowed upon Mr. Adams a living of one hundred and thirty pounds yearly. The parson was reluctant to accept because of his long-time attachment to his own parish, but was finally induced to send a curate to his new benefice and thereby retain his humble station with all the benefits which his newly acquired riches could supply.

An obscure novel of similar style and content was published by Richard Graves in 1773. The Spiritual Quixote; or, the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Hildgoose related the adventures of a young Oxford graduate and his low-born companion Jerry Tugwell while on a self-appointed tour as

itinerant Methodist missionaries. Wildgoose had gone home from college with the intention of managing his widowed mother's estate but had gotten into an altercation with the vicar of the parish, Mr. Powell, over the question of whether or not a new glass door that he had installed should be subject to window tax. In anger at being defeated in the argument, he determined to spite the vicar by reading the Methodist sermons of Whitefield, which "abounded with bitter invectives against the regular clergy, and the established church; and with sentences of reprobation upon all mankind, except a few choice spirits called the elect."<sup>31</sup> He proceeded to read The Marrow of Divinity, Crumbs of Comfort, Honey-combs for the Elect, The Spiritual Eye-salves and Cordials for the Saints, and Foxe's Martyrology,<sup>32</sup> and ended in being converted to Methodism.

Wildgoose was noted for his "openness of countenance and a simplicity of manners";<sup>33</sup> at the same time, he was "shrewdly suspected to have been guilty of some slight offences against the rules of chastity, with his mother's maid."<sup>34</sup> The latter fact was not a hindrance to the new convert, who gloried in admitting numerous other sins in the belief that "every unregenerate man is daily guilty of them virtually, . . . and it is only by the grace of God, that he is restrained from putting them in execution."<sup>35</sup> Finding no sympathetic hearers among the gentry of his

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<sup>31</sup>Richard Graves, The Spiritual Quixote; or, the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose, two volumes in The British Novelists series (London: C. Baldwin, printer, 1820), vol. 1, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

native Gloucestershire, he began preaching in Tugwell's cottage and soon accumulated a sizeable following. One reason for his success was that "he spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes, that is, common country parsons."<sup>36</sup> A second contributing factor was the vicar's disagreeable method of dealing with sinners. Mr. Powell's way of preventing recurrence of faults was to say to offending parishioners, "I give you fair warning once more, that the next time I hear or see any thing of this kind, I will drub you most confoundedly."<sup>37</sup>

Not content with the little domain that he had conquered, Wildgoose yearned for more extensive fame. Whitefield was at that time living in Bristol, and Wildgoose decided to go there to serve his idol in whatever manner possible. Graves let his readers know at the outset that he was not in sympathy with the plan and ridiculed the motives by which Geoffry "thought himself obliged in honour to sally forth and submit to voluntary hardships in quest of adventures which he was not likely to meet with, and to redress grievances which no longer existed; or in which, under a regular government, he had no right to interfere."<sup>38</sup> The novelist went on to rail at evangelists in general, saying that

our modern itinerant reformers, by the mere force of imagination, have conjured up the powers of darkness in an enlightened age. They are acting in defiance of human laws, without any apparent necessity or any divine commission. They are planting the gospel in a Christian country; they are combating the shadow of popery, where the protestant religion is established; and declaiming against good works, in an age which they usually represent as abounding in every evil work.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

With Tugwell, whom he considered "only half a convert"<sup>40</sup> because he smoked a pipe, Wildgoose started out on his expedition. Their first stop was at a Whitsuntide revel where Geoffry was mistaken for a quack doctor and pelted with horse dung. His companion was in favor of going home immediately, but the ardent preacher was enjoying his first persecution too intently to take notice.

After a similar rebuff the following day, the pair reached Gloucester at nightfall. Wildgoose induced a barber to let him hold a series of meetings in his shop, and the gatherings were well attended. Perhaps a description of one of the evangelist's typical sermons will indicate the entertaining appeal that he had:

He usually began his discourse with lamenting the universal corruption of mankind, and with a lively representation of the dreadful consequences to be apprehended from the justice of God; and instead of speaking of hell and damnation in the refined terms and elegant circumlocutions of modern divines (as a place not proper to be mentioned to a polite audience), he ran, perhaps, into contrary extreme, by too gross and minute a detail of particulars. . . .

When he had sufficiently terrified them by the denunciation of eternal torments, he shifted the scene, and melted them into tears by the tenderest descriptions of the mercy and compassion of God, and the fondest expressions of love from the great Shepherd of their souls.

. . . .  
In short, by this soothing eloquence, and the earnestness of his manner, Wildgoose softened those hearts, which for some years had resisted the admonitions of friends, and the suggestions of conscience; and made many converts to religion; at least he made them so as long as the brightness of those similes continued to glow in their imagination. But, their affections only being moved, and their understandings not enlightened, nor their reason convinced, too many of them soon relapsed into their former dissolute courses.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-104.

During the final service in Gloucester, some hecklers filled with explosives the barrel on which Tugwell sat, and set them off just as Wildgoose reached a vivid description of fire and brimstone. The resulting explosion almost sent its intended victim "to heaven, before his time, in a chariot of fire."<sup>42</sup>

The pair was a target for pranks throughout the journey. At a crowded alehouse they were doused with a bucket of water, and on another occasion with the contents of a chamberpot. When the preacher tried to convert a waitress in Tetbury, the landlady called him a "hypothetical rascal"<sup>43</sup> and threw a hasty pudding into his face.

All their opposition was not so volatile. One man took issue with Wildgoose quietly:

I really believe, when the Methodists first set out. . . they did some good, and contributed to rouse the negligent clergy, and to revive practical christianity amongst us. But I'm afraid they have since done no small prejudice to religion, by reviving the obseweb disputes of the last century; and by calling off the minds of men from practice to mere speculation. For by all the accounts I have heard of late, if a man does but frequent their meetings regularly, expresses himself properly upon justification, and a few more of their favourite topics, he is immediately ranked among the elect, and may live as carelessly as he pleases in other respects; . . . In short, if a man does but talk and look like a saint, he may, without any reproach, live like a sinner.<sup>44</sup>

The "missionary" did not like either of the two Methodist preachers at Bath, for they held almost contradictory beliefs, neither of which coincided with Wildgoose's own brand of theology. Inspired to speak out against "luxury in dress, cards, dancing, and all the fashionable diver-

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 179.



sions<sup>45</sup> of the resort town, Geoffry was drowned out by a rousing rendition of "God Save the King" performed by an impromptu band of kettle-drums and French horns. Indignantly advising Tuggle to follow the Biblical admonition to shake the dust of inhospitality from his feet, Wildgoose renewed his desire to reach Mr. Whitefield, "who he did not doubt would resolve all his scruples, and put him in the true road to salvation."<sup>46</sup>

The itinerant Quixote at last gained an audience with his idol in Bristol but was disappointed, upon being ushered into the holy man's presence, to find him "sitting in an elbow-chair, in a handsome dining-room, dressed in a purple nightgown and velvet cap; and, instead of a Bible or a prayer-book, as Wildgoose expected, he had a good bason of chocolate. and a plate of muffins well-buttered, before him."<sup>47</sup>

The pompous Whitefield offered him no encouragement in his clerical ambition,

for whether he gloried in the number of his followers, and began to taste the sweets of such distinction, or whether he thought that too great a number of labourers in the vineyard might render the soil less fruitful to himself; however it was, he did not seem inclined to admit any more sharers in the labour; but began to complain of the great number of divisions already among them; that one was of Paul, and another of Apollos; that brother Wesley had preached another Gospel, entirely contrary to his; in short, that, from that source, strife, envy, wrath, revelling, backbiting, drunkenness, and every evil work, began already to prevail amongst them.<sup>48</sup>

Seeing that Wildgoose was not easily to be deterred, however, Whitefield condescended to trust him among the lowly colliers in Staffordshire and

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

Shropshire and the lead miners in Derbyshire--but only after giving the novice some lessons in preaching.

After hearing Whitefield preach twice, Wildgoose was convinced that he himself had been wrong in trying to persuade people to repent and to reform; for the experienced preacher "said little about repentance, but laid all the stress upon faith alone; so that if a man was, or fancied, or even said, that he was possessed of true faith, he was immediately pronounced a convert; and, whether he reformed his life or not, became a saint upon easy terms."<sup>49</sup>

Whitefield's plan was to have Wildgoose speak once in Bristol, so that he could correct any mistakes in doctrine or delivery, and then get rid of him as quickly as possible; for "he found some few sparks of jealousy in his own breast."<sup>50</sup> Wildgoose, however, was such a success that he soon was preaching nightly to larger crowds than Whitefield could draw. His superior, therefore, devised other trials for his disciple by sending him to minister among the sinners in the death hole at Newgate, at a notorious gin shop, and at a house of ill fame.

In this new role as spiritual adviser, Geoffry was a complete failure. He gave away all his money to idlers who thought it sinful to work; he told the keeper of the bawdy house that, since God looks chiefly on the heart, whatever fleshly sins her charges might commit could be atoned for by their reading the Bible every Sunday. When a distraught mother brought her pregnant fourteen-year-old daughter to him, he consoled her by saying that since no father was in sight, this must be a sign of the

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

New Birth. As no other advice came to his tongue, he quoted a favorite maxim of Whitefield—"The greater the sinner, the greater the faith."<sup>51</sup> Next he told an escaped prisoner that he would have to draw lots to determine whether or not the man was wrong to have broken out of jail.

Immediately thereafter, a tough, scarred sailor came confessing that he had "been guilty of every kind of uncleanness" including "an intrigue with a cat,"<sup>52</sup> and asked if it were a sin to be addicted to laughing. While Wildgoose was pondering the strange question, four or five other ruffians rushed in, tied him and Tugwell, and took them to a large ship which set sail as soon as they were aboard. The vessel was bound for North America; but the captain, who had arranged the kidnapping because he believed that Wildgoose was flirting with an alderman's wife, condescended, after a wild storm had driven them off course, to put the pair out on the coast of Wales.

Geoffrey delightedly told Tugwell that he was a second St. Paul on a missionary journey to the land of Canaan. They found their way to Cardiff, where Howell Harris, another of Whitefield's disciples, was conducting a revival. Thankful to see a fellow laborer, Howell hired the town hall and assembled four hundred persons to hear Wildgoose. When the Spiritual Quixote "took occasion, without judge or jury, to arraign and condemn the whole race of mankind,"<sup>53</sup> some irreverent pranksters turned loose a fox in the meeting and set a number of dogs after it. "The fox-hunters, however, were tired before the preacher, who harangued for above an hour."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

That night Wildgoose was forced to sleep in the stable and was mortified when the cook, a plump lass accustomed to sharing the hostler's bed, was discovered by a waiter to be in the process of preparing to get into bed with the preacher. The chastely indignant man decided that the only prudent thing to do would be to leave at daybreak before the story spread. Harris went with them as far as Newport in order to introduce them to the parson there, who he thought was in sympathy with Methodism. On the contrary, they found him to be irate:

My own people, who are very well disposed, and who were before entirely satisfied with my plain doctrine, now, forsooth, give out, that I do not preach the Gospel, because I do not always harp upon the same string, of the new birth, faith without works, and the like. They also expect me to have private meetings two or three nights in the week, and compliment them with private expositions of Scripture, extempore prayer, psalm-singing, and what not; though I really believe, if I were to give them the very same sermons in a private room, lighted up with candles like a play-house, the very novelty of the thing would content them for a while, as well as the best of your itinerant preachers.<sup>55</sup>

Near Monmouth the pair encountered the most versatile and the poorest Anglican vicar of the tour. "His eyes, his hands, and his feet, every limb of his body, and every faculty of his soul were fully employed; for he was reading a folio that lay on the table to the right; was hearing his little boy read, who stood by him on the left; he was rocking the cradle with his foot, and was paring turnips."<sup>56</sup> Needless to say, he had no time or effort to do more than point them toward their destination.

Wildgoose's ultimate goal was eventually to get to the poor colliers of Staffordshire, but he was delayed by a variety of circumstances that in-

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

cluded being accosted by a highwayman who turned out to be a Methodist deacon. Near Worcester he met a man with whom he got into a heated discussion on doctrinal matters and was chagrined to discover that the stranger was none other than John Wesley. Whitefield's rival advised Geoffry that it would be useless for him to try to convert the colliers, for he himself had just been driven out of their territory. The determined Wildgoose changed his course for Derbyshire, thinking to enlighten the lead miners, but was discouraged when he was accused in the mining town of Ashbourn of being a Jesuit in disguise. His zeal further cooled by an almost interminable visit with a worldly lord and lady, Wildgoose decided to go instead to Warwick in order to preach against horse racing.

The choice brought about the end of his career; for, imprudently getting up in the middle of a fast race in order to preach, he became the target of a wine glass thrown by an enraged spectator. The shattered glass cut a vital artery in his head, and for a time it was feared that he would not survive. He had the good fortune, however, to be taken in by Dr. Grenville, a clergyman who

really was what Mr. Wesley and his associates ought to have been, and what, I [Graves] sincerely believe, they at first intended to be. He revived the practice of primitive piety in his own person, and his own parish; and, by his example, and admonitions, excited many of the neighboring clergy to be more vigilant in the discharge of their duty. He had a faith which worked by love; or, in modern language, his belief of the truths of the Gospel made him consider as an indispensable duty those acts of beneficence which his humanity prompted him to perform.<sup>57</sup>

The blow on the head brought Wildgoose to his senses as it healed, and "the mist was dispelled from his mind."<sup>58</sup> He admitted to Dr. Grenville

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-274.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

that he had been wrong to follow "the blind impulse of an over-heated imagination. . . without any pretense of a divine commission."<sup>59</sup> As soon as he was able to travel, he returned home, patched up his differences with Mr. Powell, and married a wife little inclined toward encouraging any further theological rambles.

In contrast to these picaresque tales, Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield gives one of the most idyllic pictures of a country parson to be found anywhere in English literature. The very first sentence in the first chapter proclaims Dr. Primrose to be an honest man. He loved his wife and six children tenderly, lived in an "elegant house, situated in a fine country, and a good neighborhood,"<sup>60</sup> had no trials or tribulations to invade his fireside, and spent his days in "moral or rural amusements."<sup>61</sup> He considered himself an avid student of human nature, and early discovered that any unwelcome guest could be tactfully disposed of by lending him an article of small value which the visitor invariably never came back to return. The only thing in life which occasionally vexed him was the Squire's falling asleep in "the most pathetic parts" of his sermon.<sup>62</sup> The entire Primrose family was aptly described by the vicar as being "equally generous, credulous, simple, and inoffensive."<sup>63</sup>

Dr. Primrose's living brought only thirty-five pounds yearly but,

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>60</sup>Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield (New York: The Book League of America, Inc., 1931), p. 4.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

having a private income of his own, he used his salary to assist widows and orphans in the diocese. He kept no curate, was intimately associated with every man in his parish, and was a strong advocate of matrimony and strict monogamy. The latter fact almost caused a crisis when he discovered that Mr. Wilmot, a neighboring clergyman whose daughter was engaged to George Primrose, was courting his fourth wife. What actually ended the Wilmot-Primrose engagement, however, was the sudden revelation that the vicar's money-keeper had absconded with his entire fortune.

Not greatly distressed by the poverty which had suddenly come upon him, the vicar accepted a cure of fifteen pounds per year and a twenty-acre farm in a distant rural area. In a manner quite different from that of his nineteenth century successors, Dr. Primrose was not the least flattered by the attentions of his wealthy landlord to his daughters. Nor was he pleased when Sophia and Olivia seemed inclined to accept Mr. Thornhill's advances, but he took no decisive measures other than that of accidentally-on-purpose upsetting a cosmetic concoction which the girls were brewing for a facial. His objections to Mr. Thornhill were twofold--he was a "freethinker," and he kept a chaplain who disturbed the countryside by shooting blackbirds.

Little by little Dr. Primrose's family lectures on "temperance, simplicity, and contentment" were more and more disregarded. His daughters determined to climb higher in the social world by spending a season in London. Moses, normally a responsible youth, was duped into exchanging the family's colt for some worthless eye-glasses, although he had been instructed to exchange the colt for a horse that would make the girls feel more fashionable. Dr. Primrose, taking advantage of the calamity, at-

tempted: "to improve their good-sense in proportion as they were frustrated in ambition."<sup>64</sup>

In some things, the good vicar himself was inclined to deviate from the high standards that he had erected. On one occasion he felt that his family had been rude to a friend in the community, but he silenced his conscience with "two or three specious reasons."<sup>65</sup> Nor was he above being victimized as his son had been. When he took the one remaining horse to a neighborhood fair to sell it, he was so flattered by an old man who hailed him as "the great Primrose, that courageous monogamist"<sup>66</sup> that he sold his animal to the glib-tongued scoundrel for a worthless check. Dr. Primrose also forgot his own injunctions against strife, jumping to false conclusions about his friend Mr. Burchell, and succumbed to "ruminating upon schemes of vengeance"<sup>67</sup> against that man for supposedly blocking his daughters' entrance into society. Even more alarming, the vicar relented in his opposition to the suave Mr. Thornhill, blinded to his imperfections by the hope of having so important a son-in-law. His vanity grew by leaps and bounds until he actually consented to have a huge mural painted depicting his family as historical personages-- Mrs. Primrose as Venus, Olivia as an Amazon, Sophia as a shepherdess, himself as a great scholar, and Mr. Thornhill as Alexander the Great.

Notwithstanding such an obvious hint of his anticipated union with the family, Mr. Thornhill seemed hesitant in declaring his matrimonial intentions. The vicar, despite his lofty principles regarding

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 106.



marriage, determined that Olivia should marry a local farmer who was prudent, sincere, and loyal. That his daughter did not love the man the father considered irrelevant. Four days before the wedding was to occur, however, Olivia eloped. Assuming the villain to be Mr. Burchell, the vicar cursed and called for his pistols; on second thought he calmed down enough to search for her armed with his Bible instead.

After walking some seventy miles the poor man fell ill of a fever during which he came to the prosaic conclusion that

Man little knows what calamities are beyond his patience to bear till he tries them; as in ascending the heights of ambition which look bright from below, every step we rise shows us some new and gloomy prospect of hidden disappointment; so in our descent from the summits of pleasure, though the vale of misery below may appear at first dark and gloomy, yet the busy mind, still attentive to its own amusement, finds as we descend something to flatter and to please. Still as we approach, the darkest objects appear to brighten, and the mental eye adapts to its gloomy situation.<sup>68</sup>

Dr. Primrose became more of a wooden character as the novel progressed, mouthing opinions on Dryden, Otway, Rowe, Fletcher, Jenson, Shakespeare, Congreve, and Farquhar for one entire chapter and ranting at length about "Glorious liberty!" in another. All thought of Olivia seemed forgotten, but on his homeward journey he did encounter his long-lost eldest son and effected a reunion between him and Miss Wilmot. Finally, within twenty miles of home, he discovered that his daughter had been abandoned by Mr. Thornhill, her real seducer, to whom she had evidently been illegally married by a "Popish priest." The vicar was prepared even for this calamity, and assured her that "wisdom makes but a slow defense against trouble, though at last a sure one."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

The balance of misfortune which had in his early life weighed so lightly now came in abundance. No sooner did he reach home than that dwelling burst into flame and was completely destroyed. Undaunted, the vicar proclaimed that if they would live harmoniously, they might yet be contented. Then word arrived that Mr. Thornhill's next victim was to be Miss Wilmot. Dr. Primrose's decision to oppose the match on the grounds that Olivia was Thornhill's rightful wife was followed by the appearance of that man himself in order to inform the vicar that he was taking immediate steps to obtain, by eviction if necessary, the annual rent.

The next day, penniless, Dr. Primrose found himself in debtor's prison. Unable to obtain living quarters for his family, he petitioned the jailer to allow his young sons to live with him in the prison. Far from being depressed by his latest misfortune, he immediately set about reclaiming the souls of the other prisoners, who included the very man who had swindled him of his horse. His lengthy sermons dealt more with prison reform than with spiritual reformation, however.

News next came that Olivia, who had been in failing health since being deserted by Mr. Thornhill, had died. Immediately the vicar in an unnatural frenzy cried "Heaven be praised, there is no pride left in me now,"<sup>70</sup> and proceeded to send word to his landlord withdrawing all opposition to the marriage to Miss Wilmot. But a happy reconciliation was not in sight. Mr. Thornhill replied that he would not release Dr. Primrose from prison, and Mrs. Primrose arrived in a fright to report that Sophia had been kidnapped by ruffians. This came closer than any previous trouble to distressing him, but still the vicar rejoiced that "the

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

sum of my miseries is made up; nor is it in the power of any thing on earth to give me another pang."<sup>71</sup> As the words left his mouth there was a clanking of fetters, and George, who had gone to avenge his sister's honor, was thrown, injured and bloody, into his father's cell. This time the vicar's response was, "I am now raised above this world and all the pleasures it can produce. From this moment I break from my heart all the ties that held it down to earth, and will prepare to fit us both for eternity."<sup>72</sup> He then summoned his fellow prisoners and delivered what he thought was his deathbed sermon, declaring that "Providence has given the wretched two advantages over the happy in this life: greater felicity in dying, and in Heaven all that superiority of pleasure which arises from contrasted enjoyment."<sup>73</sup>

Instead of floating heavenward on clouds of martyred piety, however, the vicar had more astounding revelations in store for him. First, Mr. Burchell arrived with Sophia, whom he had rescued from her captors. George instantly recognized him as Sir William Thornhill, benevolent uncle of the vicar's landlord, who had chosen for undisclosed reasons to disguise his rank and who, after receiving Sophia's pledge of truth with her father's blessing, ordered his nephew to be imprisoned. Next Miss Wilmot entered the jail--her appearance, Goldsmith informs the reader, was "quite accidental"--cried "Good Heavens! how very near have I been to the brink of ruin!"<sup>74</sup> and was reunited with her true lover.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 241-242.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

Next on the scene was Olivia, formerly presumed dead, who had actually been under the care of the horse swindler. That reformed individual proclaimed that Olivia's marriage was not illegal and that she was therefore an honest woman, free to return to her wayward husband.

The idyllic vision closed with the vicar, once more a free man, officiating at the multiple weddings of the oddly assorted couples. Never at a loss for words, Dr. Primrose, whom Goldsmith allowed to narrate the entire proceedings, said, "I had nothing now on this side of the grave to wish for; all my cares were over; my pleasure was unspeakable. It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity."<sup>75</sup>

One presumes that he lived happily ever after.

Two other eighteenth-century contrasting portraits are pertinent, although they appear in poetry rather than in novels: Goldsmith's preacher in "The Deserted Village" and George Crabbe's priest in "The Village."

As might be expected, the parson of "The Deserted Village" was the epitome of goodness. Content with his humble station in life, ever-ready to welcome the wayward and needy at his fireside, "He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt, for all."<sup>76</sup> When he entered the pulpit, "Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway" because of his meekness and unaffected grace, "And fools who came to scoff, remain'd to pray."<sup>77</sup>

Crabbe's treatment of the village priest is significant as an

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. 287-288.

<sup>76</sup>Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village" in The Poems of Oliver Goldsmith, M. B. (New York: A. L. Burt Company, n.d.), p. 135.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

attempt to picture the clergyman realistically. "The Village" depicted "a shepherd of a different stock"<sup>78</sup> who grudgingly performed those Sabbath duties which he could not possibly avoid and spent the rest of his week in hunting, feasting, and playing whist. Unfitted for comforting his flock in time of trouble,

Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed,  
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal  
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?<sup>79</sup>

The question was one which was to plague the conscience of many a nineteenth-century parson finding himself in a similar frame of mind.

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<sup>78</sup>George Crabbe, "The Village" in The Poetical Works of George Crabbe, A. J. and R. M. Carlyle, editors (London and New York: Humphrey Milford, n.d.), p. 38.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PARISH LIFE

Among the earliest nineteenth century novelists to turn their attention to the clerical scene as fitting subject matter for fiction were John Galt and George Eliot. Although separated by more than thirty years, their works are similar in that both chose to limit themselves to an essentially secular approach to the clergyman's life as it related to the small sphere of his parish. Surprisingly enough, these two writers stood alone in giving their attention to clerical detail. Other authors of community chronicles, including even Mary Russell Mitford (Our Village and Stories of Village and Town Life) and Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell (Cranford), virtually by-passed religious aspects of the parish in their zeal to record the apparently more interesting activities of the town's barber, apothecary, and rat-catcher.

Galt, a Scotsman, described parish life in the Church of Scotland, an institution that differs markedly from the Church of England.<sup>1</sup> Since the political union of the two countries in 1707, the Church of Scotland has had no direct connection with civil government other than the token recognition expressed by the attendance of the king or queen's commissioner at the annual general assembly and the appointment of several presbyterian ministers as royal chaplains. All matters of doctrine, worship, discipline, and ecclesiastical government are decided solely by the members of the Church of Scotland itself. As the established state church, however, it fills a sentimental function by serving as the surviving witness of an independent Scottish nationality.

