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THE PORTRAYAL
OF THE ANGLICAN CLERGYMAN
IN SOME
NINETEENTH-CENTURY FICTION
by
P.A. PACKER

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Submitted for the Degree of
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1979

ABSTRACT

What were Anglican Clergymen, in the fiction of the nineteenth century, like? How were their social and intellectual attitudes, and religious beliefs, characterized and delineated? Why do novelists portray the clergy as they do? How accurate is their portrayal, in the light of contemporary ecclesiastical history?

This study answers these questions by reference to the novels, both well-known and little read, and to the lives and opinions of the actual clergy, of the period.

There is a general survey of the fictional clergy throughout the century which relates them to particular religious movements, such as the Evangelical and Tractarian Movements, and to changing intellectual and theological opinion.

The principal aim of the study, however, is literary. It concentrates on the work of four major authors: Jane Austen, Thomas Love Peacock, Anthony Trollope and George Eliot. Their novels are examined in detail; the place and treatment of their clerical characters analysed and discussed. This close study of particular novels, it is hoped, will deepen the general literary appreciation of the novels and writers and stimulate interest in the neglected clerical characters of fiction.

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This study was initially conceived while I was a member of the Benedictine Community at Nashdom Abbey. It was then, for such is the enthusiasm of the ignorant, only one chapter among ten. Whilst my scope has become more modest the debt to my friends and fellow-monks remains. Dom Aidan Harker, Dom Wilfrid Weston, Dom Joseph Boulton and the late Dom John Howton were especially helpful and encouraging in the early stages of research.

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The final copy of this thesis was made by Mrs M. Burke. Its excellence is self-evident. Her vigilance removed many minor errors. Her consistent accuracy is a model to many; certainly to me. I pay tribute also to her patience and endurance, both with me and a very long text.

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P.A. Packer

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Newcastle upon Tyne

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In an age like our own, when religious apathy is widespread, church-going confined to the very few, and the number of those ordained continues to dwindle, what possible justification can there be for a study of clergymen - let alone clergymen in fiction? Why bother with such figures, clad all in black, when there are so many brightly coloured characters in the literary landscape? What of the heroes, villains, comic figures of fiction, memorable, moving or amusing, living proof of a writer's genius or skill? Beside these can a study of the Anglican parson in fiction possibly be interesting or significant?

Such criticism may still, perhaps, seem over-stated. But it does not sound so odd today as it would have done fifty or a hundred years ago, and the time is not so far distant, I believe, when it will meet with general acceptance. Ecclesiastical matters will then be quite foreign even to the generally well-educated reader. After all, this has already happened to another area of background material, the classical tradition. Classical allusions, sources and references can no longer be passed over unexplained, though fifty years ago this would have seemed quite natural.

This study will, I trust, inform and correct opinion on a subject which, certainly unfashionable, may even now be to some partially incomprehensible. My purpose, however, is not merely to annotate. As an essay in literary research it also aims to broaden, and deepen, appreciation of the novels studied and to throw further, if particular, light on the creative imagination of certain writers. Jane Austen, Thomas Love Peacock, Anthony Trollope and George Eliot could never, I imagine, be thought insignificant - even if Peacock may be thought a brilliant minor writer. They are all read, enjoyed and admired. Almost any aspect of these writers' work could lead to a study of some interest. Furthermore, the clerical character, while I make no exaggerated claims for his importance, is not 'almost any' subject. He plays a prominent part in the four writers I have chosen, and in the period as a whole. In some thirty novels discussed here, in chapters three to six, there are over fifty clergymen, and this number excludes those merely mentioned or very briefly sketched. In three of the writers there is a clerical character in virtually every novel they wrote, while the other, Trollope, produced a whole series of novels about clergymen and others largely or partially concerned with them.

The writers I have chosen for detailed study were

not, of course, alone in their delineation of clerical characters. Far from it. Almost every novelist of note in the last century, and a great many of very little, drew a clerical portrait in one or more of their novels.¹ Dickens and Thackeray, largely, laughed at Evangelical clergymen, while Charlotte Brontë also amused her readers, in Shirley, with the foibles of Catholic-minded curates. Novelists as different as Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell and Charles Kingsley included clerical portraits in their depiction and discussion of contemporary society. Even an intellectual giant like J.H. Newman entered the fictional fray with Loss and Gain peopled with parsons, or embryonic clergy, representing a great variety of religious opinion. Marmion Savage and Stephen Adderley used the clerical figure to exemplify, or to satirize, different religious movements. Mrs Oliphant, Emma Jane Worboise and a host of minor novelists established their reputations with clerical tales.

The high statistical occurrence of the clerical character, which becomes more noticeable after about 1830, and continued almost until the turn of the twentieth century, has, of course, a historical explanation. It was a time which might not only be called, in a general way, 'religious' but which saw immense and important changes in the character and expression of religious feeling and opinion. The writers

I have chosen to study might be expected to have reflected, or reacted against, this climate of religious interest, and although I do not claim that they are representative of their age, it would be very odd if they had entirely ignored contemporary intellectual concerns. I have thus attempted to provide an intellectual and historical context for the works discussed, which seems all the more necessary with a subject both currently neglected and so very distant from the concerns of our time.

There is, however, a more fundamental reason why I have chosen the clerical character as the subject of literary study. For the main writers studied are not primarily concerned with intellectual or religious questions as such, though Peacock frequently cocks a comic glance at 'opinions' and George Eliot might properly be called an 'intellectual' writer. I have not examined these novels only as historical documents or as fictional discussions of current ideas. A novel is far more than the sum of its parts and to the student of literature it is first of all the product of an individual imagination. The clerical character is not just a cypher of religious attitudes, either of an author or the age, he is a character in the novel like any other, an imaginative creation, whose conception and delineation can be discussed as part of a writer's artistic achievement. What he is like,

his effect on the reader, his place in the novel as a whole, throw light on our understanding of the work and its author. There is a further important reason for literary study: the potential range and variety inherent in the character during the period under discussion.

A clergyman of the last century held a special position in his society. By virtue of his official position, his education, and possibly his birth, he was aligned with the ruling class. But his duties, if he felt inclined to undertake them, took him outside this sphere into the homes and lives of those very different from himself. The education of children, the social and material welfare of the poor, even the care of the sick was often his concern, or broadly under his direction. Nor could neglect of these parochial duties entirely free him from some charitable activities, casually or amongst his own circle. Even amongst those who made no claim to scholarship, and many, of course, made substantial contributions in a variety of fields, some superficial understanding, albeit in early years, with the intellectual questions of the age could be expected. Although some inevitably escaped them, he was not free from social or moral restraints, nor could he avoid the practice of Christian ideals. His example was noted, if not always too closely, and his opinion on theological, philosophical or ethical matters might justly be called for. By

the middle of the century, though largely untrained, he was expected to be not merely the passive, official representative of the state religion but an active local leader in a Christian society. In an age before state welfare, education, and the police force, the maintenance of law and order and the organization of local administration were often partly his affair.

Because of his potentially broad acquaintance and concerns, therefore, the clergyman presented special opportunities for the novelist. The clerical character is often at the centre of some moral dilemma or social problem; a focus for the novelist's views and opinions on religious or ethical topics. Equally, he might reflect the established viewpoint which the novel generally seeks to question or undermine. More simply, his presence, or his family's, in a novel may allow the novelist to move out of the drawing-room and into the village or city slum. Or, he may merely add verisimilitude to the delineation of a particular society. On the other hand, he might be a hypocrite, a rogue, a fool, or a villain. This too presents the novelist with dramatic possibilities. How, and in what way, the novelist uses or explores this potential in a clerical character, or why he does not, is then of significance in our understanding and appreciation of his social realism. But the clerical character may also tell us something of a writer's

powers of observation, his skill in caricature, or his use of stereotypes. This study examines in what way, and with what success, some novelists portrayed this interesting character.

The clerical character, in the novelists I have chosen, should certainly not be thought of as elusive. He is a character not only frequently drawn but prominently portrayed. Mr Collins, for example, is as notable as Elizabeth Bennet. The history of Dorothea Brooke, in Middlemarch, can hardly be considered without the Reverend Mr Casaubon. Mr Slope and Archdeacon Grantly, from Barchester Towers, are not merely co-incidental to that novel but one of the chief reasons for its fame. Dr Folliott, in Crotchet Castle, is probably Peacock's most memorable single character. These characters, and their brethren, may well be clothed in black, to return to the imaginary protests at the beginning of this introduction, but they are as varied and as colourful as many other characters created by English novelists. Amongst them you will find heroes, villains and comic characters; objects of sympathy, hostility or delight; men of might, or with feet of clay; hypocrites and victims of circumstances, highly principled and hopelessly compromised. Above all, perhaps, there are many more than one might expect who are still alive and interesting to the modern reader. The reasons for the occurrence of the clerical character may well be historical but their continued

vitality results from, and is an indication of, the writer's artistic skills. How these characters are portrayed is as much the concern of this study as why this may be so.

This, I trust, will largely explain why I have chosen to study the novels of four writers in detail. First, they are all important writers but in every case also the clerical character is prominent and significant. His portrayal is of literary as well as of historical interest. Often, indeed, the characters are of literary merit. Although they have been largely ignored by scholarly studies, they do not deserve to be, and I hope that this study will stimulate interest, and certainly greater awareness, of this aspect of these writers' creative work.

There are in fact two general studies of the clergy in fiction. F.E. Christmas's The Parson in English Literature (1950), an anthology with comment, serves only as an introduction to the very wide range of material. A.L. Drummond's critical account of The Churches in English Fiction (1950) covers a huge area, but this allows little space for comment useful to the literary student. He also approaches fiction from an historical viewpoint, seeing fiction, sometimes uncritically, 'as a window into the soul of a nation.' Although I would agree with his premise that 'the novel reveals ordinary men and women ... in varying attitudes towards organised religion',

I examine them primarily as the product of the writer's imagination, as part of the novel in which they occur, and not merely as representatives of religious or historical opinion. To divorce the characters from their literary context would provide, it seems to me, only dubious historical evidence and may even obscure their value as imaginative creations.

There are no detailed studies of the clerical characters in the four chosen writers, despite their number and importance. Jane Austen and Trollope's Barsetshire novels have received some slight attention,² though not recently, while George Eliot and T.L. Peacock have been almost entirely ignored on this point.³ Since my aim is to deepen the appreciation of individual novels and their writers by bringing to life, whether by commentary or critical appreciation, a particular aspect of their imaginative delineation of the world, it seemed to me more satisfactory to study in depth a small but important number of writers, than a great number in outline. I have also resisted the superficial charm of a study which wholly treats the characters in categories - 'The Curate', 'The Evangelical', 'The Tractarian' and so on. This may have made the study more agreeable to the general reader but would, I believe, have limited greatly its scholarly usefulness. At the same time I have, in chapter two, surveyed some of the more notable nineteenth-century clerical portraits and set the

writers generally against the ecclesiastical background of the period.

The first question that I have tried to answer in this study is 'What are the clerical characters like?' I shall examine their personal and intellectual character, their social and religious attitudes, where appropriate, and discuss how the portrayal of these various aspects contribute to the character's general effect. Something of the range and variety of the characterisation should then emerge, and the different types of portrayal can be contrasted or compared. My second question is, 'Why are these characters portrayed as they are?' with the corollary, 'How is this portrayal achieved?' In the context of the novel this should tell us something of the author's attitude and purpose in the character's portrayal and deepen our appreciation of the novel as a whole. It would be as well to make clear, however, that my assessment of a character or author will be literary, not moral or religious. A clergyman may be lazy, unpleasant or immoral but effective as a character. The portrayal may be biased or based on ignorance but, while I shall comment on this, I shall not judge either the author or character on these grounds. Two of the writers studied, Peacock and George Eliot, held views that were far from orthodox. It is their effectiveness as writers which concerns me not their religious notions. Should comparisons

to generally understood ideas of clerical behaviour be necessary, I have taken as the yardstick the exhortations and questions to ordinands in the Anglican Ordinal in The Book of Common Prayer.⁴ All such comparisons must in any case be made within an historical context. My third question, therefore, is 'How like the actual clergy of the period are the fictional characters?' Here, though, I must emphasize the nature of the historical evidence available. There is no detailed study of the Anglican clergyman in the nineteenth century,⁵ although general ecclesiastical histories, lead by the magnificent volumes of Owen Chadwick,⁶ naturally provide much information. Biographies, memoirs, letters and sermons abound but they are by, or concern, individuals. These, generally, are the most notable and influential clergymen of their age; not necessarily the most typical. Clearly, to use this truly vast range of variform material with authority would require a lifetime of study. All I am able to do is to introduce relevant comparisons and accept the general conclusions of others. It must be obvious, and understood, that the personal lives and opinions of a body so various as the clergy of a national church, particularly in a period of great change, is a field too rich and diverse to be conquered en passant.⁷

These, then, are the three main questions that I

have borne in mind while pursuing my study. I trust that this account of my exploration will add to our knowledge of the scope and quality of these writers' literary imagination. Above all I hope it will stimulate interest in, and enjoyment of, this unfashionable and neglected creature, the Anglican parson. Even the relatively few portraits that I have examined will show, I think, that he is by no means as dull and shadowy as some may imagine. Some of our greatest writers have been inspired to portray him, and not always with a satirical pen. This may show us that like so many other characters, well-loved and admired, he too is worthy of study and appreciation.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SURVEY

The four authors studied here most closely were writing over a period of some eighty years, from 1795 when Elinor and Marianne (later to become Sense and Sensibility) was begun, to 1879 when Trollope wrote Dr Wortle's School. Although each makes an individual literary claim upon our attention, on purely historical grounds these four writers between them cover a period both important in church affairs and significant in the novel's development. Kathleen Tillotson, in the brilliant introduction to her Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, sees in those novels which were written with a particular religious intention a special influence upon the novel in general. 'Religious novels', she argues persuasively, 'enforced, and perhaps even initiated, the growing tendency to introspection in the novel.'¹ During these years the generally dutiful, though often complacent, acceptance of religion which had characterised the eighteenth century was largely replaced by a more informed and active Christian belief. Many of the specifically religious reasons for this change of outlook (there were also, of course, social, educational and economic reasons) are reflected in the fiction of the period. Methodism, the Evangelical and Tractarian

movements, ecclesiastical reform and the provision of suitable parsons for the growing numbers of parishioners are subjects touched upon, or vividly dramatised, by contemporary novelists. Personal belief, or disbelief, was just as vital a question for the nineteenth-century novel reader, and perhaps one more fitted to the form. Especially in the mid-century, when scientific studies, such as Robert Chambers Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (published, anonymously, in 1844), were preparing the way for that most unsettling work by Charles Darwin, religious debate often took a fictional form. This was not the only topic so transmuted as Disraeli's political novels show² but, especially after the Oxford Movement, it was a most important one. As Walter Bagehot pointed out in 1858,

The theological novel, which was a few years ago so popular ... is likely to have a recurring influence in times when men's belief is unsettled... The desire to attain a belief ... has become one of the most familiar sentiments of heroes and heroines. 3

The clergyman, as one might expect, often played an important part in such works. Previously, in Jane Austen's day for example, he had reflected the religious calm and apparent social stability of another generation. Religious dispute or controversy 'would have seemed utterly incongruous to the plain sagacity of Scott',⁴ Bagehot writes, though, as we shall

see, it is not wholly absent from Mansfield Park. But although Methodism is mentioned in that work, and the duties of the clergyman discussed, the tone is very different from that of the other woman novelist to be considered, George Eliot. As Marion Evans she had translated, in 1846, David Strauss's work Das Leben Jesu. 'Few books of the nineteenth century', Gordon Haight writes, 'have had a profounder influence on religious thought in England.'⁵ Her clergymen, as one might expect, have a special significance in this study, for not only was George Eliot a great spiritual writer in the broadest sense, she was also a woman who had rejected conventional Christian orthodoxy and had even chosen to live outside accepted moral conventions in her relationship with a married man, George Lewes. A greater contrast, perhaps, with the conventional Hampshire spinster, Jane Austen, could not be imagined. If Jane Austen wrote before the religious turbulence which characterized Victorian England, George Eliot wrote from its very centre. Thomas Love Peacock, pagan though he proudly remained, lived and wrote in both climates. Most of his novels were written before 1831, and his penultimate work, Crotchet Castle, captures many of the social questions and changing atmosphere of that time. In 1860, at the age of seventy-five, he published Gryll Grange. Its style and atmosphere may well derive from the Regency, but in one respect,

and one very relevant to our purpose, the religious, it is unmistakably of a much later date. Even so idiosyncratic a writer as Peacock was influenced by, some may say enamoured with, the upsurge of Catholic interests stimulated by the Oxford Movement. Important, too, is his radically different treatment of the clergyman in this book, the Reverend Doctor Opimian. It would be quite wrong to omit such a curious transformation of viewpoint from this examination of clerical portraits.

Anthony Trollope cannot be ignored either. Not an intellectual, like George Eliot, nor scholarly like Peacock, and certainly quite without Jane Austen's genius, he wrote some sixteen novels containing clergymen of all rank, opinion and personal character. A contemporary of George Eliot, Barchester Towers appeared in 1857, the same year as Scenes of Clerical Life began publication, he is perhaps the most typical Victorian novelist. Dickens, who is probably still the most popular, was fired by an altogether greater muse. In Trollope's novels we can expect to find popular prejudices and contemporary religious questions interestingly intermingled. His portrayal of the clergy may lack George Eliot's human insight and Peacock's wit, but it will certainly show, by its variety, a range and scope that will give greater verisimilitude to this study. Although in this study I

concentrate on these four important writers, it will be helpful to see something of the wealth of material which must inevitably be left unexamined in detail. The portrayal of the Anglican clergyman can then be seen in broad outline, together with something of the historical and ecclesiastical background from which inevitably, though not of course completely, they came.

The Anglican Church has ever been a compromise, avoiding the dogmatism of Rome and Geneva and representing a unique, though not necessarily happy, marriage of church and state, religion and society. Bishop Ken, who died in 1711, wrote,

Glory be to thee, O Lord my God who has made me a member of the particular Church of England, whose faith and government, and worship, are holy, and catholic, and apostolic, and free from the extremes of irreverence and superstition. 6.

In fact, it was not God who had made him an Anglican but Henry VIII whose break with the Church of Rome sprang from political, not religious, necessity. Only later did a protestant rationalisation follow. The re-drafted Act of Supremacy, in 1559, made Queen Elizabeth and her successors 'the only supreme governor ... as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal.'⁷ The clergy swore obedience to the crown and by subscription to the thirty-nine articles accepted the church's politically

established position. The popular eighteenth-century song The Vicar of Bray is about just such political accommodation of religious belief. In the song the vicar boasts that he has remained loyal to the crown during the different reigns of Charles, James, William, Anne and George, and no matter what religious views may be enforced he will always keep his living.

And whatsoever king may reign,
Still, I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir!

After the doctrinal controversies surrounding the reformation of the church in England had finally died down, the clergy's status, as religious officers of a state instrument, was accepted as useful. Writing in 1792, Paley defends the hierarchical structure of the church as a reflection of civil society. His words indicate the essentially static idea of society which prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century, and which the church re-inforced, in an age before industrialization and the clamour for reform.

The distinctions of the clergy ought ... to correspond with the distinctions of lay society, in order to supply each class of the people with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate upon terms of equality. 8

It was only later that the missionary zeal of the Evangelicals and the Catholic principles of the Tractarians began to stress the clergy's religious role which could, in

theory, have cut across social barriers and even the political settlement. The furore created by the Tractarian's Catholic emphasis, for example, was only partly theological. In the popular mind and press fear, of foreign intervention, un-English influences, of a reversal of the status-quo in wealth, education and privilege, also played its part. As Chadwick says, 'the Tractarians were endangering the ancient idea that the Church of England was the Tory party at prayer.'⁹ What exactly was in danger was not always clear in the first decades of the nineteenth century but with the terrible example of the French revolution before them, conservatives saw any reform of the church as a threat to social order. In Peacock's Melincourt (1817), the senseless cry of Mr Feather-nest and Mr Paperstamp, both recipients of state salaries, to every suggestion, '"The church is in danger! The church is in danger!'" satirizes this widespread temerity. In 1782 Paley wrote that the 'rich and splendid situations in the church have been justly regarded as prizes held out to invite persons of good hopes and ingenious attainments to enter into its service.'¹⁰ By the middle of the nineteenth century, most people admitted that the prizes far outweighed the services required or expected and that, if the church was to survive as a body fulfilling a religious mission, some re-distribution of its wealth was inevitable. As Chadwick

writes, 'England was becoming a country of cities and manufacturers' and the Ecclesiastical Commission, set up by Peel in 1835, 'was an instrument for adjusting ancient endowments to new needs.'¹¹

The Commission was not, of course, the only reforming influence. The emergence of the Methodists and later the clamours of Roman Catholics and dissenters for the removal of discrimination also awoke the sleepy establishment. Those outside the Anglican Church were as politically, and socially, suspect as the Anglican parson was respectable. He had, through his birth, and usually his education, aligned himself with the accepted order of things. The ancient universities, where nearly all the clergy graduated (the advent of non-graduate clergy only gradually became common after 1840)¹² required subscription to the thirty-nine articles until 1854 upon matriculation. Even then the Anglican exclusiveness of higher education continued. Oxford allowed dissenters only to Bachelor's degrees and Cambridge barred them from any office hitherto held by Anglicans. The foundation of University College London, without subscription, in 1836, was regarded with very deep suspicion. It was argued before the Privy Council that an Oxford degree was 'the indication of a religious profession, and of the habit, education and associations of a gentleman.'¹³

Robert Southey believed that the advantage of the established church was that it placed a scholar and a gentleman in every village.¹⁴ Throughout the century, but with increasingly less justification, the parson was thought to be scholarly. Both George Eliot and Trollope dwell on this¹⁵ though finally, in Mrs Humphry Ward and Mrs Gaskell,¹⁶ learning unsettles, rather than deepens, faith. Certainly the Anglican incumbent, though not always his curate, was assumed to be a gentleman. Often his personal income and usually his social background led to this assumption. It was in this area, perhaps, that the greatest changes can be seen during this period. Men like Parson Trulliber in The Adventures of Joseph Andrews (1742),¹⁷ or Wordsworth's real Robert Walker (1709-1802),¹⁸ little more than labourer-farmers like their neighbours, had largely been replaced by the thirties, when many gentlemen 'looked upon holy orders as the most attractive of all professions.'¹⁹ Edmund Bertram, in Mansfield Park, explains to Mary Crawford that it is partly because he has no private fortune and is '"neither a lawyer, nor a soldier, nor a sailor"',²⁰ that he has chosen the church.

The more intense religious feeling which developed in Victorian England made orders less generally attractive by 1860. 'The ideals became more prominent while the social incentives declined.'²¹ Ordination was becoming a calling

rather than merely a position. . . . Nonetheless, his social standing declined slowly. The Reverend Augustus Jessop could still complain towards the end of the century that 'it is a very serious fact . . . that . . . there has been a large incursion of young men into the ministry of the Church of England who are not gentlemen by birth, education, sentiment or manners.'²² Jessop's clerical ideals are still related to Edmund Bertram's who saw the clergyman as the guardian 'of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence.'²³

In the local community the clergyman exercised considerable influence and some power and the Whig reforms of the 1830s increasingly saw that he undertook his responsibilities by enforcing residence. (Before that, in 1827 for example, only 4,413 incumbents out of 10,533 officially resided.)²⁴ The incumbent's income was partly derived from ancient tithes on the surrounding land. These were commuted only in 1836 to actual money and their payment, though representing a sacred duty, was also a legal obligation. Thus the clergyman's wealth, like the squire's, had roots in feudal privilege. He was closely entwined in the nation's hierarchy. He was also the nineteenth century's nearest official to the modern registrar. 'The evidence of his baptismal register was legal evidence of birth [and] . . . of his burial register legal evidence of death.' Until 1837, excepting Quakers and

Jews, 'no other marriage was legal except marriage in a parish church.'²⁵ The clergyman was frequently a magistrate and, even by 1857, twenty-one per cent of magistrates were in orders.²⁶ He was thus required to help the poor, by virtue of his religious profession, which indeed he frequently did, and to punish them by the nature of his civil office. As the century wore on this dual role, of gentleman and parson, led to inner, even open conflict. In Jane Austen's time, however, a parson might have a man fined for swearing without a qualm.²⁷ This, then, is a general picture of the nineteenth-century clergyman's social and professional position. Let us now look at some of the various literary portrayals of the parson throughout the period covered by this study.