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<sup>1</sup>This brief discussion of the essential points of difference is drawn from the 1895 and 1960 editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The only consistent point of contention in the Church of Scotland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the question of patronage. The general assembly, legislative body of the organization, was controlled in the 1800's by moderates who favored patronage as it was practiced in England. In 1743 a secessionist body opposed to patronage broke away and organized the Reformed Presbytery. The controversy continued to rage for another hundred years; in 1843 Thomas Chalmers led a "Disruption" which brought into existence the Free Church of Scotland, "free of state control, free of patronage, and zealously evangelical."<sup>2</sup> Gradually, small groups that had seceded from the main stream of presbyterianism rallied to the Free Church of Scotland; and it has continued to be the leading presbyterian body since Scottish patronage was formally abolished in 1874.

Galt's Annals of the Parish was written in 1813 but did not appear in print until 1821, when it was serialized in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. His avowed purpose was "to write a book that would be for Scotland what the Vicar of Wakefield is for England," but he added that, unlike Goldsmith, he did not intend to represent the "beau-ideal of a rural pastor."<sup>3</sup> Henry Mackenzie, writing in the May 1821 issue of Blackwood's, compared the Annals with its reputed model:

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<sup>2</sup>"Presbyterian" in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1960 edition, vol. 18, p. 442.

<sup>3</sup>John Galt, "Illustrations, Anecdotes, and Critical Remarks" appended to Annals of the Parish or the Chronicle of Dalmailing during the Ministry of the Rev. Micah Balwhidder written by himself and arranged and edited by John Galt (London & Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1926), p. 289, quoting Galt in Literary Life, vol. 1, pp. 152-160.

Like the Vicar of Wakefield, Mr. Micah Balwhidder is the historian of his own fireside, and the various vicissitudes of their [sic] fortune. Of these there are not, like those of Dr. Primrose, incidents to surprise or to interest, by their uncommon or romantic nature, in which respect the Vicar of Wakefield has perhaps gone somewhat beyond the limits of the probability even of fiction. The simple and almost uniform journal of Mr. Balwhidder is so little extraordinary, as to claim from us somewhat of a belief in its reality.<sup>4</sup>

A less known but equally enthusiastic critic wrote in the Inverness Courier for May 10 of the same year:

If there be one heartless and brainless mortal in the circle of English readers, who does not remember Parson Abraham Adams, and Dr. Primrose, Vicar of Wakefield, as the beloved of his youth, let him not take up the Parish Annals--he can never become acquainted with the Rev. Micah Balwhidder, 'doctor as he was sometimes called, though not of that degree'. . . . Micah has not, to be sure, the learning or mental vigour of Parson Adams, nor the tenderness and delicacy of 'the husband of one wife,' the Vicar--still he is worthy in virtue of their common good-hearted and pastoral affections, to take his place by their side; and he is the first presbyter [sic] who has been thus honoured.<sup>5</sup>

Galt's work takes the form of the yearly remembrances of Mr. Balwhidder from 1760 to 1810, ostensibly compiled at the close of the parson's fifty-one-year tenure as minister of the kirk at Dalmailing in Ayrshire on the Scottish coast. There had been great opposition when, fresh from the University of Edinburgh, Mr. Balwhidder had been placed in Dalmailing by a wealthy patron; the Ayrshire Scots characteristically opposed "a bird out the nest of patronage."<sup>6</sup> In fact, when he had arrived to preach his

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 294, quoting Mackenzie.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., quoting "Mrs. Johnstone, author of Glan Albin, Elizabeth de Bruce, and other well-known and able works," pp. 296-297.

<sup>6</sup>Annals of the Parish, p. 7.



first sermon, he had found the door locked and barred and had, with his congregation, been obliged to climb in through an open window—an action which prompted his opponents to quote gleefully, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."<sup>7</sup> But by "works of peacemaking and charity" the new parson gradually convinced his congregation that "preaching is the smallest portion of the duties of a faithful minister"<sup>8</sup> and so won them over. Throughout his tenure, the main theme of his sermons was always passive: "Reflect on this, my young friends, and know, that the best part of a Christian's duty in this world of much evil, is to thole and suffer with resignation, as lang as it is possible for human nature to do."<sup>9</sup>

The first year of Mr. Balwhidder's ministry was marked by his marriage to his cousin Betty Lanshaw, with whom he had been brought up by their grandmother. The union was "more out of a compassionate habitual affection, than the passion of love."<sup>10</sup> The first real crisis of his clerical career came soon thereafter in the form of tea smuggling. The minister preached against tea parties for a time; but by 1762, deciding that tea drinking was a great improvement over "decent ladies coming home with red faces, tosy and coah, from posset-making,"<sup>11</sup> he allowed his wife to begin serving the beverage in the manse.

The great calamity of 1763 was the burning of the lintmill at

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

harvest time. Mrs. Balwhidder lost her entire crop, and the resulting "vexation" caused her to pine away and die on Christmas day. For a time her grieving husband occupied himself by composing a lengthy poem for her tombstone; when that had been done to his satisfaction, he felt inspired to tackle "an orthodox poem, like Paradise Lost, by John Milton, wherein I proposed to treat more at large of Original Sin, and the great mystery of Redemption."<sup>12</sup> Mentioning the project to one of the church elders, however, he was advised to put the effort off indefinitely and look instead for a second Mrs. Balwhidder to manage his household. The point was driven home when one of his servants "got herself with bairn" and he was accused of having "a finger in the pie."<sup>13</sup> As soon as a year and a day had passed, therefore, he married Miss Lizy Kibbock, the daughter of a prominent cheesemaker.

With household cares removed, the minister was again able to turn his attention to his parish. Thanks to his tactful requests to the wealthy Lord Eaglesham, Dalmailing acquired a new road; and thanks to his heartfelt sermons "on the helplessness of them that have no help of man, meaning aged single women, living in garret-rooms,"<sup>14</sup> the dying days of the local schoolmistress were not spent in solitary poverty. Mr. Balwhidder's chief displeasure with the teacher's successor, a young lady from Glasgow, was her influence on Dalmailing fashions:

I could date from the very Sabbath of her first appearance in the kirk, a change growing in the garb of the younger lassies, who from that day began to lay aside the silken plaidie over

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

the head, the which had been the pride and bravery of their grandmothers; and instead of the snood, that was so snod and simple, they hided their heads in round-eared bees-cap nitches made of gauze and catgut, and other curious contrivances of French millendery.<sup>15</sup>

The year 1772 merited only two entries in the Annals, but they are representative of the equal attention Mr. Balwhidder characteristically gave to both serious and routine matters. Because of a tooth extraction the minister had been unable to perform his Sabbath duties and was obliged to call upon the services of Mr. Heckletext, a young clergyman "thirsting to show his light to the world."<sup>16</sup> When he rose to preach, however, a "donsie lassie" in the congregation was seized with hysterical crying that proved fatal. It later turned out that Mr. Heckletext, although he indignantly denied it, was the father of the unborn child who had perished with her. Before he could be brought to trial, he married his housekeeper, who within three months of their wedding presented him with a son. The new father laid aside his clerical aspirations and opened a school in Edinburgh. Afterwards, Mr. Balwhidder was advised by the elders "never to allow any preacher to mount in my pulpit, unless I knew something of his moral character."<sup>17</sup>

The second event considered worth recording was the successful "Caesarean operation" performed by the schoolmistress in order to remove "as many beans as filled a nitchkin stoup"<sup>18</sup> from the stomach of a pet duck which had almost fatally gorged itself on a quantity of spilled beans

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

in the parson's stable.

The year 1773 brought a meeting between Mr. Belwhidder and the only Church of England dignitary with whom he ever came in contact. Lord Eaglesham had as his guest

a large, round-faced man, with a wig, that was a dignitary in some great Episcopalian church in London, who was extraordinary condescending towards me, drinking wine with me at the table, and saying weighty sentences, in a fine style of language, about the becoming grace of simplicity and innocence of heart, in the clergy of all denominations of Christians, which I was pleased to hear, for really he had a proud red countenance, and I could not have thought he was so mortified to humility within, had I not heard with what sincerity he delivered himself, and seen how much reverence and attention was paid to him by all present, particularly by my lord's chaplain, who was a pious and pleasant young divine, though educated at Oxford for the Episcopalian persuasion.<sup>19</sup>

It was a sign of his excellent toleration that Mr. Belwhidder could usually find something good to say about most religious persuasions. Some twenty years after making the acquaintance of the dean, he attended the meetings of a company of traveling Quakers in order "to keep the people in awe; for we feared the strangers might be jeered and insulted."<sup>20</sup> He was baffled by their habit of sitting in long silences but pleased by their "very sensible exposition of Christianity. I was really surprised to hear such sound doctrine; and Mr. Dozendale said, justly, that it was more to the purpose than some that my younger brethren from Edinburgh endeavored to teach."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-120.

Even Mr. Balwhidder's generous nature, however, did not extend to Roman Catholicism. When an Irish priest named O'Grady tried to establish the Mass, "with all its mummeries and abominations," among the laborers at the cotton mill, Mr. Balwhidder, indignant that the priest had had "the impudence to set up that monstrosity of Satan, the crucifix" in his parish, convened the session and urged immediate action to drive the man out. The elders, prudently observing that "the days of religious persecution were past" and that it was "a comfort to see mankind cherishing any sense of religion at all, after that vehement infidelity that had been sent abroad by the French Republicans," counselled him to wait. The advice proved wise. As there were only five Catholics in the parish, Father O'Grady soon "packed up his Virgin Marys, saints, and painted Agneses in a portmanteau, and went off in the Ayr fly one morning for Glasgow," where he "met with all the encouragement that might be expected from the ignorant and idolatrous inhabitants of that great city."<sup>22</sup>

The Dalmailing session might adopt a wait-and-see attitude regarding Popery, but its members rose up in arms over the "interloper" who later entered the parish preaching "the flagrant heresy of Universal Redemption, a most consolatory doctrine to the sinner that is loth to repent, and who loves to troll his iniquity like a sweet morsel under his tongue."<sup>23</sup> Mr. Balwhidder failed to become excited about such "kittle crudities of polemical investigation,"<sup>24</sup> and the scare passed.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

During his entire ministry, Mr. Balwhidder hardly left his parish.

"I was but little sought for at sacraments, and fasts, and solemn days, which was doubtless well ordained; for I had no motive to seek fame in foreign pulpits."<sup>25</sup> The one exception came when, in 1779, he was invited to preach at the General Assembly in Edinburgh. Unfortunately, the good man chose an ambiguous text from the Old Testament that his listeners misapplied—"wherefore, then, should thy servant be a burden to the King?" They took it to refer to the newly appointed commissioner of King George III. Afterwards Lord Eaglesham told him that he had "gone beyond the bounds of modern moderation," and the discomfited minister "longed for the privacy" of his own "narrow pasture."<sup>26</sup>

A problem which arose periodically was the selection of guest clergymen for special church days. In 1785, three men were invited. Mr. Keekie of Loupinton, "a sound preacher, and a great expounder of the kittle parts of the Old Testament, being a man well versed in the Hebrews and etymologies," was chosen because he appealed to "the old people that delighted to search the scriptures." The second speaker, Mr. Sprose of Annock, was "a vehement and powerful thresher of the word," although he lacked "that correct method which is needful to the enforcing of doctrine." In contrast with him was Mr. Waikle of Gowany, "a quiet hewer out of the image of holiness in the heart."<sup>27</sup> With such a variety Mr. Balwhidder thought everyone should be pleased; he was shocked beyond speech when a leading citizen declared that "Mr. Keekie of Loupinton, and Mr. Sprose of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

Annock, and Mr. Waikle of Gowanry, and all such trash, may go to ----  
and be -----!"<sup>28</sup>

Ever since entering the parish, Mr. Balwhidder had conscientiously endeavored not to be a financial burden to his flock. By 1786, however, the manse was literally falling to pieces around him; he was forced to submit a requisition for repairs. When a few estimates showed that it would be cheaper in the long run to build a new manse than to renovate the old one, many members of the congregation objected, calling the pastor an "avaricious Jew"<sup>29</sup> and refusing to attend services. Notwithstanding the opposition, the new manse was completed the following year; but there were secret rejoicings when the dampness of the newly-plastered house caused Mr. Balwhidder to have "a severe attack of the rheumatics."<sup>30</sup>

The minister was a consistently good influence upon the young people of the community, and with his assistance several of them distinguished themselves. One such youth was William Malcolm, who had gone away to an unnamed theological school and who, upon his return, entered the Dalmailing pulpit to preach his first sermon. Mr. Balwhidder thought the lad had great potential with one drawback: "His sermon assuredly was well put together, and there was nothing to object to in his doctrine; but the elderly people thought his language rather too Englished, which I thought likewise; for I never could abide that the plain auld Kirk of Scotland, with her sober presbyterian simplicity, should borrow, either in order or in deed, from the language of the prelatic

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

hierarchy of England."<sup>31</sup> While the minister was pleased later when young Malcolm sent him a volume of moral essays of his own composition, he could not refrain from commenting that the work lacked "somewhat of that birr and smeddum that is the juice and flavour of books of that sort."<sup>32</sup>

The closing decade of the eighteenth century brought with it confusion in politics and philosophy; subjects which Mr. Balwhidder treated bravely despite the divided opinions of his parishioners:

As for me, my duty in these circumstances was plain and simple. The Christian religion was attempted to be brought into disrepute; the rising generation were taught to gibe at its holiest ordinances; and the kirk was more frequented as a place to while away the time on a rainy Sunday, than for any insight of the admonitions and revelations in the sacred book. Knowing this, I perceived that it would be of no effect to handle much of the mysteries of the faith; but as there was at the time a bruit and a sound about universal benevolence, philanthropy, utility, and all the other disguises with which an infidel philosophy appropriated to itself the charity, brotherly love, and well-doing inculcated by our holy religion, I set myself to task upon these heads, and thought it no robbery to use a little of the stratagem employed against Christ's kingdom, to promote the interests thereof in the hearts and understandings of those whose ears would have been sealed against me, had I attempted to expound higher things.<sup>33</sup>

In 1796 the second Mrs. Balwhidder died and was laid to rest beside the first; by this time the husband had "drained his poetical vein" and was content to let the same epitaph serve for both. With the eye of one accustomed to the necessity presented by his state of affairs, the widower took for his third wife "Mrs. Nugent, the relic of a professor in the university of Glasgow."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-116.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 122.



The Irish rebellion of 1798 brought hordes of refugees to Ayrshire and would have created an economic crisis there if Mr. Cayenne, whose opinions of the guest ministers had been less than complimentary, had not supplied the newcomers with money, lodging, and employment. Because of this generosity, Mr. Balwhidder was inclined to have a higher opinion of the outspoken man, "although he had still a very imperfect sense of religion, which I attributed to his being born in America, where even as yet, I am told, they have but a scanty sprinkling of grace."<sup>35</sup>

It was Mr. Balwhidder's personal conviction that "the French business was but a fever that would pass off"; but when Napoleon threatened invasion of England, the minister "was not backward in sounding the trumpet to battle."<sup>36</sup> He preached a fiery sermon that resulted in the formation of a voluntary local militia, with himself as chaplain, dedicated to repulsing Jacobins and all other threats to his flock.

While the Dalmailing clergyman was growing older, Ayrshire, because of expanding economic facilities, grew more populous. Various "sectarians," dissatisfied with the gospel as Mr. Balwhidder preached it, began building a kirk of their own and "getting a minister that would give them the gospel more to their own ignorant fancies."<sup>37</sup> Mr. Balwhidder was indignant at this "overt act of insubordination" and preached an ill-timed sermon on the "growth of new-fangled doctrines." The truth of the matter, however he might try to ignore it, was that he had outlived his usefulness. On the day that the new meetinghouse was opened, the Dalmailing

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

chirk was virtually empty. The elders, wishing to be tactful, suggested to the aged minister that with winter coming it would be to his advantage to allow most of the parish duties to fall upon the shoulders of a young assistant. For a time Mr. Balwhidder refused, "for I felt no falling off in my powers of preaching; on the contrary, I found myself growing better at it, as I was enabled to hold forth, in an easy manner, often a whole half hour longer, than I could do a dozen years before."<sup>38</sup> At last, however, he gave in. All of Ayr, including those who had seceded from his parish, attended his final sermon in order to pay tribute to his unselfish life of service. Moved by the tribute, the minister said:

Such a thing would have been a prodigy at the beginning of my ministry; but the progress of book-learning and education has been wonderful since, and with it has come a spirit of greater liberality than the world knew before, bringing men of adverse principles and doctrines into a more humane communion with each other; showing that it's by the mollifying influence of knowledge the time will come to pass, when the tiger of papistry shall lie down with the lamb of reformation, and the vultures of prelacy be as harmless as the presbyterian doves; when the independent, the anabaptist, and every other order and denomination of Christians, not forgetting even those poor wee wrens of the Lord, the burghers and anti-burghers, who will pick from the hand of patronage, and dread no snare.

The good old man discovered that he was too deaf to hear the sermons of the new minister from his seat in the congregation and so did not attend services after his resignation. He continued to christen and to marry those who desired him to do so, but he ruefully admitted that he must soon give up even those duties: "Mrs. Balwhidder is now and then obliged to stop me in my prayers, as I sometimes wander—pronouncing the baptismal blessing

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

upon a bride and bridegroom, talking as if they were already parents.<sup>40</sup> As the annals drew to a close, the final entry expressed Mr. Balwhidder's hope of going to the new pasture where he would meet the long-departed sheep of his flock and be reunited with his wives.

Less inclusive in terms of years and variety was George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life, her first published fiction. It appeared in 1857, but the events of each of the three novelettes in the collection are set some twenty-five to thirty years before that time. The order of the three--"The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," "Janet's Repentance," and "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story"--needs to be reversed in order to obtain a chronological picture of clerical life in the small English towns of Shepperton and Milby, scenes of each of the vignettes. In using a common background, Eliot was paving the way for the more elaborate clerical chronicles of Anthony Trollope and Mrs. Margaret Oliphant.

The Reverend Maynard Gilfil, who preceded the Reverend Amos Barton at the Shepperton Church, was "an excellent old gentleman, who smoked very long pipes and preached very short sermons."<sup>41</sup> For the main body of "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," George Eliot dealt almost entirely with the vicar's courtship of his wife, an incident of his youthful days as chaplain in the manor house of Sir Christopher Cheverel. The details of his difficulty in winning the hand of his patron's ward are irrelevant to a study of his clerical functions. From a religious point of view, the chief value in the courtship narrative is its picture of the duties

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>41</sup> George Eliot, "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," Scenes of Clerical Life, part 1, in the St. James Edition of The Complete Works of George Eliot, vol. 3, (London and New York: Postlethwaite, Taylor & Knowles, Ltd., 1908), p. 6.

of the young chaplain. He apparently had nothing to do except to read prayers in the evening after the customary game of cards and to deliver a Sunday sermon to the members of the household. The rest of his time was free for hunting or for walking in the garden with Caterina. It was obvious that in Sir Christopher's eyes his most important duty was that of making himself acceptable to the young girl. Having a private fortune of his own, Mr. Gilfil intended to bide his time until he could succeed the aged incumbent of nearby Cumbermoor living.

Caterina thought of the chaplain as her spiritual adviser only; she ardently loved her cousin, upon whom the Cheverel fortune was to be bestowed. The cousin, a sickly, effeminate, selfish rascal, toyed with her emotions and then died of a "heart palpitation" when he found himself cornered between her and the haughty young woman to whom he was actually engaged. Caterina almost died from the shock of his death. Mr. Gilfil tenderly sat by her bedside until she was out of danger and then volunteered to take her away from the Cheverel manor and all her old memories if she would become his wife. The girl listlessly but gratefully consented; the newlyweds moved immediately to Shepperton, far distant from former associations. Within six months, however, Caterina was dead: "The delicate plant had been too deeply bruised, and in the struggle to put forth a blossom it died."<sup>42</sup> The grief-stricken bridegroom maintained her room in the vicarage as a shrine unvisited by anyone except his house-keeper who, four times a year, entered to dust the furniture and to see that the unfinished baby cap and the articles of feminine apparel were

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<sup>42</sup>Eliot, "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," Scenes of Clerical Life, part 2, p. 190.

exactly as his wife had left them.

Mr. Gilfil never loved again. Instead, he manifested a spirit of generosity and unselfishness in his parish that caused him to be admired despite the fact that "he did not shine in the more spiritual functions of his office. . . . He had a large heap of short sermons, rather yellow and worn at the edges, from which he took two every Sunday, securing perfect impartiality in the selection by taking them as they came, without reference to topics; and having preached one of these sermons at Shepperton in the morning, he mounted his horse and rode hastily with the other in his pocket to Knebley,"<sup>43</sup> a little country church composed of a few farm families, and delivered the other.

Mr. Gilfil's sermons, as you may imagine, were not of a highly doctrinal, still less of a polemical, cast. They perhaps did not search the conscience very powerfully. . . ; but, on the other hand, they made no unreasonable demand on the Shepperton intellect--amounting, indeed, to little more than an expansion of the concise thesis, that those who do wrong will find it the worse for them, and those who do well will find it the better for them; the nature of wrong-doing being exposed in special sermons against lying, backbiting, anger, slothfulness, and the like; and well-doing being interpreted as honesty, truthfulness, charity, industry, and other common virtues, and having very little to do with deep spiritual doctrine.<sup>44</sup>

The vicar was a man of considerable property, owning a large farm and being an authority on the breeding of cattle and horses. In fact, one hearing him discussing his stock with other farmers would not recognize him as a clergyman. Yet his parishioners regarded him with complete trust; it did not occur to them to question either his theology or his secular

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

knowledge. Secure in his parish and untroubled by any crisis in his simple ministry, Mr. Gilfil grew to be an old "gray-haired man who filled his pocket with sugar-plums for the little children, whose most biting words were directed against the evil doing of the rich man, and who, with all his social pipes and slipshod talk, never sank below the highest level of his parishioners' respect."<sup>45</sup>

A change came over the Shepperton parish after Mr. Gilfil's death. The living was awarded to "a vicar given to bricks and mortar, and thereby running into debt far away in a northern county,"<sup>46</sup> who paid the Reverend Amos Barton eighty pounds yearly to serve as his curate. Mr. Barton, forty-year-old father of six children, had no easy time making ends meet; and his life was further complicated by wrangling within the church. Gone were the days when the parishioners looked upon their minister as infallible. Before Mr. Barton had been at Shepperton two years, he was being criticized as "a confounded methodistical chap, who must be putting his finger in every pie,"<sup>47</sup> because he favored hymn singing. The townspeople also disliked his habit of preaching "extempore": "He can preach as good a sermon as need be heard when he writes it down. But when he tries to preach wi'out book, he rambles about, and does n't [sic] stick to his text; and every now and then he flounders about like a sheep as has cast itself, and can't get on its legs again."<sup>48</sup> Those who expressed approval of the curate did so with reservations: "I think he's a good sort o' man, for all he's not overburthen'd i' the upper story."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>46</sup>"The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," p. 7.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

Part of the trouble arose because Mr. Barton was trying to play both ends against the middle. "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."<sup>50</sup> His appearance, moreover, was not the kind to command respect. He was bald and almost toothless, and he had "a knack of hitting on the wrong thing in garb as well as in grammar."<sup>51</sup>

Mr. Barton had not the gift of perfect accuracy in English orthography and syntax, which was unfortunate, as he was known not to be a Hebrew scholar, and not in the least suspected of being an accomplished Grecian. These lapses in a man who had gone through the Eleusinian mysteries of a university education, surprised the young ladies of his parish extremely; especially the Misses Farquhar, whom he had once addressed as Dear Mads., apparently an abbreviation for Madams. The persons least surprised at the Rev. Amos's deficiencies were his clerical brethren, who had gone through the mysteries themselves.<sup>52</sup>

Many in the congregation felt that their minister would have been better off had he remained in the Independent church where his father was a deacon; they compared his Anglican career to "a Belgian railway-horn, which shows praiseworthy intentions inadequately fulfilled."<sup>53</sup>

Mr. Barton was certainly sincere in his devotion to his duties. Without pay, he served daily as chaplain at the workhouse, "striving if by this means some edifying matter might find its way into the pauper mind and conscience."<sup>54</sup> In this endeavor, as in almost everything that

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-32.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

he undertook, he was a failure; for he had neither the flexible imagination nor the adroit tongue required to translate the mysteries of the faith to his unlearned listeners. Still, with stolid determination, he preached two sermons there every Sunday and topped off his Sabbath exertions with an extempore sermon in a cottage at the other extremity of his parish. Afterwards, he usually stopped for a late supper and several glasses of brandy with one of his parishioners.