Before Jane Austen there had been many notable clerical portraits, especially in Fielding. The Reverend Abraham Adams, in Joseph Andrews, has been described as 'the ideal eighteenth-century curate in literature'.²⁸ From his first introduction, we see him to be virtuous and godly. 'Mr Abraham Adams was an excellent scholar ... He was generous, friendly and brave to an excess.' He was also unsophisticated and, though a good man, had still at fifty only 'a handsome income of twenty-three pounds a year.'²⁹ His ingenuousness is, of course, part of his charm but there is no question of him being on an equal footing with the Squire. 'Adams had

no nearer access to Sir Thomas or my lady, than through the waiting-gentlewoman.'³⁰ By the time Jane Austen was writing this had, of course, changed. The Reverend Mr Collins, in Pride and Prejudice, was often invited to Rosings, if only to play cards.³¹ Though what this clergyman had gained in social standing, he had certainly lost in forthrightness. We can never imagine the obsequious Mr Collins speaking out as Parson Adams does to Lady Booby, when criticized for harbouring vagrants in her parish. "'Whilst my conscience is pure, I shall never fear what man can do unto me.'" he exclaims.³² The Vicar of Wakefield, also, has little influence but, as the novel opens, he has only the small and insignificant country trials to weary him.

My orchard was often robbed by schoolboys, and my wife's custards plundered by the cats or the children. The Squire would sometimes fall asleep in the most pathetic parts of my sermon, or his lady return my wife's civilities at church with a mutilated curtsy. 33

In a later period Mr Elton, in Emma, has the eyes of the neighbourhood upon him as he chooses his wife, and even the table-manners of Dr Grant come in for a good deal of scrutiny in Mansfield Park. Before Jane Austen the life of the parson was not merely rural: it was rustic. He was less concerned with broader social matters. George Orwell's verses, written in 1935, on the eighteenth-century parson's lot may be satirical but there is an element of truth in them.³⁴

A happy vicar, I might have been
Two hundred years ago,
To preach upon eternal doom
And watch my walnuts grow.

This kind of life is admirably captured by William Coombe in his amusing portrait of Dr Syntax (published in 1809).

The School was done, the bus'ness o'er,
When tir'd of Greek and Latin lore,
Good Syntax sought his easy chair, And sat in calm
composure there.
His wife was to a neighbour gone, To hear the chit-
chat of the town;
And left him the unfrequent power, of brooding
through a quiet hour.
Thus, while he sat, a busy train Of images besieged
his brain.
Of Church-preferment he had none;
Nay, all his hope of that was gone:
He felt that he content must be With drudging in
a Curacy.
Indeed, on ev'ry Sabbath-day,
Through eight long miles he took his way,
To preach, to grumble, and to pray;
To cheer the good, to warn the sinner,
And, if he got it, - eat a dinner;
To bury these, to christen those, And marry such
fond folk as chose
To change the tenor of their life, And risk the
matrimonial strife. 35

Jane Austen presents a more sophisticated figure than her eighteenth-century predecessors. Her parsons were generally from the bottom of the upper-middle classes, and just below, or had at least a desire to be thought of that caste. Their education made them more suited to social intercourse and, possibly, family patronage put them into livings where their income matched that of their neighbours. In any case it must be remembered that Parson Adams and Dr Syntax

were poor curates and intended to be humourous characters. Jane Austen's clergy may sometimes be amusing also but they are not delineated as a different breed. They are merely a part of society, separated neither by great social inferiority nor, as later, by their religious profession. They were men like Parson Woodforde, the Norfolk diarist, whose quiet, untroubled life is reflected in his writing.³⁶ Good food, which Woodforde lovingly records, the visits to, and by, neighbours and friends, and the small details of domestic economy give ample proof that men like Dr Grant were no wild inventions. On the other hand her eye, though sharp, was kindly and she generally makes her clergy, if not always personally admirable, at least not too boisterous or openly unclerical. They may have risen slightly in the social scale since the days of Fielding but they still have their roots there. They belong to a quiet and largely untroubled parochial world which, partly of course, reflected Jane Austen's own personal experience of life.

A robust writer like Thackeray, on the other hand, could portray a much more cavalier cleric. One who might equally be met at the opening of the last century. The Reverend Bute Crawley, in Vanity Fair,

was a tall, stately, jolly, shovel-hatted man, far more popular in his county than the Baronet his brother. At college he pulled stroke-oar

in the Christchurch boat, and had thrashed all the best bruisers of the "town". He carried his taste for boxing and athletic exercises into private life; there was not a fight within twenty miles at which he was not present, nor a race, nor a coursing match, nor a regatta, nor a ball, nor an election, nor a visitation dinner, nor indeed a good dinner in the whole county, but he found means to attend it ... He had a fine voice; sang "A southerly wind and a cloudy sky"; and gave the "whoop" in chorus with general applause. He rode to hounds in a pepper-and-salt frock, and was one of the best fishermen in the county. 37

His wife, we learn, was 'a smart little body who wrote this worthy divine's sermons.'³⁸ Crawley's chief activity was to struggle out of the debts into which he continually fell. His great hope is that his sister will soon die and leave him her fortune. He discusses this quite heartlessly with his wife after dinner one day.

'She drank seven glasses of champagne,' said the reverend gentleman in a low voice; 'and filthy champagne it is, too, that my brother poisons us with - but you women never know what's what.' 'We know nothing,' said Mrs Bute Crawley. 'She drank cherry-brandy after dinner,' continued his Reverence, 'and took curaçao with her coffee. I wouldn't take a glass for a five-pound note: it kills me with heartburn. She can't stand it, Mrs Crawley - she must go - flesh and blood won't bear it! and I lay five to two, Matilda drops in a year.' Indulging in these solemn speculations, and thinking about his debts, and his son Jim at college, and Frank at Woolwich, and the four girls, who were no beauties, poor things, and would not have a penny but what they got from the aunt's expected legacy, the Rector and his lady walked on for a while. 39

Here, the petty hypocrisies, the frustrations and the worldli-

ness of a gentleman forced, through lack of funds or other abilities, into the boredom of a family living are deliciously captured. It is very different from Jane Austen, but there is still no doubt that Bute Crawley is a gentleman.

No cleric less like a gentleman can be found in fiction than Parson Chowne, in R.D. Blackmore's The Maid of Sker. Published in 1872, this novel was set at the turn of the eighteenth century in Devon, far from the genteel society we find at Highbury, Bath, or even Queen's Crawley. Chowne, said to have been based on the notorious Parson Froude of Knowstone,⁴⁰ was thought by the country folk to be in league with the devil. The narrator of the story, Llewellyn, a sailor, describes him thus.

It was the most wondrous unfathomable face that ever fellow-man fixed gaze upon; lost to mankindliness, lost to mercy, lost to all memory of God. As handsome a face as need be seen, with a very strong forehead and coal-black eyes, a straight white nose, and a sharp-cut mouth, and the chin like a marble sculpture. Disdain was the first thing it gave one to think of; and after that, cold relentless humour; and after that, anything dark and bad. 41

He had been married three times, kept a pack of wild dogs, and delighted in cruelty; the result so Llewellyn was told of an unhappy childhood and being cheated in love! He liked best to torment his fellow parsons. Cunningly, he invited the local clergy to an excellent dinner. 'All went smoothly

until one of them, egged on by the others, called for spirits and hot water. This annoyed Parson Chowne who had intended to bring in the drinks at the proper time. And so, 'the devil entered into him.' He brought in 'two great jacks of brown brandy' and 'two silver kettles upon the hobs'. The parsons, drinking freely, grew 'more drunk than despair, or even hope.'

Because, in the silver kettles was not water, but whisky at boiling point, and the more they desired to weaken their brandy, the more they fortified it: until they tumbled out altogether, in every state of disorder. For this he had prepared, by placing at the foot of his long step half-a-dozen butts of liquid from the cleaning of his drains, meant to be spread on the fields next day. And into the whole of this they fell, and he bolted the doors upon them. 42

His other escapades were even more unpleasant. He kept a pack of naked savages, fed on pigswill, who performed the parson's acts of vengeance, like setting ricks alight, to neighbours who had offended him.⁴³ When the sailor Llewellyn crosses him, he tells us, 'crack came his hunting-whip round my sides - crack, and wish, and crack again.'⁴⁴

His end is as vile as his life. Bitten by a rabid dog, whom he had mercilessly whipped, he calls upon his immensely strong, but entirely dominated, friend Parson Jack to end his suffering. 'Oh that we had remained outside!' the narrator recalls.

I have been through a great deal of horrible

sights ... Yet never did I behold, or dream of, anything so awful as the scene that lay before me ... It was Chowne's own dining-room, all in the dark, except where a lamp had been brought in by a trembling footman, who ran away, knowing that he brought this light for his master to be strangled by. And in the corner now lay his master, smothered under a feather-bed; yet with his vicious head fetched out in the last rabid struggle to bite. There was the black hair, black face, and black tongue, shown by the frothy wainscot, or between it and the ticking. On the feather-bed lay exhausted, and with his mighty frame convulsed ... Parson Jack ... sobbing with all his great heart ... yet afraid to take his weight off, and sweating at every pore with labour, peril of his life, and agony. 45

Such a character, whether accurately copied from life or based on the exaggerated tales of country-folk, makes excellent material for dramatic fiction.

England, at the turn of the nineteenth century, could be as coarse and dangerous in parts as it was refined and well-bred in others. It should be remembered that in the last decades of the eighteenth century,

the criminal law is immensely rigorous, and thefts of the value of 40s. or over are punished by death. There are 160 capital offences. Small-pox carries off the thirteenth or fourteenth part of each generation. The Slave Trade is regarded as a legitimate commercial enterprise, and slavery itself as a respectable institution. 46

Even while Jane Austen was delineating fashionable life at Bath, not seven miles away, in the village of Camerton, the Reverend John Skinner struggled in a mining community of terrible ungodliness and cruelty. Eventually, after a life

of frustration and a depressing ministry, among a people quite as barbaric as those later generations of Englishmen sought to civilize abroad, he shot himself.⁴⁷ The social unrest in Crotchet Castle, which Dr Folliott so energetically puts down,⁴⁸ was no mere dramatic embellishment on Peacock's part, it was the reflection of an England which survived a revolution, like that endured by France, perhaps by a hair's breadth.

It was in the year that Crotchet Castle was published, 1831, that civil unrest was particularly prevalent. The first reform bill was defeated in the Lords in October and much of the popular outcry was against the church. 'The press remarked that if twenty-one bishops had voted in the opposite sense the bill would have passed.' At a meeting in Regents Park a large placard was displayed, 'Englishmen - remember it was the bishops, and the bishops only, whose vote decided the fate of the Reform Bill.'⁴⁹ They were everywhere denounced; their usefulness and their incomes questioned. Their carriages were stoned and their public appearances hissed. An effigy of the Bishop of Carlisle was burned by a mob of eight thousand in the market square. Troops had to be called at Lambeth and Exeter. Radicals turned their eyes to Cathedral endowments and the abuses of plurality. It was in the panic to avoid confiscation of

property that Durham University was founded.⁵⁰ The lot of the labouring classes, godless and often starving, was also an inspiration for unrest. Three things seem significant at this time, according to Ford K. Brown. The first,

the contrast between the immense wealth of the great and the degrading indigence and squalor of a large mass of the 'lower orders'. The second the shocking increase in crime and in savage legal punishments ... the third ... is the ruling class's fear of the lower orders ... the patience, or resignation ... with which even good-hearted members of the upper and middle classes were able to bear the manifest sufferings of the poor as necessary in a pre-established and unchangeable divine order. 51

The clergy might have altered, locally, some of these attitudes. William Cobbett realised this. He wrote in 1802 that when 'from the top of any high hill, one looks round the country, and sees the multitude of regularly distributed spires,' the clergy's power is only too obvious.⁵² What he should have said was that this power was potentially great. Widespread clerical non-residence, their neglect of regular instruction and the absence of their constant example made this influence, in places, non-existent.

Now, it seemed, the clergy were set against democracy. There were, however, indications of spiritual renewal, even while the bishops cowered in their palaces. This awakening had begun, of course, with Wesley and other preachers of the gospel who travelled into the towns and villages of

England spreading a message of hope if not for this world, then for the next. As is well known, these bodies of like-minded and 'serious' Christians did not finally remain within the established church. That the Methodists left the Church of England was, perhaps, in religious terms a great tragedy, but in social and political terms, it could be argued it was perhaps the salvation of civil order. It channelled the spirit of revolt and discontent amongst the working classes into religion and away from the state. Religious revival, however, continued within the church. Those who did not become Methodists and, much more important, those who never could become Methodists, because of their social rank, became part of what later was known as the Evangelical party. Their first leader, William Wilberforce, believed what Wesley had not: that if a country is to be converted, its head, political, social and religious, must be taken first. The body then would follow. A certain degree of compromise, with undiluted Calvinism for example, was essential. Nor did the new movement reject wealth, rank or privilege. Indeed, William Wilberforce, himself a wealthy man, married an heiress, while the movement concentrated on converting the great and thence improving the lot and the morals, with practical inducement if necessary, of the poor. Their aim was to make all men 'religious', 'pious' and 'sincere', and

in the sense which they understood these terms.⁵³ The Christian way was once more to be a 'serious' way and the lives of such Christians was to be seriously dedicated to charity, education and the rescue of the fallen. The reform of the nation's morals would spring, they believed, from a restoration of 'true religion'. Above all, they were concerned to be seen as respectable; not Methodists, or radicals or dissenters. They wanted to improve not overthrow.

Why, then, are the Evangelical clergy, so obviously dedicated to such good, useful and worthy aims, almost everywhere portrayed in literature, certainly in literature notable as such, as unpleasant? This could perhaps be explained in terms of the personal experiences of some writers. Charlotte Brontë's portrayal of the Reverend Robert Brocklehurst⁵⁴ may have been based on her own experience at the Cowan Bridge school and of the Reverend Carus Wilson.⁵⁵ Both Charlotte Brontë and Thackeray were also said to have attended Newman's rather disreputable 'Lectures on certain differences felt by Anglicans in submitting to the Catholic Church' delivered in 1850.⁵⁶ They, perhaps, had more sympathy with the Tractarian party. Certainly both Dickens and Thackeray, who had known many leading Evangelicals at Cambridge, could not resolve their belief in a God of Love with the excesses of Jehovah in the Old Testament,⁵⁷ and the Evangelicals

strongly upheld the veracity of the Scriptures. On the other hand, many of Dickens's social concerns were shared by Evangelicals and their societies, and none of these writers were either godless or heartless. Nor were they alone in their portrayal of Evangelicals as gloomy, cold or hypocritical. The Trollopes' portraits, mother's and son's, were far more hostile and they had little personal religion of any kind. George Eliot, who actually suffered through her Evangelical belief, or rather her loss of it, was one of the few writers, on the other hand, to attempt a sympathetic portrait of an Evangelical clergyman in Janet's Repentance. One reason why the Evangelical clergyman generally received such hostile literary treatment was their strict notions of proper behaviour; a natural if excessive reaction to the decadent days of the Regency. Bowdlerising Shakespeare and censoring popular music would hardly win the approval of creative writers. Nor would the stricter Evangelicals' condemnation of Christmas trees, ringlets, bonnets with bows, dancing⁵⁸ and the theatre,⁵⁹ all of which might be considered part of fiction's essential decoration. By the time most of these novelists were writing, in Victorian England, the moral character of society had no doubt improved. The continuance of puritan attitudes was seen as an anachronism, or even hypocrisy. Novelists, anxious to entertain, inevitably

saw things differently from moral reformers, who imagined any laxity would return England to decadence. Furthermore, G.M. Young makes the important point, in his excellent study, Victorian England, that 'Evangelicalism at war with vice and brutality ... was a very different thing from Evangelicalism grown complacent, fashionable, superior.'⁶⁰ Even worse, perhaps, is the fact that at about this time, Evangelicalism was adopted by a great many who lacked breeding, culture or humour. Men whom Wilberforce called the dissenter type.⁶¹

It was probably difficult too for the novelist to reconcile himself to a movement traditionally hostile to fiction itself. The Reverend Robert Brown, of the Isle of Man, for example, would not allow fiction in his parsonage.⁶² Legh Richmond 'forbade his daughter to read novels and poetry', and to hear any music except that classed as sacred.'⁶³ The works of Mrs More, and authors like her, would also have inspired the novelists' scorn. They were largely moral or theological tracts and wholly didactic in purpose, under the guise of stories and little dramas. George Eliot pitched into the idol of her youth with zest after her 'apostasy', saying that Hannah More 'was that most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue-stocking,' to be 'classed along with singing mice and cardplaying pigs.'⁶⁴ The Tract, left on trains and handed to strangers, elevated the message above either art or

realism. They were as offensive to serious writers as many novels were an affront to the 'serious'. One of the most famous was Legh Richmond's The Dairyman's Daughter, a supposedly true story of a friendly gospel-preaching parson who converts his parishioners with orthodoxy and sentiment.⁶⁵ Rowland Hill's Village Dialogues (1810) reveal the conventional party portrait of the Evangelical clergyman. He is called Mr Lovegood, while the local representative of the clerical establishment is Mr Doolittle. The didactic nature of such stories is all too clear in this work, for the dialogues take place between personifications of such abstract theological notions as Antinomianism and Socinianism. The Dairyman's Daughter also reveals a didactic use of narrative and dramatic incident in the final edifying death-bed scene and the affecting funeral, intended to move the sinner to repentance. Nonetheless, such scenes became almost commonplace in Victorian fiction and both George Eliot and Dickens resort to them, in their description of the death of Milly Barton and Little Nell respectively. This can be attributed either to Evangelical influences or the universal mawkishness of the age.

To see the portrayal of Evangelicalism purely in terms of a personal reaction would, however, be an injustice to both sides. Certainly since strict Evangelicals neither

read nor wrote novels of any consequence themselves, those who did so might be assumed to be out of sympathy with them. There was much that was ridiculous or amusing in the manifestations of Evangelical earnestness. It is hard to read of a society such as 'The National Truss Society for the Relief of the Ruptured Poor', for example, without amusement.⁶⁶ More important, however, is the fact that the Evangelicals formed a movement for reform, and in a country naturally conservative that inevitably lead to scorn. Religious seriousness has always been alien to the British people who regard any form of enthusiasm with suspicion. As William Addison writes, 'the English genius for compromise has nowhere shown itself to better advantage than in the national Church.'⁶⁷ Furthermore, the Evangelical concern for the ordering of domestic life, food, drink, clothing and leisure would have seemed to some an unwarranted interference in personal liberty. The Evangelical influence in education, though it often provided schooling where otherwise there would have been none, is particularly pilloried in fiction. The English are supposed to object to a doctrinaire attitude to the young although the outcry might have been even stronger if Evangelicals had turned their attention to the training of horses or dogs.

Three major writers focus upon the Evangelical upbringing of their characters. In Thackeray's novel The Newcomes (1855) Tom, the father of Clive Newcome, the book's

hero, was brought up by his father and his second wife, the worthy and wealthy Sophia Alethea Hobson, in strictest Evangelical luxury at Clapham. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Henry Venn, 'Clapham [was] for a time the heart of the Evangelical Reform'.⁶⁸ At Sophia's home, 'the most eloquent expounders, the most gifted missionaries, the most interesting converts from foreign islands, were to be found at her sumptuous table, spread with the produce of her magnificent gardens ... Mr Whitfield himself christened her' and her two greek Christian names 'meant wisdom and truth'.⁶⁹ Tom's marriage to Sophia was looked upon with much displeasure by the Reverend Gideon Bawls and 'the Reverend Athanasius O'Grady, that eminent convert from Popery, who, quarrelling with each other, yea, striving one against another, had yet two sentiments in common, their love for Miss Hobson, their dread, their hatred of the worldly Newcome'.⁷⁰ Thackeray's suggestion, that Evangelical clergy men were wont to prey on wealthy unmarried ladies, is a common one and recurs in Mrs Trollope's The Vicar of Wrexhill. His account of Mrs Hobson-Newcome's life pillories many Evangelical activities. They were,

to attend to the interest of the enslaved negro;
to awaken the benighted Hottentot to a sense of the truth;
to convert Jews, Turks, Infidels and Papists;
to arouse the indifferent and often blasphemous mariner;
to guide the washerwoman in the right way;
to head all the public charities of her sect,

and do a thousand secret kindnesses that none knew of; to answer myriads of letters, pension endless ministers, and supply their teeming wives with continuous baby-linen; to hear preachers daily bawling for hours, and listen untired on her knees after a long day's labour, while florid rhapsodists belaboured cushions above her with wearisome benedictions; all these things had this woman to do, and for near fourscore years she fought her fight womanfully. 71

We are reminded here of another female reformer in fiction, Dickens's Mrs Jellyby, in Bleak House, whose concern never seemed to extend to her own children.⁷² The unpleasant mixture of domestic extravagance and spiritual narrowness, which continued to be parodied in fiction until the end of the century, in Butler's The Way of All Flesh, is also wittily captured by Thackeray.

Tommy was taught hymns, very soon after he could speak, appropriate to his tender age, pointing out to him the inevitable fate of wicked children, and giving him the earliest possible warning and description of the punishment of little sinners. He repeated these poems to his stepmother after dinner, before a great shining mahogany table, covered with grapes, pineapples, plum-cake, port wine, and Madeira, and surrounded by stout men in black, with baggy white neckcloths, who took the little man between their knees, and questioned him as to his right understanding of the place whither naughty boys were bound. 73

Hymn-singing, Hell-fire, mahogany and obesity were the hallmarks of this type of Evangelicalism, though Macauley thought that the writer exaggerated somewhat.⁷⁴ Tom, alas, eventually wishes to marry a Papist and banishes himself to India but his

son, Clive, returns to England in the care of his mother's brother, the Reverend Charles Honeyman, of whom more later.

Charlotte Brontë's portrayal of an Evangelical education, in Jane Eyre, and of the clergyman who directs it, presents a much bleaker and disturbing side of the movement. Lowood School in the novel and the Reverend Robert Brocklehurst, who was its patron, may well have been based on Charlotte's own experiences at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, and on the Reverend Carus Wilson. To what degree these descriptions are accurate or distorted does not here concern us.⁷⁵ It does seem likely, however, that were the school only half as horrid as she depicts it, it would be bound to affect a deeply sensitive and emotional girl like Charlotte Brontë. Mr Brocklehurst, too, is seen through the eyes of a little girl - the lonely, unloved figure of Jane Eyre. From Jane's first meeting with 'the stony stranger', he is a forbidding figure. She looked up and saw 'a black pillar! - such, at least, appeared to me ... the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug; the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital.' He was terrifying to the small child. 'What a face he had ... what a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large, prominent teeth!'⁷⁶ His first questions characterized Evangelical gloom (Amos Barton, as we shall see,

catechizes a small boy in exactly the same manner).⁷⁷

'Do you know where the wicked go after death?'
'They go to hell' was my ready and orthodox answer.
'And what is hell? can you tell me that?'
'A pit full of fire'
'And should you like to fall into that pit, and
to be burning there forever?' 78

Brocklehurst, clearly, believes in religious passivity but Charlotte Brontë makes clear that this emphasis on humility is also a preparation for social servitude. As the gaunt clergyman explains to Mrs Reed, Jane's guardian,

'Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood; I, therefore, direct that special care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them. I have studied how best to mortify in them the worldly sentiment of pride; and, only the other day, I had a pleasing proof of my success. My second daughter, Augusta, went with her mamma to visit the school, and on her return she exclaimed: "Oh, dear papa, how quiet and plain all the girls at Lowood look! ... they are almost like poor people's children! and," said she, "they looked at my dress and mamma's, as if they had never seen a silk gown before."' 79

What is fitting for a daughter of this clerical benefactor is certainly not deemed suitable for his 'daughters in Christ'. This breaking of the child's spirit continues at Lowood School where bad food, the cold, continual prayers and bible-reading combine to dull the senses and the soul. Brocklehurst's main concern is with the plainness and economy of the school's life. Whether it be thread for calico chemises, the restriction of needles to one per pupil, - "if they have more

they are apt to be careless and lose them"" - or the rationing of one clean tucker a week, he ensures that the avoidance of waste comes before any kind of comfort.⁸⁰ His attitude to the Superintendant's kindly action in giving the girls a light lunch, when their breakfast was ruined by the cook's carelessness, is typical. Were it not for the forbidding picture Charlotte Brontë paints of her black marble parson, and the serious tone of the book, we might be forgiven for viewing this passage as satirical exaggeration; so horribly hypocritical is it.

'Madam , allow me an instant. You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is, not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying. Should any accidental disappointment of the appetite occur, such as the spoiling of a meal ... the incident ought not to be neutralized by replacing with something more delicate the comfort lost, thus pampering the body and obviating the aim of this institution ... A brief address on those occasions would not be mistimed ... Oh, madam, when you put bread and cheese, instead of burnt porridge, into these children's mouths, you may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!' 81

The worst aspect of Brocklehurst's positively inquisitorial nature (to save the soul at the expense of the body is an aim shared by religious puritans of both Catholic and Protestant extremes) is his humiliation of Jane Eyre before the whole school. Stood on a tall stool, in front of teachers, visitors and pupils, Jane Eyre is singled out for vicious verbal

humiliation.

'It becomes my duty to warn you that this girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is a little castaway - not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example - if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse. Teachers, you must watch her; keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body to save her soul - if, indeed, such salvation be possible, for (my tongue falters while I tell it) this girl, this child ... is - a liar!' 82

Such a description might seem like imaginative licence today, but the Reverend Carus Wilson's stories, in his Children's Friend magazines, confirm that such attitudes to children were far from unknown. The stories, Phyllis Bentley writes, 'abound in deathbed stories of little children. One little boy of three and a half, asked whether he would choose death or life, replies: "'Death for me. I am fonder of death.'" Another naughty child asks, "'Why do they whip us if they love us?" [and] is told that they are whipped in order to save their souls.'" ⁸³ Even towards the end of the century these tales of death, larded with religious sentimentality, continued to be written and published. This poem printed in The Christian Age is fairly typical.

Little Mary's Dying Vision (by Mrs W.C. Eddy)

(The words are those of Dr Smith's little daughter in India about an hour before she died.)

She in her father's arms at last
The weary pain all o'er -
Her little bark was drifting fast
To the distant unknown shore.

'Dear mamma, am I asleep?' she cried,
'No, darling, you see us here.'
'Well, angels seem leading me about,
Singing, Come, and do not fear.'

'Do you think this means I am going home?'
'Yes, Jesus wants my child,
And has sent his angels to bear you safe,
And bring you close to his side.'

'Mamma, now I see golden stairs' -
Faint grew the voice and low -
'And little angels are going up,
And some wait down below.'

Waiting for her! She only paused
To tell the vision fair -
Then, clasped their hands, and with trusting heart,
Passed up the golden stair. 84

Although a layman, Mr Murdstone, in Dickens's David Copperfield, is portrayed in a manner similar to Brocklehurst in Jane Eyre. Young David, even before he meets his new father, 'trembled, and turned white. Something - I don't know what, or how - connected with the grave in the churchyard, and the raising of the dead, seemed to strike me like an unwholesome wind.'⁸⁵ Both Murdstone and his sister are shrewdly characterized by Dickens, as so often, by one main attribute. This is clearly re-inforced by the aptness of their name, suggesting both murder, or murky, and the hardness and inflexibility of stone.

'Firmness [David observes,] was the grand quality on which both Mr and Miss Murdstone took their stand. However I might have expressed my comprehension of it at that time, if I had been called upon, I nevertheless did clearly comprehend in my own way that it was another name for tyranny, and for a certain gloomy, arrogant, devil's humour that was in them both. The creed, as I should state it now, was this. Mr Murdstone was firm; nobody in his world was to be so firm as Mr Murdstone; nobody else in his world was to be firm at all, for everybody was to be bent to his firmness. 86

Other characteristics of Evangelical ministers which novelists seized upon can be seen first in that most vicious and scurrilous portrait, The Vicar of Wrexhill (1837) by Mrs F. Trollope. This clergyman's cunning and blackness of heart makes his daughter become an atheist and his avaricious schemes nearly outwit the more conventional Christians in his parish. Other writers, like Mrs Trollope, emphasized the Evangelical's aptitude for preaching. Their powers of persuasion, normally exerted to convert the sinful, are also seen to extend into private life. To a remarkable and even alarming degree they charm widows into marriage and prise fortunes from the unsuspecting. Mrs Trollope succeeds quite well in suggesting this mysterious power.

The reverend gentleman expressed himself with an unusual flow of words, in sentences particularly well constructed; yet nevertheless his opinions seemed enveloped in a mist. 87

or,

The great natural gift of Mr Cartwright was the power

of making his voice, his eye, and the flexible muscles of his handsome mouth, echo to give to his language a power beyond its own. 88

Her son's most notable Evangelical clergyman, Mr Slope, it will be remembered, also causes much consternation in Barchester Towers⁸⁹ by his sermon in the Cathedral. George Eliot's Amos Barton, however, in Scenes of Clerical Life, is compared unfavourably with previous parsons of Shepperton because his preaching is uninspired.⁹⁰

This emphasis by novelists in their portrayal of Evangelicals is not to be wondered at. From the beginning of the Evangelical Movement, the call to preach the gospel had been stressed. Mr Bogue of Gosport, an early founder of the London Missionary Society, made this clear in 1794.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. That has not yet been done. It ought to be done without delay; and every Christian is called upon to act his part, and cannot without criminality withhold his exertions ... It is surely full time that we had begun. We are able. Our number is great ... Nothing is wanting but for some persons to stand forward, and to begin. 91

This, of course, refers to foreign lands but as Thomas Scott wrote, in 1801, 'the most active friends to missions are also the most diligent in promoting Christianity at home.'⁹² The foundation of Bible Societies, Sunday Schools, and numerous 'Benevolent and District' visiting societies, indicates that their mission in England was as organised and massive as anything sent overseas.

Thackeray, in The Newcomes, satirizes the kind of preacher who, in the early decades of the century, made a living out of his homiletic expertise. He also pillories a particular abuse in the church of that time, the private chapel. The Reverend Charles Honeyman, believing 'a curacy but a synonym for starvation' or, worse, hard work, decides to buy 'that elegant and commodious chapel, known as Lady Whittlesea's, Denmark Street.'⁹³ Many a clever young clergyman established himself in such an extra-parochial place during the first half of the nineteenth century. If he were an excellent preacher, of reasonable breeding and a pleasant manner, he might be supported in a fashionable area by pew rents, and the donations of wealthy parishioners.⁹⁴ Such opportunists were criticized by Jane Austen in Mansfield Park.⁹⁵ The building of such chapels, and their design, was condemned in the forties by that great theorist of ecclesiastical architecture, A.W. Pugin. Chapels, Pugin writes,

are erected by men who ponder between a mortgage, a railroad or a chapel, as the best investment of their money, and who, when they have resolved on relying on the persuasive eloquence of a cushion-thumping, popular preacher, erect four walls with apertures for windows, cram the same full of seats, which they readily let; and so greedy after self are these chapel-raisers, that they form dry and spacious vaults underneath which are soon occupied at a good rent by some wine and brandy merchant. ⁹⁶

Honeyman, whose name alone fits him for this eloquent task, had a most romantic notion of his duties.

A voice within me cries 'go forth, Charles Honeyman, fight the good fight; wipe the tears of the repentant sinner; sing of hope to the agonised criminal; whisper courage, brother, courage, at the ghastly death-bed, and strike down the infidel with the lance of evidence and the shield of reason!' 97

He calculated that his income would be not less than a thousand pounds per annum and, for some time, makes a success of the venture. His 'elegant discourses were at this time preached in a rich silk Master of Arts gown, presented to him, along with a teapot full of sovereigns, by his affectionate congregation at Leatherhead.'⁹⁸

Dickens, with his ear for verbal nuance and eye for idiosyncratic behaviour, gives us a vivid portrait of the Evangelical preacher. In Pickwick Papers, (1837), the red-nosed Mr Stiggins strongly contrasts with the more amiable elderly cleric whose poetry and tale the Pickwickians listen to at Manor Farm.⁹⁹ Usually, though, except in Canon Crisparkle, from Edwin Drood, he is vague about denomination. With Mr Chadband, from Bleak House, he ably captures the worst excesses of the pious preacher. As in the case of Mr Slope, oiliness is the physical manifestation of an ingratiating obsequiousness.

'Peace, my friends,' says Chadband, rising and wiping the oily exudations from his reverend visage, 'Peace be with us! My friends, why with us? Because,' with his fat smile, 'it cannot be against us, because it must be for us; because it is not hardening, because it is softening; because it does not make war like the hawk, but comes home untoe [sic] us like the dove. Therefore, my friends, peace be with us!'

All this is addressed to the unfortunate Jo, who has strayed into Chadband's custody. 'You let me alone.' he cries.

'No, my young friend,' says Chadband, smoothly.
'I will not let you alone. And why? Because I am a harvest-labourer, because I am a toiler and a moiler, because you are delivered over untoe me, and are become as a precious instrument in my hands. My friends, may I so employ this instrument as to use it toe your advantage, toe your profit, toe your gain, toe your welfare, toe your enrichment!'

 100

This is an exaggeration of the earnest Evangelical preacher's manner but, as usual, in the repetition, alliteration, rhetorical questions and biblical language, Dickens captures something of the style of such sermons. The same devices, for example, can be found in William Wayte Andrew's emotional, two and a half hour sermon preached after the execution of the Norfolk murderer Mr Rush.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, when the clerical diarist Benjamin Armstrong heard the most famous Evangelical preacher of the age, Mr Spurgeon, he was not impressed, either by his matter or his manner. 'His voice is powerful,' Armstrong writes, 'but without sweetness or modulation of tone ... The sermon was from 2 Kings, ii, 4. There was nothing extraordinary in the address, and the only clue that I could discover to the unbounded popularity of the man was his wonderful assurance.'¹⁰² It should be added, in Spurgeon's defence, that Armstrong was a firm Anglo-Catholic and unlikely to be moved.

Finally, it is as a preacher that Mr St John Rivers, the other Evangelical clergyman in Jane Eyre, begins to reveal his deep and complex idealism. The first sermon that Jane

heard him preach,

Began calm - and indeed, as far as delivery and pitch of voice went, it was calm to the end: an earnestly felt, yet strictly restrained zeal breathed soon in the distinct accents, and prompted the nervous language. This grew to force - compressed, condensed, controlled. The heart was thrilled, the mind astonished, by the power of the preacher: neither were softened ... I was sure St John Rivers - pure-lived, conscientious, zealous as he was - had not yet found that peace of God which passeth all understanding. 103

The character and role of St John Rivers in Jane Eyre's history has, it seems to me, been much misunderstood by critics. Possibly, having rightly seen the portrayal of Brocklehurst as caustic they conclude, if indeed they discuss him at any length at all, that he is in the same mould. Certainly, he has all the Evangelical characteristics of intensity and high moral purpose and a passionate, idealistic desire for sacrifice and dedication which other writers had made sinister or hypocritical. Q.D. Leavis, with whom there is no space to argue fully, says that 'St John is apparently a high-minded cleric' but, 'actually he is only a more subtle moral bully than Mr Brocklehurst.'¹⁰⁴ This seems to me as wrong as A.L. Drummond's analysis of him as 'an Evangelical zealot' who 'suffers from intensity.'¹⁰⁵ David Cecil's comment that Charlotte Brontë 'felt sympathetic admiration' for him is, on the other hand, too genteel.¹⁰⁶ St John is not 'apparently' high-minded, he is so. His close, though finally hopeless, relationship with Jane Eyre (which, we should note, takes up practically all of the novel's last

ten chapters) would have been impossible if he were not.

Charlotte Brontë's portrait is of a saint in embryo and if we are to call him evangelical, we should properly use the lower case. He is a Christian evangelist, dedicated to the gospel. His portrait, deeply penetrating and psychologically accurate, is not of a partisan but of a very rare individual. His asceticism, his struggle for control of heart and body is something met with as much in S. Bernard or S. Ignatius Loyola as in Henry Martyn, whom Rivers much resembles.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps, because he is shown still struggling with his doubts and fears this has lead to an unsympathetic view of him but a vocation such as his cannot be purified without mental suffering or without the sacrifice of many things which other men enjoy. Q.D. Leavis says that 'Jane sees through the surface appearance of the self-sacrificing missionary to the ambition.'¹⁰⁸ She condemns Rivers with twentieth-century eyes. Jane Eyre does not see his ambition, sternness or single-mindedness as wholly damning, although, in the end, and rightly, she sees that her lot lies with Mr Rochester. The last words of the book characterize not, I believe, with satire or condemnation but with detached admiration an exceptional if, indeed, a somewhat frightening man.

A more resolute, indefatigable pioneer never wrought amidst rocks and dangers. Firm, faithful, and devoted, full of energy and zeal, and truth, he labours for his race; he clears their painful way

to improvement; he hews down like a giant the prejudices of creed and caste that encumber it. He may be stern; he may be exacting; he may be ambitious yet; but his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart ... His is the exaction of the apostle ... His is the ambition of the high master-spirit, which aims to fill a place in the first rank of those who are redeemed from the earth - who stand without fault before the throne of God, who share the last mighty victories of the Lamb, who are called, and chosen, and faithful. 109

His character may not seem natural to ordinary men, but it is still one which the passionate Charlotte Brontë, through Jane Eyre, could wonder at and, in awe, admire. Far from being, as Q.D. Leavis suggests, 'the antithesis of Mr Rochester',¹¹⁰ who almost fades completely from the book on Rivers's appearance, until his final reunion with Jane, he is, I suggest, the antithesis of Jane Eyre. They both seek the same thing, Love, with a dramatic and unbending energy. Jane finds it in the warmth of one person; Rivers finds it in a consuming ideal of service. Both, Jane Eyre perceives, require dedication, suffering and sacrifice.

Rivers is misunderstood, or rather not understood, today because of the immense revolution in religious opinion and contemporary attitudes to religion. Charlotte Brontë's portrait needs historical commentary. She is concerned to show the human weaknesses of an idealist, commonly conceived at that time to be above other men by reason of his dedication. The relationship between Jane Eyre and Rivers is a careful delineation of two different, and yet remarkably similar

psychologies. Their search for fulfilment only finally diverges; much of the route is the same; as are their sufferings and disappointments. Her feminine emphasis, for she stresses those qualities which would once have been thought properly a woman's, in her insistence upon the human aspects of love obviously emphasizes River's inflexibility.

How much of him was saint, how much mortal, I could not heretofore tell: but revelations were being made in this conference: the analysis of his nature was proceeding before my eyes. I saw his fallibilities: I comprehended them. I understood that, sitting there where I did, on the bank of heath, and with that handsome form before, I sat at the feet of a man, erring as I. The veil fell from his hardness and despotism. Having felt in him the presence of these qualities, I felt his imperfection, and took courage. I was with an equal - one with whom I might argue - one whom, if I saw good, I might resist. lll

We should notice nonetheless that she sees him as 'an equal' not a humbug. Today's sympathies have so changed that any notion of sanctity, inevitably, is suspect. Traditional asceticism is questioned even by theologians - especially after the Second Vatican Council. No longer is the dedication of a man like Rivers admired in the same way. Thus Charlotte Brontë's portrait seems condemnatory. I do not believe it is meant to be so. In its historical context, it is a perceptive adjustment of contemporary religious notions. Such faith as his may no longer be comprehended but I believe Jane Eyre admires it even if she cannot wholly embrace it. Her account of him, and the work itself, end thus.

The last letter I received from him drew from my eyes human tears and yet filled my heart with divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown. I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of his Lord ... his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be undaunted, his hope will be sure, his faith steadfast. His own words are a pledge of this - 'My master', he says, 'has forewarned me. Daily he announces more distinctly, "Surely I come quickly!" and hourly I more eagerly respond, "Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus."' 112

Jane Eyre was published in 1847. The religious atmosphere of the book, however, owes everything to Evangelicalism and nothing to that other great spiritual revival of the nineteenth century, the High Church, Tractarian or Oxford Movement, whose influence was widespread by the forties. The word 'high' began to be used in 'High Church' before the Revolution of 1688, but although a High Churchman might well have sympathized with those who refused to take their oath of allegiance to William III, or have favoured the Episcopalians and Jacobites rather than the Presbyterians in Scotland, his convictions had religious as well as political foundations. Broadly speaking such men, in Elizabethan times and during the days of Archbishop Laud, avoided the extremes of Calvinism, favouring the older patristic stream of thought which emphasized both episcopal ministry and sacramentalism. Bishop Andrewes's Book of private devotions and Cosin's use of traditional ornaments at Durham Cathedral represent two similar flowerings of this kind of Anglican devotion.¹¹³ They believed, not that

continental Protestants ministered in vain, but that the Anglican episcopal ministry 'was the best, the complete ministry as God had intended his Church to be ordered.'¹¹⁴ The gap, between those who emphasized the historical nature of the church and those who did not, widened in the age of reason. Reason, by its nature, is not much concerned with historical tradition, and by the end of the eighteenth century the old High Church party lay dormant.

Curiously enough, Owen Chadwick argues, it was the Evangelicals who contributed to its renaissance. Their diligent, enthusiastic and biblically-based preaching, 'encouraged by reaction the "stiff quality", the high element in high churchmanship.'¹¹⁵ High churchmen emphasized, by contrast, the need for the soul to grow in sanctification and holiness. They set against individual salvation the corporate community of the church manifested in the local parish, whose boundaries the missionary zeal of Evangelicals often set at nought. Furthermore, Chadwick writes, 'the Evangelicals contributed perhaps more than any group to transforming the high and dry men into the new high churchmen of the nineteenth century. There is a certain continuity of piety between the Evangelical movement and the Oxford movement ... in religion the Evangelicals taught the Oxford men not to be afraid of their feelings - indeed, both Newman and Pusey brought into the movement a strong element of Evangelical sensibility and language.'¹¹⁶

There were, of course, other cultural influences. 'Romantic literature and art, the sense of affection and the sensibility of beauty pervading European thought, the flowering of poetry, the medievalism of the novel or of architecture' also played their part.¹¹⁷ Something of this sense of re-awakening, which followed the early work of the 'Oxford Apostles', can be seen in Dean Hole's description of the church of his youth. Although acquainted with Evangelicals, it is the Tractarians who, to his mind, brought new life to the establishment. The somewhat laboured literary prose only serves to emphasize a contrast with the bleaker, biblical language of the religious movement which preceeded it.

At last, the morning star, which announced the advent of a brighter day, shone through the darkness, and it is interesting to recall how gradually that gracious light broke upon the dreary scene. As when some beautiful picture, which has been concealed and forgotten, removed in time of battle, lest it should be destroyed by the enemy, is found after many years, and is carefully cleansed and skillfully restored, and the eye is delighted with the successive development of colour and of form, and the lifelike countenance, the historical scene, the sunny landscape, or the moonlit sea comes out once more upon the canvas; so in that great revival of religion, which began in England more than half a century ago, the glorious truths of the gospel, the ancient verities of the Catholic faith, were restored to a disobedient and gainsaying people, who had forgotten or slighted them so long. They were with us in our Bibles, in our Prayer-books, in our Sacraments, and means of grace, but they were hidden from our eyes, like the colours of the picture, by the dust of a long neglect. 118

If Dean Hole's description of the Tractarians'

influence seems romantic, an account which tried to concentrate wholly on intellectual propositions would be equally erroneous. As Chadwick says, in dealing with the Oxford Movement, 'we are faced with the difficulty that movements have no mind', and that this movement really was, to begin with, the teaching and the example of three great individuals, Newman, Keble and Pusey.¹¹⁹ It is true that these three, at least for a time, come together intellectually and shared a view of doctrine and theology which has 'certain recognizable features, of detail as well as of type; and this doctrine and theology form the centre of a far wider group of writers and preachers, rooted in the old tradition of high churchmen, receiving fresh impetus both from the crisis of the times and from their leaders in Oxford.'¹²⁰ But the influence of outstanding and different individuals in the Oxford Movement contrasts with the Evangelical movement. There were, of course, great Evangelicals, but the inspiration of the movement was scriptural not personal. The Bible, and not a passionate shared search for spiritual enrichment, which could lead in practice in various directions, was its common anchor. Nor did the Evangelicals, because of their puritanism, find their movement infused with the many artistic and imaginative flowerings of their age in the way that the Oxford apostles were to do. The intensity of religious feeling which characterized the earnestness both of the Wesleyans and the Evangelicals

largely turned inwards, to self-analysis or private prayer. Even their numberless humanitarian activities had fundamentally missionary foundations. The Tractarians, on the other hand, encouraged a disciplined flowering of the emotions in religious worship. This in turn, together with a store of language and imagery from the past, which their examination of the Churches' tradition re-opened to them, was inevitably carried into imaginative and practical expression.

There is no Evangelical equivalent to Keble's immensely popular, and widely-read, series of poems, The Christian Year, first published in 1827. The improvements in church architecture and furnishings, in ritual and piety, sprang from the Tractarian not the Evangelical revival. Although, clearly, the changes in ritual were due more to the Camden Society in Cambridge than to the austere and unritualistic fathers at Oxford, the principles of the early Tractarians can nonetheless be seen to be like an umbrella for many broader cultural impulses; including, even, the revival of Gothic. Why this was so can be seen from Pusey's definition of the movement's basic principles in 1840. First, he makes clear that the movement has set out 'no peculiar doctrines' but is rather designated by 'a temper of mind' which 'will vary according to the individual who uses it.' He then lists the aspects of religion which the Tractarians stressed. Here it is clear that although the Tractarians, like

the Evangelicals, sought to deepen and enliven the spiritual life, they were far more concerned with corporate devotion than with the individual's communion with God: with sanctification in the body of Christ rather than only with salvation, in the narrower sense of conversion. Obvious, too, is their historical emphasis which included, and honoured, post-biblical Christian experience, rather than focusing religion on its ultimate credentials. This led the Church of England closer to its old rival, the Church of Rome. These principles were, then,

1. High thoughts of the two sacraments.
2. High estimate of Episcopacy as God's ordinance.
3. High estimate of the visible Church as the Body wherein we are made and continue to be members of Christ.
4. Regard for ordinances, as directing our devotions and disciplining us, such as daily public prayers, fasts and feasts, etc.
5. Regard for the visible part of devotion, such as the decoration of the house of God, which acts insensibly on the mind.
6. Reverence for and deference to the ancient Church ... in a word, reference to the ancient Church instead of the Reformers, as the ultimate expounder of the meaning of our Church. 121

How Newman, Keble, Pusey and their other Oxford followers arrived at these propositions, how they disseminated them and with what effect can, of course, be discovered in accounts far fuller and richer than any I can give here.¹²²

Important for our purpose, though, are the effects of the Tractarians' teaching on church life and the parish clergyman.

Even Pusey had suggested, following his statement quoted above, that the differences between the Tractarians and others, 'which seemed considerable are really so only in the way of stating them.' His use of such phrases as 'high thought', 'high estimate' and 'reverence for' emphasize the point that it was practice and expression rather than principle which they stressed. Pusey's statement, however, is especially conciliatory and conservative. It avoids all inkling of the sort of controversy which might, and did, arise from the interpretation of particular points - especially numbers five and six. Nevertheless, it is practice which usually concerns the novelist and indeed the Tractarians' outward expression of religion is far more often characterized in fiction than their principles, another contrast with the Evangelicals whose doctrinal utterances, as we have seen, were as much recorded as their personalities. The revolution which the Tractarians effected in the Church of England was only partly theological. Its most lasting effect was to restore that true awareness and acceptance of tradition which had been lost in the doctrinal holocaust of the Reformation. It freed the church, mind, body and soul from the narrower tenets of Protestantism, towards which it had been driven once again by the apathy and laxity of the establishment.