His faults were middling . . . . It was not in his nature to be superlative in anything; unless, indeed, he was superlatively middling, the quintessential extract of mediocrity. If there was any one point on which he showed an inclination to be excessive, it was confidence in his own shrewdness and ability in practical matters, so that he was very full of plans which were something like his moves in chess,—admirably well calculated, supposing the state of the case were otherwise.<sup>55</sup>

During Mr. Barton's ministry the Tractarian movement brought an intellectual current even to Milby, the backward, provincial market town close to Shepperton. The clergymen of the surrounding countryside decided to meet once each month to discuss theological and philosophical questions, and the resulting Clerical Meetings and Book Society had a noticeable effect upon the Shepperton curate:

When he first came to Shepperton he was simply an evangelical clergyman, whose Christian experiences had commenced under the teaching of the Rev. Mr. Johns, of Gun Street Chapel, and had been consolidated at Cambridge under the influence of Mr. Simeon. John Newton and Thomas Scott were his doctrinal ideals; he would have taken in the "Christian Observer" and the "Record," if he could have afforded it; his anecdotes were chiefly of the pious-jocose kind, current in Dissenting circles; and he thought an Episcopalian Establishment unobjectionable.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 41.



After ten months of discussion he reached the amazing conclusion that "the held opinions a little too far-sighted and profound to be crudely and suddenly communicated to ordinary minds."<sup>57</sup>

A combination of misfortunes suddenly put an end to any spiritual progress the minister might have made. Countess Czerlaski, a woman of questionable background who was the subject of Shepperton gossip, cultivated Mrs. Barton's friendship until the two women became fast friends. Then one day the countess moved--bag, baggage, and pampered dog--into the curate's home, giving the excuse that she had been deserted and had nowhere to go. Winter was coming, money for coal and food was scarce, and Mrs. Barton was expecting her seventh child; but the family graciously made room for the uninvited guest. The countess settled down to a life of leisure, demanding nothing more than breakfast at eleven, a good roast for dinner, and a daily cup of cream for her dog. She contributed nothing to the financial upkeep of the household and showed no signs of intending to go elsewhere.

Months passed, and the townspeople were beside themselves with malicious speculation. In their minds there could be but one reason for the countess' prolonged visit: there must be a romantic attachment between her and the curate. Mr. Barton had perhaps innocently fanned the flames of this gossip long before by frequently accompanying his wife on visits to the countess' home. At that time he had felt a desire to rise into aristocratic life and had, as a result, gone through a period of treating his parishioners "in a pastoral and parenthetic manner."<sup>58</sup> Now,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

however, he was thoroughly disillusioned by nobility and was as eager as anyone else for his unwanted visitor to leave.

The matter was finally brought to a head by the Bartons' cook and cleaning woman. Having stood the intruder as long as she could, she finally told the countess in no uncertain terms that she was bringing the family to ruin. The guest, as if a light suddenly had dawned, immediately packed her bags and departed. But the action had come too late to save the health of Mrs. Barton. Mentally and physically exhausted by the long ordeal, she gave birth to a premature child and survived it by only a few days.

The only good that came from her death was the dispelling of gossip regarding Mr. Barton, for no one could fail to see how genuinely the distraught man grieved over his loss. "Amos failed to touch the spring of goodness by his sermons, but he touched it effectually by his sorrows; and there was now a real bond between him and his flock."<sup>59</sup>

The rapport, however, was not destined to last. Mr. Carpe, vicar of Shepperton, wrote Mr. Barton that his services as curate were no longer needed. The blow was a cruel one, both because the curate wanted to remain near the grave of his wife and because he knew that Mr. Carpe's ultimatum was only an excuse to give the curacy to his own brother-in-law. No alternative presented itself, and Mr. Barton was forced to accept an undesirable living in an unnamed manufacturing city.

The subject of "Janet's Repentance" is "sectarianism within the Church"; it deals with an evangelical offshoot of the church at Milby. While the members of the chapel of ease at Paddiford Common were considered nonconforming Anglicans by the Church hierarchy, the members of

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

Milby Church looked upon them as "no better than Presbyterians."<sup>60</sup> And Presbyterians in Milby were thought of as "a sect founded in the reign of Charles I., by a man named John Presbyter, who hatched all the brood of Dissenting vermin that crawl about in dirty alleys, and circumvent the lord of the manor in order to get a few yards of ground for their pigeon-house conventicles."<sup>61</sup> Very few of the Milby members had met Mr. Edgar Tryan, the new curate at the chapel, but they were prejudiced against him already, having heard that "he preaches without a book . . . just like a dissenter" and that he "says good works are not necessary to salvation,—a sectarian, antinomian, anabaptist doctrine." They condemned him, sight unseen, as "a domineering, ambitious Jesuit"<sup>62</sup> and were incensed to learn that he wished to conduct a series of Sunday night lectures within the very walls of Milby Church because he felt that old Mr. Crewe, their curate, was not preaching the gospel as it should be delivered.

In truth, Mr. Crewe was virtually incompetent. In "a brown Brutus wig [he] delivered inaudible sermons on a Sunday, and on a week-day imparted the education of a gentleman—that is to say, an arduous inacquaintance with Latin through the medium of the Eton Grammar—to three pupils in the upper grammar-school."<sup>63</sup> He had held his position for half a century and had avariciously accumulated a large fortune from his school and curacy.

The tide of religion in Milby was at a low ebb. The Dissenters

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<sup>60</sup>"Janet's Repentance," Scenes of Clerical Life, part 1, p. 120.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

could gain no converts to adult baptism, "and Methodism was only to be detected, as you detect curious larvae, by diligent search in dirty corners. The Independents were the only Dissenters of whose existence Milby gentility was at all conscious, and it had a vague idea that the salient points of their creed were prayer without book, red brick, and hypocrisy."<sup>64</sup> The Independent Chapel, moreover, had been unfortunate in its choice of ministers. Mr. Horner had to be dismissed for drunkenness and quarreling; Mr. Rose was found to harbor "high" doctrines; Mr. Stickney was disappointing as an orator, and Mr. Smith had made himself objectionable by writing love poems to the young ladies in the congregation.

When Mr. Tryan came to Paddiford Common, he therefore determined to rid the town of its religious lethargy. First he won over a number of spinsters, soon he was accepted by a few substantial businessmen, and eventually he was well received in several "good" houses. By no means was his progress easy; the entire town ranged itself into Tryanites and anti-Tryanites and watched the battle-lines being drawn. A trio of outspoken citizens led by a Mr. Dempster circulated a petition designed to deny Mr. Tryan's entrance into Milby Church; when it was completed, they dispatched it to Mr. Prendergast, the nonresident rector. When their request met with favorable action from the rector, the anti-Tryanites staged a victory parade with Dempster, suddenly eloquent on Mr. Crewe's behalf, as the main speaker:

I have the gratification of announcing to you thus formally what you have already learned indirectly. The pulpit from which your venerable pastor has fed us with sound doctrine for half a century is not to be invaded by a fanatical, sectarian, double-faced, Jesuitical interloper! We are not to

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<sup>64</sup>ibid., p. 136.

have our young people demoralized and corrupted by the temptation to vice, notoriously connected with Sunday evening lectures! We are not to have a preacher obtruding himself upon us, who decries good works, and sneaks into our homes perverting the faith of our wives and daughters! We are not to be poisoned with doctrines which damp every innocent enjoyment, and pick a poor man's pocket of the sixpence with which he might buy himself a cheerful glass after a hard day's work, under pretence of paying for Bibles to send to the Chicklaws.<sup>65</sup>

The reader probably wonders what connection the title of the nov-  
ellette has with these affairs. "Janet" was Janet Dempster, wife of the  
self-styled orator. Her fifteen-year marriage had been childless and un-  
happy; Dempster drank heavily and habitually beat her, and she herself  
had lately begun drinking as a means of escape. In one thing, however,  
she and her husband were in accord: Mr. Tryan must not disrupt Mr. Crewe's  
doctrine that "the best Gospel" is the one "that makes everybody happy  
and comfortable."<sup>66</sup>

The Tryanites' turn for rejoicing came when, on Confirmation Sun-  
day, the Paddiford Common curate went over the head of the rector and  
gained permission from the visiting bishop to proceed with his lecture  
programs. When his opponents heard the news, some of them favored letting  
matters run their course: "If he goes on preaching as he does, with such  
a constitution as his, he'll get a relaxed throat by and by, and you'll  
be rid of him without any trouble."<sup>67</sup> Dempster would not be restrained,  
however, and vowed to make the Milby climate too hot for the minister's  
delicate health. He drew up a bill of attractions in the manner of a  
circus handbill. It began this way:

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

## GRAND ENTERTAINMENT!!!

To be given at Milby on Sunday evening next, by the  
 Famous Comedian, TRY-IT-ON!  
 And his first-rate Company, including not only an  
 Unparalleled Cast For Comedy!  
 But a Large Collection of reclaimed and converted Animals,  
 Among the rest  
 A Bear, who used to dance!  
 A Parrot, once given to swearing!  
 A Polygamous Pig! ! {  
 and  
 A Monkey who used to catch fleas on a Sunday! ! ! ;<sup>68</sup>

The handbill went on to proclaim other acts, including "The Wolf in Sheep's  
 Clothing; or The Methodist in a Mask" and the "Screaming Farce of The Pul-  
 pit Snatcher."

The curate was greatly disturbed by Dumpster's attitude:

Mr. Tryan was not cast in the mould of the gratuitous martyr. With a power of persistence which had been often blamed as obstinancy, he had an acute sensibility to the very hatred or ridicule he did not flinch from provoking. Every form of disapproval jarred him painfully; and though he fronted his opponents manfully, and often with considerable warmth of temper, he had no pugnacious pleasure in the contest. It was one of the weaknesses of his nature to be too keenly alive to every harsh wind of opinion; to wince under the frowns of the foolish; to be irritated by the injustice of those who could not possibly have the elements indispensable for judging him rightly.<sup>69</sup>

His supporters rallied to his defense and marched boldly through the streets of Milby at the appointed hour on Sunday evening, "braving insult for the sake of a preacher to whom they were attached on personal as well as doctrinal grounds,"<sup>70</sup> and the first lecture went on as scheduled. Subsequent programs drew increasingly larger congregations, and Evangelicalism gained a strong foothold in Milby Church itself.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., pp. 220-221.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

Eliot described Mr. Tryan as "a real hero of God's making,"<sup>71</sup> despite the fact that "he made the mistake of identifying Christianity with a too narrow doctrinal system; that he saw God's work too exclusively in antagonism to the world, the flesh, and the devil."<sup>72</sup> The curate worked without ceasing. He preached three sermons every Sunday, conducted a night school and a week-night lecture program, catechised the school children, and made numerous pastoral visits. His opponents saw ulterior motives in such a burdensome schedule: "He wants to get the reputation of a saint" or "He's eaten up with spiritual pride," or "He's got his eye on some fine living, and wants to creep up the Bishop's sleeve."<sup>73</sup>

By Christmas of that eventful year in Milby, doctors were predicting that Mr. Tryan was literally killing himself; they gave him less than a year to live. Janet, stopping to see a sick friend whose bedside the curate was just leaving, heard him admit that he could sympathise with the suffering woman because he, too, was in almost constant bodily pain. Although still antagonistic toward him, Janet could not help warming to her avowed opponent: "Mr. Tryan, too, like herself, knew what it was to tremble at a foreseen trial."<sup>74</sup>

Janet Dempster had reason, soon after her brief encounter with the curate, to remember his compassionate and understanding heart. Her husband, returning home late one evening in a rage, threw her bodily out

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

of their house. Knowing nothing else to do and fearing for her life, she took refuge with a neighbor who happened to be a member of the Paddiford Chapel. Afraid to return home, Janet sat morosely throughout most of the next day and finally asked her sympathetic hostess to send for Mr. Tryan. When he arrived, she humbly told him that she was unhappy, weak, and wicked and that she did not care whether she lived or died. To her surprise, the minister answered by making a confession of his own. After a youth spent in "thoughtless self-indulgence," he had ruined his health and reputation at college, where he was supposedly preparing for a political career. While there he had enticed a seventeen-year-old girl to live with him although he had no intention of marrying her. Upon his return from an extended vacation, he discovered that she had left—"gone away with a gentleman, her neighbors said."<sup>75</sup> Three years later he had found her lying dead on a London street, having committed suicide rather than continue her career as a prostitute. He said, "There was only one thing that could make life tolerable to me; that was to spend all the rest of it in trying to save others from the ruin I had brought on one."<sup>76</sup>

But, continued the curate, he had no faith on which to build a life of service. At last a friend had told him that "the only preparation for coming to Christ and partaking of his salvation was that very sense of guilt and helplessness"<sup>77</sup> which was weighing him down. Mr. Tryan had found the advice to be true and had entered the Church, asking for "nothing through the rest of my life but that I might be devoted to God's

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 292.



work, without swerving in search of pleasure to the right hand or to the left."<sup>78</sup> The consolation he now had was that "there is nothing that becomes us but entire submission, perfect resignation."<sup>79</sup>

Janet, inspired by the clergyman's confession, determined that she would put the past behind her and return home to salvage her marriage. Unfortunately, Dempster had in the meantime injured himself in a reckless horse-riding accident and lay in a drunken stupor. Her resolution thus put immediately to the test, Janet forgave the dying man and afterwards, in the loneliness of widowhood, resisted the temptation to resort again to drink.

Even anti-Tryanite prejudice could not resist the fact that Janet Dempster was a changed woman--changed as the dusty, bruised, and sun-withered plant is changed when the soft rains of heaven have fallen on it,--and that this change was due to Mr. Tryan's influence. The last lingering sneers against the Evangelical curate began to die out.<sup>80</sup>

At the same time, it became apparent that the curate himself was dying. First he had to give up part of his preaching schedule; at last he was forced to ask Mr. Prendergast to appoint a new curate for the chapel. With money from her husband's estate, Janet tried to prolong the minister's life by securing for him better food and lodging than he had provided for himself; but she could not prevent his inevitable death.

There were two monuments in Milby which attested to the life of the clergyman who died there shortly afterwards. One was a stone in the Milby churchyard; the other was Janet Dempster's life. Through her efforts the spirit of that devoted man lived on in "years of purity and

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 353-354.

helpful labour. The man who has left such a memorial behind him," concluded the author, "must have been one whose heart beat with true compassion, and whose lips were moved by fervent faith."<sup>81</sup>

The author of Scenes of Clerical Life also gave to nineteenth century England a rare portrait of a woman preacher in Adam Bede (1857). Dinah Morris was as central a personage in this, George Eliot's first full-length novel, as was the title character. An orphan raised by a maiden aunt, Dinah had been inspired by that God-fearing woman and by the sermons of Wesley to devote her life to spreading the gospel among the poor in her native Stonyshire. As the narrative opened, twenty-five-year-old Dinah, a strikingly beautiful woman with a "total absence of self-consciousness in her demeanour,"<sup>82</sup> was fulfilling her ambition by working in a cotton mill and preaching at outdoor Methodist rallies in her spare time. The curious audiences who gathered were frequently surprised by her quiet, intent manner of speaking without resorting to gestures or stage effects, for they were acquainted with only "two types of Methodists, --the extatic and the bilious."<sup>83</sup>

Although she rarely left her immediate neighborhood, she was prevailed upon to undertake a preaching crusade in the village of Hayslope in neighboring Loamshire, where her married aunt lived. Hayslope was in the Anglican parish of the Reverend Adolphus Irwine, rector of Broxton,

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>82</sup>Eliot, Adam Bede, St. James Edition of The Complete Works of George Eliot, vol. 1 (London and New York: Postlethwaite, Taylor & Knowles, Ltd., 1908), part 1, p. 27.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

and only two Methodists were known to be in the entire territory. One of these was Seth Bede, who with his older brother, Adam, was a carpenter. Seth had been in the habit of traveling widely to Methodist revivals and had fallen in love with the pretty parson. While she was in Hayslope, he attempted without success to obtain a declaration of love from her. Since they "believed in present revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots, [sic] and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard; having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures, which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators,"<sup>84</sup> Seth opened his proposal by quoting the words of St. Paul to the effect that "I will that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to speak reproachfully."<sup>85</sup> Dinah, however, countered with another verse from the same apostle--"She that's married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband,"<sup>86</sup> and explained that "God has called me to minister to others,--not to have any joys or sorrows of my own, but to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with those that weep. . . . My life is too short, and God's work too great for me to think of making a home for myself in this world."<sup>87</sup>

The morning after this conversation, the father of Seth and Adam was found drowned in a pond into which he had drunkenly staggered. Dinah came at once to minister to the man's querulous and distraught widow and was more helpful to the family than was Mr. Irwine; for "from her girl-

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

hood upwards she had had experience among the sick and the mourning, among minds hardened and shrivelled through poverty and ignorance, and had gained the subtlest perception of the mode in which they could best be touched, and softened into willingness to receive words of spiritual consolation or warning."<sup>88</sup> Old Mrs. Bede would have been happy to have Dinah stay on as her daughter; she was apprehensive that Adam would marry a flirtatious milkmaid whom he ardently worshipped, and she was unaware of Seth's failure to win Dinah. But the devoted young Methodist ended all hope of a union with either of the brothers by returning to Stonyshire.

Hetty Sorrel, Adam's intended wife, got involved with the grandson of the owner of most of the property in Hayslope; he went away to war without knowing that she was to bear his child. Hetty at first thought an engagement to Adam would be a way out of her troubles; but as the time for their wedding approached, she decided instead to run away and find her soldier. Telling Adam that she was going to spend a week with Dinah in Stonyshire, she went to the only address Arthur Donnithorne had given her. He was not there, and she had exhausted her meagre funds. Adam, worried when she failed to return as scheduled, went to Dinah's lodgings and found that the preacher had been away at Leeds for a fortnight and that Hetty had not been seen. After a futile search of the vicinity, Adam returned sorrowfully to Hayslope and told Mr. Irwine he suspected that Hetty had left because she did not love him.

Eliot's description of the rector might cause the reader to wonder why Adam should have chosen him for a confidant:

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

He really had no very lofty aims, no theological enthusiasm. If I were closely questioned, I should be obliged to confess that he felt no serious alarms about the souls of his parishioners. . . . Clearly the rector was not what is called in these days an "earnest" man; he was fonder of church history than of divinity, and had much more insight into men's characters than interest in their opinions; he was neither laborious, nor obviously self-denying, nor very copious in almsgiving, and his theology, you perceive, was lax. His mental palate, indeed, was rather pagan, and found a savouriness in a quotation from Sophocles or Theocritus that was quite absent from any text in Isaiah or Amos.<sup>89</sup>

Adam admitted that his minister did not go into "deep speritual things in religion" and that his sermons were nothing more than "moral."

"But then he acted pretty much up to what he said; he did n't [sic] set up for being so different from other folks one day, and then be as like 'em as two peas the next. And he made folks love him and respect him, and that was better nor stirring up their gall wi' being over-busy."<sup>90</sup>

Mr. Irwine was Arthur's godfather, and upon him fell the hard task of informing Adam that Hetty was being held in a distant jail for child-murder; she had buried alive the child born on her homeward journey. After a short trial the wayward girl was condemned to be hanged. Dinah returned from Leeds on the day that the verdict was handed down, and she remained in Hetty's cell until the day set for the hanging. Through Dinah's gentle prodding, the condemned prisoner was brought to an awareness of her sins and an experience of divine forgiveness. Arthur learned of her conviction in time to apply successfully for a commuted sentence; but still Hetty was ordered to be transported.

Adam was heartbroken, reason enough for Dinah to feel compassionate toward him. When Mrs. Bede suffered a severe rheumatic attack, the young

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 267-268.

preacher had double reason for visiting the family in Hayslope. Against her will, she found herself coming to love Adam; and he, prodded by his mother and by Seth, who had given up any hope of winning her himself, declared his love for her. Before she would consent to follow her heart, however, Dinah insisted on going back to Stonyshire to seek God's will. A short separation convinced her that she would be violating no divine plan in marrying Adam, and the two were united in the Anglican church at Hayslope by Mr. Irwine.

The question of whether Dinah should continue her preaching was soon decided by the Wesleyan Conference, which enacted a new rule forbidding women to engage in that activity. Seth favored joining a new body "that 'ud put no bonds on Christian liberty,"<sup>91</sup> but Adam was in agreement with his wife's decision to confine her ministry to "talking to the people a bit in their houses."<sup>92</sup> He explained simply:

"There's no rule so wise by what it's a pity for somebody or other. Most o' the women do more harm nor good with their preaching,--they've not got Dinah's gift nor her sperrit; and she's seen that, and she thought it right to set th' example o' submiting, for she's not held from other sorts o' teaching."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., part 2, p. 262.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 262-263.

CHAPTER THREE  
TROLLOPE'S BARSETSHIRE

Anthony Trollope, more than any other novelist of his century, succeeded in picturing the clergyman in the entire framework of the Church of England. The six novels which compose his Chronicles of Barsetshire—The Warden (1855), Barchester Towers (1857), Doctor Thorne (1858), Framley Parsonage (1861), The Small House at Allington (1864), and The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867)—depict inhabitants of a fictitious cathedral community from the bishop to the lowliest of perpetual curates.

The plan of the series was shaped through Trollope's duties as a postal employee commissioned to suggest routes for rural deliveries in southwestern England. Michael Sadleir credits this "fine-combing of English country life" with revealing to the hitherto uninspired author "the immense strategic strength of the social position of the upper clergy."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Sadleir postulates that Trollope's intention at the beginning of the series was primarily to present the role of the church in the administration of an almshouse and that not until later did the idea of creating a cathedral city occur to him.<sup>2</sup> No single cathedral city can be designated as a model for Barchester, and the surrounding countryside is recognizable only as a blend of the counties—Dorset,

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Sadleir, Trollope: A Commentary (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1947), p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire--through which his postal duties took him.<sup>3</sup>

In his Autobiography Trollope recorded the manner in which he first conceived the plan for The Warden while musing at Salisbury Cathedral, but by his own admission shortly before his death it became apparent that his earliest inspiration for the first novel had arisen out of the case of an actual hospital administrative problem at Winchester. Familiarity with the Winchester situation reveals the extent to which The Warden owes its origin:

In June 1851 the papers were busy with a scandal caused by the apparent malversation under clerical control of funds left by will for charitable purposes. Reading the papers, Trollope received two opposite but equally characteristic impressions. He resented, on the one hand, the possession by the Church (a caste or corporation within the community) of funds which, whatever the intention of their legators, seemed to have become incomes for idle dignitaries; but he also resented, and simultaneously, the virtuous indignation of the Press towards the recipients of these incomes, who were not directly to blame for enjoying monies to which in equity they were not entitled.<sup>4</sup>

The impressions he received in this instance are reflected throughout the series in his criticism of the Church as a whole coupled with sympathy for the individual clergymen within its system.

Before launching into a descriptive study of Trollope's clergymen, it will be helpful to ascertain his intentions and self-imposed limitations as they evolved in the Chronicles. Such a statement appeared at the conclusion of The Last Chronicle of Barset:

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-165.



Before I take my leave of the diocese of Barchester for ever, which I purpose to do in the succeeding paragraph, I desire to be allowed to say one word of apology for myself, in answer to those who have accused me,—always without bitterness, and generally with tenderness,—of having forgotten, in writing of clergymen, the first and most prominent characteristic of the ordinary English clergyman's life. I have described many clergymen, they say, but have spoken of them all as though their professional duties, their high calling, their daily workings for the good of those around them, were matters of no moment, either to me, or, in my opinion, to themselves. I would plead, in answer to this, that my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen; and that I have been led to do so, firstly, by a feeling that as no men affect more strongly, by their own character, the society of those around than do country clergymen, so, therefore, their social habits have been worth the labour necessary for painting them; and secondly, by a feeling that though I, as a novelist, may feel myself entitled to write of clergymen out of their pulpits, as I may also write of lawyers and doctors, I have no such liberty to write of them in their pulpits. When I have done so, if I have done so, I have so far transgressed. There are those who have told me that I have made all my clergymen bad, and none good. I must venture to hint to such judges that they have taught their eyes to love a colouring higher than nature justifies. . . . Had I written an epic about clergymen, I would have taken St. Paul for my model; but describing, as I have endeavoured to do, such clergymen as I see around me, I could not venture to be transcendental.<sup>5</sup>

The Reverend Septimus Harding was Trollope's first clerical creation in the series, and for him the novelist seemed to have that special but impartial love so often reserved for firstborn children. Before the time portrayed in *The Warden*, Mr. Harding had been a minor canon in Barchester who at the age of forty had received a small living and who, ten years later, had been made precentor of the cathedral. Traditionally, the precentor was also given the office of warden at Hiram's Hospital, an almshouse established by a wool-carder in the Middle Ages; at the time the reader meets him Mr. Harding had been ably filling both positions

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (London: J. M. Dent & Co., n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 387-388.

for twelve years. A widower, he was quietly and happily living at the hospital with his younger daughter, Eleanor, and serving as spiritual and physical companion to the twelve old men who were residents of the charity institution. These "bedesmen" had not a care in the world, every need and want being supplied them.