Undoubtedly, the most extraordinary single fact which can be found to characterize the wide-ranging changes which

occurred in English religious life in the thirties and forties is that William Wilberforce himself, one of the most respected and influential Evangelicals of the century, and the movement's undoubted leader until the late 1820s, by the end of his life 'had gone over to the High Church.'¹²³ Since he died in 1833, the year in which Keble preached his Assize Sermon and which Newman, wrongly, thought of as the beginning of the movement proper, the Tractarians cannot be given entire credit for this remarkable apostasy. The careers of his sons, however, show the changes equally clearly. A man might not, perhaps, be held wholly responsible for his sons' spiritual development - a sentiment Wilberforce and the Evangelicals generally would most certainly have repudiated - but it is not without significance that he sent three of his four sons to Oxford and not to Cambridge, 'the second Evangelical capital.'¹²⁴ Moreover, Robert,¹²⁵ Samuel,¹²⁶ and Henry¹²⁷ matriculated not at St Edmund's Hall, Oxford's Evangelical bastion, but at Oriel College which stood at that time, theologically, in direct opposition to it. (Newman and Keble were both Fellows there.) All three sons became followers of the Tractarian Movement and two of them, finally, Roman Catholics. With them we move truly into the Victorian period where political upheaval and the threats of revolution are replaced by the more cerebral, but often equally violent, controversies of belief.

Although the Oxford Movement was initially what its name infers, very soon, and especially with the publication of the Tracts for the Times, the parish clergy throughout the country watched with interest, or followed with enthusiasm, developments at that place of learning. The first Tract, published in 1833, was in fact entitled, 'Thoughts on the Ministerial Commission respectfully addressed to the Clergy'. All of them 'secured a wide circulation, and their influence ... was enormous.'¹²⁸ On the publication of the famous Tract Ninety, in 1841, which finally, so to speak, put the Catholic cat amongst the establishment pigeons, Dean Church, then a fellow of Oriel, wrote that, 'People in the country' - the list indicates that he means clergymen - 'have in general backed up manfully and heartily.' By this time the Movement could only have escaped the notice of the most eremitical Anglican. 'The papers have been full of the row,' Church continues, 'which has stirred up London itself in no common manner.'¹²⁹ Nor could Church have been the only Oxford man who eagerly wrote to friends and fellow clerics in the country of every development. Soon, in any case, the exertions of the press, the reaction of the bishops, and discussions in Parliament made the issue of Tractarianism not merely a matter for debate but for commitment. The affair of the Jerusalem Bishopric, in 1841, shattered the last loyal-

ties of many clergymen who had only endured an established church ruled by politicians.¹³⁰ Far more would now have agreed with Hurrell Froude who had said earlier, 'Let us give up a national Church and have a real one.'¹³¹ Those sympathizers who did not follow, or precede, Newman to Rome in October 1845, stayed on to enrich the church of their baptism. The Movement had finished in Oxford but elsewhere, in a way, it had only really begun.

Newman's novel, Loss and Gain (1848), captures amusingly many clerical and ecclesiastical concerns, and some of the 'fads' of this period. In the past, serious-minded historians have been alarmed by this work, so much more frivolous than Newman's austere, intellectual writings. Alexander Whyte in Newman, An Appreciation,¹³² thought it added nothing to his reputation 'either for literary ability, or for historical integrity, or for controversial fairness.' Unfortunately Walter Walsh did not express his view in that bizarre work of slander and nonsense, The Secret History of the Oxford Movement (1898). It would hardly have been flattering. The novel is, none the less, fascinating, bringing to life again the enthusiasms of youth, and the popular appeal of many ecclesiastical questions circulating in Oxford's rarified, but undergraduate atmosphere. A.L. Rowse goes too far when he says that it is 'in many ways more revealing than the Apologia where

[Newman] was consciously making a case for himself.¹³³ It does, however, indicate that if the original Tractarians were not ardent ritualists, they were not wholly blind to ritual's charms. Nor is the work wholly trivial. Geoffrey Faber, in his 'character study of the Oxford Movement', discerns in the two short chapters devoted to a discussion of celibacy a more serious indication of Newman's otherwise firmly repressed emotional life.¹³⁴

Most of Newman's characters are eager undergraduates, but there are some non-Catholic clergymen in the novel, though none of them are portrayed with much admiration. The Very Reverend Dr Brownside, the Dean of Nottingham, is described as 'one of the acutest, if not soundest, academical thinkers of the day. He was a little, prim, smirking, bespectacled man, bald in front, with curly black hair behind, somewhat pompous in his manner, with a clear musical utterance, which enabled one to listen to him without effort.'¹³⁵ Faith and theology were also effortless to him, and revelation 'was a flat sunny plain, laid out with straight macadamized roads.'¹³⁶ Here Newman is satirizing the rationalist intellectual divine to whom faith is a logical deduction. Newman also wittily records one of his sermons, where he suggests that all beliefs are but 'modes', Anglican formulas but convenient explanations, even the Athanasian Creed merely a useful vehicle for a personal

affirmation of faith.¹³⁷ By way of contrast there is also in the novel the Reverend Alexander Highfly, who runs the Holy Catholic Church in Huggermugger Lane. 'A man of gentlemanlike appearance and manner, his language was refined, and his conduct was delicate.' His beliefs are an individual combination of Irvingite spirituality¹³⁸ and a desire for the restoration of the order of Apostles to the Church of England.¹³⁹ Another clerical oddity, who calls himself Zerubbabel, was formerly an Anglican deacon but has become a Jew. He had decided that, "as Judaism was the first religion, so it's to be the last."¹⁴⁰ The views of these clergymen, like the interests of the undergraduates earlier in the book, whether for ritual, restoration or the Evangelical religion of Exeter Hall, are shown to be as nothing beside the true peace and security of the Roman Church. The climax of the novel is the hero's, Charles Reding's, reception into the Church of Rome. For him, it is 'as if he were really beginning life again.'¹⁴¹ The orthodox Catholic finally conquers the novelist who had allowed himself, for a while, to re-live the enthusiasms of youth.

Newman was not, though, the only Tractarian novelist. Joseph Baker, in his study The Novel and the Oxford Movement, lists no fewer than 128 Tractarian novels, though few repay literary study, and only Charlotte Yonge's work may still be actually read. Some of the more amusing ones, like St Antho-

lin's (1841) and Milford Malvoisin (1842) by F.E. Paget, describe the craze for church restoration and the abolition of box pews which was widespread in the forties and fifties. Even a novelist from very erastian stock, William Paley's grandson, F.A. Paley, published in 1845 a story on these topics entitled The Church Restorers, 'a tale treating of Ancient and Modern Architecture and church decoration.' Despite his assurances that he was no advocate of Romish splendours, he joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1847. By 1857, when George Eliot published The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton, the transformation of most parish churches was complete. In a church of Dean Hole's youth,

the altar was represented by a small, rickety deal table, with a scanty covering of faded and patched green baize, on which were placed the overcoat, hat and riding-whip of the officiating minister, who made a vestry within the sacrarium, and sitting there in a huge surplice ... looked as though he were about to have his hair cut. The font was filled with coffin-ropes, tinder-boxes and brimstone matches, candle ends ... Sparrows twittered and bats floated beneath rotten timbers of the roof, while beetles and moths, and all manner of flies, found happy homes below.' 142

Now, even the country parish church of Shepperton, which George Eliot describes, had

a wide span of slated roof flanking the old steeple; the windows are tall and symmetrical; the outer doors resplendent with oak-graining, the inner doors reverentially noiseless with a garment of red baize ... the nave filled with well-shaped benches ... Ample galleries are supported on iron pillars, and in one of them stands the crowning glory ... an organ. 143

Church restoration was not the sole subject of these 'party' novels though, because of its visual appeal and relatively non-theological nature, it occupies many writers. The soul's inner remoulding was as popular as churches' outer refurbishment. James Anthony Froude's novel, The Nemesis of Faith (1849) is probably best known for this. Carlyle described the book as 'a wretched mortal's vomiting up of all his interior crudities, dubitations and spiritual, agonising bellyaches into the view of the public.'¹⁴⁴ Kathleen Tillotson, however, suggests that novels like this 'enforced, and perhaps even initiated, the growing tendency to introspection in the novel.' Their heroes' or heroines' habit of analyzing their own states of mind reached literary summation in the novels of the Brontës.¹⁴⁵

A more interesting novel of this sort, for our purpose, is From Oxford to Rome (1847) 'by a companion Traveler' who was, in fact, Elizabeth Harris. This was the work, sent to Newman in Rome, which inspired him to 'the production of a second tale; drawn up with a stricter regard to truth and probability ...'¹⁴⁶ Whether Loss and Gain is, in fact, successful on this score is doubtful. Elizabeth Harris's tale tells of the Trials of Eustace and Augusta A-. Eustace is first seen, after graduation at Oxford where, despite his inner doubts, he is preparing for ordination. This service is later described in agonizing detail with the spiritual exaltation

of the newly-ordained priest melodramatically mirrored in his surroundings. The tortuous intensity of Miss Harris's prose is not untypical of such novels.

The full solemn weight of his position was almost overwhelming his spirit, when the sun, which had been shining obliquely on the painted panes of the oriel window, in front of which they had knelt, - passed beyond the external angle of the building, and, at the moment when the final benediction was pronounced, its pure light streamed in through the southern clerestory arches, and the figure of the prelate and the assistant clergy, in their dresses of dazzling whiteness, and the vessels of the Holy Communion, and the whole altar-place, suddenly became the centre and source of a received and emitted glory. And this seemingly chance circumstance struck a chord of strength in his soul, which vibrated long and sustainingly when the swelling discords of the world would else have overpowered him. 147

After ordination,

It was the fortune of Mr A., - a singularly happy one in these vexed times, - to be associated in the pastorate of a parish of great extent with a vicar and fellow-curate of most kindred feeling in all those points and principles which constitute the common distinction between High and Low Churchmen. 148

The parish is run on moderate Tractarian lines, with daily evening prayers and much tolling of bells. 'From the first, Eustace was respected and beloved.'¹⁴⁹ There are rumours, however, that Eustace 'had fitted up a small east room in his house with an Altar and the symbols of religion.' And that 'he was in the habit of inflicting corporeal Penance on himself.'¹⁵⁰ 'Another sore offence arose in the curate's

admitting a few persons, by their own special desire, to private Confession.¹⁵¹ As he labours diligently on, still 'he found time for the constant and careful perusal of the floods of literature poured from Oxford sources.'¹⁵²

It is his reading of W.G. Ward's book, The Ideal of a Christian Church (1894), which finally clarifies the inner agonies and doubts with which he has been daily struggling. After a short visit to Paris, and his acquaintance 'with a young Catholic priest of most fascinating address and singularly accomplished mind,¹⁵³ he resigns his orders and both 'brother and sister submitted together to the rite of baptism by a Roman Catholic Priest.'¹⁵⁴ In a letter from Italy he outlines his future plans.

In retirement and complete abstraction I hope yet to attain a much higher walk of faith. An establishment under the rule of St Bernard is my peculiar choice ... But I try to wait, like Samuel lying down and watching for the Voice of the Lord, so mercifully heard once. Oh! that, like him, I could know it unmistakably. 155

Chapter six, entitled 'The Dream Dispelled: and the Opening of the Real', sounds the first warning note. No wonder that Newman, newly converted himself, wanted to put the record straight. Despite the elaborate ceremonial of Vespers which precede the day of Eustace's clothing ceremony - 'Is there anything symbolical in the fact that a Roman Catholic Church', Miss Harris asks, 'always displays its greatest brilliancy in

Artificial Illumination?'¹⁵⁶ - all is not well. A friend from England visits him in his gloomy cell.

There he lay, extended on a low pallet bed, like a form of marble, except that his countenance seemed impressed with the intelligence of a book:- and he who entered and gazed on it so intently read it plainly enough. He saw all that had been suffered - saw that still was wanting all that had been sought; - Eustace had asked for peace, and received a whirlwind: he had grasped a fair jewel, and in his hand it had become a band and chain of iron. 157

Eustace quotes from Psalm 137, 'in the version of the English Prayer-book',¹⁵⁸ and after a lengthy theological discussion, as unlikely as a dying hero's last aria in opera, 'his friends bent beside A. to catch the last breathing of his pure spirit ere its flight from the body.'¹⁵⁹ The stern, unbending attitude of the monks after Eustace's death concludes his part in the story.

A careful watch was instituted to prevent the Anglican brethren from holding any private intercourse. Under plea of the solemn providence which had visited the house in taking from among them one of their most promising ornaments of learning and piety, and in preparation for the funeral ceremony, and the following profession of the remaining novices, a Retreat was commanded. This form, by preserving a much stricter discipline and surveillance, effectually accomplished the wish of the Superior, that the whisper of Heresy - which a communication made him by the Confessor with regard to Eustace's last moments verily seemed in his ears - should not be spread, especially among the younger members of the fraternity. 160

His sister hardly fares any better. After the death of a fellow-novice, who had found fasting too much for her, and who was suspected of remaining an Anglican, the Superior

informs Augusta that she "will be buried as a dog is buried."¹⁶¹

Augusta dies shortly afterwards, receiving the sacraments from the church of her youth. Miss Harris ends this morbid story with her moral.

These are no fables - but the things of the time and the months we live in ... If these purposes come into your hearts, far be it from us to talk of setting aside the Lord's vocation - only be sure that it is such. It is a day of excitement and influence; be sure that these do not carry you away whither you are not aware. 162

That such a narrative reached a third edition in the year of publication is some indication of its contemporary appeal. The novel also dwells upon another contemporary subject of fiction, monasticism, to which we will shortly return.

Not all clergymen, however, found Tractarian ideals as heart-rending as Eustace A-. Thackeray's Mr Honeyman, in The Newcomes, whom we have met before, took to them with the alacrity of a new hat - or, to be precise, a new surplice. If this was to be the fashion, then Honeyman would follow it. 'Poor bewildered Honeyman!', writes Thackeray, describing a scene some twenty years after the setting of his story,

It was a sad day for you, when you appeared in your neat pulpit with your fragrant pocket-handkerchief (and your sermon likewise all millefleurs), in a trim, prim, freshly-mangled surplice, which you thought became you! How did you look aghast, and pass your jewelled hand through your curls, as you saw Mrs Newcome, who had been as good as five-and-twenty pounds a year to you, look up from her pew, sieze hold of Mr Newcome, fling open the pew-door,

drive out with her parasol her little flock of children, bewildered, but not ill-pleased to get away from the sermon, and summon John from the back seats to bring away the bag of prayer-books! Many a good dinner did Charles Honeyman lose by assuming that unlucky ephod. 163.

In real life the wearing of the surplice aroused antipathy even more violent than that displayed by Mrs Newcome. At St Sidwell's Exeter, for example, the perpetual curate, Mr Courtenay, continued to wear the surplice in the pulpit introduced by his predecessor. On the twelfth of January, 1845, two-thirds of the morning congregation walked out, and in the evening he was accompanied home by a mob, hooting and hissing. Next Sunday the crowd rose to two thousand and the mayor informed Bishop Phillpotts 'that it might be impossible to keep the peace if Courtenay persisted.'¹⁶⁴ The bishops generally made matters worse by intemperate and confused advice. In London, Bishop Blomfield, in his charge of 1842, tried to legislate in detail exactly what the Anglican rubrics required. Unlit candles were allowed on the altar, but no flowers; the surplice was to be worn only at Morning Service; he insisted that church-goers bow their heads at the name of Jesus. Conscientious clergy felt duty bound, then, to wear the surplice despite the wishes of their congregations¹⁶⁵ In the end, however, the new fashions conquered the ladies who attended Lady Whittlesea's Chapel. Mrs New-

come retreats in disgust, Handel's church music is sung from the organ loft, and Honeyman's old sermons are 'got up with new scenery, dresses and effects.'¹⁶⁶ He even takes lessons from an actor to improve his performance. The transformation is complete, as Clive Newcome discovers when he attends service there.

An odour of millefleurs rustled by them as Charles Honeyman, accompanied by his ecclesiastical valet, passed the pew from the vestry, and took his place at the desk. Formerly he used to wear a flaunting scarf over his surplice, which was very wide and full; and Clive remembered when as a boy he entered the sacred robing-room, how his uncle used to pat and puff out the scarf and the sleeves of his vestment, arrange the natty curl on his forehead, and take his place, a fine example of florid church decoration. Now the scarf was trimmed down to be as narrow as your neckcloth, and hung loose and straight over the back; the ephod was cut straight and as close and short as might be - I believe there was a little trimming of lace to the narrow sleeves, and a slight arabesque of tape, or other substance, round the edge of the surplice ... He read the service in a swift manner, and with a gentle twang. When the music began, he stood with head on one side, and two slim fingers on the book, as composed as a statue in a mediaeval niche. 167.

Not only is this description of Thackeray's wickedly amusing and very perceptive, it also captures accurately the external trappings of two differing styles of piety and worship. Such distinction of detail may still be observed today.

Mrs Oliphant describes more accurately than many the trials of the Tractarian clergyman in a conservative parish in her novel, The Perpetual Curate (1864), part of the Chronicles of Carlingford. (She had, in the previous year, turned her attention to a young dissenting minister in Salem Chapel.) Although not a particularly original writer (this story about the High-Church curate's involvement with a young girl mirrors George Eliot's tale of Amos Barton, just as Phoebe Junior (1876) is concerned, like Trollope's The Warden (1855), with the abuses of almshouses) she manages to capture something of the religious tone of the times. It is perhaps typical of them, that a novelist can start a story with the words that, '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.'¹⁶⁸ Whether or not this was actually true, and it might be doubted, such a statement certainly assumes a very different outlook in the readers of fiction from that of fifty years before, or fifty years afterwards.

This novel is about Frank Wentworth who had come to Carlingford as curate in the days of the Evangelical rector Mr Bury - a friend of his very Evangelical aunts. They are patrons of a country living for which Frank is destined - until,

that is, they learn that Frank 'held "views" of the most dangerous complexion, and indeed was as near Rome as a strong and lofty conviction of the really superior catholicity of the Anglican Church would permit him to be.'¹⁶⁹ By the time Mrs Oliphant was writing, the stream of converts to Rome, encouraged by Newman in 1845, had steadied. Frank's brother, Gerald, who is married and holds the 'family' living, cannot resist the call but he is introduced only as a contrast to his loyal Anglican brother. The strands of plot with which Mrs Oliphant weaves her story are neither particularly original nor, in her hands, especially interesting. The curate's supposed involvement with the flirtatious Rosa, the grocer's daughter, enables her to delineate the gossipings of a small community, though George Eliot had done it far better. The question of Wentworth's rights to his chapel of St Roque's and the hostility of the parish priest, Mr Morgan, had also been drawn far more dramatically by George Eliot in the last of her Scenes of Clerical Life, Janet's Repentance, in 1857. Although Tryan is an Evangelical and Wentworth a Tractarian both stories concern the triumph of a vital new religious expression over the relative torpor of the establishment. The endings of both stories have an air of fictional contrivance. Tryan dies of consumption and Wentworth is made, fortuitously, Rector of Carlingford. This solves Wentworth's other difficulty, how he is to marry

Lucy Wodehouse without any income; a standard concern of nineteenth-century novelists. (There are other stray strands of conventional Victorian fiction, most notably the mysterious stranger who turns out to be Lucy's 'black sheep' brother.)

Not wholly without interest, however, is Mrs Oliphant's characterization of Wentworth's religious work. From the first she makes it plain that, whatever his views, he was doing 'a great work' in the poor part of the town 'among the bargemen'.¹⁷⁰ This is important for, in the absence of a rector that counted for anything, Mr Bury's successor 'knew no more about managing a parish than a baby.'¹⁷¹ Thus, 'a great deal of the interest and influence of the position fell into the hands of the Curate of St Roque's.'¹⁷² The new Rector is concerned more with legality than with ministry and believes that '"a disregard of all constituted authority ... can never ... be attended by good results."¹⁷³ Even worse is the sight of '"some ladies in grey cloaks ... He has got up a sisterhood, I have no doubt"' and, in the Rector's opinion, '"they are founded on a mistake."¹⁷⁴ Good works, Mrs Oliphant seems to suggest, possibly reflecting the reading public's weariness with debate, are of more value than good doctrines. Wentworth's brother, by contrast, is rendered useless for parochial work by his inner struggles. Hiding in his study he 'had bent his head down upon his clasped hands; sometimes

a great heave of his frame showed the last struggle that was going on within him - a struggle more painful, more profound, than anything that had gone before.'¹⁷⁵ Frank, on the other hand, 'had come through it, it was plain; the warfare was accomplished, the weapons hung up, the conflict over; and nothing could be more apparent than that he had no intention of entering the battle-field again.'¹⁷⁶ Their father, the Squire, admirably expresses lay impatience with religious quibbling. '"Will you tell me, sir,"' he asks Frank, '"that my son Charley should have gone into the question between Russia and England when he was before Sebastopol - and deserted ... God bless my soul! that's striking at the root of everything. As for the Church of Rome, its Antichrist - why, every child in the village school could tell you that."' ¹⁷⁷ Whatever the intellectual arguments, the patriotic duty of an English gentleman should be plain enough!

Miss Leonora, the Evangelical aunt, cannot wholly decide upon her attitude to Wentworth's ministry. 'It was a trying experience ... but at the same time it was a "great work"; and she could not give up the hope of being able one time or other to appropriate the credit of it, and win him over to her own "views".'¹⁷⁸ It is plain, from this description of Wentworth's sermon on Easter Sunday, however, that Mrs Oliphant thought the basic facts of Christianity far more important than

either party's opinions. Wentworth

spoke, in very choice little sentences, of the beneficence of the Church in appointing such a feast, and of all the beautiful arrangements she had made for the keeping of it ... how much higher, how much more catholic, after all, his teaching would have been, could he but have once ignored the Church, and gone direct, as Nature bade, to that empty grave¹⁷⁹ in which all the hopes of humanity had been entombed.

In narrating Aunt Leonora's visit to the St Roque's school, she laughs at the absurdities of both religious extremes. Leonora examines the curate's books and,

among them was a little pocket copy of Thomas à Kempis, from which ... certain little German prints ... dropped out, some of them unobjectionable enough. But if the Good Shepherd could not be found fault with, the feelings of Miss Leonora may be imagined when the meek face of a monkish saint, inscribed with some villainous Latin inscription, a legend which began with the terrible words Ora pro nobis, became suddenly visible to her troubled eyes. She put away the book as if it had stung her, and made a precipitate retreat. 180

Mrs Oliphant, though she touches here upon a serious issue (asking the prayers of the departed) trivializes the principles of Tractarianism, reducing it almost entirely to surplices, grey cloaks and a white-robed choir. Although this is perhaps forgivable in a work of light fiction it is not inevitable. George Eliot's stories, which use many similar religious themes, demonstrate this admirably.

Clerical dress, however, could signify something sinister to other novelists. It is noticed by Emma Jane Worboise, whose extraordinary tale of undercover infamy, Father

Fabian (1875), was as unpleasantly hostile to Roman Catholicism as Mrs Trollope's Father Eustace (1847). Two railway travellers see a priest on a railway station. "Is he a clergyman of our own Church or a priest of Rome?" "A priest of Rome! What makes you think of such a thing? It is precisely the dress which some of our pronounced Oxford clerics are just now affecting ... These Tractarians, Puseyites - poor Arnold used to call them 'Newmanites' - are really at heart Romanists, with this grave difference - that the Newmanites are Roman Catholics at Oxford instead of at Oscott."¹⁸¹

The curates in Charlotte Brontë's Shirley (1849) are characterized not so much by their millinery as by their manners. Strictly speaking these clergymen are not Tractarians at all, for the novel is supposedly set at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Curates were scarce then; there was no Pastoral Aid - no Additional Curates' Society to stretch a helping hand to worn-out old rectors and incumbents ... The present successors of the apostles, disciples of Dr Pusey and tools of the Propaganda, were at that time being hatched under cradle-blankets, or undergoing regeneration by nursery-baptisms in washhand-basins. You could not have guessed by looking at any one of them that the Italian-ironed double frills of its net-cap surrounded the brows of a pre-ordained, specially sanctified successor to St Paul, St Peter, or St John: nor could you have seen in the folds of its long night-gown the white surplice in which it was hereafter cruelly to exercise the souls of its parishioners. 182

It may be true that Charlotte Brontë consulted old newspaper

files when writing Shirley¹⁸³ but it is equally obvious that 'the curates ... though all ostensibly pre-1820, gain in definition from their author's awareness of contemporary circumstances.'¹⁸⁴ Perhaps even this judgement of Tillotson's is an understatement. Who would expect this, for example, to be said of curates' conversation in the early years of the nineteenth century?

While they supped, they argued; not on politics, nor on philosophy, nor on literature - these topics were now as ever totally without interest for them - not even on theology, practical or doctrinal; but on minute points of ecclesiastical discipline, frivolities which seemed empty as bubbles to all save themselves. 185

This seems very much more like a parody of Anglo-Catholicism with its concern for rubrics, and the finer points of ecclesiology. Similarly, this criticism of the curates' attitudes by Shirley touches many Tractarian concerns: the church, the priesthood, traditions and devotions - though servility to the rich would more usually be ascribed to Evangelicals.

When I hear Messrs Malone and Donne chatter about the authority of the Church, the dignity and claims of the priesthood, the deference due to them as clergymen; when I hear the outbreaks of their small spite against Dissenters: when I witness their silly narrow jealousies and assumptions; when their palaver about forms, and traditions, and superstitions is sounded in my ear; when I behold their insolent carriage to the poor, their base servility to the rich, I think the Establishment is indeed in a poor way. 186

Charlotte Brontë also introduces into this discussion of Miss

Ainley's piety the sort of comparisons which would not, I would have thought, have come naturally to a woman living before the thirties. Shirley reflects that this woman looked 'to the bliss of the world to come. So do nuns - with their close cell, their iron lamp, their robe strait as a shroud, their bed narrow as a coffin. She says, often, she has no fear of death ... no more, doubtless, had St Simeon Stylites, lifted up terrible on his wild column in the wilderness.'¹⁸⁷ The reference to nuns is not in itself surprising. Southey had suggested that sisterhoods should be revived¹⁸⁸ but this description of them, and the reference to a desert father, in this characterization of another's spirituality pre-supposes an awareness of Tractarian ideals. (Such reference might have been inspired solely by the medieval revival if the subject had been abbey ruins.)

The curates are well characterized by Charlotte Brontë at the tea table.¹⁸⁹ A good meal, be it only a homely tea provided by their vicar's cook, was a welcome addition to their meagre salaries or lonely meals in humble lodgings. The curates in Shirley 'summoned to this bounteous repast', tea at their rector's, 'entered joyous'.¹⁹⁰ The rector's daughter dreads their company, particularly Mr Donne's,

on account of his stultified and unmoveable self-conceit, and his incurable narrowness of mind. Malone, grinning most unmeaningly, inducted himself into the corresponding seat on the other side; she

was thus blessed in a pair of supporters; neither of them, she knew, would be of any mortal use, whether for keeping up the conversation, handing cups, circulating the muffins, or even lifting the plate from the slop basin. 191

The other curate, 'little Mr Sweeting ... having a dish of tarts before him, and marmalade and crumpet upon his plate, looked and felt more content than any monarch.'¹⁹² Donne's lack of manners are emphasized.

The meal at last drew to a close: it would have been over long ago, if Mr Donne had not persisted in sitting with his cup half full of cold tea before him, long after the rest had finished, and after he himself had discussed such allowance of viands as he felt competent to swallow - long, indeed, after signs of impatience had been manifested all round the board: till chairs were pushed back: till the talk flagged: till silence fell. Vainly did Caroline inquire repeatedly if he would have another cup; if he would take a little hot tea, as that must be cold, etc.: he would neither drink it nor leave it. He seemed to think that this isolated position of his gave him a certain importance; that it was dignified and stately to be last; that it was grand to keep all the others waiting. So long did he linger, that the very urn died: it ceased to hiss. 193

The clergy's love of food is a common theme in fiction of the last century, from Dr Grant, Mansfield Park, and Dr Gaster, Headlong Hall, until Trollope, and it is usually High Church or earlier 'High and Dry' clergy who are gourmets. In Victorian times, of course, this love was by no means confined to clergymen,¹⁹⁴ but the picture of the portly divine, like this one of Dean Bedford by Marmion Savage, lingers still. He was 'immersed in a sea of cushions ... taking his noon-day nap,

his hands folded on his apron, the very type of prosperity in repose.'¹⁹⁵ This, perhaps, is because over-eating, though often a fatal indulgence was, until recently, considered innocuous and the clergy could be amusingly portrayed as having resort to the only vice properly open to them.

Arrogance was another vice in Charlotte Brontë's view. When Donne insults Shirley, and Yorkshire, and suggests that her subscription to the church school is insufficient, he is turned out of her house. Shirley declares "'How dare the pompous priest abuse his flock? How dare the lisping Cockney revile Yorkshire.'"¹⁹⁶ The church could rightly be arrogant, it seems, when dealing with dissenters. In chapter seventeen of Shirley, when a church procession is blocked by the Dissenters' 'unholy alliance', the two parties almost engage in a pitched battle. "'Follow me!'" the Rector cries, 'and he strode on with such a determined and deliberate gait, and was, besides, so well seconded by his scholars and teachers ... that the body of Dissenters were first amazed, then alarmed, then borne down and pressed back, and at last forced to turn tail ... The fat dissenter who had given out the hymn was left sitting in the ditch.'¹⁹⁷ When the 'curates began to exult', however, the Rector 'remarked that they never had sense to know what to say, and had better hold their tongues.'¹⁹⁸

One writer who might be mentioned here, not only

because he satirizes various aspects of Tractarianism but also since he is a writer of literary quality, far above the many minor novelists of the period, is Marmion Savage (1803-72). He has been little recognized, except by Bonamy Dobrée, and his charming and amusing novels are unjustly neglected. Although this is not the place, I would like to provide a more general appreciation of his work. (Savage is interesting, too, because he is one of the very few writers upon whom Peacock obviously had some influence although traces can also be discovered in Meredith and Disraeli.) The Reverend Bartholomew Owlet, 'his intimates called him Bat',¹⁹⁹ in the Bachelor of the Albany (1847), is a character very much in the Peacockian mould. He reminds us of Mr Chainmail in Crotchet Castle, except that Owlet is interested in medieval religion as well as medieval castles. He was,

A fellow - and an odd fellow - of Baliol, and a minor canon of Salisbury. Owlet was a man of much learning, eccentric habits, and Puseyitical opinions. He doated on the dark ages, indeed was so fond of obscurity that he was hardly ever seen or known to be abroad except in the twilight. He was particularly bent upon reviving the Mystery Plays and Moralities, and had quarrelled with his dean for objecting to the dramatic representation of the story of Balaam in his cathedral. 200

The characters all meet at the Rosary, the Spread's country home, at Christmas. (Their daughter is Owlet's fiancée) This enables Savage to discuss this season with detached wit

and gentle satire. Peacock, too, discusses Christmas in his novel Gryll Grange (1860).²⁰¹ A comparison of the two passages reveals their similar styles. Their attitudes, however, differ. Peacock looks back with affection to the customs of the past; Savage claims the conveniences of the present to be more desirable.

It was now verging to the season which, in Catholic Oxford, is called the Feast of the Nativity, but by Protestant England is still named Christmas - the season of pudding and pantomimes, mince-pies and maudlin sentiment, blue noses and red books. Now were malicious bachelors purchasing small drums and tiny trumpets, to present to the children of unfortunate married men ... Now landlords were beginning to get praised in provincial papers, for lowering rents that ought never to have been so high; and labouring men were about to be compensated for a year of hunger, with a single day of roast beef and plum-pudding. Folly, in white waistcoat, was now quoting old songs, and dreaming of new monasteries ... Sensible people, on the contrary, content to live in their own times, and not so ravished as Mr Owlet with the ages of darkness, or the things thereof, were buttoning their coats, without a sigh for the doublets of their fathers; going to and fro upon railroads, with a decided preference of speed and security to robbery and romance. 202

Perhaps the eighteen years between the two descriptions makes Savage, in some respects at least, more decidedly Victorian?

Owlet's medieval enthusiasms, and some of its paraphernalia, provide an amusing and fitting climax to an otherwise quite modern Christmas. The guests become drowsy as the evening declines - 'the room had been darkened to accommodate Owlet, whose eyes were dim with his monastic researches' -

when suddenly, 'a shrill and piercing scream was heard from a remote part of the villa, and the whole party, in an instant, became wide-awake.'²⁰³ One of the guests ventures into the corridor and 'something monstrous rushed towards him, something evidently not human.'

The Reverend Mr Owlet (who, though constitutionally a craven, felt a demonological satisfaction in thinking that the Rosary was indeed haunted) never stirred from his seat from the beginning of the commotion, and sat now with his small eyes riveted upon the mysterious object ... the mysterious object, however, made towards him instantly, jumped on his lap, stuck one of its fore-feet upon each of his knees, thrust its nose within an inch of his, shook an enormous pair of ears, and brayed in his face. 204

The 'monster' is, in fact, a mischievous boy in the costume of Balaam's ass which Owlet, leaving his rehearsals in Salisbury hurriedly, had amongst his luggage. The incident is a delightful and comic parody both of gothic horror and medieval romanticism and 'the ridicule of it ... had the effect of putting down the attempts of the Tractarian divines ... to revive the ecclesiastical drama.'²⁰⁵

Equally ridiculous, in the eyes of many Victorians - those who were not deeply horrified or seriously alarmed that it was the attempt amongst later Tractarian sympathisers to revive monasticism. Few would doubt today that Anglican Religious Communities perform a valuable service within the Church, and their very survival is an indication that their foundation was not merely quixotic. It must be admitted, however, that the

early attempts to revive the religious life, especially by Joseph Leycester Lyne (later Fr Ignatius of Jesus, OSB), and even the more successful Ben Carlyle (later Abbot of Caldey), are not without their amusing and fantastic aspects. Could they have been anything else in an age where common notions of monasticism were inspired as much by Charles Reade's novel, The Cloister and the Hearth (1861), as by the Rule of St Benedict? Reading Baroness de Bertouch's The Life of Father Ignatius OSB, The Monk of Llanthony (1904), one is at a loss sometimes to know where fact merges into fiction, although such questions fade into insignificance beside her baroque literary style.²⁰⁶ She captures exactly the extravagant tone of such ventures in this description of how Pusey and Abbess Lydia Sellon, one of the first Anglican religious, encouraged the prospective Abbot.

It was a strange combination, this trefoil of force, blending into one prolific leaf. Dr Pusey, the sublime torch-bearer of the Tractarian Reformation; and hand in hand with him the saintly Abbess ... that strong yet gentle incarnation of vertebrate spirituality, whose single arm had raised the corpse of consecrated womanhood in her Mother Church. Then, last of all, their supplement, the delicate, almost boyish figure of the one whose voice was to go crying through the wilderness of an entire world. 207

Although Newman had retired to a quasi-religious life at Littlemore outside Oxford in 1842, the monastic life was not seriously revived in the Anglican Church until the 1860s. There were,

however, some earlier experiments, like that which C.P.S.

Clarke records where a Yorkshire incumbent fitted up a school-house with cells and with a few enthusiastic young men lived a life of eccentric deprivation. He could only sleep there

four times a week, however, having a wife and six children

at home.²⁰⁸ Savage's picture of the 'Monastic Villa', in

The Falcon Family, published in 1845 is therefore ahead of its time, though no less fantastic than the actual records of early Anglican communities.²⁰⁹

Savage first describes the ladies' living-room of this community, which is lead by St John Crozier. It was 'an octagon apartment, which seemed half-library, half-music room, but was certainly a female sanctuary, for the books belonged to the light troops of literature.'²¹⁰ Littered about were 'the materials and machinery of dilettanti needlework, which betrayed upon close inspection the labours of tractarian fingers; a long, narrow scarf, seemingly intended for a stole ... had the Greek word *Αγίος* (holy) thrice embroidered on it; and a purse of silk net-work was partially wrought in old English characters, with the monkish word *ELEEMOSYNARIA*.'²¹¹ The ladies to whom the room belongs, Emily Falcon and Anastasia Crozier, then enter. (The Miss Spriggs mentioned is a low-church governess who has been co-opted into the community.)

'Only St John has been so impatient for his scarf,' she said, to her companion, 'I should have finished your purse long ago. I positively will finish it

before I begin the cover for the fald-stool.' 'No, indeed, you shall not, Anastasia,' said Emily, 'we have been sadly in your brother's way, it has really made us very unhappy.' 'Nonsense, you are not more in his way than my sister and I are, St John had no notion that any of us would be here this summer. My father changed his plans quite suddenly.' 'But your brother was so bent on his experiment.' 'A nice experiment indeed! - Oh, no, I go with St John a great way, but I can't go the length of monasteries at this time of day. I quite agree with poor Miss Spriggs upon that point.' 'Poor Miss Spriggs,' repeated Emily. 'Poor thing! she is perfectly miserable; she won't pass the door of St John's Oratory; I'm certain it was she who broke the nose of Dr Pusey's statue in the hall.' 212

This sort of conversation ably captures the amateur nature of the venture.

A later conversation attempts to solve the men's difficulty of living a celibate existence under the same roof as attractive women. It parodies the use of history to support any contemporary proposition.

'I believe there are precedents in conventual history,' said Moore, deliberately, 'for the reunion of the sexes under the same monastic roof; at all events, there is the memorable example of the Abbey of Theleme, which we cannot do better than adopt provisionally for our model.' 'I don't remember to have heard of that abbey,' said Lord Lodore; 'under what rule was it, and by whom founded?' 'It was founded by Gargantua the Great, and the rule had only one clause - "DO WHAT THOU WILT." Now, can we adopt a more agreeable or a more commodious one, under existing circumstances?' 213

Unfortunately one of the 'monks' is discovered already to have succumbed to feminine charms. St John Crozier is despondent.

"A marriage resulting from this experiment would be fatal to

the whole cause of monachism for a century,"^ohe believes, splendidly over-rating his experiment. A vow of celibacy is suggested for all. "It would be no use. Some would take it in a non-natural sense," said Crozier, "as Ward and men of Baliol subscribe the articles, meaning to repudiate the doctrines of the Church of England."²¹⁴ Finally, two of the would-be religious elope with their young ladies and the experiment is concluded. The next day,

St John Crozier was sitting dolefully in the Oratory, ruminating upon his discomfiture, and meditating a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; his sister was ministering such comfort as the case admitted of, and strewing flowers upon the altar; when the former accidentally raised his eyes to the picture of St Sebastian, and after gazing at it for a moment, said: 'Anastasia, I never observed before that St Sebastian had an arrow in his face,' 'Nor I,' said Anastasia, glancing at the painted martyr. 'Why, it's a real arrow,' she quickly added. 'You don't think it's a miracle?' asked Crozier, solemnly. 'I think not,' said Anastasia, 'I should say it was rather Master Willy Falcon.' Whether the impious little archer ever repented of his parting shot at the Puseyites is questionable, but it is certain that he did not disclose it in confession to his Mother-Abbess. 215

Such short extracts cannot really do justice to Savage, whose fast-moving and witty tales need to be enjoyed at length. They do, however, indicate something of his humourous purpose which deals lightly with important questions of the day, and nicely captures the delicate detail of their absurdity. Savage is not a profound writer but he well perceives, like Peacock, that in every enthusiasm there is humour, especially when a

complex and demanding ideal, such as monasticism, gets into the hands of amateurs and dilettantes.

By the middle of the century the 'Victorian Age', as it is generally known and generally understood, can be distinctly contrasted with the period preceding the Oxford Movement.²¹⁶

By 1860 there were few churches in the dilapidated and neglected state that the Tractarians found them in. Even if, like George Martin, who took the remote Cornish parish of St Breward in 1851, they found things run down, they left them flourishing and well attended.²¹⁷

Absentee clergy, like absentee squires, were now very much the exception. In a small country parish like East Dereham, Norfolk, the Vicar records on Easter Day 1856, 'the congregation was unusually large, and 178 persons partook of Holy Communion.'²¹⁸ The effect of the Evangelical and Tractarian movements was widespread and beneficial. Most people of the middle classes were alert to religion and Owen Chadwick's general description of the time as 'religious' is not exaggerated.

Its churches thrived and multiplied, its best minds brooded over divine metaphysic and argued about moral principle, its authors and painters and architects and poets seldom forgot that art and literature shadowed eternal truth or beauty, its legislators professed outward and often accepted inward allegiance to divine law, its men of empire ascribed national greatness to the providence of God and Protestant faith. The Victorians changed the face of the world because they were assured ... Part of their confidence was money, a people of increasing wealth and prosperity, an ocean of retreating horizons. And part was of the soul. God is; and we are his servants, and under his care, and will do our duty. 219

The work of the Ecclesiastical Commission begun in earlier decades was bearing fruit. The Established Church Act of 1836 had re-organized sees and abolished episcopal abuses. The Pluralities Act of 1838 limited the number of livings, held by one man, to two and its encouragement of Sunday services with sermons and residence had by now taken effect. The later Dean and Chapter Act of 1840 largely led to the re-modelling of such institutions and the theological colleges and urban livings founded with surplus monies also exerted an influence for the betterment of the Church. The removal of penalties for Roman Catholics in 1844, and the establishment of thirteen Roman sees in England in 1850, also inspired the establishment to greater efforts. New churches were built and the increasing urban population provided with pastors. The clergy were undoubtedly more zealous and more active in 1860 than they had been thirty years before. They 'conducted worship more reverently, knew their people better, understood a little more theology, said more prayers, celebrated sacraments more frequently, studied more Bible ... reform of Ministry was the momentous reform of the Victorian church.'²²⁰ This was the golden age of the Church of England when a well-educated and reasonably well-paid clergy, and their families, exerted a beneficial influence on the community. Religion was socially accepted, and acceptable. Lord Hatherton's remark puts it in a nutshell. In 1810 only

two gentlemen in Staffordshire had family prayers. In 1850 only two did not.²²¹

Trollope, undoubtedly, is thought of as the great delineator of the clergy of this period, when men like Archdeacon Grantly thrived, secure in their faith and social status. But even as we look at this rosy picture we see that, in fact, it was neither universal nor completely monochrome. If Trollope's picture is accurate, and his own limited conceptions and particular, genial outlook make this dubious, then it was not so for long or in every case. No doubt, and particularly in quiet rural parishes, many clergy lived and died quietly and undisturbed, but well before the sixties the seeds of later difficulties can be seen. The Victorian age, although so often thought of as an age of single-mindedness and universal prosperity, was in fact an age of contradictions. If it was an age of faith, and certainly church attendance had never been higher, it was also an age of doubt. Even Trollope attempted to discuss this, although the subject was far beyond his comprehension, in The Bertrams (1859), and he was by no means alone as we shall see. Perhaps ultimately of more significance is the fact that this time of prosperity - of Empire, trade, industry and domestic comfort, symbolized in the Victorian parlour with its heavy furniture and rich fabrics and the many servants necessary to maintain it - was also a time of great

poverty. Slums, disease, starvation, children illiterate and underclothed, were commonplace. Dickens drew not only from his imagination in the depiction of poverty in his novels, but from the streets of London and his own experience. Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) vividly captures the appalling suffering of industrial workers in England's northern cities. The idyllic picture of rural quiet, in England's 'green and pleasant land', must be set beside the miserable squalor around its 'dark, satanic mills.'

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was indeed the epitome of England's new-found prosperity and stability. But what lay beneath this rich surface inevitably meant that its continued security was questionable. The Chartist Movement, culminating in the great demonstration of 1848 at Westminster, may have fizzled out for the moment, but the hopes and fears that it enshrined could not be dampened down for very long. In the fifties there were a great many important questions in the air demanding more thought and action than England's traditional ruling class had been educated to provide. The problems of housing, health, education and Ireland had yet to be dealt with. The reform of the universities, of Parliament and the electorate had scarcely begun. Furthermore, the very basis of this society, its Christian faith, had yet to face the tremendous intellectual challenges of the second half of the century. As G.M. Young

says, 'the rigorous deductions of the early Victorians' contrast so ominously with 'the imprecision of late Victorian thought and policy.'²²² The church in the middle of the century, having struggled into the modern world several decades too late, was too busy putting its own house in order to face the real problems all around it. For all its good influence Tractarianism led the church into many backwaters.

Novelists, apart from those purveying a party line, had more pressing concerns. Of the great novelists of this period, Dickens hardly mentions the clergy, Thackeray rarely in contemporary circumstances, Mrs Gaskell in her great novel about the light and the dark in English society, North and South, has her clergyman resign his orders, George Eliot sets all but one of her novels before 1830, and Trollope, on the whole, fixes his clergy in a world from which real poverty, social injustice and doubt have been removed. Although a lesser novelist, F. Marion Crawford, as late as 1886, in her Tale of a Lonely Parish, could still use the quiet untroubled country parish as a quaint background for romance, the Reverend Augustin Ambrose is only incidental to the tale. As A.O.J. Cockshut has said, once an institution like the church is seen as picturesque, its existence is seriously threatened.²²³ Perhaps, as the church rested on its reformed laurels or revived its liturgical practices, it was already being passed over, by some novelists, as of little

interest compared with the pressing social concerns of the time.

Some of the signs of the social and religious revolution in the fifties and sixties, which were evident at the same time as the more general indications of prosperity, and which only became fully apparent after 1914, are small but not insignificant. In March 1866 the Vicar of East Dereham remarked, the government having refused to order a fast on the outbreak of cholera, 'here we have an intimation of the growing disunion between Church and State.'²²⁴ The previous month his parish had been noticed by 'The Norfolk News', an 'able but very radical Norwich paper', which pilloried clergy 'most opposed to the principles of the paper.' Luckily, Armstrong's sermon was deemed innocuous.²²⁵ Such interest in the parson's political opinion was not isolated. The country parson looking out from his pulpit in the sixties would see, for example, far fewer smocks than a decade before. Instead, the labourer wore a cheap black suit. 'The smock became a badge of something unwanted, almost a sign of childlike status.' Before, he would have expected to go to church, increasingly now, he would not. 'A growing social consciousness in the labourer, leading to a political consciousness in the labourer', as well as the 'depression of agriculture or the lure of the city' marked the village's decline.²²⁶ The village church and the parson's influence declined too, more especially when the old link between parson and squire seemed like the union of oppressors. The founding

of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872, which quickly had a membership of nearly 100,000, indicates a new force at work beside which the squire's benevolence and the parson's charity fade into insignificance.

The church, though there were individual exceptions, inevitably sided with the social establishment. Bishops condemned unions as 'iniquitous' and 'the first utterances of the Agricultural Labourers' Union contained abuse of the clergy.'²²⁷ The parsons, a later pamphleteer wrote, are 'slaves of their rich patrons, the lords and squires, and therefore have stood by them as they hardly dare stand up for you; and of course a good many of them are intimately bound up with the landed interest, and of course are, and ever will be, against your rising out of your bonds.'²²⁸ It was not true that the parson was an oppressor of the poor, but by the seventies the century-old tradition of a middle-class clergy, broadly from the same class as the land or factory owner, was beginning to be the cause of unease, deep suspicion and even hostility. An event like that at Chipping Norton, where two clerical magistrates imprisoned 16 women for strike-breaking in 1873, (it was discussed in the Commons) provided excellent material for militant propaganda.²²⁹ It hastened the decline of clerical magistrates and signalled the end of the era where Church and State made and enforced law together.

Disraeli, writing long before the events at Chipping Norton, was one of the few novelists who saw what the clergy's role could be in days of social upheaval. Sybil, published in 1845, with the secondary title 'The Two Nations', might be seen as prophetic, or as the observations of a statesman, as shrewd as he was romantic. When Disraeli came to power, nearly thirty years later, his policies naturally were tempered by time and circumstances. The romantic feudalism of his novels with its benign aristocracy and a National Church, composed of Catholic and Jewish ideals working hand in hand with a proud peasantry, was largely left behind. In the forties this might have seemed like a solution; in the seventies (Das Kapital was published in 1867) it never could. The vicar in Sybil, Aubrey St Lys, combines a social conscience with a love of the church's traditional splendour which is in sharp contrast to aristocratic attitudes of the landowners. Lord Marney is satisfied that the recent troubles amongst the workmen have nothing to do with wages.