There came to Barchester, however, a young doctor imbued with a desire to be a reformer. No sooner did he learn that Mr. Harding's income was eight hundred pounds a year than he determined that the wool-carder's intention in founding the almshouse had been willfully disregarded. Trollope indicated that Dr. Bold probably was inspired in his desire to wage war against Mr. Harding by hearing reports from "eager pushing politicians" who were asserting in the House of Commons "with very telling indignation, that the grasping priests of the Church of England are gorged with the wealth which the charity of former times has left for the solace of the aged, or the education of the young."<sup>6</sup>

Nothing would satisfy Dr. Bold short of seeing Mr. Harding's salary reduced so that each of the old men might have the hundred pounds per year to which he thought them entitled. Mr. Harding declared that his conscience was clear and with quiet dignity said that he would not hinder Dr. Bold's investigation. And yet Mr. Harding was afraid--afraid of the storm of publicity which would come to mar his serenity--and in his fear he began to doubt the justice of his position at the hospital. Even when the lawsuit Dr. Bold prepared against him was thrown out on a legal technicality, he determined

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<sup>6</sup>Trollope, Barchester Towers and The Warden (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 10.

that he would rather resign than to live with the accusations that were left unsettled. As a further depressant, he discovered that the influential London Jupiter had singled out Hiram's Hospital and its warden as a prime example of clerical maladministration and that he was being viciously ridiculed in a pamphlet entitled Modern Charity and in a popular serialized novel, The Almshouse.

Against the advice of his archdeacon son-in-law, Dr. Theophilus Grantly, and the aging bishop of Barchester, the archdeacon's father, and to the consternation of Sir Abraham Haphazard, the London lawyer who declared the case against him invalid, Mr. Harding resigned as warden. Too kindhearted even to displace the curate who was performing the duties in the living he had acquired as a minor canon, he took the smallest living available in the diocese. The bishop, out of respect for his friend, refused to appoint a successor to the warden. The almshouse grew up in weeds, and the bedesmen's only solace came to be the visits which Mr. Harding took time to pay them.

Thus was the end of The Warden, but Mr. Harding was by no means forgotten. In Barchester Towers he was amply rewarded for his conscientious stand by the receipt of a letter of praise from no less a personage than the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Jupiter, too, did an about-face and "wafted his name in eulogistic strains through every reading-room in the nation."<sup>7</sup> Most pleasing to him of all, his volume of church music was introduced into the Royal Chapel at St. James'.

When old Bishop Grantly died, Mr. Harding found himself faced

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

with new trials from Bishop Proudie and his wife. He was not alone in his fear of the latter, and was cut to the quick by a sermon in which the bishop's chaplain denounced from the pulpit the role of precentor. His unhappiness was heightened by the knowledge that this chaplain, Mr. Slope, had romantic designs upon Eleanor, lately widowed after a brief marriage to—Dr. Bold!

The crowning blow came, however, in the opening of that old wound—the wardenship of the hospital. A successor had yet to be named; and, all opposition and technicalities having been cleared away by an act of Parliament, it was the general opinion that Mr. Harding should be reappointed. In his heart of hearts, the faithful old man would have been happy to resume his duties, but Mrs. Proudie had other views. In the end the position was offered to him with such odious stipulations that he felt compelled to decline it. Trollope clearly indicated that had Mr. Harding's character been otherwise, he need not have given up so easily. "In his indecision, his weakness, his proneness to be led by others, his want of self-confidence, he was very far from being perfect."<sup>8</sup>

Once more the novelist let poetic justice come to the fore. When the dean of the chapter died, Mr. Harding was offered that position; but, deterred by the Jupiter's opinion that a young man would be better fitted for the office, the ex-warden refused to accept it. For once he took the initiative, in spite of the scarcity of that quality in his

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

character, and successfully petitioned the prime minister to nominate instead Dr. Arabin, a capable clergyman who had with no difficulty superseded Slope as Eleanor's lover.

And so, at the end of the second novel, Mr. Harding was still precentor of the cathedral. At Dr. Arabin's request, he took over the duties at St. Ewolds, the new dean's former living. "He does such duties as fall to his lot well and conscientiously, and is thankful that he has never been tempted to assume others for which he might be less fitted."<sup>9</sup> Presumably he continued to occupy himself in the same manner throughout the events narrated in Doctor Thorne and Framley Parsonage, although he was not mentioned in the former and was only glimpsed at a public lecture in the latter. Perhaps some of the novelist's readers asked what became of the old man, for Trollope inserted a chapter in The Small House at Allington in which he indicated that the ex-warden was now past seventy, as modest as ever, still performing his duties and visiting those of the old bedesmen who were yet alive.

Mr. Harding was indeed an old man himself in The Last Chronicle of Barset:

He stooped a good deal, and his black clothes were very loose about his shrunken limbs. He was not decrepit, nor did he seem to be one who had advanced to extreme old age; but yet he shuffled rather than walked, hardly raising his feet from the ground. Mr. Toogood, as he came forward to meet him, thought that he had never seen a sweeter face. There was very much of melancholy in it, of that soft sadness of age which seems to acknowledge, and in some sort to regret the waning oil of life; but the regret to be read in such faces has in it nothing of the bitterness of grief; there is no repining that the end has come, but simply a touch of sorrow that so much that is dear must

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 746.

be left behind.<sup>10</sup>

Forced by infirmity to live in the deanery with his daughter and son-in-law, he was obliged first to give up his cathedral duties and finally to forego even the daily hundred-yard walk to the church for prayers. Eventually bedridden, his only diversion came to be that of playing cat's cradle with his granddaughter Posy. It was while thus occupied that he heard of Mrs. Proudie's death. He was perhaps the only person in Barchester to feel genuine distress in her passing, maintaining to the very end of his life his belief in the intrinsic goodness of all humanity. He died as peacefully and serenely as he had lived and, although he had never been an exceptionally popular figure in the community, was sadly missed by all who had known him.

Decidedly in contrast with the precentor was the second major figure drawn in conjunction with Barchester cathedral, Archdeacon Grantly. Trollope created a more complex character in the warden's son-in-law and managed to show temperamental changes as he progressed through the series. In *The Warden*, the first description of Dr. Grantly was negatively apologetic in tone--he was said to be "by no means a bad man."<sup>11</sup> The novelist implied that the archdeacon's shortcomings were a result of his clerical education, which put him in his position but did not prepare him for rising above his sphere of duty. He displayed diligence, authority, and a judicious mind, but he evidenced an overbearing assurance of his virtue, overdependence upon his own ability, and over-

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<sup>10</sup>*The Last Chronicle of Barset*, vol. 1, p. 375.

<sup>11</sup>*Barchester Towers and The Warden*, p. 17.

confidence in his position. While the warden was reticent about asserting his claims at the hospital, Dr. Grantly prepared for battle with all the gusto of a Trojan warrior: "As the indomitable cock preparing for the combat sharpens his spurs, shakes his feathers, and erects his comb, so did the archdeacon arrange his weapons for the coming war, without misgivings and without fear."<sup>12</sup> Defending John Hiram's will became for him as much a holy cause as the Crusades. Again, Trollope took pains to explain that Dr. Grantly was not to blame for his attitude; for his mind, with its "fungi" and its "dead wood," was "the growth of centuries of church ascendancy" and was yet capable of bearing good fruit.<sup>13</sup>

A mere glance at him revealed the Church itself:

As the archdeacon stood up to make his speech, erect in the middle of that little square, he looked like an ecclesiastical statue placed there, as a fitting impersonation of the church militant here on earth; his shovel hat, large, new, and well-pronounced, a churchman's hat in every inch, declared the profession as plainly as does the Quaker's broad brim; his heavy eyebrows, large open eyes, and full mouth and chin expressed the solidity of his order; the broad chest, amply covered with fine cloth, told how well to do was its estate; one hand ensconced within his pocket, evinced the practical hold which our mother church keeps on her temporal possessions; and the other, loose for action, was ready to fight if need be in her defence; and, below these, the decorous breeches, and neat black gaiters showing so admirably that well-turned leg, betokened the decency, the outward beauty and grace of our church establishment.<sup>14</sup>

In private, Trollope insinuated, Dr. Grantly's conduct and appearance did not make so pleasing a portrait of the Church. It was his daily

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48.

habit after breakfast to retire to his study, ostensibly for the purpose of composing sermons but actually to amuse himself with the latest "wicked" French novel, which he kept locked from inquisitive eyes in a secret drawer.

Entirely unable to sympathize with Mr. Harding's doubts and equivocations, he bombarded that gentleman with the only thing that he could provide in abundance—advice. When his counsel was kindly but systematically avoided, he stalked away from the warden in righteous indignation and ungraciously gave up his crusade as a lost cause.

At the beginning of Barchester Towers Dr. Grantly's hopes for ecclesiastical promotion received impetus with the death of his father, the aged bishop; he was more deeply grieved by being denied appointment as his father's successor than he was by his personal loss. It was inevitable, feeling as he did that the post actually should have been his, that he should be at odds with the new bishop, Dr. Proudie. Because he felt it necessary to remain disdainfully aloof from actual encounters with the Proudies, his open combat was limited to skirmishes with the bishop's chaplain, Mr. Slope. Trollope sized them up for the battle this way:

Both men are eager, much too eager, to support and increase the power of their order. Both are anxious that the world should be priest-governed, though they have probably never confessed so much, even to themselves. Both begrudge any other kind of dominion held by man over man.<sup>15</sup>

The main difference between the two was that Mr. Slope's aims were to dominate every aspect of Barchester life while Dr. Grantly would have

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 230.



been content to be supreme authority in clerical matters alone. The latter interfered but little with the worldly aspects of life in the diocese. He favored a good dinner party and a good bottle of wine as much as his neighbor, and was inclined to be indulgent in all matters except gross immorality and tendencies toward heresy. As a result he was accustomed to being obeyed implicitly in the few rules that he did impose. His battle against the Proudie faction consisted chiefly of flaunting in their faces his High Church tendencies in direct opposition to the preference of the bishop and Mr. Slope for Low Church forms and ceremonies. Giving the archdeacon credit for more broadmindedness than might be expected, Trollope indicated that Dr. Grantly "endured without impatience many different shades of Anglo-church conservatism; but with the Slopes and Proudies he could not go on all fours."<sup>16</sup> In the end, when of her own free will Eleanor married the anti-Proudie Dr. Arabin in preference to Mr. Slope, Dr. Grantly claimed the event as his personal victory over the chaplain.

The archdeacon, his name carelessly spelled "Grantley," appeared at the very end of Doctor Thorne only long enough to perform a wedding at Greshamsbury; but he was his usual domineering self again in Franley Parsonage. There, in the fourth book of the six-volume series, Dr. Grantly reached valiantly toward the climax of his hopes and dreams, only to be disappointed in a tragic style befitting his personality. Word came to him that by Parliamentary Act two new sees were to be created and that his political acquaintance Lord Brock was going to nominate him as Bishop of Westminster. With visions of outranking the Proudies dancing in his head he went to London, arriving just in time

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 483.

to learn that the bill had met sudden opposition and would not even be put to a vote. With all hope of subsequent ecclesiastical advancement too remote to count on, the archdeacon returned to Barchester determined to make the Grantly name immortal without the assistance of clerical association.

The first part of his project involved mingling with the highest society in Barchestershire, regardless of the religious sentiments of those whom he undertook to cultivate. When his convictions were likely to be in the way, they were conveniently left at home. This was especially true whenever he courted familiarity with the Duke of Omnium, who was conceded by all who knew him to be the richest of politicians and the chief of sinners. In this portion of his plan he succeeded, and the Grantlys were to be found at every major social function in Barchestershire and at a great many gatherings during "the season" in London.

In the other half of his program the archdeacon was not quite as successful, although the outward result was satisfying. His somewhat conceited daughter Griselda was now at the marriageable age, and it was his desire that she should be matched as highly and auspiciously as possible. His first choice of a mate, Lord Ludovic Lufton of neighboring Framley Court, showed not the slightest appreciation of the prize he was being offered. An even more favorable alliance appeared in the making, however, between Griselda and the eldest son of the Marquis of Hartlestop, Lord Dumbello--whose name characterized him perfectly. As the date for the wedding drew near, word began circulating in Barchester that Dr. Grantly's prospective son-in-law had got cold feet and fled to Paris. The irate archdeacon declared, "If it be so I'll drag him back to England by the collar of his coat and disgrace

him before the steps of his father's hall."<sup>17</sup> Shortly thereafter he was absent on a mysterious journey, at the end of which Lord Dumbello meekly reappeared to slip his neck into the matrimonial halter. And so Framley Parsonage, like the novel which preceded it, closed with Dr. Grantly in his customary center of attention, officiating at a wedding "without assistance, although the dean, and the precentor, and two other clergymen, were at the ceremony."<sup>18</sup>

The very title of The Small House at Allington is an indication of the reason for not finding Dr. Grantly in a prominent position, for its chief characters were on a considerably lower social level than the strata in which he now moved. He was seen only once, when, having heard rumors from Mrs. Proudie that Griselda was about to leave her husband in favor of a rival with the unlikely name of Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, he went to London to check up on matters. Fear unexpectedly got the best of him and he could not bring himself to mention the subject of his visit; so he could take no credit later when the Dumbello alliance remained intact.

The archdeacon would not have willfully appeared as frequently as he did in The Last Chronicle of Barset, had he not been drawn into the sorry affair of Mr. Crawley by what he considered to be his son Henry's extreme folly in seriously intending to marry the daughter of the lowly perpetual curate of Hogglestock, a man unable to refute the

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<sup>17</sup>Trollope, Framley Parsonage (London & Toronto: J. N. Dent & Sons., Ltd., 1921), p. 440.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

accusation that he was a thief. Dr. Grantly would have termed the match disagreeable on any grounds, since "the poor girl had no advantages,"<sup>19</sup> and he determined to do all in his power to prevent the marriage. First, he threatened to cut off Henry's income if he persisted in seeing the girl. Next, he insisted that he would refuse all intercourse with his son; but because of the mellowing effect of his previous battles in life, "he knew that he would not have the strength of character to carry him through a prolonged quarrel."<sup>20</sup> He felt entirely firm, on the other hand, in his decision never, under any circumstances, to receive Grace into his presence as a daughter-in-law.

Trollope gave his readers cause to sympathize with the archdeacon's point of view:

Dr. Grantly had been a very successful man in the world, and on all ordinary occasions had been able to show that bold front with which success endows a man. But he still had his moments of weakness, and feared greatly lest anything of misfortune should touch him, and mar the comely roundness of Prosperity. He was very wealthy. The wife of his bosom had been to him all that a wife should be. His reputation in the clerical world stood very high. He had lived all his life on terms of equality with the best of the gentry around him. His only daughter had made a splendid marriage. His two sons had hitherto done well in the world, not only as regarded their happiness, but as to marriage also [at this time Henry was a widower], and as to social standing. But how great would be the fall if his son should at last marry the daughter of a convicted thief! How would the Proudies rejoice over him,-- the Proudies who had been crushed to the ground by the success of the Hartleyp alliance; and how would the low-church curates who swarmed in Barsetshire, gather together and scream in delight over his dismay!<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The Last Chronicle of Barset, vol. 1, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 38-39.

Impatient for a showdown, the archdeacon could no longer refrain from going to Grace himself and demanding that she have nothing further to do with Henry. In his earlier days he could have intimidated her in royal style, but in the present interview he came off decidedly second best. Grace sweetly informed him that she could not think of marrying Henry while her father was accused of so serious a crime; and Dr. Grantly, lulled by his own conviction that the man could not possibly be acquitted, found himself gallantly promising that he would give his blessing to the lovers' union as soon as Mr. Crawley's name should be cleared. Indeed, this girl who had no "advantages" so charmed the father's hardened heart that before he left he had kissed her and allowed two tears to trickle down his nose. Needless to say, he felt it unnecessary to relate to his wife the full interview.

When it was finally discovered that Mr. Crawley was innocent, Dr. Grantly was, to use an old expression, "in a pickle." He hated to admit that he had been wrong; and yet he must, because of his promise to Grace, inform Henry that he no longer objected to their marriage. Here again Trollope indicated the extent to which the archdeacon's attitude had softened through the years, for in this final defeat Dr. Grantly evidenced a graciousness that had been previously lacking. Not only did he welcome Grace into the family, but he voluntarily brought himself to accept the entire Crawley claim despite their social limitations. He even entreated Dr. Arabin to appoint Mr. Crawley to the living of St. Bwolds. The event which most clearly indicated Dr. Grantly's subdued spirit, however, was his outright cheerfulness in allowing Mr. Crawley, his clerical inferior, to perform the marriage uniting the two families.

Not much need be said of Bishop Grantly, benevolent patriarch of the cathedral at the opening of the series. Unwilling to take or to give offense, he for the most part let the diocese go its own way. It was his successor in Barchester Towers and the remaining volumes who evinced Trollope's detailed portrait of the bishopric.

It must be noted at the outset that Dr. Proudie held his office in name only; the real bishop of Barchester was his wife. But as this paper is limited to the clergymen themselves, it would be both out of place and impossible to do Mrs. Proudie justice without also mentioning numerous other apt characterizations of clerical helpmates. Suffice it to say that she had an opinion on every subject and a plan of action for every occasion and that nothing could hinder the delivery of the one or the carrying out of the other.

Dr. Proudie had once had within him the potential to become a successful—if not a great—churchman. His dignity and demeanor were of the highest order and had enabled him to obtain several prominent positions in London, where he had managed to be so ecclesiastically elastic that he had gained advocates from all quarters. "Dr. Proudie was one among those who early in life adapted himself to the views held by the whigs on most theological and religious subjects. He bore with the idolatry of Rome, tolerated even the infidelity of Socinianism, and was hand in glove with the Presbyterian Synods of Scotland and Ulster."<sup>22</sup> An ambitious man, he viewed the bishopric of Barchester as but a stepping stone to higher ecclesiastical honors, and he determined to maintain

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<sup>22</sup>Barchester Towers and The Warden, p. 220.

his permanent residence in London where he could periodically renew himself in the eyes of those who could advance him still further.

The biggest error the bishop had ever made was that of marrying Mrs. Proudie. Trollope labeled him "henpecked," adding that "in the eyes of his wife he is never right. All hope of defending himself has long passed from him; indeed he rarely even attempts self-justification; and is aware that submission produces the nearest approach to peace which his own house can ever attain."<sup>23</sup> The question, alas, was never how high he could be boosted by outward forces but how long he could maintain his facade of independence before crumbling from within.

The Chronicles of Barsetshire is the saga of the bishop's gradual decline. He might have withstood the opposition of Dr. Grantly had he had no other enemy to ward off, but he soon discovered a foe in his own camp in the person of Mr. Slope, his wife's protégé. When the chaplain preached his first sermon at the cathedral, Dr. Proudie's hair "almost stood on end with terror."<sup>24</sup> Instant dismissal of the arrogant Slope might have appeased even Dr. Grantly; instead, the bishop retreated to London leaving his chaplain "flattering such as would listen to his flattery, whispering religious twaddle into the ears of foolish women, ingratiating himself with the few clergy who would receive him, visiting the houses of the poor, inquiring into all people, prying into everything. . . ."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 253-254.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-261.

In one respect Mr. Slope tried to do the bishop a favor, though it must be hastily added that his effort was purely selfish. Disgusted with Dr. Proudie's submission to "petticoat government," he attempted to "infuse a little of his spirit into the bishop, sufficient to induce him to oppose his wife, though not enough to make him altogether insubordinate."<sup>26</sup> In a pathetic display of false bravery, Dr. Proudie boldly determined to assert himself--until a situation arose which demanded that the resolution be put into action. Then "he thought this was not the best time to do it" and "put off the evil hour."<sup>27</sup> Nor did he ever find a suitable occasion. In fact, he gave up seeking an opportunity, hoping instead that Mr. Slope and his wife would "fight it out so that one should kill the other utterly, as far as diocesan life was concerned, so that he, the bishop, might know clearly by whom it behooved him to be led."<sup>28</sup>

There is no reason to dwell on the bishop's position in matters such as filling the wardenship, finding a new dean, or any other crises in Barchester Towers; for his position, if he had one, was known only to himself. At the end of the volume he accepted a seat in the House of Lords; but because he rarely bothered to go up to London to vote, his aspirations for subsequent advancement suffered irremediable setback.

Trollope mercifully kept the bishop's unchanged matrimonial

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 347.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 454.



and clerical plight in the background in the next three novels in the series. The Last Chronicle of Barset, however, made up for any previous neglect with a painfully minute running account of Dr. Proudie's complete disintegration. At the beginning of the Crawley affair, the bishop was content to mouth his wife's opinions as to the "terrible disgrace."<sup>29</sup> But his conscience, which he had grown accustomed to disregarding, would not be silenced. Knowing in his heart that Mr. Crawley was innocent until proved guilty by secular law and that he had no ecclesiastical power to remove the curate from his parish before the court had even convened to hear the case, he was anxious to do nothing at all. The odds against holding out against his wife after thirty years of submission to her were overwhelmingly against such a policy. If the misery resulting from defying her could be kept private, he felt that he could endure her wrath. "But to be scolded publicly was the great evil which he dreaded beyond all evils. . . . And he well knew that should he now rebel, the whole house would be in turmoil. He would be bishoped here, and bishoped there, before the eyes of all palatial men and women, till life would be a burden to him."<sup>30</sup> So the poor man, "driven to persecute because he cannot escape persecution himself,"<sup>31</sup> succumbed to his wife's demands that Mr. Crawley be temporarily relieved of his parish duties. He also yielded to her request that an ecclesiastical board be appointed to determine the curate's permanent moral inability to resume his curacy.

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<sup>29</sup>The Last Chronicle of Barset, vol. 1, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 384.

But Mrs. Proudie pressed her luck too far. When she publicly attempted to tell the board how to carry on its investigation, Dr. Proudie could stand her dictatorial ways no longer. "You have disgraced me," he said in despair. ". . . You are always being wrong. I wish I had never come to Barchester."<sup>32</sup> After a two-hundred-page interval in which no new developments occurred, the broken man was still murmuring, "You have brought on me such disgrace that I cannot hold up my head. You have ruined me. I wish I were dead; and it is all through you that I am driven to wish it."<sup>33</sup> The finality of his attitude was more than Mrs. Proudie's constitution could stand; the shock of being totally rejected killed her.

Misery, relief, anger, and an unexpected tenderness battled for dominance in the bishop's reaction to the news that he was now a free man. His first impulse was to pray, but he hardly knew what to say. "I think," said Trollope in one of his best revelations of character, "he was praying that God might save him from being glad that his wife was dead."<sup>34</sup>

It was too late for the bishop to reassert his long-suppressed feelings of confidence and ambition. He had been controlled so completely that he was scarcely able to make the simplest decisions in the diocese. He would have liked to exchange places with the newly acquitted incumbent at St. Erolds; but necessity kept him in the cathedral,

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 39.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 239.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 246.

where he might have been a sufficiently good bishop, had it not been that Mrs. Proudie was so much more than a sufficiently good bishop's wife.<sup>35</sup>

Trollope's characterization of the typical absentee incumbent is to be found in the owner of Crabtree Canoncorum:

the Honourable and Reverend Dr. Vesey Stanhope, who also fills the prebendal stall of Goosegorge in Barchester Chapter, and holds the united rectory of Kiderdown and Stoppingum, or Stoke Pinquium, as it should be written. This is the same Dr. Vesey Stanhope whose hospitable villa on the Lake of Como is so well known to the elite of English travellers, and whose collection of Lombard butterflies is suppose to be unique.<sup>36</sup>

He had been chasing butterflies for twelve years, attributing his absence to a sore throat which the continental atmosphere alone could improve, when Bishop Proudie, at the insistence of Mr. Slope, firmly invited him back to the diocese.

Condescending to spend two or three months in Barchester, Dr. Stanhope arrived with his strange family. Most conspicuous was a crippled daughter who had been deserted by a worthless Italian but who claimed that she was, by the marriage,

!la Signora Madeline  
Vesey Neroni  
--Nata Stanhope<sup>37</sup>

and demanded that she be treated by all--even Mrs. Proudie--as a countess. Bertie, Dr. Stanhope's only son, was a spoiled young man who, having been strikingly converted first to Catholicism and then to Judaism, had gotten heavily in debt in an attempt to become a sculptor in Palestine. The

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 370.

<sup>36</sup>Barchester Towers and The Warden, p. 123,

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

brunt of managing the household fell upon Charlotte, the elder daughter, who was "a fine young woman; and had she been a man, would have been a very fine young man."<sup>38</sup>

That Charlotte had turned out well was certainly not owing to any effort on her father's part. His appearance was that of "a benevolent sleepy old lion," and all that he had demanded of his family was that his dinner be served on time.