'And what is the rate of wages, in your part of the world, Lord Marney?' inquired Mr St Lys ... 'Oh, good enough ... They get their eight shillings a week; at least generally.' 'Eight shillings a week!' said Mr St Lys. 'Can a labouring man with a family, perhaps of eight children, live on eight shillings a week?' 'Oh! as for that,' said Lord Marney; 'they get more than that, because there is beer-money allowed, at least to a great extent among us, though I for one do not approve of the practice, and then some of them have potato grounds, though I am entirely opposed to that system.' 230

The clergyman has wider sympathies and greater imagination than the aristocrat. He is able, through his contact with the people, and his understanding of ordinary human needs, to see something of their sufferings. He sees below the surface as a man of God might be expected to do, but was not always capable of doing.

'What is a poor man to do ... after his day's work, if he returns to his own roof and finds no home: his fire extinguished, his food unprepared; the partner of his life, wearied with labour in the field or the factory, still absent, or perhaps in bed from exhaustion ... We have removed the woman from her sphere; we may have reduced wages by her introduction into the market of labour; but under these circumstances what we call domestic life is a condition impossible to be realized for the people of this country.' 231

St Lys, like the Tractarians, believes that the beauty and splendour of the medieval church gave the common people an outlet for their emotions; an outward expression of their hopes. Disraeli, however, saw the church not merely as a place for escape into the transcendental but as an instrument for improving present existence. St Lys blames the church for neglecting her people and sees, in the revival of its past, an active not an inward-looking tradition.

'For all that has occurred, or may occur ... I blame only the Church. The Church deserted the people; and from that moment the Church has been in danger and the people degraded. Formerly, religion undertook to satisfy the noble wants of human nature, and by its festivals relieved the painful weariness of toil ... It shared equally among all its prayer, its incense, and its music; its sacred instructions, and the highest enjoyment that the arts could afford.' 232

Although this clergyman does not play a major part in the novel, we feel that the church, if filled with young and caring clergy like St Lys, could be part of the revival of England Disraeli envisaged. A model of this future order can be seen in Mr Lyle's estate, depicted in Coningsby (1848).²³³ Mr Lyle, on the recommendation of the clergy on his lands, gives alms to those who need them. With the chapel bell tolling, and the estate almoner presiding, the scene typifies Disraeli's feudal ideals. Mr Lyle's words sum up this notion of autocratic beneficence. 'I wish the people constantly and visibly to comprehend that property is their protector and their friend.' His desire that 'the widow with her child at the breast ... many a maiden with her light basket, curly-headed urchins with demure looks, and sometimes a stalwart form baffled for a time of the labour which he desired ... bless the bell that sounded from the tower of St Geneviere.'²³⁴

How very different are the ideas and picture of the world displayed in Yeast, by Charles Kingsley, which was serialized four years after Coningsby, in 1848. It is hardly surprising that the work was published anonymously in Frazer's Magazine, and the the editor 'implored the author to shorten it.'²³⁵ Many Victorians thought it shockingly radical. Many Christians, whether Evangelical or Tractarian, would have found it almost blasphemous. It seems to come from a different

world from Disraeli's fiction and although Kingsley is by no means a great writer (he is not even as good a novelist as Disraeli) the ideas and attitudes of Yeast are still of interest today. Disraeli, as Prime Minister, may well have shaped the nation's destiny in the last decades of the nineteenth century but the problems which Kingsley raises, and some of the solutions he suggests, are undoubtedly those that have since changed the civilized world, for better or worse. No better antidote to the Trollopian picture of clerical complacency could be found than this remarkable Devonshire clergyman who was only finally rewarded for a lifetime of dedicated service to his fellow man, along socialist principles abhorrent to the establishment, by a canonry at Chester in 1870, and at Westminster in 1873. No better novel than Yeast could be found to set beside that picture of Victorian England conjured up by the Great Exhibition.

Notable neither for its clerical portraits, nor for its literary excellence, I may perhaps be forgiven for discussing this novel, since any historical survey of the age which ignored the attitudes it displays would be guilty of serious misrepresentation. For once our object of study may be reversed as we look at a clerical fiction and not only at fictional clerics. There are in fact three clergymen in the novel: the Reverend Panurgus O'Blareaway, an Anglo-Irish preacher, who might best be characterized as a watered down

Protestant version of Mrs Trollope's Patrick O'Donagough,²³⁶ the local vicar who schemes to establish a nunnery, and the hero's cousin Luke. Luke's agonized letters, as he struggles on the path to Rome, provide a striking contrast to the thoughts and life of Lancelot Smith (a name which combines the knight with Everyman) whose biography this novel chiefly is. Elspeth Huxley suggests that Lancelot's portrait may be autobiographical,²³⁷ though Kingsley does make the disclaimer, customary in works of this sort, towards the end of the book.

I beg my readers to recollect that I am in no way answerable for the speculations, either of Lancelot or any of his acquaintances; and that these papers have been, from beginning to end, as in name, so in nature, Yeast - an honest sample of the questions which, good or bad, are fermenting in the minds of the young of this day, and are rapidly leavening the minds of the rising generation. 238

Many of the ideas and attitudes in the book, however, are Kingsley's own. Coming under the influence of F.D. Morris, whose ideas of Christian Socialism he early imbibed, Kingsley was all his life a leader in this movement. He was notorious for his sympathy with the Chartists, up to 1848, and later continued the work for social justice in his teaching, preaching and pastoral work. His belief, seen in his placard for the shortlived magazine Politics for the People, was that although the church should, and must, fight for better living conditions, wages and political liberty, the working man's

full salvation was founded in God.

'Workmen of England! You say that you are wronged. Many of you are wronged; and many besides yourselves know it ... above all, the working clergy know it. They go into your houses, they see the shameful filth and darkness in which you are forced to live crowded together; they see your children growing up in ignorance and temptation, for want of fit education; they see intelligent and well-read men among you, shut out from a freemen's just right of voting ... they see it and God sees it ... Englishmen! Saxons! Workers of the great, cool-headed, strong-handed nation of England, the workshop of the world, the leader of freedom for 700 years ... A nobler day is dawning for England, a day of freedom, science, industry! But there will be no true freedom without virtue, no true science without religion, no true industry without the fear of God, and love to your fellow citizens.'

The placard was signed 'a working parson', which in itself suggests a new attitude to the traditional ties between church and state.²³⁹ It is no wonder that when he preached at St John Fitzroy Square, in 1851, attacking the accumulation of property, the ownership of land and the serf-like status of the labourer, 'the vicar of the church rose to his feet to repudiate his guest's preaching.'²⁴⁰

The story of Yeast concerns Lancelot Smith's realization of the lot of the poor. It is clearly a parable, and when Lancelot loses all his money, on the collapse of his father's bank, and goes in search of his destiny in the company of the mysterious and prophetic Barnakill, Christ's words to the rich young man - 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast ... and come and follow me.'²⁴¹ - spring readily to mind. At the

end of the book Luke's future is left, deliberately, uncertain. Perhaps he becomes a clergyman. His words, 'the height of my ambition ... if I dare choose ... would be only this - to regenerate one little parish in the whole world ...',²⁴² may imply that. Certainly the aim of his search will not be for 'peculiar doctrine or systems' but for 'Jesus Christ - THE MAN'.²⁴³ The homiletic, or propagandist, nature of the novel is further clarified in the epilogue. To those who complain the work is unfinished Kingsley writes, 'let me entreat him to set manfully about finishing his own history - a far more important one to him than Lancelot's ... Let him try to right somewhat of the doubt, confusion, custom-worship, inconsistency, idolatry, within him - some of the greed, bigotry, recklessness, respectably superstitious atheism around him.'²⁴⁴

The words Kingsley uses, here and elsewhere, are an important indication of his concerns. They strongly contrast with those we are accustomed to meet in a Victorian fiction. 'Workers', for example,²⁴⁵ are a great distance from the 'peasantry' of Disraeli. Lancelot, in the company of the gamekeeper-preacher, Tregarva, visits a local village fair, suitably disguised, and with 'his hands in his pockets ... lest their delicacy, which was, as it happened, not very remarkable, might betray him.'²⁴⁶ The sight which greets him is not idyllic, pastoral or pretty. He sees men 'wrangling, stupid,

beery, with sodden eyes and drooping lips - interspersed with more girls and brazen-faced women, with dirty flowers in their caps ...²⁴⁷ The children starve while their parents forget their troubles in drink. The charity of squires and clergy, Tregarva argues, only makes the situation worse, not better. The local lord is a good man dedicated to the poor, but 'all his boundless charities are keeping the people down, and telling them they must stay down, and not help themselves, but wait for what he gives them. He fatts prize-labourers, sir, just as Lord Minchampstead fatts prize-oxen and pigs.'²⁴⁸ This leads Lancelot to think about the scene in Coningsby, quoted above, where Mr Lyle gives alms to his peasants, 'as if they had been middle-age serfs or vagabonds, and not citizens of modern England.'²⁴⁹ He had come to the fair with poetic expectations. 'May-pole dancing and athletic games, somewhat of village-belle rivalry, of the Corin and Sylvia school,' and had found instead 'a booth full of trumpery fairings', 'tawdry girls', 'maudlin youths', 'odours of stale beer and smoke', 'grumbled oaths and curses'.²⁵⁰ Do not be deceived, Lancelot is warned, by the new cottages and villages. The destruction of hovels drives 'the people into the towns, to herd together there like hogs.' 'Along the roadsides, and round the gentlemen's parks, where the cottages are in sight, it is all very smart; but just go to the outlying hamlets - a whited sepulchre, sir, is

many a great estate; outwardly swept and garnished, and inwardly full of all uncleanness, and dead men's bones."²⁵¹

Although this state of things is, no doubt, over-coloured here for dramatic effect, may have been clear only to a minority in the forties, by the seventies it was clear to all. The collapse of agriculture from 1875, 'the greatest single event of the seventies, fraught with immeasurable consequences for the future',²⁵² was to affect landowner, labourer and parson alike. As the villages declined, so did the parish church and the parson's influence. Finally when, as early as the seventies, 'a country doctor said that the great disease which afflicted the mass of country clergy was want of work', we come full circle.²⁵³ For Paley had written almost a century before, that the 'principal objection to the life of a clergyman' is 'that it does not supply sufficient engagements to the time and thoughts of an active mind.'²⁵⁴ England became an urban and industrial nation and to a very large extent left her clergy struggling in the country wedded to a dying social structure and a parochial system inadequate, and too poor, for its new mission. The labourers who remained in rural parishes were often embittered by what they saw as their betrayal by the ruling class. Tregarva's verses, in Yeast, put this sentiment at its most extreme.

A labourer in Christian England,

Where they cant of a Saviour's name,
And yet waste men's lives like the vermin's
For a few more brace of game.

You have sold the labouring man, Squire,
Body and soul to shame,
To pay for your seat in the House, Squire,
And to pay for the feed of your game. 255

The word 'manliness' (deriving from 'Christ the man') also marks a new emphasis in Christian thought, with which Kingsley is widely associated. In *Lancelot*, Kingsley tried to portray the type of Christian he believed was best suited to the challenges of modern society. (This is why Kingsley is so anxious to point out that Lancelot's hands, which he kept in his pockets at the fair, were not remarkably delicate.) His ideal Christian was in marked contrast to the withdrawn contemplative Christian favoured by the Tractarians. Kingsley's battle with Newman, of course, led finally to the publication of the Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864), against which Kingsley's energy, enthusiasm and ebullience seemed, though not necessarily was, like hot air. In Yeast we can see some of the better aspects of what was later somewhat derisively termed 'muscular Christianity'. Elspeth Huxley suggests that Amyas Leigh, from Westward Ho! (1856) was 'the quintessential Muscular Christian, transparently honest, brave, strong, chivalrous, none too bright ... but resourceful in emergencies, chaste, loyal to God, Queen, Devon and his mother, and an implacable foe of Spaniards and Jesuits.'²⁵⁶ There is, incidentally,

an amusing chapter entitled Muscular Christianity in T. Hughes's novel, Tom Brown at Oxford (1861), which distinguishes between this sort of Christian and the mere thug, and an excellent parody of Kingsley by Bret Harte, in his Sensation Novels (1871?) entitled Guy Heavystone. 'I pushed the door of the schoolroom open ... In the centre of the room, lightly brandishing the piston-rod of a steam engine, stood Guy Heavystone alone. I say alone, for the pile of small boys on the floor in the corner could hardly be called company.'²⁵⁷ Lest anyone should imagine this epithet wholly characterizes Kingsley, I remind the reader he was also the author of The Water Babies (1863).

Lancelot's increasing awareness of himself and his surroundings is the key to his new energy. 'His new interest in the working classes ... seemed the shortest and clearest way towards a practical knowledge of the present.'²⁵⁸ The correspondence with his Romanizing curate-cousin emphasizes Lancelot's healthy opinions which are contrasted with the sickly, celibate notions of enslaving, jesuitical superstition. Kingsley, at times, becomes almost hysterical in his derision of perverted papal propaganda. 'One really pitied the poor saints and martyrs for having such blind biographers,' Lancelot writes, 'such dunghill cocks, who overlooked the pearl of real human love and nobleness in them, in their greediness to snatch up and parade the rotten chaff of superstition, and self-torture,

and spiritual dyspepsia, which had overlaid it.'²⁵⁹ Lancelot's notion of Christianity was vigorous, not simply virtuous.

'Take you the sanctity, and give me the Civilization' ... give me the political economist, the sanitary reformer, the engineer; and take your saints and virgins, relics and miracles. The spinning jenny and the railroad, Cunard's liners and the electric telegraph are to me ... signs that we are ... in harmony with the universe.'²⁶⁰

(Already more new words and conceptions than I have time to discuss are being introduced. They emphasize the break with the backward-looking medievalists and strain forward to the present century.) Despite, or perhaps because of, all these wholesome exhortations, his cousin does eventually become a Roman religious. (He is finally seen 'Painting lean frescoes for the Something-or-other-Kirche at Munich.'²⁶¹) Lancelot's love, Argemone, dies after a brief flirtation with conventual life, giving Kingsley ample scope for attacks on his bête noire, celibacy, but also, more positively, for a discussion of the nature and importance of true love. (Both this emphasis and that on Christ's humanity were to be very important in later nineteenth-century and much twentieth-century theology.) Finally, in the last chapter, even the temporal concerns of socialism are seen to be overtaken and gathered up into the God whom Lancelot now dimly perceives, 'the Father of all in whom dwell personal qualities,

power, wisdom, creative energy, love, justice, pity.'²⁶² The image of the avenging, jealous God which dominated the lives of so many Victorians had begun to be replaced.

The fictional image of the clergyman took a great deal longer to emerge realistically, if indeed it ever did. Between 1860-70 George Eliot made considerable inroads upon the conventional stereotype and although her clergymen are usually of a previous generation her own opinions and her artistic skill made the parson more alive than he had ever been. Trollope made occasional gestures to the times in which he lived, with The Vicar of Bullhampton (1870), for example, but generally he blended religious conservatism with his unending commonsense. With the Honorable and Reverend James Adderley's portrait of an increasingly radical parson, appropriately named Stephen Remarx (1893), we come to the end of the century. More a socialist tract in fictional form than a serious novel, Stephen Remarx reached a twelfth cheap edition by 1904, and was widely read. Adderley's style is witty enough to hold our attention still, although the characterization and plot are comparatively thin.

Stephen, born an aristocrat, influenced at Oxford by Frederick Hope (who suggests F.D. Maurice), is sent as a curate to the east end of London. His vicar, Dr Bloose, 'had been a distinguished person in his day, but his day was now over.'²⁶³ He divided his day between his desk, his sofa and the dining

table. Stephen, 'brimming over with social enthusiasm', is disappointed that the doctor is more concerned with heresy than political economy. 'If they are to starve, starve they will.' the Doctor believes.²⁶⁴ Stephen, on the other hand, has discovered in the Scriptures a message of hope for the poor. His preaching causes a sensation and the diplomacy of his aunt in getting him a family living enables him to escape the restrictions of his first vicar. Traditional ties have their uses. His aunt writes, concerning the living of St Mark's Chelsea, 'I should have a light blue damask paper in the drawing-room, and get rid of that spotted linoleum on the staircase. You must have four curates. I think the Bishop has some fund that will pay for them. They will do what I call the drudgery of the work. You must of course keep yourself for preaching on Sunday.'²⁶⁵ Stephen has different ideas, which he soon puts into practice. He tries to make his life and preaching, which is stirring and provocative and concerned with the everyday life, match. It is a weekday religion, a social gospel; a great success with the poor, but an offence to 'society'. His Lenten sermons are reported in the newspaper together with an unpleasant paragraph suggesting that Remarx may preach socialism but he is, in fact, the heir to a large estate and earns £800 a year. This leads him to start 'the venture' which is in fact a Christian commune where all property is held in common

for the general good. "'Nobody is allowed to possess a penny. All our money is in one common fund ... about half is sent to home and foreign missions, and the rest is spent on our work"', one of the members, an ex-docker explains. He adds, "'it's much harder than dock labour.'"²⁶⁶ Stephen's London home is turned into the community house where its members live in the servants' quarters and the rest is kept for meetings. Poor and rich alike flock to hear the message of equality and brotherhood.

Adderley does not, however, paint a wholly uncritical picture of this new movement. Remarx's position is so extreme and uncompromising that many sympathizers find it difficult to reconcile this gospel with their everyday professions. Stock-brokers despaired - 'their life ... appeared to be made up of ghastly fictions and unreal bargaining.'²⁶⁷ Doctors were worried about taking fees. Clergymen offended as many of their parishioners as they won round by involvement in socialist causes. (This situation was not unknown in real life, where a clergyman like E.D. Girdlestone began fighting for the labourer's lot as early as 1860.²⁶⁸ But he divided the parish and its people with his campaigns and possibly destroyed his spiritual usefulness.²⁶⁹) Obviously, as Adderley intimates but does not state, only a complete social revolution could reconcile extreme social doctrines and a strict evangelical

Christianity. It was the problem that St Francis of Assisi faced throughout his life: to renounce all is a sacrifice for the very few. Remarx, knocked down by a cart, dies on St Stephen's Day, his followers about his bed. Perhaps his example would show them that, 'the heroism of Calvary may still be reproduced in Christ's own soldiers who believe in Him.'²⁷⁰

What is most interesting in this novel, in relation to this chronicle of clerical portraits, is the fact that Stephen Remarx's position, although singular, is no longer defended or portrayed, as in Kingsley, as shocking or an affront. That his relationship with the church establishment is untenable comes as no surprise. The old, traditional values of conservative Christians are not pilloried seriously. They are held up for ridicule in a way that assumes the reader cannot for a moment sympathize with them. They are caricatured as dated, thoughtless and generally ridiculous with an almost Peacockian zest. This is the Dean of Dover speaking:

'Of course, I know there's a great deal of poverty in the world ... but it always will be so: "The poor are always with us," as the Holy Scriptures say.' 'Yes,' said Lady Blanche, chiming in with an alarming piece of exegesis, 'and it says too that we can "do what we will with our own;" so why shouldn't we go yachting?' 'Yes,' said Lord Arthur, with a crowning misquotation, 'and the Catechism says that the poor are to be content, and do their duty in the state of life to which the Almighty has called them.' 'What do you think, Miss Bramley?'... 'Oh, I'm sure I don't know.' said Miss Bramley in a rapid voice, and nervously fumbling in her bag for a tract, 'I

think these things have nothing to do with religion;
we've got to save our souls, haven't we?' 271

This, of course, is a propaganda piece, but its satirical humour suggests a rather different world from the earnest missionary days of Yeast. Then, people needed to be convinced that there was a problem. Now, they have to be converted to the socialist solution.

It would be quite wrong, however, to suggest that most or even many clergymen, certainly between 1850-1870, were sorely perplexed by social questions. Nonetheless, they were much more aware of them than they had been before. Even the Vicar of East Dereham, whose interest is almost exclusively in the Tractarian party, discusses in the fifties pollution of the atmosphere,²⁷² cleanliness amongst the poor,²⁷³ and the town's drainage and water supply.²⁷⁴ There was also, of course, a great difference between rural and industrial areas, between north and south. This contrast is admirably captured in Mrs Gaskell's novel, North and South (1855), about a clergyman, John Hale, and his family who move from the quiet rural backwater of Helstone to Milton-Northern, a 'manufacturing town in Darkshire.'²⁷⁵ The reason for his migration, however, is not philanthropic. It is because he has doubts. The Reverend John Hale is one of the first Victorian clergymen in fiction to be portrayed with intellectual scruples about the church's official doctrine and practice. At the same time as the

church was grappling with a virtual revolution of the country's social fabric, she was also facing a more gradual evolution of her traditional theological position. This came under attack from without, from scientists and philosophers, but it was increasingly eroded from within, by biblical criticism, historical exegesis and the discussion of ethics. Not that such attacks were deliberately aimed against the church, at least at first. They were often merely the fruits of intellectual enquiry. But in attempting to discover how the general change of attitudes came about - from the relative, if unthinking, orthodoxy of 1830 to the relative, if unthinking, agnosticism of 1930 - such things must obviously be noted. The process was slow, only occasionally dramatic, and should not be divorced from other social, cultural and historical circumstances. It was, however, fairly complete. There were agnostics and unbelievers in early Victorian England, and long before, but they were very much in a minority. Since the First World War, probably, the burden of proof has rested with the believer.

Long before 1918, though, unbelief had become commonplace. In 1888, Bishop Magee of Peterborough declared, Chadwick writes, 'that you found unbelief everywhere, in your club or in your drawing-room. You might hear it from the lady next to whom you sat at dinner. You found it lurking in the newspaper, or the novel. You found parents who watched their

children saying their prayers at their knee, and wondered what would happen when the child went away to school or university.²⁷⁶ More terrible to many was the fact that churchmen, clergymen, even bishops, seemed no longer impregnable. One of the great stumbling-blocks was the question of the biblical miracles. Did they, could they, actually happen as recorded? In 1879 Bishop Temple ordained a man, knowing of his general agnosticism on miracles, though other bishops would not; by 1917 there was a bishop, Henson of Hereford, who believed in biblical students' right to accept that the New Testament miracles were, in part, legendary.²⁷⁷

Mr Hale, in North and South, did not for a moment doubt his religion - "No! not doubts as to religion; not the slightest injury to that", he exclaims in answer to his horrified daughter²⁷⁸ - he merely questioned the authority of the church. Mrs Gaskell leaves the theological nature of his doubts deliberately vague, for it is not central to her story, but over the next forty years the subject grew in importance and intensity. Mrs Humphry Ward's novel, Robert Elsmere (1888), dramatizes the intellectual conflict that Mrs Gaskell had avoided. Despite its great length, and weight, the novel achieved popularity, intelligent reviews and even the attention of Mr Gladstone, whose 'Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief' in Nineteenth Century, revealed a mind 'much less supple in theology than in

politics'.²⁷⁹ To those of a less conservative stance, the novel was a brave attempt to present the intellectual crisis of many thoughtful Christians in a serious fictional form.

As a work of fiction it is by no means remarkable, but it represents the culmination of the didactic stream of fiction, seen earlier in Kingsley's Alton Locke and Newman's Loss and Gain, which had been further broadened by a truly great writer like George Eliot. In her best writing, the intellectual and the imaginative were fused either in a character or in the delineation of a whole social fabric, as in Middlemarch (1871). Robert Elsmere, while rarely crude or laborious, sometimes confuses the lecture with the novel. Mrs Ward lacked a great writer's penetrating observation of character and the imaginative passion that could turn cardboard cut-outs into flesh and blood. The novel is, however, by no means unreadable and should be studied by anyone who wishes to understand, and enter into, the once serious and deeply disturbing questions of belief and orthodoxy, personal spirituality and public profession of faith which so troubled many intelligent Victorians. Another interesting aspect is the element of roman à clef in the work. Several characters can be identified, if not always substantiated, in detail. Langham, Mrs Ward confessed, 'was the fruit of my long communing with philosophic charm and tragic impotence of Amiel.' whose Journal Intime she had translated in 1855.