That he had religious convictions must be believed; but he rarely obtruded them, even on his children. This abstinence on his part was not systematic, but very characteristic of the man. It was not that he had predetermined never to influence their thoughts; but he was so habitually idle that his time for doing so had never come till the opportunity for doing so was gone forever.<sup>39</sup>

Although his income was three thousand pounds per year, Dr. Stanhope was continually in debt; and although he sometimes regretted that he had "ill-performed his duties as a father and a clergyman,"<sup>40</sup> he made no effort to change his habits. Trollope apparently saw no reason for allowing such a failure to remain on the scene and arranged for him to die of apoplexy at his Italian villa in Doctor Thorne.

Perhaps the most repulsive clergyman associated with the Barchester diocese was Bishop Proudie's first chaplain, Mr. Obadiah Slope. His activity and aspirations in Barsetshire were limited to one volume, Barchester Towers, but he was frequently remembered throughout the subsequent novels in the series for his obnoxiousness.

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

In early life Mr. Slope had been a sizar at Cambridge. He had afterwards ingratiated himself with Mrs. Proudie in London; and when the bishop's appointment to Barchester had been announced, he had secretly determined to make his own rise in life by clinging to that poor man's clerical garments. He fully realized that Dr. Proudie was not endowed with qualities of leadership, and he decided that "he, Mr. Slope, would in effect be bishop of Barchester."<sup>41</sup> In such an endeavor he was doomed to failure, but he was confidently unaware of his inability to oust Mrs. Proudie from the post.

And so he began his campaign. Crafty and capable, he played Mrs. Proudie against the bishop and managed for a time to appear to be in sympathy with both. It cannot be said that anyone was sympathetic towards him in return. He antagonized the chapter and all the cathedral clergymen by his very first sermon—a highly vitriolic diatribe against the Barchester status quo—and he kept most of the townspeople at a distance by his physical appearance alone:

His hair is lank, and of a dull pale reddish hue. It is always formed into three straight lumpy masses, each brushed with admirable precision, and cemented with much grease; . . . His face is nearly of the same colour as his hair, though perhaps a little redder: it is not unlike beef--beef, however, one would say, of a bad quality.<sup>42</sup>

When it came to theological matters he was a pharisee of the pharisees:

In doctrine, he, like his patron, is tolerant of dissent, if so strict a mind can be called tolerant of anything. With Wesleyan-Methodists he has something in common, but his soul trembles in agony at the iniquities of the Puseyites.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

His aversion is carried to things outward as well as inward. His gall rises at a new church with a high pitched roof; a full-breasted black silk waistcoat is with him a symbol of Satan; and a profane jest-book would not, in his view, more foully desecrate the church seat of a Christian, than a book of prayer printed with red letters, and ornamented with a cross on the back. Most active clergymen have their hobby, and Sunday observances are his. . . . The "desecration of the Sabbath," as he delights to call it, is to him meat and drink:—he thrives upon that as policemen do on the general evil habits of the community.<sup>43</sup>

The only faction which might be said to have seen in him anything appealing were the undiscerning ladies who mistook his "pawing, greasy way"<sup>44</sup> for serious attention. When the time came to draw battle lines in Barchester, the chaplain found to his dismay that he could count on the support only of "the enthusiastically religious young ladies, and the middle-aged spinsters desirous of a move," whose method of warfare was to "work slippers and cushions, and hem bands for Mr. Slope, make him a happy martyr, and stick him up in some new Sion or Bethesda . . . ."<sup>45</sup>

Mr. Slope's plan of attack on the bishopric began with his effort to make a matrimonial alliance with the Proudies' eldest daughter. When she disdainfully refused, he launched his campaign against the Grantly forces by trying to insult Mr. Harding enough to assure the ex-warden's refusal of his old position at Hiram's Hospital. In the heat of the battle, however, the chaplain changed his tactics, having suddenly learned that Mr. Harding's widowed daughter had an independent income that would prove useful in financing his rise to power. In order to court her, he had to

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-229.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

appear to advance her father's interest. The about-face put him in an embarrassing position at the palace which only his expert talent at double-talk got him out of, and the action came at the expense of a suspicious attitude formed in Mrs. Proudie's mind.

The price was dearly paid, for Eleanor, although civil to him, had no desire to become a part of his plans. Persistent to the point of nausea, he refused to take "no" for an answer and was ultimately brought to admit defeat only by a resounding and unladylike slap in the face.

Realizing that his readers were probably forming a decidedly bad opinion of the chaplain, Trollope thought it worth while to say something in his behalf:

And here the author must beg it to be remembered that Mr. Slope was not in all things a bad man. His motives, like those of most men, were mixed; and though his conduct was generally very different from that which we would wish to praise, it was actuated perhaps as often as that of the majority of the world by a desire to do his duty. He believed in the religion which he taught, harsh, unpalatable, uncharitable as that religion was. He believed those whom he wished to get under his hoof, the Grantlys and Gwynnes of the church, to be the enemies of that religion. He believed himself to be a pillar of strength, destined to do great things; and with that subtle, selfish, ambiguous sophistry to which the minds of all men are so subject, he had taught himself to think that in doing much for the promotion of his own interests he was doing much also for the promotion of religion. But Mr. Slope had never been an immoral man. Indeed, he had resisted temptations to immorality with a strength of purpose that was creditable to him.<sup>46</sup>

Notwithstanding his good morals, the chaplain's next mistake--his infatuation with the already married Madame Neroni--was a costly error; and the price which he had to pay for such a luxury as a fake countess was higher than he could prudently have afforded. His attention to a

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 336.

woman whom the bishop's wife detested was all that was necessary to alienate him from Mrs. Proudie's assistance forever.

Mr. Slope was now becoming desperate. With Mrs. Proudie against him, his days as the bishop's chaplain were numbered. While he was contemplating his next move, the dean of the cathedral took to his deathbed. As the spirits of that gentleman declined, those of Mr. Slope rose. Before the dean had even completed the ceremony of dying, the chaplain had declared his candidacy for the office in letters to the Jupiter and to Sir Nicholas Fitzwhiggin, a government official whose good graces he had courted for just such an occasion as this, and had brazenly asked Bishop Proudie to recommend to the archbishop that he be appointed.

The Grantly faction, which now included practically everyone in Barchester except Mr. Slope himself, needed only to convey a few well-chosen words into a few well-chosen ecclesiastical ears and the chaplain's hopes were ended, despite the Jupiter's favorable editorial comments upon the presumptuous candidate. When Mrs. Proudie learned of the aspirations of her enemy, she demanded his immediate dismissal from his palace duties. Hearing that Mr. Harding had been nominated for the deanery, Mr. Slope shook the dust of Barchester from his feet and returned to London, where he eventually achieved fame as "one of the most eloquent preachers and pious clergymen."<sup>47</sup> Trollope said that he married the widow of a sugar refiner, but in Barchester circles it was reported with spiteful satisfaction that he had been able to win no one more impressive than the widow of a "tallow-chandler."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 732.

<sup>48</sup>Framley Parsonage, p. 55.



The Reverend Francis Arabin of Oxford came to be involved in Barchester affairs through an invitation from Dr. Grantly to join the local battle against Mr. Slope. Such a request--that of conquering Low Church tendencies--was one Mr. Arabin found too challenging to decline. He was a High Churchman, himself; "so high, indeed, that at one period of his career he had all but toppled over into the cesspool of Rome."<sup>49</sup> As further inducement, Dr. Grantly included in his offer the living of St. Ewolds, but Mr. Arabin would have come anyway. He was already involved in a controversy--began in the Jupiter and carried on through other publications--with Mr. Slope on the question of apostolic succession. The chaplain contended that "the main part of the consecration of a clergyman was the self-devotion of the inner man to the duties of the ministry;" while Mr. Arabin staunchly affirmed that a man had "no single attribute of a clergyman, unless he became so through the imposition of some bishop's hand" in direct line back to the apostles.<sup>50</sup>

Mr. Arabin had been a star pupil at Oxford, a statement supported by the fact that he had the "approved" attitude upon leaving: "he was inclined to look upon the rural clergymen of most English parishes with contempt."<sup>51</sup> After contact with a dedicated curate in a country parish he effected a reformation in his opinion of the profession. He became humble, yet remained "great in sermons, great in platforms, great at after dinner conversations, and always pleasant as well as great."<sup>52</sup> Still

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<sup>49</sup>Barchester Towers and The Warden, pp. 325-326.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 327.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 387.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 388.

the most important aspect of the Church for him was the Church as God's sword: "What is all our work but fighting, and hard fighting?"<sup>53</sup>

And so he came to Barchester. The outcome of the battle has already been told. Mr. Arabin, now "Doctor," won both Eleanor and the deanery from Mr. Slope. (Although the new dean probably would wish it to be forgotten, accuracy necessitates mentioning that on the matter of wooing Madame Neroni the two opponents were equally imprudent and equally unsuccessful.) He settled down to studious pursuits, engaging himself "in sifting and editing old ecclesiastical literature, and in producing the same articles new."<sup>54</sup>

Not until The Last Chronicle of Barset did Dr. Arabin emerge from his deanery to take part in public affairs, and then only from a distance. Indeed, had he not befriended Mr. Crawley, he might have gone on his scholarly expedition to Palestine virtually unnoticed. As it happened, on the eve of his departure for the Holy Land he gave the perpetual curate an envelope in which he had placed five bank notes in order to assist his friend in some of his many debts. Unknown to him, Mrs. Arabin had inserted in the envelope a twenty-pound check which she had lately received as a rent payment on some personal property; it was that check which Mr. Crawley was subsequently accused of having stolen. Many thousands of words and a great quantity of heartbreaking investigation passed before Mrs. Arabin, on a continental tour, heard of the curate's plight and vindicated him. The dean's return to Barchester was anticlimactic, since matters had been set right before he arrived, but he attempted to make amends for the mis-

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 745.

take into which he had innocently been drawn, by placing Mr. Crawley in the vicarage of St. Bolds.

It has already been noted that Trollope considered the type of education clergymen received as a major factor in their inability to become great churchmen. In Barchester Towers he gave a brief but telling description of one of the clerical masters at Oxford, a man responsible for the training of such men as Dr. Grantly and Dr. Arabin.

Tom Staple, tutor of Lazarus, was "a decently clean liver"<sup>55</sup> but was inclined to indulge too frequently in port wine. His one passion in life was the prevention of University reform: "The status [sic] quo of the University was his only idea of life, and any reformation was as bad to him as death."<sup>56</sup> Students, he contended, should be allowed to conduct themselves as they pleased; by his system young clergymen cultivated a taste for wild oats that was hard to be rid of when the time came to settle down in a parish.

Such a young man was the Reverend Mark Roberts. Brought up from his cradle destined to be a clergyman, educated at Harrow and Oxford, he was given the nine-hundred-pound living of Framley by Lady Lufton as soon as he took his degree. His patroness, a close friend of his father, also thoughtfully provided the only thing he lacked, arranging a marriage with an eligible young lady. With every advantage, it soon became apparent what direction Mr. Roberts' education had taken. Almost as soon as he got settled at Framley, he became dissatisfied by the absence of social contacts to which he had grown accustomed. He jumped eagerly at invitations to visit the landed gentry in Barchestershire, even when his absence

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 554.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 555.

necessitated leaving his living in the hands of an incapable curate.

Nathan Sowerby, Esq., of Chaldicotes took a fancy to Mr. Robarts because he saw in the naive vicar a new source of money to apply to his worldly pursuits; and the new parson, pleased at being recognized by a "great man," cheerfully and unquestioningly signed notes for sums that were eventually to bring him to poverty when his new friend played him false. Receiving an invitation to dine with Sowerby and the Duke of Omnium, figures highly detested at Framley Court, he fought a losing battle with his conscience and accepted. Before the evening was over, he was unaccountably disappointed. He was moving in the highest society, "but what pleasure had come to him yet from these intimacies? . . . To speak the truth he was not over well pleased with himself."<sup>57</sup>

Lady Lufton, too, was far from pleased with her pampered parson as the months passed. "Early in the winter he had gone to Chaldicotes and to Gatherum Castle, consorting with gamblers, whigs, atheists, men of loose pleasure, and Proudeites. That she had condoned; and now he was turning out a hunting parson on her hands."<sup>58</sup> The latter was, in her eyes, a sin equal to going over to Rome.

About this time, Mr. Sowerby good-naturedly tried to make amends in advance for the notes which he knew he would never be able to assume. Writing to Mr. Robarts from London, he told the vicar that he had just learned that a prebendal stall in Bassetshire had been vacated and that he was taking the liberty of recommending his young friend for appointment.

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<sup>57</sup>Framley Parsonage, p. 66.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

Prebendaries were usually middle-aged men who had worked for years to gain recognition, and Mr. Roberts was pleased at the stroke of luck that was bringing honor and six hundred additional pounds to him while he was yet twenty-five years old. The honor was short-lived, however. In rapid succession the notes came due, the vicar was unable to pay, the assessors arrived to evaluate all his possessions to be taken in lieu of the balance, and only the loan of the total funds by Lady Lufton's son kept the vicar and his family from being turned out utterly penniless. Next, the Jupiter got wind of the proceedings and, in a scathing editorial, demanded Mr. Roberts' resignation from his new prebendal stall on the grounds of his highly irregular and reprehensible private associations.

Trollope credited the young parson's humiliating downfall to his too-easy rise to unearned rewards. Becoming a wiser man the hard way, the vicar managed a soul-centered reform, put his past follies behind him, and went on to become one of the most conscientious clergymen in the diocese. In The Last Chronicle of Barset he was one of Mr. Crawley's few unfailing supporters, posting bond so that the curate could resume his parish duties. As a member of the ecclesiastical board convened to judge the poor man's fitness to retain his clerical position, he loyally defended the curate of Hogglestock, and he went out of his way to minister to the personal needs of the Crawley household on numerous occasions.

The Reverend Josiah Crawley of Hogglestock, upon whom so much misery alighted in The Last Chronicle of Barset, had appeared in Framley Parsonage in the role of moral advisor to young Mark Roberts. A "strict stern, unpleasant man"<sup>59</sup> of forty, he had held his present living for

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

some five years after struggling in a remote parish on the northern coast of Cornwall for more than a decade. The combined ordeal had led him, on more than one occasion even before the incident of the stolen check, to "complain with a bitter voice, crying out that the world was too hard for him, that his back was broken with his burden, that his God had deserted him."<sup>60</sup>

Because of false pride he had no close friends--a fact which greatly concerned his wife: "He is pining for the solace of some friend to whom he could talk--for some equal, with a mind educated like his own, to whose thoughts he could listen, and to whom he could speak his own thoughts. But such a friend must be his equal, not only in mind, but in purse; and where can he ever find such a man as that?"<sup>61</sup> The answer was all too plain. And so he withdrew into himself, refusing all offers of intimacy from fellow clergymen anxious to do something constructive towards bettering his meagre existence.

The matter of the check has been alluded to previously. Mr. Crawley, believing that it had been given him by Dr. Arabin, cashed it without giving it a second thought. It was then discovered that the check had originally belonged to a Mr. Soames, a London businessman who was quite convinced that he had lost it while visiting the curate. Town opinion, bolstered by Mrs. Proudie's accusations, lost no time in assuming that the parson had found the check and, instead of returning it, had used it to pay his debts. Rather than call Dr. Arabin a liar--for the dean wrote back from the Holy Land to say that he had given no check to his friend--

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

Mr. Crawley met all accusations by throwing up his hands passively and saying that if it had not come from the dean, he had no idea where he had got it. Firmly, almost viciously, he refused the aid of lawyers and would not even appear in court until carried there bodily. No evidence being presented in his behalf, he was bound over for trial at the next assizes.

Whenever his wife tried to prod his memory about the source of the check, "he was terribly confused, contradictory, unintelligible,--speaking almost as a madman might speak--ending always by declaring that the cruelty of the world had been too much for him, that the waters were meeting over his head, and praying for God's mercy to remove him from the world."<sup>62</sup> The only consolation he seemed able to draw from life was that of indulging in his grief without restraint. He brooded over the accusation until he began to believe that he actually was a thief. Townspeople thought otherwise: it was the common opinion that he could not be considered a thief because he was "as mad as a hatter."<sup>63</sup> They were not entirely correct, but it was true that at times the curate's mind tended to go off on tangents.

One can perhaps give Mrs. Proudie credit for sincerely wondering whether or not Mr. Crawley was fit to continue his clerical duties. Her method of prejudging his guilt and of trying to force him from his pulpit cannot be condoned, however. The best supporting testimony of the curate's alleged insanity was the manner in which, upon being summoned to the palace at her demand, he told her in no uncertain terms that she was a meddling

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<sup>62</sup>The Last Chronicle of Barset, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 75.

busybody. Only a man in a state of madness would have dared confront the "Ahs-Beelzebub"<sup>64</sup> in a head-on attack, and only a madman could have won.

Having displayed his determination to retain his curacy regardless of outside pressure, Mr. Crawley's next siege of melancholy led him to conclude that it would be noble of him to resign of his own accord--to make, as it were, the supreme sacrifice and thereby put to shame all who were hounding him unmercifully.

He pitied himself with a consideration that was sickly in spite of its truth. It was the fault of the man that he was imbued too strongly with self-consciousness. He could do a great thing or two. He could keep up his courage in positions . . . He could tell the truth though truth should ruin him. He could sacrifice all that he had to duty. He could do justice though the heaven should fall. But he could not forget to pay a tribute to himself for the greatness of his own actions; nor, when accepting with an effort of meekness the small payment made by the world to him, in return for his great works, could he forget the great payments made to others for small work.<sup>65</sup>

Inwardly proud of his martyrdom, he announced his decision to the ecclesiastical board. The following Sunday, a parson of Mrs. Proudie's choosing conducted the Hogglestock service while Mr. Crawley made a point of being pitifully unobtrusive.

It cannot be said that he enjoyed his misery; but it is certainly true that when Mrs. Arabin's explanation vindicated him and incriminated the actual culprit, Mr. Crawley was pleased that his months of mental torture were now regarded by the community as proof that he was, indeed, a man who deserved all the pity that he could muster.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 87.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 189-190.



Unabated to the end, the curate's pride almost prevented his accepting a new living; he believed that it was offered to him solely in order that the family of Henry Grantly's new bride might not appear to be poor. "But at last Mrs. Crawley condescended to accept St. Ewolds."<sup>66</sup> His condescension more than tripled his income and, happily, effected a brightening in his disposition.

Among the insignificant little lights in Barseshire was Mr. Quiverful, appearing first in The Warden as a "wretched clerical Priam, who was endeavoring to feed his poor Hecuba and a dozen little Hectors"<sup>67</sup> on the scanty funds provided by his living at Puddingdale. His entrance into the series resulted from the perplexing problem of what was to become of Hiram's Hospital after Mr. Harding's resignation. It was suggested that the ex-warden and the Puddingdale incumbent exchange positions, for Mr. Quiverful was so intent on the problems of his brood that he would be impervious to any public criticism which might come his way; but the scheme was dropped when old Bishop Grantly disapproved.

With his wife annually presenting him more mouths to feed, it was urgent that Mr. Quiverful campaign for some financial improvement in his lot. The accession of the Proudle regime in Barchester Towers and the renewal of the matter of the wardenship encouraged him to practice some apple-polishing that won over Mr. Proudle and Mr. Slope. Trollope, with characteristic sympathy toward the man who was caught in a predicament created by a system too big for him, indicated that under the circumstances, with

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>67</sup>Barchester Towers and The Warden, pp. 185-186.

his family lacking the bare essentials of subsistence, Mr. Quiverful was doing the best that could be expected of him.

He was not careful, as another might be who sat on an easier worldly seat, to stand well with those around him, to shun a breath which might sully his name, or a rumour which might affect his honour. He could not afford such niceties of conduct, such moral luxuries. It must suffice for him to be ordinarily honest according to the ordinary honesty of the world's ways, and to let men's tongues wag as they would.<sup>68</sup>

Mr. Quiverful gained the wardenship at the expense of some anxious moments. Bishop Proudie continued to favor Mr. Harding; Mr. Slope vacillated between the ex-warden and the Puddingdale candidate as his own fortunes appeared to depend first on one and then on the other. Only through Mrs. Proudie's decisive intervention was the matter settled. And although Mr. Harding did everything possible to smooth the way for his successor by personally introducing him to the bedesmen, Mr. Quiverful never was respected in the office as his predecessor had been.

Only two more glimpses of the new warden are afforded the reader, but they are indicative of the price that he continued to pay for his position. Mrs. Proudie, upon hearing of Lord Dumbello's supposed reluctance to marry Griselda Grantly, sent word demanding that the warden "dwell on this subject in morning and evening lecture at the hospital on Sabbath next, showing how false is the trust which we put in the good things of this world."<sup>69</sup> One wonders, as did Mr. Quiverful himself, why Mrs. Proudie should be so anxious to warn the ancient, bedridden bedesmen of ambitious matrimonial projects. Her hold over the warden was still strong in the final volume of the series; at her insistence he was appointed to serve on

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>69</sup> Framley Parsonage, p. 435.

the ecclesiastical board set up to judge Mr. Crawley. Not only was the assignment distasteful to Mrs. Quiverful, but he was obliged to foot the bill for all expenses incurred as her emissary. Fortunately, his wife had become too involved in her duties as mistress of the hospital to continue the yearly love-offerings, and he could rejoice that his budget had to cover the requisitions of no more than fourteen children and the bishop's wife.

Some of Trollope's clerical portraits are no more than flashes, each one just long enough to suggest the sorry state of the profession.

Griselda Grantly in her youth had romantic visions of marrying the Reverend Augustus Greens, chiefly because he had a comfortable allowance from his father which permitted him to "devote the whole proceeds of his curacy to violet gloves and unexceptional neck ties."<sup>70</sup>

The rector of Greshamsbury, the Reverend Caleb Oriol, was a man devoted to his profession; but he was a misfit as a parish clergyman. The only service which delighted him was the one which he conducted at six o'clock on winter mornings; and the only satisfaction he got from life—for attendance at his early matins dropped from one to none when his lone communicant realized that her devotion did not lead to matrimony—was derived from the inward rewards of remaining celibate and fasting periodically.<sup>71</sup>

The Small House at Allington contains the most unremarkable parson

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<sup>70</sup> Barchester Towers and The Warden, p. 390.

<sup>71</sup> Trollope, Doctor Thorne (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1910), p. 338.

of Trollope's lot. Mr. Boyd, the vicar of Allington, was described and discarded with two words--he was a "mere clergyman."<sup>72</sup> He reappeared briefly in The Last Chronicle of Barset, still unexceptional in his tendency to sleep during his curate's sermons and to grow increasingly fat and lazy.

Yet another minor figure was the Reverend Evan Jones, aged curate of Framley, whose only characteristics Trollope noted were his equally distasteful red face, awkward feet, and Low Church principles. And then there was Mr. Tickler, a widower with three children to support from the pew-rents at the district church in Bethnal Green. His claim to questionable fame rested in his being matrimonially acceptable to Olivia Proudie.

Despite the numerous clerical vehicles for his satire and criticism, Trollope on occasion felt inclined to preach a few sermons of his own. A study of the Chronicles of Barset would be incomplete without taking notice of them. Broadly speaking the novelist gave his own opinions in two forms, the sarcastic jest and the serious lament. Excerpts from selections representing each type follow.

Mr. Slope's first sermon elicited this digression by the novelist:

There is perhaps no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons. No one but a preaching clergyman has, in these realms, the power of compelling an audience to sit silent, and be tormented. No one but a preaching clergyman can revel in platitudes, truisms, and untruths, and yet receive as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanour as though wards of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic,

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<sup>72</sup>Trollope, The Small House at Allington (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Lt., 1915), p. 9.

fell from his lips. . . . He is the bore of the age, the old man whom we Sinbads cannot shake off, the nightmare that disturbs our Sunday rest, the incubus that overloads our religion and makes God's service distasteful. . . .

With what complacency will a young parson deduce false conclusions from misunderstood texts, and then threaten us with all the penalties of Hades if we neglect to comply with the injunctions he has given us! . . .

And here I must make a protest against the pretense, so often put forward by the working clergy, that they are overburdened by the multitude of sermons to be preached. . . . 'I have preached nine sermons this week,' said a young friend to me the other day, with hand languidly raised to his brow, the picture of an over-burdened martyr. 'Nine this week, seven last week, four the week before. I have preached twenty-three sermons this month. It is really too much.' 'Too much, indeed,' said I, shuddering; 'too much for the strength of any one.' 'Yes,' he answered weakly, 'indeed it is; I am beginning to feel it painfully.' 'Would,' said I, 'you could feel it--would that you could be made to feel it.' But he never guessed that my heart was wrung for the poor listeners.<sup>73</sup>

No humor lightened this passage of criticism from Framley Parsonage, prompted by the introduction of Mr. Crawley:

On what principle the remuneration of our parish clergymen was settled when the original settlement was made, no deepest, keenest lover of middle-aged ecclesiastical black-letter learning can, I take it, now say. That the priests were to be paid from tithes of the parish produce, out of which tithes certain other good things were to be bought and paid for, such as church repairs and education, of so much the most of us have an inkling. . . . But one cannot conceive that even in this way any approximation could have been made, even in those old mediæval days, towards a fair proportioning of the pay to the work. At any rate, it is clear enough that there is no such approximation now. And what a screech would there not be among the clergy of the Church, even in these reforming days, if any over-bold reformer were to suggest that such an approximation be attempted. Let those who know clergymen, and like them, and have lived with them, only fancy it! . . . Ecclesiastical work to be bought and paid for according to its quantity and quality!

But, nevertheless, one may prophesy that we Englishmen must come to this, disagreeable as the idea undoubtedly is. . . .

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<sup>73</sup>Barchester Towers and The Warden, pp. 252-253.

Our present arrangement of parochial incomes is beloved as being time-honoured, gentlemanlike, English, and picturesque. We would fain adhere to it closely as long as we can, but we know that we do so by the force of our prejudices, and not by that of our judgment. . . . In other trades, professions, and lines of life, men are paid according to their work. Let it be so in the Church. Such will sooner or later be the edict of a utilitarian, reforming, matter-of-fact House of Parliament.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Framley Parsonage, pp. 137-139.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MRS. OLIPHANT'S CARLINGFORD

It was hardly likely that such an accomplished novelist as Trollope could fail to be imitated. Mrs. Margaret Wilson Oliphant, daughter of one Nonconformist clergyman and husband of another, undertook in her Carlingford series of novels to delineate life in a rural town inhabited and invaded by factions representing a cross section of religious sentiment. She was by no means as talented or as original as Trollope, and her plots were frequently nothing more than ridiculously contrived variations upon a Barchester theme. She turned out numerous pieces of hackwork filled with the stock figures popular among the undiscerning masses of Victorian readers but rightfully ignored today. Although a number of her novels were vaguely associated with Carlingford, the canon concerned directly with the clergy consisted of Salem Chapel (1863), The Rector (1863), The Perpetual Curate (1864), and Phoebe, Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford (1876).

Ernest A. Baker, in The History of the English Novel, compared the approaches employed by Trollope and Mrs. Oliphant:

It was not by accident both she and Trollope employed the clerical gambit. . . . Trollope had the wider outlook, but both had the same sort of aims. Class distinctions, or, as Mrs. Oliphant put it, "the perennial inequality between the two halves of mankind," and the heart-burnings as well as the spites and affectations of which they are the source, furnished in the last analysis half the efficient motives in the novels of both. Questions of doctrine or of conscience are of less importance, especially in Trollope, than the nice gradations between the higher dignitaries and the humble minister of the gospel. But the main point in the novels of either, whether the clash is between High and Low Church, Church and Chapel, or over the succession to a living or the

prerogatives of a rector in his own parish, inevitably brings affairs into the public arena.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Oliphant, however, would not acknowledge her indebtedness to the creator of *Barsetshire*. Her lack of literary appreciation was expressed through the heroine of *Phoebe, Junior*, who remarked decisively that "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."<sup>2</sup> Miss Yonge was a disciple of Keble, and her novels were full of High Church morality; but even *The Daisy Chain*, her most religious novel, did not contain a memorable clergyman.

The most concise description of Carlingford appeared in the third volume of the series:

In Carlingford proper there is no trade, no manufactures, no anything in particular, except very pleasant parties and a superior class of people. . . . But in every community some centre of life is necessary. This point, round which everything circles, is in Carlingford, found in the clergy. They are the administrators of the commonwealth, the only people who have defined and compulsory duties to give a sharp outline to life.<sup>3</sup>

There were three religious establishments in Carlingford, and each served a specific portion of society. Salem Chapel was the only Dissenting place of worship in the vicinity; it catered to the tastes of the tradesmen--buttermakers and dressmakers. Carlingford Church, presided over by a series of rectors, served the opposite end of the social scale and numbered among its communicants the most prosperous and influential men of the community.

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel*, vol. 10 (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1939), p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, *Phoebe, Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1876), vol. 1, p. 309.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Oliphant, *The Perpetual Curate* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1870), vol. 1, pp. 7-8.



The middle class in Carlingford attended St. Roque's, a High Church chapel-of-ease whose undefined parish overlapped, by unwritten agreement, the territory of the Carlingford rector. Under normal circumstances, the three congregations kept strictly to themselves, in both religious and secular matters.

At the opening of Salem Chapel, the status quo in Carlingford's clerical circles was disrupted by the arrival of a new minister at the Dissenting chapel. Arthur Vincent, fresh from Homerton and full of lofty idealism, had little idea of the kind of spiritual community he had entered. He knew that Dissenters were looked down upon and that they were expected by Anglicans to "keep in their own place," but he regarded such details lightly:

Mr. Vincent, who had been brought up upon the "Nonconformist" and the "Eclectic Review," was strongly impressed with the idea that the Church Establishment, though outwardly prosperous, was in reality a profoundly rotten institution; that the Nonconforming position of the English public was the party of progress; that the eyes of the world were turned upon the Dissenting interest; and that his own youthful eloquence and the Voluntary principle were quite enough to counterbalance all the ecclesiastical advantages on the other side, and make for himself a position of the highest influence in his new sphere. . . All he wanted--all any man worthy of his post wanted--was a spot of standing-ground and an opportunity of making the Truth--and himself--known.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Vincent soon discovered that three things were expected of him. First, he was to preach fine sermons--"nothing very stimulating, indeed, to the sentiments and affections" but full of eloquence, thought, and "an honest entrance into all the difficulties of the subject."<sup>5</sup> Second, he was

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<sup>4</sup>Mrs. Oliphant, Salem Chapel (New York: George Munro, Publisher, 1884), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Ibide.

to appear daily for tea with his members, being careful to distribute his visits equally among the Salem families. Third, he was not, under any circumstances, to try to mix in Carlingford society. These three edicts made life far from pleasant for the new minister, and he was discouraged by the prospects in view. "There were no grand struggles in Carlingford,"<sup>6</sup> but there were tea parties ad nauseam among ignorant people who prided themselves upon "no display, you know--nothing but a hearty meetin', sorry to part, and happy to meet again."<sup>7</sup>

The greatest thorn in Mr. Vincent's flesh was having to submit to dictation from his deacons. Chief offender in that body was the well-meaning buttermaker, Samuel Tozer, who always had a word of advice:

"I'd say give it 'em a little more plain--meaning the Church folks. It's expected of a new man. I'd touch 'em up in the State-Church line, Mr. Vincent, if I was you. Give us a coorse [sic] upon the anomalies, and that sort of thing--the bishops in their palaces, and the fisherman as was the start of it all; there's a deal to be done in that way. . . . Not," added the deacon, remembering in time to add that necessary salve to the conscience--"not as I would have you neglect what's more important; but, after all, what is more important, Mr. Vincent, than freedom of opinion and choosing your own religious teacher?"<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after his arrival, the new minister unwittingly sealed his doom as far as one segment of his congregation was concerned--he fell in love with the richest, most beautiful young widow in Carlingford. Every mother at Salem Chapel took Mr. Vincent's helpless infatuation as a personal insult; Mrs. Tozer was especially offended by the clergyman's failure to court her plump and pink daughter Phoebe, whom she threw in his path at every opportunity.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

Mr. Vincent, frustrated by the suspicion that Lady Western had no desire to return his devotion, locked himself in his rooms and tried to devote himself instead to study. He sat for days with a blank sheet of paper before him, accomplishing nothing except acquiring a reputation for being exceptionally studious. In reality, he dashed off his sermons in last-minute desperation and was all the more confounded and disgusted when his congregation could not tell the difference. They airily congratulated him on the great results of his deep concentration and rewarded his efforts by hiring the town music hall for a series of lectures. Some favored charging a sixpence admission fee for the privilege of hearing so learned a speaker, but Tozer stated the bald truth when he said, "If we was amusin' the people, we might charge sixpence a-head; but mark my words, there ain't twenty men in Carlingford, nor in no other place, as would give sixpence to have their minds enlightened."<sup>9</sup> Mr. Vincent, "an evangelist whom the state did not recognize and with whom mammon had little enough to do," dutifully launched the free lectures with a vehement denunciation of "the heinous evils of rich livings, episcopal palaces, and spiritual lords."<sup>10</sup>

The young pastor also tried to make up for his neglect of the congregation through an extensive visitation program among the poor and the sinful in the community. But like Geoffrey Wildgoose, he was a failure:

Absolute want, suffering, and sorrow were comparatively new to him; and being yet a stranger to philanthropic schemes, and not at all sympathetic, the minister of Salem conducted himself in a way which would have called forth the profoundest contempt and pity of the curate of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

St. Roque's. He believed everybody's story, and emptied his purse with the wildest liberality; for, indeed, visitation of the poor had not been a branch of study at Homerton.<sup>11</sup>

At this point arose preposterous complications in the plot. During his visits he met a poor woman, Mrs. Hilyard, who was in some strange way connected with the affairs of Lady Western. Mrs. Hilyard had a daughter whom she was anxious to keep out of the clutches of her ex-husband; so Mr. Vincent suggested that she send the child to live with his mother and sister in a distant town. As it happened, Mrs. Hilyard's former husband, who was using the assumed name of Fordham, was in the process of trying to marry Mr. Vincent's sister. When Mrs. Vincent came to Carlingford to tell her son that she distrusted the suitor, the villain seized the opportunity to kidnap his sweetheart and Mrs. Hilyard's daughter.

That was just the beginning. Mr. Vincent left immediately to track down his sister; upon arrival at Fordham's lodgings in London he discovered that the villain's real name was Milmay and that he had been using the name of a naval officer who had recently returned to the country after a twelve-year absence. Moreover, the real Fordham was in love with Lady Western. Mr. Vincent finally traced his sister to a seaport; but when he arrived there, he found that Milmay had been shot, that Susan Vincent had been accused of attempting to murder him, and that she had eluded detective officers sent to capture her. The Salem minister did a bit of sleuthing on his own and found that it was Mrs. Hilyard--in reality Lady Russell--who had shot Milmay in an attempt to recover her child. Mr. Vincent threatened to turn her over to the police but relented when she promised to extract

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

from the dying man a statement clearing Susan's name.

Not knowing where to look for his sister, Mr. Vincent returned to Carlingford to find all Salem Chapel in an uproar over his sudden departure. Tozer, angry that the lecture series had been interrupted, rebuked the clergyman: "Them as likes to please themselves would be far better in a State Church, where it wouldn't disappoint nobody. . . ; but if the chapel folks is a little particular, it's no more nor a pastor's duty to bear with them."<sup>12</sup> The buttermilk man also complained to Mrs. Vincent about her son's fitness to continue teaching, hinting that the pastor had a lax conscience if he could let private whims distract him from his public duties.

The effect of such appalling lack of sympathy for his personal misfortunes was a moral blow to Mr. Vincent. "For the first time in the commotion of his soul, in the resentment and forebodings to which he gave no utterance, in the bitter conviction of uncertainty in everything which consumed his heart, a doubt of his own ability to teach came into his heart."<sup>13</sup>

Susan finally made her way to Carlingford, arriving in a delirious state that bordered on insanity. The town doctor offered no hope of her recovery unless she could be brought to recall the events of the night during which the shooting occurred. Tozer recognized the strain of having a lunatic in the minister's lodgings, but he consoled Mr. Vincent by telling him that even in the midst of calamity he could continue saving souls. The pastor was stupefied by the remark:

Saving souls! Heaven help him! the words rang in his ears like mocking echoes. . . . Saving souls! What did it mean. . . ? Could he, and such as he, unwitting of half the mysteries of life, do anything to that prodigious

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

work? The end of it all was a confused recognition of the One half-known, half-identified, who, if any hope were to be had, held that hope in His hands.<sup>14</sup>

In the midst of his anguish, the clergyman discovered that the members of Salem Chapel were displeased by his failure to visit each member personally in order to apologise for his preoccupation with family matters. That was the last straw. On the following Sunday the indignant Mr. Vincent called a special meeting of the congregation, saying that he had an announcement to make.

Fearing the outcome of such a meeting, Tozer came to his senses and berated his fellow members for their attitude:

"It's the way of some folks in our connection, ladies and gentlemen; a minister ain't to be allowed to go on building up a chapel and making hisself useful in the world. He ain't to be left alone to do his dooty as his best friends approve. He's got to be took down out of his pulpit, and took to pieces behind his back, and made a talk and a scandal of to the whole connection. It's not his preaching as he's judged by, nor his dooty to the sick and dyin', nor any of them things as he was called to be pastor for; but it's if he's seen going to one house more nor another, or if he calls often enough on this one or t'other, and goes to all the tea-drinkings. . . . I could reckon up as many as six or seven as has been drove off already; and I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, what's the good of subscribing and keeping up of colleges and so forth, if that's how you're a-going to serve every clever man as trusts hisself to be your pastor?"<sup>15</sup>

It was too late, however, to alter Mr. Vincent's disillusioned opinion of the spiritual level of Salem Chapel. Using as his text "Love one another," he said that he had come to the painful conclusion that Dissenters in Carlingford did not understand the concept of love. Then he read his resignation:

"I am going to leave Carlingford. It was you who elected me, it is you who have censured me, it was you . . . who consented to look over my faults and give me a new trial. I am one of those who have boasted in my day that I received

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 185-186.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 234-235.

my title to ordination from no bishop, from no temporal provision, from no traditional church, but from the hands of the people. Perhaps I am less sure than I was at first; when you were all disposed to praise me, that the voice of the people is the voice of God; but, however that may be, what I received from you I can but render up to you. If there is any truth in the old phrase which calls a church a cure of souls, it is certain that no cure of souls can be delegated to a preacher by the souls themselves who are to be in his care. I find my old theories inadequate to the position in which I find myself, and all I can do is to give up the post where they have left me in the lurch. I am either your servant, responsible to you, or God's servant, responsible to Him--which is it? I cannot tell.<sup>16</sup>

Mrs. Oliphant polished off the rest of the clergyman's life briefly.

His sister, charmed back to sanity by Lady Russell's daughter, recovered and was acquitted. Lady Western ended all his romantic dreams by marrying Fordham. Mr. Vincent declined to accept three other Dissenting pulpits which were offered him and devoted himself instead to abstract idealism:

A Church of the Future--an ideal corporation, grand and primitive, not yet realized, but surely real, to become one day--shone before his eyes, as it shines before so many; but, in the meantime, the Nonconformist went into literature, as was natural, and was, it is believed in Carlingford, the founder of the "Philosophical Review," that new organ of public opinion. He had his battle to fight and fought it out in silence, saying little to any one. Sundry old arrows were in his heart, still quivering by times as he fought with the devil and the world in his desert; but he thought himself almost prosperous, and perfectly composed and eased of all fanciful and sentimental sorrows, when he went, two or three years after these events, to Folkestone, to meet his mother and sister, who had been living abroad, away from him, with their charge, and to bring them to the little house he had prepared for them in London, and where he said to himself he was prepared, along with them--a contented but neutral-colored household--to live out his life.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-277.

Salem Chapel also contained glimpses of several minor Nonconformist clergymen. Mr. Tufton, Mr. Vincent's infirm and incompetent predecessor, lived in retirement in Carlingford, harried the new minister with advice, and cherished the delusion that no one could equal his own contribution to the advance of Dissent. Mr. Bailey of neighboring Parson's Green was a success in his pulpit—"he had a historical course in the evenings, and a course upon the eighth of Romans in the morning, and it was astonishing to see how they took"<sup>18</sup> but he was pressured into resigning because the deacons' wives thought his wife gave herself airs. The most popular minister to put in an appearance at Salem Chapel was the Reverend Mr. Raffles of Shoebury, who was in great demand as a speaker at church-sponsored teas. Words fell from his lips like honey:

Mr. Raffles made quite one of his best speeches; he kept his audience in a perpetual flutter of laughter and applause; he set forth all the excellencies of the new minister with such detail and fullness as only the vainest could have swallowed. . . . He praised Mr. Tufton, the venerable father of the community; he praised the admirable deacons; he praised the arrangements. In short, Mr. Raffles applauded everybody, and everybody applauded Mr. Raffles.<sup>19</sup>

Mr. Vincent's successor, a college friend from Homerton, was an instant success. "If he was not quite equal to Mr. Vincent in the pulpit, he was much more complaisant at all the tea-parties."<sup>20</sup> Within six months after his arrival he married Phoebe Tozer; their rise in life is the subject of Phoebe Junior.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 276.



The Rector, second novel in the clerical series, was of novelette length. It, too, dealt with a new minister's impact upon ecclesiastical circles in Carlingford. Like Arthur Vincent, the Reverend Mr. Morley Proctor came to the town with no previous pastoral experience; he had been engaged in classical research at All-Souls, Oxford, for fifteen years after taking his degree. Before his arrival there was much speculation about his probable reaction to the Carlingford Church, which had been split by his predecessor:

He was highly spoken of, everybody knew; but nobody knew who had spoken highly of him, nor had been able to find out, even by inference, what were his views. The Church had been low during the last rector's reign—profoundly low—lost in the deepest abysses of Evangelicalism. A determined inclination to preach to everybody had seized upon that good man's brain; he had half emptied Salem Chapel, there could be no doubt; but, on the other hand, he had more than half filled the Chapel of St. Roque.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Proctor's parishioners knew no more about him after he took up residence at the rectory than they had known before. They entertained him at an endless succession of dinner parties but were unable to gain a statement of his position on any church issues. The new rector maintained a shy reserve, "made no innovations whatever, and never preached a sermon or a word more than was absolutely necessary."<sup>22</sup>

Morley Proctor's one great fear in life was that some woman would come upon him unawares and "marry him before he knew what he was about."<sup>23</sup> To protect himself from such a calamity, he invited his mother to come from

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<sup>21</sup>Mrs. Oliphant, The Rector and The Doctor's Family (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1870), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

Devonshire to live with him. She was a gay old soul "a hundred years or so younger than the Rector"<sup>24</sup> in mental outlook, and she delighted in teasing her son that one of the two Wodehouse daughters would pounce upon him and carry him off to her lair. Mr. Proctor took his mother seriously. In fear and trembling he shut himself up from all society for ten days but finally decided that he could venture out on short sorties with impunity. Still, "he lived not in false security but wise trembling, never knowing what hour the thunderbolt might fall upon his head."<sup>25</sup>

It was for reasons far removed from matrimony that the rector's career came to a hasty and remarkable conclusion. One afternoon as he was out walking, he was hastily summoned into a house where a woman lay dying. At first, the surprised man refused to enter the patient's room:

He had not his prayer-book--he was not prepared; he had no idea of being called upon in such an emergency. . . . The Rector stood uncertain and perplexed, perhaps in a more serious personal difficulty than had ever happened to him all his life before. For what did he know about deathbeds? or what had he to say to any one on that dread verge?<sup>26</sup>

Finding himself in the woman's presence, Mr. Proctor was at a complete loss for words. When she told him that her mind was uneasy, he advised her to have confidence in her physician. When she pointedly confessed that she feared for her soul, he awkwardly said that he hoped she was not ill enough to worry about such matters. Fortunately, the curate of St. Roque's arrived and with an efficient bedside manner set the suffering woman at ease.

In embarrassment and consternation, Mr. Proctor went home to his

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

study filled with doubts about his calling:

For the first time in his life he set himself to inquire what was his supposed business in this world. His treatise on the Greek verb, and his new edition of Sophocles, were highly creditable to the Fellow of All-Souls; but how about the Rector of Carlingford? What was he doing here, among that little world of human creatures who were dying, being born, perishing, suffering, falling into misfortune and anguish, and all manner of human vicissitudes, every day? . . . Was he a Christian priest, or what was he? He was troubled to the very depths of his soul. To hold an office the duties of which he could not perform, was clearly impossible. The only question, and that a hard one, was, whether he could learn to discharge those duties, or whether he must cease to be Rector of Carlingford.<sup>27</sup>

With unresolved questions lingering in his mind and with a wistful anxiety to do his duty, the rector preached as usual on the following Sunday, delivering a "smooth little sermon, which nobody cared much about, and which disturbed nobody."<sup>28</sup> His limited ministry might have gone on indefinitely had there not been another death among his parishioners; but such an event, through which he struggled with a "horrible abstractness,"<sup>29</sup> convinced him that he ought to return to Oxford and give the Carlingford living to a fellow scholar whose turn was much more to be a working clergyman than a classical commentator.<sup>30</sup>

But Mr. Proctor found that he was no longer content in his little cocoon at All-Souls; for "life, after all, did not consist of books, nor were Greek verbs essential to happiness."<sup>31</sup> He longed for the work that he

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

had rejected, and at the close of The Perpetual Curate he paid another visit to Carlingford, married the elder Miss Wodehouse, and settled down to spend the remainder of his life in a remote parsonage.

It would be difficult to decide between The Perpetual Curate or Phoebe, Junior if one were selecting the least satisfying novel in the Carlingford chronicles. Baker termed The Perpetual Curate "much ado about absolutely nothing,"<sup>32</sup> and the reader is prone to agree with him long before the end of the two-volume relation of the trials and tribulations of the Reverend Frank Wentworth, whom Baker classified as a "woman's man, a charming young fellow of the loftiest principle but far too good to be true."<sup>33</sup>

Mr. Wentworth had been in Carlingford during the incumbency of Mr. Vincent and of Mr. Proctor, but his work had gone smoothly and he had not drawn any widespread attention. Although people knew that he "held views of the most dangerous complexion, and indeed was as near Rome as a strong and lofty conviction of the really superior catholicity of the Anglican Church would permit him to be,"<sup>34</sup> they had a high personal regard for his devotion to his duties and his missionary activities among the poverty-stricken families in the run-down area of town known as Wharfside.

Young Mr. Wentworth felt himself destined for better things in life. His salary as perpetual curate was not sufficient to permit his marriage to the younger Miss Wodehouse, but he looked forward to receiving the living at Skelmersdale, a benefice owned by his three maiden aunts. The drawback was that the women were Evangelical to the core and wanted none of his

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<sup>32</sup>Baker, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>34</sup>The Perpetual Curate, vol. 1, p. 9.

Romishness, which they blamed on his education:

It is all owing to the bad advisers young men meet with at the universities; and how can it be otherwise as long as tutors and professors are chosen just for their learning, without any regard to their principles? What is Greek and Latin in comparison with a pious guide for the young?<sup>35</sup>

Arriving unannounced on Easter Sunday, they were appalled by the surplices of the choir, the flowers on the altar, and their nephew's sermon. The latter consisted of "very choice little sentences" which praised the Church for preserving the memory of such an important occasion without mentioning any of the reasons for allocating divine significance to the day. Mr. Wentworth had a habit of preaching "very clever little sermons, but still it is undeniable that a man has less scope, not only for oratory, but for all that is worthy of regard in human speech, when, instead of the everlasting reciprocations between heaven and earth, he occupies himself only with a set of ecclesiastical arrangements, however perfect."<sup>36</sup>

Here, as in Salem Chapel, the plot ran away without the least sense or credibility. For no apparent reason, Mr. Wentworth's aunts decided to settle indefinitely in Carlingford. At the same time, a mysterious and disreputable stranger took up lodgings with the perpetual curate. Shortly thereafter, the niece of a local merchant disappeared, and, because he had been talking to the girl the day she was last seen, Mr. Wentworth was charged with her abduction. The curate did not bother to declare his innocence, being preoccupied with trying to talk his brother Gerald out of renouncing his Anglican rectory in order to become a Catholic priest.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

Tongues wagged, and public opinion against the curate continued to mount:

"I can't fancy he looks guilty," an eager voice here and there kept saying over and over. But on the whole, after they had got over the momentary impression made by his presence and aspect, the opinion of Carlingford remained unchanged, which was--that, notwithstanding all the evidence of his previous life, it was quite believable that Mr. Wentworth was a seducer and a villain, and ought to be brought to condign punishment; but that in the meantime it was very interesting to watch the progress of this startling little drama, and that he himself, instead of merely being the Curate of St. Roque's, had become a most captivating enigma, and had made church-going itself half as good as a play.<sup>37</sup>

The Reverend Mr. William Morgan, who had followed Mr. Proctor as rector of Carlingford Church, was delighted to have an opportunity to put Mr. Wentworth in his place. He had felt, ever since coming to Carlingford, that the town was not big enough to hold them both, for he was convinced that the curate's wharveside mission infringed on rectory territory. The rector therefore called an ecclesiastical panel to investigate the curate's private life and to determine whether or not he was morally fit to retain his position.

Old Mr. Wodehouse died before the trial could be held, and the stranger whom Mr. Wentworth had been harboring came out of hiding and declared himself to be the deceased man's son. When the trial convened, one of Mr. Wentworth's aunts electrified the court by producing the girl whom the curate had been accused of abducting; the girl admitted sheepishly that she had gone into hiding of her own accord at the request of the newly discovered Wodehouse heir.