Something of T.H. Green, to whom the book is dedicated, can be seen in Grey, who had abandoned Christianity's supernatural elements but clung to its moral ideals. Squire Wendover is reminiscent of Mark Pattison, though the author claimed that he was her inspiration only in 'a few personal traits, great learning and a general impatience of fools.'²⁸⁰ However far these parallels are taken, it is clear that Mrs Ward, wife of an Oxford don, was alive to the personalities and opinions of thinkers around her. Robert Elsmere was, in fact, inspired by her reaction to Dr John Wordsworth's Bampton Lectures of 1881, which were an attempt 'to fit a not very exacting science to a very grudging orthodoxy.' As she sat in the pew she wondered how she 'could show England what was really going on in her midst.' This novel was her answer.²⁸¹ The novel's central dilemma also reveals the results of the Tractarians' insistence upon historical tradition and the Evangelicals' passionate upholding of biblical inspiration. With the spread of scientific method, and the revelation of scientific fact, not to mention the social and educational upheavals which followed in the wake of Victorian prosperity, the position of thinking people could no longer rest on a few simple half-truths. Where they were turning, and with what anxiety they struggled, is caught for a moment in the character of Robert Elsmere.

The story of the novel is simple. Robert Elsmere

works hard at Oxford and finally accepts a fellowship. He is torn by his yearning for a slum parish and his passion for academic excellence and overwork. He takes the country parish of Murewell, because his mother believes he needs a rest from intellectual strain. Having resigned his fellowship, he marries an earnest Evangelical girl called Catherine. His local squire is Roger Wendover, an eccentric scholar and atheist. All goes well until the squire returns to England and exerts his influence on Elsmere's sensitive intelligence. Faced with the magnificent but destructive learning of Wendover, Elsmere's faith crumbles. He resigns his living and eventually forms a 'New Brotherhood' in London, dying from cancer and overwork. With poetic justice, the crusty squire goes mad and, having tried to take his own life, dies alone.

Mrs Ward's difficulty was to show the alteration of Elsmere's thoughts within the traditional narrative form of fiction. With the examples of the mature Henry James or Joseph Conrad before her it is possible, though not probable, that Mrs Ward could have wrought a miraculous alchemy on her rather didactic material. But her roots were in the older tradition of Victorian fiction, wedded to chronology, characters and incident and she had not the genius of a writer like George Eliot to deepen and enliven the traditional elements of her novel. Her work is, therefore, a mixture of commonplace inci-

dents - meetings, marriage, domestic and social dramas - and sections of rather undigested intellectual debate. She never wholly solves the problem of how to relate the two, with the result that, although we see the results of Elsmere's intellectual transformation, it is not, at its crucial points, very convincingly portrayed. After the first real conversation between the Squire and Elsmere, which ranges over Wendover's early Tractarianism and his study of the origins of Christianity, Mrs Ward comments,

As for Elsmere, that hour and a half, little as he realised it at the time, represented the turning-point of life ... by the end of their conversation that first period of unclouded youth we have been considering was over for poor Elsmere. In obedience to certain inevitable laws and instincts of the mind, he had been for months tempting his fate, inviting catastrophe. 282

First, a novel is inevitably weakened when the author needs laboriously to explain a crucial change in a character rather than show it to us, especially when, as here, it is unbeknown to the character himself; though the foundation of his future behaviour. Secondly, the reader wonders what these laws are that are so inevitable and why Elsmere has 'for months' been inviting 'catastrophe'. Certainly, he has been engaged in historical study, vaguely defined as 'the makings of France',²⁸³ but such work could not in itself, and for an Oxford first, lead to disaster. There is the suggestion, seen again in Trollope,²⁸⁴ that doubt once dwelt upon cannot be repulsed and

that intellectual enquiry of any kind leads to agnosticism.

Because of this difficulty, of delineating the intellectual drama, much of the real action of the work takes place 'off-stage'. The reader is presented with a fait accompli. For example, Elsmere endures the destruction, in conversation, of an enthusiastic Catholic convert by Wendover. It is only 'half an hour later' that his silence 'became clear to him. A month ago, every word of that hectic young pleader for Christ and the Christian certainties would have roused in him a leaping passionate sympathy ... Now that inmost strand had given way.'²⁸⁵ It is such half-hours as these, we feel, that the real drama of the novel takes place. Afterwards, Mrs Ward with an air of desperation tries to show us the effect of this interlude on her character. Too often, as here, there is a hint of melodrama.

Robert stood still, and with his hands locked behind him, and his face turned like the face of a blind man towards a world of which it saw nothing, went through a desperate catechism of himself ... The high alternations of intellectual and spiritual debate, the strange emerging sense of deliverance, gave way to a most bitter pang of misery. 'O God! My wife - my work!' 286

This crisis is further weakened by quotations from Bunyan which, however relevant, confirm the impression that there are decided limits to Mrs Ward's originality.

Her characters, also, have the air of stereotypes, and the personalities of her central figures reflect too

simply the intellectual positions they hold. The Squire, Wendover, for example, is the villain. His tired, remote eyes light up in arguments with Elsmere and there is a hint of the satanic - 'no man feels another's soul quivering and struggling in his grasp without excitement',²⁸⁷ we are told. Before his death, the Squire becomes almost mad, and attempts to strangle his doctor. 'They rushed in and found Meyrick struggling in the grip of a white figure, that seemed to have the face of a fiend and the grip of a tiger. Those old bloodshot eyes - those wrinkled hands on the throat of the doctor - horrible!',²⁸⁸ Mrs Elsmere is the perfect, loyal, long-suffering wife whose love, like her simple unquestioning Evangelical faith, never wavers. A neighbouring Ritualist clergyman, introduced as a contrast to the self-questioning hero, 'had the saint's wasted unearthly look, the ascetic brow high and narrow, the veins showing through the skin, and a personality as magnetic as it was strong.'²⁸⁹ Langham, an Oxford don and friend of Elsmere's, who may have been inspired partly by Pater, is listless and a little effete. His voice is slow and nonchalant, he smokes cigarettes, and he 'stayed at home with a volume of Montaigne' when everyone else went to church.²⁹⁰

Elsmere himself, though his role in the book is very different, reminds us of the heroes of Tractarian novels whose

anguished souls eventually find a harbour in the Church of Rome. Even though he is torn between faith and doubt, not two brands of Christianity, the agony is as intense and the end is still, inevitably, death.

When the door opened and Catherine saw her husband come in - her young husband, to whom she had been married not yet four years - with that indescribable look in the eyes which seemed to divine and confirm all those terrors which had been shaking her during her agonised waiting, there followed a moment between them which words cannot render. When it ended - that half-articulate convulsion of love and anguish - she found herself sitting on the sofa beside him, his head on her breast, his hand clasping hers. 'Do you wish me to go, Catherine?' he asked her gently, - 'to Algiers?' 291

Now it is Algiers, not Florence or Rome or some continental monastery, which is the last resting place of religious martyrs. Again we notice that 'words cannot render' the intellectual and spiritual transformation. This is not only the result of Mrs Ward's limitations as a writer but of a more general change in what was considered acceptable in fiction. This is one of the last novels where religious vocabulary was used seriously in the delineation of a character's inner conflict. Elsmere is a clergyman whose secularization is seen as a crisis. Henceforth, the novel's hero is wholly secularized and his inner conflicts are depicted no longer in religious or theological language but in personal and emotional terms, and an everyday vocabulary.

After Robert Elsmere there were increasingly few

fictional attempts to portray the clerical character, whether in a state of doubt or religious faith. Mrs Ward herself did, in fact, produce something like a sequel to her earlier work in The Case of Richard Meynell (1911), where a more mature 'Elsmere' battles for a broad church creed amongst the lower classes. But it was merely the solution to a once earnestly debated problem and was presented to a world where such questions, increasingly, had little relevance. George Macdonald's novel, Thomas Wingfold, Curate (1876), suggests a more dramatic, religious answer to the problem of routine faith or nagging doubt. It is 're-conversion' in terms which recall the blinding light of St Paul on the road to Damascus.²⁹² But although A.L. Drummond says that 'there is nothing morbid or pietistic in this conversion: it is like opening the window and letting in the sunshine',²⁹³ most readers will judge it outmoded or laughable. It is at the end of the novel that this uncomfortable use of conventional vocabulary appears most unacceptable.

The curate remained with the organ. It was silent, and so were his lips, but his heart - the music was not latent there, for his praise and thanksgiving ascended, without voice or instrument, essential harmony, to the ear that hears thought, and the heart that vibrates to every chord of feeling in the hearts it has created ... Alone in the dusky church, the curate's [thoughts] ascended like a song of the angels, for his heart was all a thanksgiving ... He knelt down by the organ and worshipped ... When he rose from his knees, the Church was dark, but through the windows of the clerestory many stars were shining. 294

The concerns of the twentieth century, anthropology, psychology and sexuality, make such passages almost impossible to read, or to accept as authentic human experience. Only the cinema, which was not so far distant, could have presented such a scenario effectively.

Works like Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh (1903) and Mark Rutherford's Catherine Furze (1894) contain clergymen, but they are no longer taken seriously. The former work, perhaps, with its combination of hysterical satire and hatred, makes the clergyman a serious target, but that is not the same thing. Warre Cornish's Sunningwell (1897) and Hugh Walpole's The Cathedral (1922) return to a Trollopian pattern with the addition of liberal theology or sociological insight but, if they gain in seriousness, they certainly fail as entertainment. After such novels as these, the clergyman declines as a subject for fiction just as his actual counterparts diminish in general influence. If people were still going to church in 1914 with their customary diligence, they had by 1918, when the death toll seemed endless, begun seriously to wonder why. Age-old clichés about the God of Mercy, of Victory, of Love, seemed inadequate for the bloody holocaust with which a whole generation was faced. And if the people at home saw that their prayers had no effect, in the simple anthropomorphic terms on which they had been weaned that is, men at the front, like

Wilfred Owen, grew angry both at the slaughter around them and the hypocrisy and blindness of established religion.²⁹⁵ Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' with its sad celebration of human rather than religious requiem asserted, for those who returned, the need for a world that was better here and now, irrespective of what it might be hereafter.

Owen's use of conventional religious and ecclesiastical language to highlight the actual horrors of war, provides a useful pointer to the decline of fiction containing clerical characters. It is not merely that the clergyman ceased to play the role in society that he had up until Queen Victoria's death and beyond, but that the language, the very vocabulary, with which a writer could describe such characters' work and ideals, was passing out of everyday life.

A book like Robert Elsmere, with its quotations from moral treatises and discussion of theological issues, could have no place in the modern world. The Anglican clergyman's age-old link with the establishment had finally rendered him impotent. Had there been a more liberal tradition of English churchmen it is possible that he could have survived in fiction representing a viewpoint that was not recognizably orthodox but nonetheless spiritual. As it is he only survives in genteel caricature. In the novels of Barbara Pym or Elizabeth Taylor²⁹⁶ the clergyman is henceforth confined to religion,

defined at its most limited. Church services, sick-visiting, the consoling of the bereaved are his functions and, generally, he speaks like a character who has strayed from some of the worst kind of nineteenth-century fiction that we have examined. Recently, there have been some few exceptions to this general picture, most notably in Iris Murdoch, but as I have noted elsewhere²⁹⁷ Miss Murdoch's interest in religion is combined with explicit sexual overtones which take her clerical characters a considerable distance from their Victorian forebears.²⁹⁸

Now, however, we have come too far, if only for a sense of completeness. We must turn back some two hundred years to the novels of Jane Austen.

CHAPTER THREE

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817)

Jane Austen was personally well qualified to include portraits of the Anglican parson in her novels. She came from clerical stock and was herself a clergyman's daughter. Her father, George, took orders in 1760. Her mother's father had been a fellow of All Souls Oxford, and later became Rector of Harpsden, near Henley-on-Thames. Mrs Austen's sister, Jane, married Dr Edward Cooper, Rector of Whaddon near Bath. George Austen's rich relations saw that he was well provided for on his marriage and, as the custom was in those days, presented him to the family living of Steventon in 1761 and also bought a couple more parishes to supplement the family income. Mrs Austen's cousin, the daughter of the Reverend Theophylus Leigh, Master of Balliol College, married a clergyman also.¹ Henry Austen, Jane Austen's favourite brother, took orders in 1816 as did her eldest brother James, who held a curacy in 1792 near Steventon, Jane Austen's first home. Jane Austen herself rejected the matrimonial advances of the Reverend Samuel Blackall, a fellow of Emmanuel, Cambridge, later in life.²

Even this recitation of bare facts cannot conceal the obvious wealth of relevant detail, first-hand experience and acquaintance which such a family history must have given

Jane Austen in clerical matters. The organization of clerical households, the conduct of church services, the quality of sermons, the bestowal of livings, all must have been, in part at least, second nature to the novelist. Nor can it be doubted that Jane Austen was personally pious and lived her life according to Christian principles. The letters written to her sailor brother Frank at her father's death, for example, indicate a simple but firm faith.³ Her nephew, the Reverend J.E. Austen-Leigh's Memoir also confirms this impression, while amongst her literary remains copies of prayers composed by her may be found. With such a background, therefore, it might confidently be expected that Jane Austen's clerical portraits will be of a most searching and profound kind.

It is perhaps then with some surprise that we learn of J.H. Newman's comment in 1837 that 'Miss Austen has no romance - none at all. What vile creatures her parsons are!'⁴ His literary judgement we may pass over, but surely his condemnation of her clergymen should be heeded? A moment's thought, however, will explain his opinion and serve to remind us of the historical context in which her portraits of clergymen must be seen. Jane Austen wrote in a religious atmosphere completely different from that of the future Cardinal. Indeed, it was one of the main aims of the Oxford Movement that the spiritual and theological awareness of the clergy should be

raised. Even the best manners and behaviour of the clergy of Jane Austen's day were lamentably insufficient for the Tractarians. Their piety was merely a deitistical decency; their religion a denial of the mysterious, universal, absolute faith displayed in the Catholic Church. Jane Austen's clergy are as remote from the intellectual greatness of a mind like Newman's, or the earnest asceticism of a man like Pusey, as the phaeton and two is from a railway engine.

Most of her clerical portraits find their counterpart in a man like Parson Woodforde. His diaries, which span a long but untroubled life, are full of the same details that might be found in Jane Austen's novels. He takes his father to Bath for 'his old complaint, the Stone';⁵ lovingly records, and eats, a lifetime of good dinners,⁶ plays cards in the evenings,⁷ brews his own beer,⁸ and passes his uneventful life in the same way as the neighbouring gentry. His religious life is equally unexceptional. His suitability for ordination was decided by the Bishop of Oxford's chaplain, who made him construe part of the fifth chapter of Romans. 'I was quite half an hour examining', Woodforde writes, as if this were a lengthy period. 'He asked a good many hard and deep questions. I had not one question that Yes, or No would answer...'⁹ A few days after his ordination, he was again in the College common room, until midnight, drinking wine and punch, being dragged

out of bed at three o'clock for further drinking and smoking with drunken friends. In parish life, Parson Woodforde preached and prayed regularly on Sundays, christened and buried his flock, all without any indication of undue enthusiasm or effort. On Christmas Day 1786, for example, there were thirty communicants at the altar in his parish of Weston and the collection amounted to two shillings and sixpence.¹⁰ Reading his diaries we cannot but agree with his editor, whose words apply equally to Woodforde's life as man and ordained minister. It is like,

A long voyage down a very tranquil stream. There is no grand or exciting scenery; there are no rapids, nor is there any ultimate expectation of the sea. But there are green fields on either side, and trees, and a very pleasant murmuring of water ... and there is peace. 11

It is in this context, then, that we must see Jane Austen's clergy.

All of Jane Austen's completed novels contain at least one clergyman. Some, like Dr Shirley in Persuasion or Dr Grant in Mansfield Park, are not of great importance except as foils for the behaviour of the other characters. Others, like Henry Tilney of Northanger Abbey and Edmund Ferrars in Sense and Sensibility, seem clergymen almost incidentally, as it were. Mr Collins and Mr Elton excite hostility and amusement, Mr Moorland our respect.¹² Edmund Bertram,¹³ however, is an ordinand, and finally a parish priest, before all else. He is one of the two central characters in Jane Austen's longest

and most difficult work. Perhaps his determined choice of vocation is one reason for the perplexity modern critics have felt in discussing the work. Yet, however hard we try to diminish the importance of Edmund's vocation in the novel, however much we may side with the sophisticated spirit of Mary Crawford, he remains at the end both a country parish priest and the novel's only obvious hero. It is difficult to explain away entirely either, Jane Austen's statement in a letter that, 'Now I will try and write something else, and it shall be a complete change of subject - ordination.'¹⁴ While, clearly, we may say that Mansfield Park is not only about ordination, I would hesitate to say that the subject is anything less than central. It is central because the heroic character of Edmund is indisputably linked to his Christian commitment. Central also it must be to the novel's achievement. For if, like Kingsley Amis, we 'finally establish Edmund as repulsive', and Fanny 'a monster of complacency and pride who, under a cloak of cringing self-abasement, dominates and gives meaning to the novel',¹⁵ Mansfield Park is an artistic failure. The novel then fails to uphold and present those values Jane Austen clearly sets out to uphold. Edmund and Fanny are indeed witnesses to Amis's accusation that the authoress's 'judgement' and 'moral sense were corrupted'.¹⁶ Nor will it help overmuch to resort to the literary truism that goodness is always less

attractive in literature than evil. Few detract from Cordelia's worth and if Jane Austen does not have Shakespeare's breadth she does have sufficient stature to achieve a similar end. Perhaps the often discussed character of Satan, in Paradise Lost, provides a better parallel. For although at a distance, or at a glance, Satan seems more attractive than he ought, when we stand back from a closer scrutiny and survey the massive, powerful whole of Milton's epic, his real position is all too obvious. In Mansfield Park the same principle is at work only in reverse. Edmund, the clergyman, committed as he is to such a vocation and Christian principles, may seem superficially uncongenial, but when he is seen as part of the whole structure of meaning in the novel and examined in greater detail, his worth becomes apparent. Whether or not he is attractive to us is a question closely related to our overall attitude to Mansfield Park, and to the attitudes which permeate it. Edmund's character is closely related to the overall theme, and the value of ordination and the parish priesthood is one example of the principles Jane Austen is upholding. In the novel the value of a resident priest fulfilling his parish duties from day to day is contrasted with the more superficially attractive position of the fashionable London preacher captivating an eclectic Sunday congregation.¹⁷ Edmund's parsonage at Thornton Lacey is only to be made a respectable home and not aggrandized into a fine gentleman's

residence, as Henry Crawford suggests.¹⁸ The parson's role is seen as an integral part of the stable social structure of England's rural community. Edmund resists the lure of fashion and the temptations of wealth or power.

Mansfield Park, itself, represents the tradition of benevolent, responsible landowners whose influence and interest in the surrounding community is for the good. It is contrasted with the negligent absentee attitude of Henry Crawford who only occasionally visits his estate at Everingham while spending most of his time and energies in London. Indeed, Mansfield Park is a novel where the values of stability and rest are upheld. It is the antithesis of Castle Rackrent,¹⁹ for example, where the decay of such values is amusingly and pathetically drawn. Tony Tanner takes this idea one stage further. Not only is Mansfield Park upholding the advantages of the benevolent activity of a great house, but also the underlying principle as it relates to individuals and life.

To a world abandoning itself to the dangers of thoughtless restlessness, Jane Austen is holding up an image of the values of thoughtful rest. Aware that the trend was for more and more people to explore the excitements of personality, she wanted to show how much there was to be said for the 'heroism of principle'. 20

Thus, as we examine Edmund, it is obvious that he is not merely upheld as a man who chooses to fulfill the obligations of his office, but as someone who orders his life as a

result of the principles he upholds. It is easy then to see why he meets with such hostility in the twentieth century. For the elements with which Jane Austen weaves her argument, ordination, the country estate, the closely-knit family, have nearly all been rejected in our age. Even when the novel was being written Jane Austen was aware of the great social upheaval that was abroad in England. Now, with these principles of life almost entirely abandoned, it is more difficult to appreciate her point of view. At least, to take her seriously is more difficult. Were Mansfield Park and Edmund Bertram created merely in the spirit of Dr Opimian's lament for the passing of the traditional Christmas or the delights of quadrille,²¹ it would be easy to indulge in a fanciful nostalgia. But Mansfield Park is not a sentimental novel. It is a stoic, firm, even unbending work, far more austere than the popular Pride and Prejudice, where Jane Austen's wit, irony and general goodhumour help to soften her criticisms of people and society. Yet Pride and Prejudice, it seems to me, is the least typical of Jane Austen's works, despite its general popularity. Emma, another great artistic achievement, is concerned with a heroine who is initially unattractive in some respects and whose 'redemption' is by no means easy or painless. Sense and Sensibility depicts the bringing of the romantic, emotional Marianne to good sense. Even Northanger Abbey, the slightest of her

works, is largely an amusing correction of the romantic or 'gothic' expectations of her readers. Thus, those critics who find Mansfield Park too serious very often bring to Jane Austen expectations alien to her real purpose. Jane Austen is not merely an ironical commentator on the humorous situations of domestic life. She is a serious and profound writer whose subject matter only is ordinary and domestic. In Mansfield Park, it is true, her attitudes and judgements are much more boldly and uncompromisingly displayed than elsewhere, but their presence is by no means singular in her mature work.

Edmund Bertram may not be as amusing as Mr Collins, or as engaging as Henry Tilney, but he is a model with which all Jane Austen's other clergy must inevitably be compared. He stands not only as Jane Austen's ideal priest but as a man of principle and personal integrity. There are, it is true, occasions on which he talks about religious matters. Few, however, where he talks about his personal religion or vocation. None, where the anguished soul-baring, so common later in the century, is presented to the reader. Perhaps this is a fact Edmund's critics find hard to bear. If only his mind had been more visibly tortured on the question of ordination or, even better, if only he had married the pert Mary Crawford and found liberation in London life. But we have no right to expect such things. Jane Austen is writing in a period where the

value, even the routine acceptability, of the clerical life and outlook is assumed. In Mansfield Park we are indeed shown the main character undecided about a prospective wife. But Edmund Bertram is not torn between Mary Crawford and ordination; only as to whether she could settle contentedly in a parsonage.²² He has to decide whether her principles are sufficiently fixed and strong to live in a stable community without the distraction, the restless change, of a more fragmented, city existence. It is indeed this conflict which provides the crisis of his character.

What of his general character? Edmund is, above all else, a kind person. He is first discovered, at the age of sixteen in an act of kindness to the lonely new arrival, Fanny.

'My dear little cousin,' said he with all the gentleness of an excellent nature, 'what can be the matter?' And sitting down by her, was at great pains to overcome her shame in being so surprised, and persuade her to speak openly. 'Was she ill? or was any body angry with her? or had she quarrelled with Maria or Julia or was she puzzled about any thing in her lesson that he could explain? Did she, in short, want any thing he could possibly get her, or do for her?' For a long while no answer could be obtained beyond a 'no, no - not at all - no, thank you;' but he still persevered, and no sooner had he begun to revert to her own home, than her increased sobs explained to him where the grievance lay. He tried to console her. 23

He follows this sympathetic encouragement with acts of practical kindness being, alone in the household, sensitive enough to see that 'she required positive kindness, and with that view endeavoured, in the first place, to lessen her fears of them all,

and gave her especially a great deal of good advice as to playing with Maria and Julia, and being as merry as possible.' ²⁴ This last phrase should be noted. Edmund is not the universal kill-joy some would like to imagine. As he grows older, so his good nature continues. Eton and Oxford do not turn him into a wastrel like his brother. Indeed, his own increasing education leads him to direct Fanny's lively mind and 'he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours, he encouraged her taste, and corrected her judgement; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise.'²⁵ From the start Edmund displays not merely passive virtue. He is always sure to translate his personal kindness into practical activity where possible, as in the case of his selling the horse to buy Fanny a pony. This personal sacrifice is made despite family opposition, represented by Mrs Norris.²⁶ This consistent considerateness highlights the occasions where Edmund is less than thoughtful. The occasion where Mary Crawford's prolonged riding of the pony deprives Fanny of necessary exercise for her health, is an example of this. Afterwards, Edmund is repentant.