What Mr. Wentworth's motives were in the first place for taking in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p. 41.

Wodehouse never was made clear. Nor did Mrs. Oliphant satisfactorily explain how the curate's prim aunt got involved in the proceedings. Having gotten in her quota of suspense, the novelist blandly allowed Wodehouse and the merchant's niece to go away together--inexplicably leaving behind the family fortunes he had so recently acquired--and permitted the Wentworth aunts to pack their trunks and return to Skelmersdale.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wentworth had been zealously trying to impress upon Gerald the fact that he could not simply desert his wife and seven children in order to become a Catholic priest. But Gerald was adamant. If he could not be a priest, he would at least be a Catholic layman:

"My dear Frank, I want a church which is not a human institution. In England it seems to be the rule of faith that every man may believe as he pleases. There is no authority either to decide or to punish. If you can foresee what that may lead us to, I cannot. I take refuge in the true Church, where alone there is certainty--where there is authority clear and decisive."<sup>38</sup>

Frank's rebuttal was:

"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!"<sup>39</sup>

A delicate question now arose. Since Gerald was determined to resign his Anglican living, why should not Frank have it? It was apparent that his aunts would bestow the Skelmersdale living upon an Evangelical candidate, and Frank had no hope of marrying his dear Lucy Wodehouse unless he were to receive a promotion from his present cure. With unbelievable unselfishness, the curate piously announced that he must remain in Carlingford in order to continue his Wharfside project, even if it meant that his own wishes must be sacrificed.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 207-208.

Mrs. Oliphant was too kindhearted to let such virtue go unrewarded; so she arranged for Mr. Morgan to be offered an attractive living in a distant parish. The rector, ashamed of his attitude toward Mr. Wentworth, magnanimously recommended that the deserving perpetual curate be appointed rector of Carlingford Church. The author probably realized that Mr. Morgan's about-face was the final inconsistency in an incredible plot, for she allowed one of the Miss Wentworths to say:

"I suppose this is what fools call poetical justice, which is just of a piece with everything else that is poetical--weak folly and nonsense that no sensible man would have anything to say to. How a young man like you, who know how to conduct yourself in some things, and have, I don't deny, many good qualities, can give in to come to an ending like a trashy novel, is more than I can understand. You are fit to be put in a book of the Good-child series, Frank, as an illustration of the reward of virtue, and, of course, you are going to marry and live happily ever after, like a fairy tale. . . . I don't approve of a man ending off neatly like a novel in this sort of ridiculous way."<sup>40</sup>

Phoebe, Junior out-Oliphants The Perpetual Curate, if such a thing is possible. It dealt with life in Carlingford twenty years after Mr. Vincent's tenure at Salem Chapel. During that time Mr. Beecher--or Beecham, as he was called in this final novel in the series--had outgrown the provincial atmosphere of Carlingford and had worked his way to the top in Dissenting circles. As the novel opened, he was pastor of the handsome Crescent Chapel near St. Regent's Park in London.

Mr. Beecham had unbounded fluency and an unctuous manner of treating his subjects. It was eloquence of a kind, though not of an elevated kind. Never to be at a loss for what you have to say is a prodigious advantage to all men in all professions, but doubly so to a popular minister.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 328-331.



He had an unbounded wealth of phraseology. Sentences seemed to melt out of his mouth without any apparent effort, all set in a certain cadence. He had not, perhaps, much power of thought, but it is easy to make up for such a secondary want when the gift of expression is so strong.<sup>41</sup>

The Beechams' daughter, Phoebe, was transported from London to Carlingford in order to care for her aged grandparents. By some obvious manipulation, she became intimate with a strangely assembled group of young people; the artificial party included Ursula May, daughter of the current curate of St. Roque's, her brother Reginald May, warden of the local almshouse, Horace Northcote, interim pastor of Salem Chapel, and Clarence Copperhead, son of the wealthiest member of Mr. Beecham's chapel. Why Mr. Copperhead, a staunch Dissenter, had selected an obscure Anglican curate as his son's tutor is beyond one's wildest imagination.

He [Mr. May] was a man of some culture, and literary power, and wrote very pleasant "thoughtful" papers for some of the Church magazines. . . . He was a man with an imposing person, good-looking, and of very bland and delightful manners, when he chose. But yet he had never made friends, and was now at fifty-five the incumbent of St. Roque, with a small income and a humble position in the church hierarchy of Carlingford. He preached better than any of the other Carlingford clergymen, looked better, had more reputation out of the place; and was of sufficiently good family, and tolerably well connected. Yet he never got on, never made any real advance in life. Nobody could tell what was the cause of this, for his opinions were moderate and did not stand in his way. . . . He took it for granted, frankly, and as a part of his nature, that he himself was the first person to be considered in all matters.<sup>42</sup>

Nothing could be further apart than the religious views of Horace and Reginald, for Northcote was "strenuously of the opinion in his heart

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<sup>41</sup>Phoebe, Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 121-123.

of hearts that the Church was the great drawback to all progress in England, an incubus of which the nation would gladly be rid."<sup>43</sup> Before he had even met the Mays, he preached a fiery sermon against Reginald's wardenship that was uncomfortably reminiscent of Dr. Bold's attacks on Mr. Harding in Trollope's The Warden:

"There is in this town, as you all know, an institution called the College; what was its original object I do not know. Nests of idle pauperism, genteely veiled under such a name, do exist, I know, over all the country; but it is at least probable that some educational purpose was in the mind of the pious founder who established it. . . . This old foundation, ladies and gentlemen, which might provide half the poor children in Carlingford with a wholesome education, is devoted to the maintenance of six old men . . . and one able-bodied parson to say their prayers for them. . . . Can I give a more forcible instance of the way in which a State Church cuts honesty and honour out of men's hearts?"<sup>44</sup>

Northcote was not popular in Carlingford. Dissatisfied with the crude society of the Salem congregation, he retaliated by ignoring the chapel members when he met them in public and by preaching sermons that went over their heads. When he was not pursuing his hobby of collecting Wedgwood cups and saucers—"my pleasure lies," he confided to Phoebe, "in making the tea-table into a kind of lyric"<sup>45</sup>—he was sitting dreamily beside Ursula in the May's parlor.

There is absolutely no reason for going into the tortuous details of the lovemaking that went on in that parlor for the better part of six months. Phoebe's grandmother apparently was not as sick as the Beechams had been led to believe, for the girl found time to lend daily piano accompaniment to Clarence's violin. After they had practiced Mendelssohn's

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 221-223.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 18.

"Wedding March" to perfection, they announced to their parents that they were coming home to London to be married. Horace modified his religious opinions to the point that he decided that he was not cut out to be a clergyman after all; with his Dissenting views out of the way he felt free to become Ursula's husband and Reginald's brother-in-law. Poor Reginald, who had secretly worshipped Phoebe from afar, was so hurt by her marriage to his rival that he vowed never to love again.

The better part of the second volume was devoted to the downfall and utter ruin of Mr. May. A poor manager and always in debt, he was at last reduced to forging Samuel Tozer's name on a bank note. Several days before the note came due, the curate could not resist purchasing an elaborate bookcase at an auction. On the day that the money was to be paid he rode gaily off to a dinner party, forgetting that such action would bankrupt both himself and an innocent tradesman whom he had entangled in his hopeless financial dealings. When the frantic tradesman sent word that they were both ruined, Mr. May became raving mad and ran out into the street in his nightshirt to avoid imaginary law-enforcement agents. Tozer, seeing the pitiful state to which the clergyman was reduced, accepted Northcote's offer to repay the note quietly. But Mr. May never recovered his health or his self-respect, and within a year he was dead--to no one's particular surprise or dismay.

CHAPTER FIVE  
INWARD STRUGGLES

The final quarter of the nineteenth century was marked by a new direction in the clerical novel. The effect of scientific and philosophical developments upon the Church of England has been noted previously; novelists such as George MacDonald, Samuel Butler, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and William H. White felt impelled to report the effect of those developments upon individual clergymen.<sup>1</sup> Thus a more serious type of fiction came into being. It emphasized deep rather than superficial character study and based extensive inward soul-searching on the barest of plots. In other words, these later novels purported to be--and in some cases actually were--spiritual diaries. Perhaps the "origin of the species" of the struggling churchmen who emerged late in the century was Josiah Crawley; but the perpetual curate of Hogglestock was grounded upon a faith, however elusive it might appear, that his successors in English fiction could not claim to possess. Nor was Mrs. Oliphant's Morley Proctor a true example, for his searching was neither profound nor extensive.

George MacDonald was a Scotsman, but he had not been brought up as a Presbyterian. After becoming dissatisfied with Unitarian theology he turned to the Church of England for the subject matter of Thomas

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<sup>1</sup>Because they are extensively treated in Horton Davies' A Mirror of the Ministry in Modern Novels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), I have excluded Mrs. Ward's Robert Elsmere and White's Mark Rutherford and Mark Rutherford's Deliverance from this discussion. The reader is referred to Dr. Davies' recent and readily-available volume.

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Wingfold, Curate. The novel appeared in 1887, but its actual setting was seventeen years earlier when the Anglican Church was fighting for its very life. MacDonald, although formally espousing no religious denomination or preference, considered himself a lay preacher; it is likely that Thomas Wingfold, curate of the Abbey Church in Glaston, was in temperament and in religious outlook a projection of the author's own personality. At any rate, Wingfold was surely intended to be representative of the bewildered clergymen of the critical period in which he lived.

Destined for clerical orders from his birth, Wingfold had obediently gone through the necessary years of preparation without giving his vocation any thought or interest. In due time he was assigned to the Abbey Church, where he was engaged in carrying out his duties in a conscientious but superficial manner when MacDonald chose to begin his narrative.

Wingfold's bland little world was disrupted when Mrs. Ramshorn, widow of a former cathedral dean, invited the curate to dine with her and her twenty-three-year-old niece, Helen Lingard. The only other guest was George Bascombe, a budding lawyer who had long forsaken the God of his clergyman father and who longed to win Helen's affections. Ostensibly for the purpose of smoking a cigar but actually to try the mettle of the curate, Bascombe accompanied Wingfold home. During their leisurely walk he assailed the church and its tenets; and Wingfold, who had held his ground admirably in discussing Horace an hour before, was unable to say

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<sup>2</sup>George MacDonald, Thomas Wingfold, Curate (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Co., 1887).

a word in behalf of the institution to which he had dedicated his life. "He said 'Don't you think?' far oftener than 'I think,' and was always more ready to fix his attention upon the strong points of an opponent's argument than to reassert his own in slightly altered phrase like most men, or even in fresh forms like a few."<sup>3</sup>

After Bascombe left, the curate went into the churchyard greatly troubled.

Something must be wrong somewhere: was it in him or in the church? In him assuredly, whether in her or not. For had he not been unable to utter the simple assertion that he did believe the things which, as the mouth-piece of the church, he had been speaking in the name of truth every Sunday. . . ?

Thus, he attended to his duties, not merely "did church," but his endeavour also [sic] that all things should be done decently and in order. All the same it remained a fact that if Barrister Bascombe were to stand up and assert in full congregation--as no doubt he was perfectly prepared to do--that there was no God anywhere in the universe, the Rev. Thomas Wingfold could not, on the church's part, prove to anybody that there was;--dared not, indeed, so certain would he be of discomfiture, advance a single argument on his side of the question. Was it even his side of the question? Could he say he believed there was a God? Or was not this all he knew--that there was a Church of England, which paid him for reading public prayers to a God in whom the congregation--and himself--were supposed by some to believe, by others, Bascombe, for instance, not?<sup>4</sup>

MacDonald, like Trollope, blamed the clergyman's state of mind on "those who had brought him up to the church as to the profession of medicine, or the bar, or the drapery business--as if it lay on one level of choice with other human callings. Nor were the honoured of the church who had taught him free from blame, who never warned him to put his shoes from off his feet for the holiness of the ground."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

It was the curate's weekly habit to read to his congregation on Sunday mornings one of the sermons which had been passed on to him by an uncle who had used them in his own pulpit for many years. Consequently, Wingfold had never in his life prepared a sermon of his own, nor had he ever paid particular attention to the content of those that he read. After his conversation with Bascombe he was careful to avoid doctrinal subjects, but he had little difficulty reading the more innocuous sermons in his repertoire. It was a complete shock to him, therefore, when a member of his congregation--Mr. Polwarth, a man with deformed body but keen mind--called the curate to his home and confronted him with the fact that the sermons he had been delivering were copied almost verbatim from such former churchmen as Jeremy Taylor. Wingfold, having thought the sermons to be of his uncle's own composition, was forced to admit his ignorance and was also led by the genuinely concerned dwarf to admit that he had no convictions on which to base counsel to his congregation.

Mr. Polwarth's main concern was not that Wingfold's sermons came from books; such a method was acceptable to him if a clergyman could not "do better." In that case, however, he advised the minister to read "not with his sermon in his eye, but with his people in his heart."<sup>6</sup> The dwarf's interest prompted the curate to confess that his sermon presentation was but a symptom of a deeper malady:

I pass my examinations with decency, distinguish myself in nothing, go before the bishop, am admitted a deacon, after a year am ordained a priest, and after another year or two of false preaching and of parish work, suddenly find myself curate in charge of a grand old abbey church; but as to what the whole thing means in practical relation with myself as

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

a human being, I am as ignorant as Simon Magus, without his excuse.<sup>7</sup>

He then, in abject sincerity, bombarded the old man with questions on the existence of God, the meaning of Christianity, and the humanity and divinity of Jesus. The dwarf listened patiently, suggested that he read the New Testament, and advised him not to resign his clerical profession unless he found unsatisfactory answers to the questions that perplexed him.

Wingfold went home to compose his first sermon. Taking the text "Confessing your faults one to another," he decided to tell his congregation honestly about his dilemma and ask their indulgence in his plan to continue reading borrowed theology to them until he could present convictions of his own. Most of his hearers were willing enough to view the experiment with interest. A few were in favor of reporting their minister's unorthodox behavior to the rector but gave up the idea when they remembered how negligent that clergyman was in matters pertaining to his parish.

Meanwhile, Wingfold's difficulties were multiplying. He got so bogged down in the New Testament genealogies, the question of scriptural inspiration, and the accounts of the miracles, that more doubts arose to plague him. Polwarth, to whom he went almost daily for guidance, kept pointing him to the necessity of seeking first to establish the centrality of Christ: "The question for you is not, Are the miracles true? but, Was Jesus true? Again I say, you must find him, the man himself."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 148.



As if in answer to his quandary, two scripture verses flashed upon his mind: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," and "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Using the latter as his text, he told his congregation on the following Sabbath that, while he could not call himself a Christian, he would henceforth make a bold effort to seek and obey the will of God. Although Mrs. Ramshorn indignantly termed the curate a "professed infidel,"<sup>9</sup> there were others in the church who recognized that their minister was involved in a sincere search for divine truth.

By the following week, Wingfold had progressed to the point that he could say in his sermon:

What is Christianity? I know but one definition, the analysis of which, if the thing in question be a truth, must be the joyous labour of every devout heart to all eternity. For Christianity does not mean what you think or what I think concerning Christ, but what is of Christ. My Christianity, if ever I come to have any, will be what of Christ, is in me; your Christianity now is what of Christ as is in you.<sup>10</sup>

Some, after hearing him, insisted that he had had a sunstroke or a "softening of the brain." Others, more malicious, accused him of trying cleverly to attract attention and thereby attain a more prominent clerical position. Still others judged him a dangerous fanatic and "suspected a Romanising drift in the whole affair."<sup>11</sup> Few except Polwarth took the ordeal seriously or realized the intensity of Wingfold's fervor: "His knees were sore with kneeling, his face white with thinking, his eye dim with

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

trouble; for when once a man has set out to find God, he must find him or die."<sup>12</sup>

As word of the curate's strange sermons spread, townspeople of other religious preferences began attending the Abbey services out of curiosity. One of these, a linen draper, came to Wingfold afterwards and asked him for help in conducting his business dealings in a Christ-like manner. The curate objected that he was an unfit counsellor.

"That's the beauty of you!--excuse me, sir," cried the draper triumphantly. "You don't pretend to teach us anything, but you make us so uncomfortable that we go about ever after asking ourselves what we ought to do."<sup>13</sup>

Wingfold's next problem was a natural outgrowth of his intense musings. He felt that he could accept an ideal religion such as Christ taught, but he could not reconcile those teachings with the commonplace things of daily life. Bascombe continued to heckle him until the curate turned him away by saying, "My business is not to prove to any other man that there is a God, but to find him for myself."<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, Bascombe had to be content with deriding the minister to Mrs. Ramshorn: "As long as he don't finish his sentences, . . . jumbles his figures, and begins and ends abruptly without either exordium or peroration, he needn't look to make anything of a preacher--and that seems to be his object."<sup>15</sup>

The curate at last began to develop a mature religious faith through

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

his association with two persons who were groping as he was. Helen Lindgard's brother, a student at Cambridge, had committed a murder and had fled to her for concealment. No one suspected him of having done the deed, but he was almost overpowered with a sense of guilt. Helen tried to comfort him but, not believing in a God herself, was unable to ease his mind with promises of the mercy and forgiveness that could come through repentance. He raged in such a fever that at last, in desperation, she called in Wingfold to talk to the youth. In explaining the need for individual communication with God, the curate was aware for the first time of a sense of Christ's presence. This he attributed to feeling a new concern for humanity in the form of the wretch before him. In proportion to the strength of character the guilty youth gained from Wingfold, so did the minister gain confidence that there was indeed a God who could transform men's lives. Happily he told Polwarth that he was confirmed in his belief that he should retain his clerical position because "nothing else seems interesting enough, nothing to repay the labour, but the telling of my fellow-men about the one man who is the truth, and to know whom is the life."<sup>16</sup> He followed with an affirmation of faith that was a step forward, even if it left much room for growth:

I will teach that which is good, even if there should be no God to make a fact of it, and I will spend my life on it in the growing hope, which may become assurance, that there is indeed a perfect God, worthy of being called the Father of Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup>

From this point onward, the novel tends more and more to be merely a vehicle for MacDonald's own sermons and poems, neither of which showed

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

much talent or originality, but both of which reflected a serious concern with man's estrangement from God and his need for a recommitment and re-vitalization if the Church were to regain its dynamic force:

Unless you repent and believe afresh, believe in a nobler Christ, namely the Christ revealed by himself, and not the muffled form of something vaguely human and certainly not at all divine, which the false interpretations of men have substituted for him, you will be, as I repeat you are, the main reason why faith is so scanty in the earth, and the enemy comes in like a flood.<sup>18</sup>

In a rather amateurishly contrived conclusion, Helen asked the curate to help her find God as he had found him. Wingfold, who had grown to love her during the months he had counselled her brother, felt his heart beat "like the drum of a praising orchestra."<sup>19</sup>

"Dear Miss Lingard," he answered very solemnly, "I can teach you nothing; I can but show you where I found that which has changed my life from a bleak November to a sunny June--with its thunder-storms no doubt--but still June beside November."<sup>20</sup>

The touching scene closed with the curate's kneeling alone in the church, thanking God "not for any perfected gift," but for many a lovely hope."<sup>21</sup>

Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh was not published until 1903, but it was written between 1872 and 1884 and thus was another product of the critical age in nineteenth century Anglicanism. According to Bergen Evans in his introduction to the Premier World Classic edition of the novel, the book treats a period of English history when "the Christian religion was, of course, the keystone of respectability. Failure to pay it

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 499.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 509.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 509-510.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 510.

at least lip service was punished by ostracism. Yet it was one of the most un-Christian ages on record, an age, said Butler, which would have been 'equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted or seeing it practised.'<sup>22</sup>

The chief value of the book lies in its extensive study of the environment which produced the type of men who blundered into clerical orders without conviction or purpose. The Way of All Flesh is highly autobiographical; Butler portrays himself both through the struggles of Ernest Pontifex and through the opinions expressed by the narrator, Edward Overton. In a sense, it is the spiritual record of two generations of the Pontifex--or Butler--family.

Overton, son of a rector, was born in 1802, as was Theobald Pontifex, Ernest's father. The two grew up together in Paleham, some fifty miles from London, and later were classmates at Cambridge. Overton's association with the Pontifex family was extended when he was named godfather to Theobald's first child, Ernest; he was thereby placed in a position in which he could observe both father and son throughout their lives.

As a young boy, Theobald was reserved, shy, and indolent. His brothers and sisters were repelled by his personality; among his schoolmates "he was not actively disliked, but he was too dull and deficient in animal spirits to be popular."<sup>23</sup>

His father, a noted publisher of religious books, early determined that Theobald should be a clergyman. "This might tend to bring business,

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<sup>22</sup>Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1960), p. vii.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

or at any rate to keep it in the firm; besides, Mr. Pontifex had more or less interest with bishops and Church dignitaries and might hope that some preferment would be offered to his son through his influence."<sup>24</sup> As long as the prospect of a clerical career was in the remote future, Theobald complied with his father's plan. Confronted, however, by the rapid approach of his ordination, he attempted a feeble show of resistance:

"I do not like opening up a question which has been considered settled, but as the time approaches I begin to be very doubtful how far I am fitted to be a clergyman. Not, I am thankful to say, that I have the faintest doubts about the Church of England, and I could subscribe cordially to every one of the thirty-nine articles which do indeed appear to me to be the ne plus ultra of human wisdom, and Paley, too, leaves no loop-hole for an opponent; but I am sure I should be running counter to your wishes if I were to conceal from you that I do not feel the inward call to be a minister of the gospel that I shall have to say I have felt when the Bishop ordains me. I try to get this feeling, I pray for it earnestly, and sometimes half think I have got it, but in a little time it wears off, and though I have no absolute repugnance to being a clergyman and trust that if I am one I shall endeavour to live to the Glory of God and to advance His interest upon earth, yet I feel that something more than this is wanted before I am fully justified in going into the Church."<sup>25</sup>

The result of that confession was an indignant threat from his father that all financial support should be withdrawn until the young man came to his senses. "Either Theobald's heart failed him, or he interpreted the outward shove which his father gave him, as the inward call for which I have no doubt he prayed with great earnestness,"<sup>26</sup> for he was promptly ordained and took a fellowship.

Now it happened that at Crampsford, near Cambridge, there was a rector

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

named Mr. Allaby who had five daughters to marry off. He could not afford to hire an eligible curate; so he followed the practice of paying different students half a guinea per Sunday to assist him. The youths were duly invited home to dinner after the service, but so far the scheme had led to no courting. In desperation, Mrs. Allaby went to a professor's wife noted for her matchmaking--"if the marriage of a young Bachelor of Arts was not made in Heaven, it was probably made, or at any rate attempted, in Mrs. Cowey's drawing-room"<sup>27</sup>--and the two women settled upon Theobald as the most likely candidate for all-out assault.

Theobald's first sermon at Crampsford was on the subject of geology, a current "theological bugbear."<sup>28</sup> His preaching and his personality were pleasing to the Allabys, and the next day the five sisters played a crucial game of cards with the unknowing victim as the stakes. The winner was Christina, four years older than Theobald. Left grudgingly as the sole combatant for the prize, she mapped her strategy and at the end of six months elicited from Pontifex a vague proposal of marriage. Their courtship consisted of discussing Theobald's prospects for becoming a bishop. If that failed to materialize, Christina promised that she would be content with becoming a missionary martyr among the heathen. They discussed their religious convictions, but the conversations upon that topic were superficial:

It had never so much as crossed Theobald's mind to doubt the literal accuracy of any syllable in the Bible. He had never seen any book in which this was disputed, not met with anyone who doubted it. True, there was just a little scare about geology, but there was nothing in it. If it

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

was said that God made the world in six days, why He did make it in six days, neither in more nor less; if it was said that He put Adam to sleep, took out one of his ribs and made a woman of it, why it was so as a matter of course.<sup>29</sup>

After a five-year engagement, the couple was married in 1831 when the living at Battersby-on-the-Hill became vacant. The ceremony had not been ended more than thirty minutes before Theobald began wishing that he had had the foresight to read Milton's divorce tracts. Equally unsuited for ministry or marriage, he nevertheless tried to do his best; "but what does a fish's best come to when the fish is out of water?"<sup>30</sup>

Ministering to the sick was completely foreign to him, and he found time hanging heavy on his hands:

He does not like this branch of his profession--indeed he hates it--but will not admit it to himself. The habit of not admitting things to himself had become a confirmed one with him. Nevertheless there haunts him an ill defined sense that life would be pleasanter if there were no sick sinners, or if they would at any rate face an eternity of torture with more indifference. He does not feel that he is in his element. . . .

He knows that he is doing his duty. Every day convinces him of this more firmly; but then there is not much duty for him to do. He is sadly in want of occupation. He has no taste for any of those field sports which were not considered unbecoming for a clergyman forty years ago. He does not ride, nor shoot, nor course, nor play cricket. Study, to do him justice, he had never really liked, and what inducement was there for him to study at Battersby? He reads neither old books nor new ones. He does not interest himself in art or science or politics, but he sets his back up with some promptness if any of them show any development unfamiliar to himself. True, he writes his own sermons, but even his wife considers that his forte lies rather in the example of his life (which is one long act of self-devotion) than in his utterances from the pulpit. After breakfast he retires to

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 75.



his study; he cuts little bits out of the Bible and gums them with exquisite neatness by the side of other little bits; this he calls making a Harmony of the Old and New Testaments.<sup>21</sup>

Ernest was born in 1835 and was duly christened in water from the River Jordan. Despite the fact that Theobald thought children to be nuisances, his wife presented him with two more within twenty-four months. "If Christina could have given birth to a few full-grown clergymen in priest's orders--of moderate views, but inclined rather to Evangelicalism, with comfortable livings and in all respects facsimiles of Theobald himself--why there might have been more sense in it."<sup>32</sup>

Theobald took seriously the Biblical injunction to train up a child in the way he should go.

Before Ernest could well crawl he was taught to kneel; before he could well speak he was taught to lisp the Lord's prayer, and the general confession. How was it possible that these things could be taught too early? If his attention flagged or his memory failed him, here was an ill weed which would grow apace, unless it were plucked out immediately, and the only way to pluck it out was to whip him, or shut him up in a cupboard,<sup>33</sup> or dock him some of the small pleasures of childhood.

Overton, as Trollope had done, gave the author's own views in side passages. Butler was particularly bitter about the unsatisfactory life of the son of a clergyman:

I have often thought that the Church of Rome does wisely in not allowing her priests to marry. Certainly it is a matter of common observation in England that the sons of clergymen are frequently unsatisfactory. The explanation is very simple, but is so often lost sight of that I may perhaps be pardoned for giving it here.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

The clergyman is expected to be a kind of human Sunday. Things must not be done in him which are venial in the week-day classes. He is paid for this business of leading a stricter life than other people. It is his raison d'être. . . . This is why the clergyman is so often called a vicar--he being the person whose vicarious goodness is to stand for that of those entrusted to his charge. But his home is his castle as much as that of any other Englishman, and with him, as with others, unnatural tension in public is followed by exhaustion when tension is no longer necessary. His children are the most defenceless things he can reach, and it is on them in nine cases out of ten that he will relieve his mind.

A clergyman, again, can hardly ever allow himself to look facts fairly in the face. It is his profession to support one side; it is impossible, therefore, for him to make an unbiased examination of the other.<sup>34</sup>

Theobald was appointed to a rural deanery upon the death of a neighboring clergyman. His selection was not surprising, for he was reputed to have firm convictions.

"I [Overton] should doubt whether he ever got as far as doubting the wisdom of his Church upon any single matter. His scent for possible mischief was tolerably keen; so was Christina's, and it is likely that if either of them detected in him or herself the first faint symptoms of a want of faith they were nipped no less peremptorily in the bud than signs of self-will in Ernest were--and I should imagine more successfully."<sup>35</sup>

When Ernest was twelve years old, having mastered Latin, Greek, French, and higher mathematics, he was sent to study with the famous Dr. Skinner of Roughborough Grammar School. The headmaster was generally conceded to have "the harmlessness of the serpent and the wisdom of the dove";<sup>36</sup> certainly he was not prepared to give Ernest the kind of attention he needed. Separated from his parents for the first time, the boy began to ponder his

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-116.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

station in life:

He hated papa, and did not like mamma, and this was what none but a bad and ungrateful boy would do after all that had been done for him. Besides, he did not like Sunday; he did not like anything that was really good; his tastes were low and such as he was ashamed of. He liked people best if they sometimes swore a little, so long as it was not at him. As for his Catechism and Bible readings he had no heart in them. He had never attended to a sermon in his life. . . . He had never been able to understand what it was that he desired of his Lord God and Heavenly Father, nor had he yet got hold of a single idea in connection with the word Sacrament. His duty towards his neighbour was another bugbear. It seemed to him that he had duties toward everybody, lying in wait for him upon every side, but that nobody had any duties towards him.<sup>37</sup>

Ernest neither disgraced nor distinguished himself at Roughborough. He occasionally got into scrapes over money or accumulated too many demerits by failing to pay attention in class, but in general he accepted passively whatever his superiors decreed to be right or worthy.

Theobald's maiden sister took an interest in the boy and moved from London to Roughborough to observe him more closely. Because she used the plausible excuse of needing to live in the country for reasons of health, Theobald did not suspect that her real motive was to determine whether Ernest was worthy to be made her heir. Overton said that had they had the least suspicion, "they would have been so jealous that. . . they would have asked her to go and live somewhere else."<sup>38</sup> She was a good influence on the lad for several months, advancing his interest in music; then she contracted typhoid fever and died. She had appointed Overton as administrator

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-132.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

of her will, which provided that Ernest was to receive fifteen thousand pounds plus accrued interest when he reached the age of twenty-eight. Until that time, no one except Overton was to know how she had disposed of her money.

In due time Ernest entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and graduated creditably. "Up to this time, though not religiously inclined, he had never doubted the truth of anything that had been told him about Christianity. He had never seen anyone who doubted, nor read anything that raised a suspicion in his mind as to the historical character of the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments."<sup>39</sup> He had come in contact with a group of ministerial students at St. John's who ostentatiously distributed tracts and met frequently in one another's rooms "for tea and prayer and other spiritual exercises,"<sup>40</sup> but the nearest he came to associating with them was through writing a parody of one of their pamphlets.

After his graduation, Ernest stayed on to read for his ordination. He studied the New Testament, attempted to memorize the Pauline epistles in their original Greek, read Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying and More's Mysteries of Godliness, and devoured numerous expositions of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Creed. Moved by curiosity, he attended a meeting where a popular Evangelical clergyman, the Reverend Gideon Hawke, was preaching. The sermon was packed with emotional stimulation, and it convinced Ernest that he must give up all for Christ—even his tobacco. With great zeal he gathered up his pipes and hid them under his bed. Before the

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

day was over, however, he had modified his views upon smoking after satisfying his conscience with this remarkable rationalization:

Tobacco had nowhere been forbidden in the Bible, but then it had not yet been discovered, and had probably only escaped proscription for this reason. We can conceive of St. Paul or even our Lord Himself as drinking a cup of tea, but we cannot imagine either of them as smoking a cigarette or a churchwarden. Ernest could not deny this, and admitted that Paul would almost certainly have condemned tobacco in good round terms if he had known of its existence. Was it not then taking a rather mean advantage of the Apostle to stand on his not having actually forbidden it? On the other hand, it was possible that God knew Paul would have forbidden smoking, and had purposely arranged the discovery of tobacco for a period at which Paul should be no longer living. This might seem rather hard on Paul, considering all he had done for Christianity, but it would be made up to him in other ways.<sup>41</sup>

Without mentioning his tobacco backsliding, Ernest wrote an impulsive letter to his parents telling them that he was sure that he was "going towards Christ." Even this did not please Theobald, who considered his son a fool for leaning toward Evangelicalism at a time when it was evident that the best clerical positions were being consistently awarded to High Churchmen.

Ernest was ordained in the fall of 1858 and was appointed to a curacy in central London, where he served as one of two curates of a moderately High Church rector. The other curate, Fryer, was popular, handsome, sophisticated, and extremely High Church. Ernest was completely taken in by him; he began to be attracted to Rome. Fearing that he alone might not have the will power to resist Fryer's belief that "the priest must be absolutely sexless,"<sup>42</sup> he decided that the only thing to do was to get married as quickly as possible. He was deterred in his plan solely by the fact that he could not think of any woman to ask.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 232-233.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

Pryer's reasons for favoring Roman Catholicism were much the same as those advanced by Mrs. Oliphant's Gerald Wentworth:

"You know, my dear Pontifex, it is all very well to quarrel with Rome, but Rome has reduced the treatment of the human soul to a science, while our own Church, though so much purer in many respects, has no organized system either of diagnosis or pathology--I mean, of course, spiritual pathology. Our Church does not prescribe remedies upon any settled system, and, what is still worse, even when her physicians have according to their lights ascertained the disease and pointed out the remedy, she has no discipline which will ensure its being actually applied. If our patients do not choose to do as we tell them, we cannot make them. Perhaps really under all the circumstances this is as well, for we are spiritually mere horse doctors as compared with the Roman priesthood, nor can we hope to make much headway against the sin and misery that surround us, till we return in some respects to the practice of our forefathers and of the greater part of Christendom."<sup>43</sup>

Ernest, who had never been exposed to such ideas, was confused.

When he asked Pryer's opinion of the Bible, he was totally unprepared for this response:

"If you begin with the Bible. . . you are three parts gone on the road to infidelity, and will go the other part before you know where you are. The Bible is not without its value to us the clergy, but for the laity it is a stumbling-block which cannot be taken out of their way too soon or too completely. Of course, I mean on the supposition that they read it, which, happily, they seldom do. If people read the Bible as the ordinary British churchman or churchwoman reads it, it is harmless enough; but if they read it with any care--which we should assume they will if we give it to them at all--it is fatal to them. . . .

Your question shows me that you have never read your Bible. A more unreliable book was never put upon paper. Take my advice and don't read it, not till you are a few years older, and may do so safely."<sup>44</sup>

Such new ideas fascinated Ernest, and soon he was mouthing Pryer's views as if he himself had originated them. He agreed wholeheartedly.

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

with his fellow curate's plan to start "a College of Spiritual Pathology where young men may study the nature and treatment of the sins of the soul as medical students study those of the bodies of their patients."<sup>45</sup> He did not realize that Fryer was playing him for a fool, trying to get him to invest all his money--he had received five thousand pounds from his grandfather upon coming of age--in a nebulous corporation whose purse strings Fryer would control.

Within a few weeks after arriving in London, Ernest had become so confused by listening to Fryer and reading Kingsley's Alton Locke, Stanley's Life of Arnold, Dickens' novels, "and whatever other literary garbage of the day was most likely to do him harm,"<sup>46</sup> that he was convinced that in order to regenerate the Church of England he must live in absolute poverty. He therefore took lodgings near Drury Lane Theatre in a boarding house filled with the dregs of humanity.

Ernest's theological theories multiplied. Another month or two saw him believing that Anglicans should revive excommunication. No doubt some of his parishioners would have put his name at the top of a list of excommunicants, for he did no pastoral visitation and preached trivial sermons:

He could hardly preach without making some horrid faux pas. He preached one Sunday morning when the Bishop was at his Rector's church, and made his sermon turn upon the question what kind of little cake it was that the widow of Zarephath had intended making when Elijah found her gathering a few sticks. He demonstrated that it was a seed cake.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

For the most part, he sat in his room and read Jesuit publications. "The world was all out of joint, and, instead of feeling it to be a cursed spite that he was born to set it right, he thought he was just the kind of person that was wanted for the job, and was eager to set to work, only he did not exactly know how to begin."<sup>48</sup> Sometimes, when he was away from Fryer, he wondered about the course he was pursuing:

Was he really doing everything that could be expected of him? It was all very well to say that he was doing as much as other young clergymen did; that was not the kind of answer which Jesus Christ was likely to accept; why, the Pharisees themselves in all probability did as much as the other Pharisees did. What he should do was to go into the highways and byways, and compel people to come in. Was he doing this? Or were not they rather compelling him to keep out--outside their doors at any rate? He began to have an uneasy feeling as though ere long, unless he kept a sharp lookout, he should drift into being a sham.<sup>49</sup>

Meantime, Fryer was gambling with Ernest's money on the stock exchange. At first the younger curate kept close tabs on his funds; but when Fryer complained that Ernest made him nervous, Pontifex put his entire fortune into Fryer's hands to do with as he thought best. "He was so anxious to do what was right, and so ready to believe that every one knew better than himself, that he never ventured to admit to himself that he might be all the while on a hopelessly wrong track."<sup>50</sup>

One thing, however, did begin to loom out of the general vagueness, and to this he instinctively turned as trying to seize it--I mean, the fact that he was saving very few souls, whereas there were thousands and thousands being lost hourly all around him which a little energy such as Mr. Hawke's might save. Day after day went by, and what was he doing? Standing on professional etiquette, and praying that his shares might go up and down as he wanted them, so that they might give him money

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 257.



enough to enable him to regenerate the universe. But in the meantime the people were dying. How many souls would not be doomed to endless ages of the most frightful torments that the mind could think of, before he could bring his spiritual pathology engine to bear upon them?<sup>51</sup>

Pryer, of course, scoffed at such questions, but Ernest determined to devote himself more ardently to laying up his treasure in heaven. He began by trying to convert a Methodist family on the third floor of his lodgings, but in talking to them he realized that he knew nothing about Methodism and could therefore say nothing intelligent. Next he went to another lodger, a tinker named Shaw. The host unexpectedly took the initiative in the conversation and early put the curate to flight by asking him to relate the story of the Resurrection as found in St. John's gospel. The visitor floundered and was mortified when Shaw told him that he needed to study until he could keep his facts straight before trying to convince anyone else. When Ernest got back to his room, he was chagrined to find, upon careful reading of the gospels, that he could not account for discrepancies between them.

Next, the curate made an appointment to convert Miss Snow, one of the two single young women in the building. He had heard that she was a prostitute, and he felt obligated to show her the folly of her ways. No sooner had he entered and placed his Bible on the table than the door suddenly opened and one of her men friends, a classmate whom Ernest had looked up to at Cambridge, came in. Ernest retreated in utter disillusionment and was so vexed that he kicked his Bible into a corner and, believing that the other woman was a bird of the same father, burst into her room. This time he was prompted by physical rather than spiritual desires. Twenty

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

minutes later he was in police custody, charged with assault, and the following day he was sentenced to six months of hard labor at Coldbath Fields.

Ernest's only regret was that he was disgracing his parents, but Theobald informed Overton that he and Christina had completely put their firstborn out of their minds.

As soon as he arrived at the prison, Ernest developed a severe case of brain fever and was delirious for two months. When he began to recover, he decided that he would be a clergyman no longer. "It would have been practically impossible for him to have found another curacy, even if he had been so minded, but he was not so minded. He hated the life he had been leading ever since he had begun to read for orders; he could not argue about it, but simply loathed it and would have no more of it."<sup>52</sup>

Excused from his original sentence of hard labor, Ernest had time to read the New Testament critically.

The more he read in this spirit the more balance seemed to lie in favour of unbelief, till, in the end, all further doubt became impossible, and he saw plainly enough that, whatever else might be true, the story that Christ had died, come to life again, and been carried from earth through clouds into the heavens could not now be accepted by unbiased people.<sup>53</sup>

He continued to pray, but the substance of his prayer was now, "Lord, I don't believe one word of it. Strengthen Thou and confirm my disbelief."<sup>54</sup> He wished to communicate his new ideas to his deluded fellowmen and decided that the best way of reaching them would be "to sprinkle a pinch of salt,

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

as it were,"<sup>55</sup> on the Archbishop of Canterbury's tail. Ernest actually believed that if his Grace were brought face to face with the facts "he would resign his Archbishopric, and Christianity would become extinct in England within a few months' time."<sup>56</sup> In order to try out the arguments he intended to present to the Archbishop, Ernest attempted to enlighten the prison chaplain. That gentleman, however, was not impressed, and he was certainly not convinced.

When his prison term was over, Ernest was not bitter. Even Overton's news that Pryer had absconded with what was left of his grandfather's legacy did not trouble him. Rather, the former clergyman rejoiced that he was enabled, by the adverse turns in his fortune, to have an excuse for cutting himself off forever from his parents. He decided to become a tailor, and he began thinking of life in optimistic terms.

Ernest found, as time passed, that he was thinking things through more seriously than he had ever done while he had considered himself a clergyman:

As the days went slowly by he came to see that Christianity and the denial of Christianity after all met as much as any other extremes do; it was a fight about names--not about things; practically the Church of Rome, the Church of England, and the freethinker have the same ideal standard and meet in the gentleman; for he is the most perfect saint who is the most perfect gentleman. Then he saw also that it matters little what profession, whether of religion or irreligion, a man may make, provided only he follows it out with charitable inconsistency, and without insisting on it to the bitter end. It is the uncompromisingness with which dogma is held and not in the dogma or want of dogma that the danger lies.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

But he was still unlearned in the ways of the world. Among the first things that he did upon leaving prison was to marry impulsively a former servant from Battersby who had become a drunken prostitute. Before he discovered that their marriage was invalid because she was already married to another man, she had borne him two children and had bankrupted his tailoring business. Ernest had long since lost any feeling of love or respect for the woman; so it was with no regret that he placed his children in a foster home and set out to begin life for the third time.

Overton had looked on in silence, but now that Ernest had reached his twenty-eighth birthday he turned over to his surprised godson the fortune from Miss Pontifex. Through judicious investment, it now amounted to more than seventy thousand pounds. Shortly afterwards, word arrived that Christina was dying. Ernest went back to Battersby; the sight of him in fine clothes almost killed Theobald, who bitterly resented his son's success.

After Christina's death, Ernest went abroad for several years and returned, at the age of thirty-two, to embark upon a literary career. His first book, a series of essays published anonymously and purported to be the result of collaboration among prominent Church of England dignitaries, was an instant success. Ernest treated the main problems that had been plaguing him but which he felt he had conquered--evidences of the Resurrection, moral authority, rationalism, and Biblical authenticity. The most popular essay contained this theory:

Christianity was true in so far as it had fostered beauty, and it had fostered much beauty. It was false in so far as it fostered ugliness, and it had fostered much ugliness. It was therefore not a

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little true and not a little false; on the whole one might go farther and fare worse; the wisest course would be to live with it, and make the best and not the worst of it.<sup>58</sup>

Ernest continued to write, but none of his later efforts equaled that first volume. He never remarried, choosing instead to live modestly and watch his fortune increase. Occasionally he visited his father, with whom he maintained an aloof acquaintance until the old man's death. Abhorring current literary, musical, and scientific trends, he contented himself with the belief that his ideas of religion and ethics would eventually come to be appreciated by future generations.

From a literary point of view, Butler was perhaps more successful than any other novelist of the nineteenth century in presenting the actual spiritual dilemma of the Anglican clergyman. There undoubtedly were many young men who, like Ernest, renounced the Church; but The Way of All Flesh was the only novel which dared to admit that such a thing could happen.

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 398-399.

CHAPTER SIX  
AN EVALUATION

If one were to draw a composite word picture of the British clergyman as he appeared in the foregoing novels, the artist would have to make use of several prominent features in arriving at a likeness. Although there were exceptions, the typical clerical figure was characterized by his faults rather than by his virtues; to paraphrase an old nursery saying, when he was good he was very, very good, and when he was bad he was horrid.

Perhaps the foremost characteristic uniformly pointed out by nineteenth century novelists was the lack of an inward call to the ministry. Young men entered clerical orders because their families desired them to do so, or because they saw opportunities for personal prestige, or because they were guided by a misplaced zeal for doing something worth while. The clerical aspirant was, moreover, almost invariably further hindered in his effectiveness by inadequate educational preparation. His theological training was classical rather than practical and resulted in his being ordained without the faintest notion of what his parish duties would involve. Because he took spiritual charge of a congregation when he himself had no deep-rooted faith, he shunned personal contact with his parishioners and their problems. His lack of religious convictions also accounted for his poorly prepared sermons and hollow oratory. The system of patronage compounded the problem by making his tenure contingent upon family or political associations rather than upon religious qualifications.

Turning to the nineteenth century clerical novel as a literary form, one can classify examples of it into three broad categories. The

first consists of those novels which, for various reasons, were failures. Thomas Wingfold, Curate was obviously a serious and sincere effort to represent the triumph of Christianity over rationalism, but it was little more than amateurish propaganda. George Eliot's accounts of clerical life suffered from an overdose of melodrama, and whatever insights Mrs. Oliphant may have had were overshadowed by ridiculous plots.

The second category includes works which were successful as far as they went but which failed to go deeply below the surface to explore basic issues. Trollope portrayed the social scene with great talent, surveying the entire scope of the Anglican hierarchy; by his own admission, however, he gave immunity to the clergyman's sacred functions. The Barsetshire chronicles also suffered from wordiness and from an unrealistic frequency of happy endings. John Galt was another novelist whose clerical portrait was effective in its comprehensiveness but not in its confronting of vital issues.

Only one book, The Way of All Flesh, meets the standards of all-around excellence. Samuel Butler's mental outlook gave him the edge over Trollope and Galt; for while those two predecessors wrote chiefly to provide entertainment, Butler wrote because he felt that he had genuine personal grievances to communicate. That fact alone possibly accounts for the dynamic force of The Way of All Flesh, a masterpiece of narrative economy, double-edged humor, deep insight, and realism. One needs only to compare Theobald and Ernest Pontifex with Parson Adams, Geoffry Wildgoose, and Dr. Primrose in order to see, in relief, the culmination of nineteenth century clerical representation.

## APPENDIX

### GLOSSARY

Archdeacon - a chief deacon; an ecclesiastical dignitary next in rank below a bishop; usually supervises the missionary work of a diocese.

Benefice - an ecclesiastical post or office to which property or a determined revenue is attached--as a rectory, vicarage, or perpetual curacy.

Bishop - a clergyman of the highest order, charged with an administrative function such as the supervision of a diocese.

Canon - a clergyman belonging to the chapter of a cathedral.

Cathedral - a church that contains the official throne or chair of a bishop and that is officially the principal church of a diocese.

Chapel - a small or subordinate place of worship, especially a Christian sanctuary other than a parish or a cathedral church; a church subordinate to or dependent upon the principal parish church to which it is a supplement of some kind; a place of worship used by members of a religious denomination or faith other than that of the established church; of or belonging to a Protestant non-conformist church.

Chapel of ease - a chapel in an outlying hamlet of a large parish, maintained by the inhabitants and served daily, or on certain days of the week, by a chaplain provided at the expense of the parochial incumbent; not having the rights of baptism and burial.



Chaplain - a Church of England clergyman who is without a title or benefice in the place where he officiates but who performs religious services in a chapel, cathedral, or collegiate church.

Chapter - the body of canons of a cathedral who are presided over by a dean and who are charged with making certain administrative decisions for the diocese.

Curate - an assistant or deputy of a rector or a vicar.

Cure - spiritual charge of a parish; the office of a parish priest or curate.

Deacon - in Anglicanism, a clergyman in orders next below that of a priest and usually a candidate for ordination to the priesthood; in Dissenting congregations, a layman in an administrative office subordinate to that of pastor.

Dean - the head of the chapter or body of canons in a cathedral church.

Diocese - the district in which a bishop has ecclesiastical authority.

Free Chapel - a chapel, usually on a private estate, which is exempt from parochial, archdiaconal, and occasionally--though not always--from episcopal jurisdiction; its incumbent is not considered to have a cure of souls.

Incumbent - the holder of a benefice or office.

Living - an ecclesiastical estate or income-producing property.

Minor Canon - a canon who has no vote in the chapter to which he belongs but who receives a stipend.

Parish - the ecclesiastical unit of area committed to one pastor; a portion of a diocese.

Parson - the rector or incumbent of a parochial church, charged with pastoral care of the persons in the parish; one that represents

the parish in its ecclesiastical and corporate capacities.

Patron - the holder of the right of presentation to an ecclesiastical benefice.

Prebend - the stipend or maintenance granted out of the estate of a cathedral to a canon or other member of the chapter; the land or tithe from which the income is derived.

Prebendary - a member of a cathedral chapter receiving a prebend in consideration for his officiating at stated times in the church; an honorary canon with the title but not the emoluments of a prebend.

Precentor - leader of the music in a cathedral church.

Priest - a member of the second order of clergy in the Anglican communion ranking below a bishop and above a deacon.

Rector - a clergyman of the Church of England who has the charge and care of a parish and owns the tithes from it; the clergyman of a parish where the tithes are not impropriate.

See - a bishop's seat; in a secondary sense applied to the church in which the seat is placed and the city in which that church stands.

Tithe - a payment in kind or money consisting until the middle of the nineteenth century of one tenth of the yearly profits arising from land, stock, or personal industry, and traditionally required of the inhabitants of a parish in the United Kingdom for the support of the parish church.

Vicar - the incumbent of an impropriated or formerly appropriated benefice of the Church of England; the priest of a parish of which the tithes are owned by a layman or, formerly, by a spiritual corporation.

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## VITA

Doralee Alice Forsythe was born on March 7, 1939, in Suffolk, Virginia. The daughter of a Baptist minister, she lived in North Carolina and Texas before attending the public schools of Jacksonville, Florida, and Hanover and Henrico counties in Virginia. She was graduated from Douglas Freeman High School in 1957 and entered Stetson University in Deland, Florida, in the fall of the same year. She transferred to Westhampton College of the University of Richmond in February 1958 and was graduated from that institution in June 1961 with a major in English. With the intention of better preparing herself for a career in public school teaching, she entered the graduate division of the University in the same month. She is the wife of Stewart Lee Richardson, Jr., whom she married in 1960.