Vexed as Edmund was with his mother and aunt, he was still more angry with himself. His own forgetfulness of her was worse than any thing which they had done. Nothing of this would have happened had she been properly considered ... He was ashamed to think that for four days together she had not had the power of riding, and very seriously resolved,

however unwilling he must be to check a pleasure of Miss Crawford's, that it should never happen again. 27

This capacity for repentance is a mark of Edmund's character. He is prepared to admit he has been wrong and to change his attitudes or conduct. Jane Austen means us to admire this characteristic. Mary Crawford's ultimate failure is her refusal to look wrong in the face, and to call it so. Edmund on several occasions (most notably the play incident, his opinion of Mary Crawford, and his encouragement of Fanny to accept Henry Crawford's hand) shows that he is capable of admitting he has been wrong. He does not avoid personal humiliation or pain. This is the behaviour of a strong, not a weak, personality. Nor is Edmund without a certain sensitivity which eschews, for example, the vulgarity of Mrs Norris. Mrs Norris's taunt that Fanny is being ungrateful in refusing to act in the play "considering who and what she is" makes Edmund 'too angry to speak.'²⁸ He is sensible enough also to see that Mr Rushworth is no very desirable match for Maria. As he says to himself, "if this man had not twelve thousand pounds a year he would be a very stupid fellow." He is not pleased that Maria's hopes for happiness 'should centre on a large income.'²⁹

There are three main incidents that throw light on Edmund's character. The first, which causes Amis so much

trouble and is one of the foundations of his spirited attack on his character, is the condemnation of Mary Crawford for her criticism of the Admiral, and Edmund and Fanny's subsequent criticism of Dr Grant. The vexed question of the play, and Edmund's part in it, and his romantic involvement with Mary Crawford are the other two. Underlying all of these incidents is the conflict between behaviour according to principle and emotional, instinctive behaviour: between, if you will, sense and sensibility.

The least important question is the first. Amis puts his criticism very strongly.

It is not long before Edmund is shocked by Mary Crawford's complaint - in company, too - that her uncle's rather ill-judged alterations to a cottage of his resulted in the garden being messed up for some time. Soon afterwards he conducts, with the untiringly sycophantic Fanny, a post-mortem on the affront to his 'sense of propriety'. This readiness to be shocked, in itself shocking, is not in evidence when, a few chapters later, the pair of them launch into a canting pietistic tirade against Mary's brother-in-law in her presence. 30

The energy of Amis's attack should not blind us to its inaccuracy. Edmund does not say he is shocked. He is 'sorry to hear Miss Crawford, whom he was much disposed to admire, speak so freely of her uncle. It did not suit his sense of propriety.'³¹ Later, he describes it as "very wrong - very indecorous"³². Nor does he deny the justice of Mary Crawford's remarks, "I do not censure her opinions; but certainly there

is impropriety in making them public."³³ Still, it might be argued, Edmund is making a fuss about nothing. But if we study this incident within the whole context of chapter six, Jane Austen's intention becomes clearer.

The chapter is full of petty quarrels which are caused by action of the smart London world on the older, slower order. There is Henry Crawford's eager advice on the 'improvement' of Sotherton, a debate close to the heart of early nineteenth-century readers.³⁴ Then there is the argument between Dr Grant and Mrs Norris where, for once, our sympathies are not entirely against her. Next, there is Mary Crawford's petulant and tactless behaviour over her harp. Jane Austen clearly indicates Mary Crawford's real allegiances, and her own, when she makes Mary say, "I shall understand all your ways in time; but coming down with the true London maxim, that every thing is to be got with money, I was a little embarrassed at first by the sturdy independence of your country customs."³⁵ It takes Edmund a long while, and much unhappiness, to realize that his allegiance is with the 'sturdy independence' of principle and not with those horrifyingly true London maxims. Immured as we are by the universal acceptance of such maxims it may be more difficult to appreciate Jane Austen's attitude. The difference between Fanny's brother William and Henry Crawford over their letter-writing is likewise significant. The

former represents the slower pace of life which allows the close ties of family to be upheld and lovingly attended to; the latter indicates the busy, sophisticated lives of those concerned with their own pleasure.³⁶ Finally, there is the snobbish, even vulgar, reference of Henry Crawford to their acquaintances in the navy at the expense of his host's relation.³⁷ In themselves, each of these contrasting attitudes appears slight. Together they begin to build Jane Austen's case against the Crawfords. Jane Austen does not deny that they are socially agreeable, amusing and intelligent. She does show, however, that their principles are wrong and, ultimately, their hearts untrue. Thus Edmund and Fanny's criticisms seem heavy-handed in isolation but their judgement reflects, if inadequately, the underlying principles on which the book is built. It is also important to recognize that Edmund's attitudes are developing as he matures, and that if there are elements of priggishness at first, these must be compared with the ultimate sanction he receives. This only comes after a not inconsiderable time of trial and purgation.

It is untrue that he later launches into a tirade against Dr Grant, pietistic or otherwise. Edmund makes one contribution to the conversation, hardly a tirade, which only turns on Dr Grant from a more general discussion on Mary's initiative. It is, in part, an expression of regret that Mary

and her sister should be suffering because of Dr Grant's self-indulgence. His final words, "we cannot attempt to defend Dr Grant",³⁸ indicate Edmund's passive role in the discussion. Fanny's defence of Dr Grant's profession, circuitous and casuistical as some must find it, does still underline Jane Austen's theme in chapter six. At least, as a cleric, Dr Grant performs certain duties and functions, and performs them well which in the constituted order are a force for good.³⁹ The dividing line between right and wrong is a thin one and Jane Austen does not, it seems to me, fall into the black and white divisions of her critics. Just as Mary Crawford and Dr Grant have their good and amiable side, so Fanny and Edmund are not models of perfection. The difference between Fanny and Edmund, Mary and Henry, is that the former base their behaviour on principles of which Jane Austen approves and the latter, if they can be said to do anything that positive, base their behaviour on the gratification of self.

This point is again made clear in another of the book's crises, that of the play. Amis, exaggerating for effect, deems Edmund's 'eventual reluctant consent to participate, which we are invited to see as the tragic overthrow of a noble mind worked on by Mary Crawford ... a squalid and ridiculous belly-flop.'⁴⁰ I do not think for one moment that Jane Austen intended anything as grand, or appalling, as a 'tragic over-

throw of a noble mind', which brings Othello rather than Edmund Bertram to mind. Nor is his eventual demise anything as dramatic, or noisy, as a belly-flop. Jane Austen could see as well as Amis that to make anyone tragic, or heroic, over a play like Lovers' Vows would indeed be ridiculous. The rights and wrongs of the case are far too thoroughly intertwined for anything like heroism. This seems to be to be a difficulty that Jane Austen's critics have made for themselves. They again see the conflict over the play in black and white terms. In reality it is grey, for even Fanny, so opposed to the idea and the only one solely untainted, 'believed herself to derive as much innocent enjoyment from the play as any of them'.⁴¹ Edmund's attitude is likewise complex, even confused. His opposition to the play is based on a variety of reasons. He does not in fact make a stand on one particular moral issue. Indeed, if he does make a stand it is on nearly every reason he can think of rather than on just one. First, it is an aesthetic objection. He does not, he says, object to

'... real acting, good hardened real acting; but I would hardly walk from this room to the next to look at the raw efforts of those who have not been bred to the trade, - a set of gentlemen and ladies, who have all the disadvantages of education and decorum to struggle through.' 42

Next, come his more serious objections.

'I think it would be very wrong. In a general light, private theatricals are open to some objections, but as we are circumstanced, I must think

it would be highly injudicious, and more than injudicious, to attempt any thing of the kind. It would show great want of feeling on my father's account, absent as he is, and in some degree of constant danger; and it would be imprudent, I think, with regard to Maria, whose situation is a very delicate one, considering every thing, extremely delicate.' 43

A further reason is given.

'I think a theatre ought not to be attempted. - It would be taking liberties with my father's house in his absence which could not be justified.' 44

Finally, he adds a most persuasive argument.

'Family squabbling is the greatest evil of all, and we had better do any thing than be altogether by the ears.' 45

Amis, in his skilful condemnation of Edmund over this issue,⁴⁶ passes over these objections of Edmund's and concentrates on a condemnation of the actual play, Lovers' Vows, which it is, of course, much easier to ridicule by more liberal modern standards. If, however, the objections are examined it will be seen that, with the exception of the first which (if we remember Mr Rushworth's efforts) may well be true but is hardly relevant, there is some element of truth in them. Certainly, the subsequent events and the attitude of their father on his return seem, sufficiently, to justify Edmund. Maria is certainly compromised by the situation which arises. Sir Thomas is not pleased with the re-organization of his study. The influence of the shallow Mr Yates, in introducing the theatricals, and the squabbles which arise between all members

of the family (and which almost succeed in dragging in the innocent Fanny) need hardly be further elaborated. Sir Thomas's fervent destruction of all copies of the play shows that, in his eyes at least, it is pernicious.⁴⁷ Amis suggests that Edmund ought to be 'more intelligent, more liberal, more manly'⁴⁸ in his approach to the play. What, in fact, he is asking is that Edmund should be a twentieth and not a nineteenth-century character, which is absurd. His downfall, therefore, if downfall it is, is tinged with common-sense and casuistry as well as compromise. He agrees in order to keep the peace, to protect Mary from acting with a stranger, and no doubt a little for his own enjoyment. Hardly the stuff of heroism.

Contrary to the view of most critics, that the play was an ill-chosen episode with which to make her point, I believe that Jane Austen chose the incident of the play deliberately for its somewhat insignificant character. She was not personally opposed to amateur dramatics, indeed, she wrote several rhymed charades herself in younger days.⁴⁹ Nor, had she so wished it, would she have been incapable of choosing a more serious issue. The same book, after all, deals with elopement and adultery. Perhaps it is more difficult for us to appreciate the point she is making because play-acting of any kind, and of whatever content, is hardly cause for comment now. But I think Jane Austen chose the play specifically as

an event not sufficiently important to be scandalous, or for Edmund seriously to be compromised, but as an issue of moderate import where he might have shown consistency of principle. She does not intend Edmund to be a hero on a grand scale. He is solid, serious, somewhat prosaic; a man of feeling, good sense, and with a kind, gentle nature. Even his compromise over the play springs from a misdirected application of these better qualities. The existence of Henry Tilney and Captain Wentworth, in an earlier and later novel, show us that Jane Austen could have created a more dashing Edmund had she so wished. She intended instead to show Edmund as a man whose goodness is unassuming and deliberately avoids the creation of a character as showy in his real goodness as the Crawfords are in their superficial sophistication. His behaviour over the play is neither tragic nor a belly-flop. It is an indication of the sort of limitations ordinary goodness inevitably has. The fact that Edmund's behaviour, as a rule, is based on right principles is more important than an occasional fall from grace.

It is very typical of Jane Austen's artistic method to choose an event of a domestic nature to make her point. It is integral to her philosophy that domestic virtue, in the end, may be just as demanding, and will certainly be more painstaking, than acts of heroism or feats of daring. C.S. Lewis seems to understand the artistic difficulty of expressing the tension

between right and wrong when he says that 'the hard core [of] morality and even of religion seems to me to be just what makes good comedy possible. "Principles" or "seriousness" are essential to Jane Austen's art. Where there is no norm, nothing can be ridiculous.'⁵⁰ The tension in Edmund between principle and emotional inclination is not one of heroic proportions. Morality and religion are never allowed entirely to obliterate comedy. Mansfield Park is certainly a work where the moral foundations and superstructure of the work are clearly visible (certainly when compared with Northanger Abbey or even Pride and Prejudice). Yet, in every case, as C.S. Lewis says, 'Jane Austen's "principles" might be described as the grammar of conduct ... that anyone can learn' and, indeed, 'that everyone must learn.'⁵¹ She 'does not envisage those standards which she so rigidly holds as often demanding human sacrifice.'⁵² Nonetheless, as we see time and again in her work, she is not blind to the cost of the domestic virtues. If those critics weaned on romance are tempted to call this the attitude of mediocrity, it could also be claimed, in Jane Austen's defence, that it is the result of a deep understanding of reality.

This is certainly true of the eventual marriage of Edmund and Fanny. Amis flippantly remarks that, 'to invite Mr and Mrs Edmund Bertram round for the evening would not be lightly undertaken.'⁵³ But if we substitute Mary for Fanny

can we imagine the evening being any happier? At least Fanny and Edmund are of one mind. They are fairly matched. If their honesty and goodness is somewhat prosaic, or dull, is it not better than the shallow pertness of Mary Crawford? One cannot see her settling into the trivial round of daily parish life; nor Edmund, if finally won away by Mary's persuasive smile and tongue, cutting a happy figure at some London soiree, with the admiral's lady-friends. Mary Crawford at the beginning of their courtship sees Edmund as he must ever, in reality, remain, despite her efforts to turn him into something he is not. It is a revealing passage, as much of Jane Austen's art as Mary Crawford's shallowness. Mary Crawford felt Edmund to be agreeable to her but,

he was not pleasant by any common rule, he talked no nonsense, he paid no compliments, his opinions were unbending, his attentions tranquil and simple. There was a charm, perhaps, in his sincerity, his steadiness, his integrity ... She did not think very much about it; however; he pleased her for the present; she liked to have him near her; it was enough. 54

What powerful, subtle irony! Can it be wondered that some readers blunder on and are surprised at Miss Crawford's downfall? Need anyone look further for the incompatibility of these two at any serious level? Can anyone imagine Jane Austen approving a character who can formulate a phrase, let alone hold the principles which give rise to such thinking, as, 'there was a charm, perhaps, in his sincerity.' The position of the adverb

is sufficient condemnation. Whether or not Edmund and Fanny are a congenial couple, and I imagine time and the routine of duty would have softened them, they are undeniably right for each other. Could we admire Edmund for marrying Mary Crawford? His character, though mundane, is not wholly blind - even if it takes a melodramatic scene to allow his sense of right to conquer his emotions.

Mary Crawford continues the courtship, begun against her better judgement, out of flirtatiousness, the lack of other suitors - in much the same way that Henry takes up Fanny - and because she is too proud to accept defeat. It should have been obvious to Mary as well as to Edmund, not merely in their final interview but as early as their conversation in Sotherton chapel,⁵⁵ that there is not sufficient basic agreement for a workable marriage. The change for the worse, which we see in Mary at that final interview,⁵⁶ may be ascribed to her removal from the benign and protective influences of Mansfield. Our attitude to Mary has been based, therefore, merely on an interlude. At last we see her not as 'she really is', but as she has always been and always will be. The wary reader, however, will note Jane Austen's warning given very early on over the incident of the harp and will not be too much misled.

The religious side of Edmund Bertram is as ordinary and straightforward as his general character. Not in Jane

Austen should we look for the sort of conflict over vocation and ordination that is discovered in later Victorian fiction. On the other hand, there is no doubt as to the seriousness of Edmund's intentions nor his obvious vocational sincerity. His first reply to Mary Crawford's assertion that "a clergyman is nothing", in Sotherton chapel, is a clear definition of how he sees his duty.

'I cannot call the situation nothing, which has the charge of all that is of the first importance to mankind, individually or collectively considered, temporally and eternally - which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence.' 57

Certainly, this is an improvement on Mr Collins whose duty, when he can see beyond the wishes of Lady Catherine de Burgh, is only to perform the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. Edmund at least connects his duty to the eternal verities and their influence upon mankind; yet not personally enough for some perhaps. It must of course be remembered that enthusiasm, and the excesses of Methodism or worse, were studiously avoided by the establishment. Mary Crawford's last bitter taunt to Edmund - intellectually as damning as her saucy, playful smile was emotionally - was on this very subject. After Edmund had spoken his mind she says, "a pretty good lecture upon my word ... when I hear of you next, it may be as a celebrated preacher in some great society of Methodists, or as a missionary into foreign parts."⁵⁸ Even to the end she

confused a clergyman's role with that of preacher. Edmund it is clear did not. From the first he realizes that words will not be sufficient.

'A fine preacher is followed and admired; but it is not in fine preaching only that a good clergyman will be useful in his parish and his neighbourhood, where the parish and neighbourhood are of a size capable of knowing his private character, and observing his general conduct.' 59

Even clearer is this speech of Sir Thomas's with which Edmund concurs in humble but ready terms. "'Sir Thomas ... undoubtedly understands the duty of a parish priest. - We must hope his son may prove that he knows it too.'" ⁶⁰ Here, the point concerning residence and formal duty, preaching and practice in the general sense, is clearly made. Not only are the excesses of Methodism to be avoided but also the vices of the establishment which were all too common at this time. "'A parish has wants and claims'", Sir Thomas points out to Henry Crawford, who might well draw a parallel to the duties incumbent upon the owner of a large estate,

which can only be known by a clergyman constantly resident, and which no proxy can be capable of satisfying to the same extent. Edmund might, in the common phrase, do the duty of Thornton, that is, he might read prayers and preach, without giving up Mansfield Park; he might ride over, every Sunday, to a house nominally inhabited, and go through divine service; he might be the clergyman of Thornton Lacey every seventh day, for three or four hours, if that would content him. But it will not. He knows that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey, and that if he does not live among his parishioners and prove

himself by constant attention their well-wisher and friend, he does very little either for their good or his own. 61

Edmund also realizes fully the financial sacrifice involved in his intended profession, as this conversation with Mary Crawford indicates.

'You intend to be very rich,' said Edmund, with a look which, to Fanny's eye, had a great deal of serious meaning. 'To be sure. Do not you? - Do not we all?' 'I cannot intend any thing which it must be so completely beyond my power to command. Miss Crawford may chuse her degree of wealth. She has only to fix on her number of thousands a year, and there can be no doubt of their coming. My intentions are only not to be poor.' 62

Whether later after Fanny's first dinner at the Grants he is, in fact, discussing how "to turn a good income into a better",⁶³ as Henry Crawford suggests he is, is not clear. At any rate, his seven hundred a year will not be solely for 'his menus plaisirs' because Edmund will not continue to live at home, as this implies. Money alone, he realizes, is not the only ingredient of happiness.

Edmund does not treat his duties of preaching and the leading of worship carelessly. The discussion of these matters with Henry Crawford shows him to have given thought to the matter. It is certainly a sign of the times that Edmund, young and newly ordained, should stress such things as the manner of reading the service with "distinctness and energy" and discuss particular passages for delivery, and even to recognize that, "in every congregation, there is a larger proportion

who know a little of the matter, and who can judge and criticize."⁶⁴ The Oxford Movement was not a totally new broom in improving divine worship, the Evangelicals had stimulated the need for sincerity and clarity. Nor is Edmund insensitive to the fact that the excessive length of a service may null its effect. His conversation with Mary Crawford in Sotherton chapel proves that he is sensitive and honest enough to analyse and learn from his own experience of college services at Oxford, while still defending the principle behind family prayers.⁶⁵

Perhaps his high moral tone over the play and private theatricals, and Mary Crawford's flippancy about her brother's behaviour, strike some as excessive today. It demonstrates nonetheless his moral seriousness as a priest. His repugnance at Henry Crawford's immorality is not mere form. It is not the fox-hunting parson doing his social duty. Edmund suffers considerably as he tells Fanny of his moral indignation - and it is clear that he feels deeply about the issues involved.

'The manner in which she spoke of the crime itself, giving it every reproach but the right, considering its ill consequences only as they were to be braved or overborne by a defiance of decency and impudence in wrong; and, last of all, and above all, recommending to us a compliance, a compromise, an acquiescence, in the continuance of the sin, on the chance of a marriage which, thinking as I now thought of her brother, should rather be prevented than sought - all this together most grievously convinced me that I had never understood her before, and that, as far as related to mind, it had been the creature of my own imagination, not Miss Crawford, that I had been too apt to dwell on for many months past. That, perhaps it was best for me; I had less to

regret in sacrificing a friendship - feelings -
hopes which must, at any rate, have been torn
from me now." 66

This whole halting confession, and especially that he wished he might be able to restore her in his esteem, is genuinely moving. Whatever critics of Edmund may consider the morality of the situation, no one can praise and admire the insensitivity, shallowness and egotism of Mary Crawford here. If they are honest, they must admit the novel's ending is in no way a volte face.

What it is most important to remember, in any judgment of Edmund, is that he is still young, inexperienced, and in the process of maturing. He is not a priest of many years standing, but a young ordinand, and finally a young clergyman, setting out upon his life's work and ministry. He is shown by Jane Austen in the process of development. He is feeling his way in personal relationships; preparing his mind for a particular way of life. The portrayal of Edmund reflects the more general concern of the whole book for the question of upbringing, environment and moral education. Fanny and Mary, Edmund and Henry, are contrasted with each other in this respect. There is also commentary upon the development of Maria and Julia,⁶⁷ the inadequate influence of Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram as parents,⁶⁸ the evil influence of Mrs Norris⁶⁹ and the admiral,⁷⁰ upon their charges. It is true that Edmund is not the most delightful of Jane Austen's heroes, but he is

honest and sincere, and even Henry Tilney has an air of prig-
gishness about him which perhaps suggests a general limitation
in the author's portrayal of men.

It might also be said that Edmund's notions of a
priest's duties are altogether uninspiring. It is no surprise
that Newman thought him 'vile' but, by the standards of the day,
remembering Parson Woodforde, he was not without sincerity and
good intentions. He had thought seriously about his vocation,
and his work, and, by his marriage to Fanny, ensured that he
would continue to live by the principles he has chosen. He
was a kind man, a good man. He would certainly not inspire
the great, but he would loyally serve the humble. For a
country parson in a small village, his qualities were all that
were required. Furthermore, goodness of this sort may be easy
to define but not necessarily easy to achieve or maintain.
Edmund Bertram is not the most attractive of Jane Austen's
characters, and Mansfield Park is not the easiest of her novels,
but both point to qualities which endure, qualities which Jane
Austen held dear and which the reader, on mature reflection,
may also come to admire.

Mr Elton is very different from Edmund Bertram.
From the manner of his introduction, a man in want of a wife,
and in the reasons given for his entry to the society of Hart-
field, we are very much reminded of Peacock's clergy who were

always in want of a good dinner.

Real, long-standing regard brought the Westons and Mr Knightley; and by Mr Elton, a young man living alone without liking it, the privilege of exchanging any vacant evening of his own blank solitude for the elegancies and society of Mr Woodhouse's drawing-room, and the smiles of his lovely daughter, was in no danger of being thrown away. 71

His dependent position in the novel, dependent on the plot and therefore upon Emma, is significant. Mr Woodhouse's description of him should also be a warning to the wary reader for his judgements rarely show perception. "Mr Elton is a very pretty young man, to be sure, and a very good young man, and I have a great regard for him."⁷² Like most of the other subsidiary characters in the novel, Elton is seen, at least to begin with, through the eyes of the heroine. It is only at a later stage that our eyes are opened and the character described more realistically. The warning signs, however, are clear enough, if Emma's forceful personality can be escaped awhile to heed them. Emma even sees the signs herself on occasions but her plans are not to be easily altered. Mr Knightley, always the guardian of right and reality, gives an apt warning to her in the very first chapter. "Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and chicken, but leave him to choose his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself."⁷³

Emma, of course, far from depending on the fact,

behaves in a manner which suggests that she believes the opposite. The first part of the novel depicts Mr Elton paying court to Emma, while she, unawares, plans his marriage to Harriet Smith. Here he seems almost unobjectionable. Vain, certainly, rather obsequious (lovers, after all, are always flatterers) but otherwise good-mannered and good-tempered. Even his proposal of marriage to Emma⁷⁴ compares favourably with that other clerical performance in Pride and Prejudice.⁷⁵ After his ill-fated proposal, however, he becomes decidedly unpleasant. His wife, of course, cannot but colour our outlook - vulgar, mean and comic as she is. But this does not fully explain the change. For in the second half of the book he is of little interest. Indeed, he becomes, for example in his petty refusal to stand up and dance with Harriet Smith,⁷⁶ as mean as his wife. Perhaps it is that Jane Austen, having used him for the purposes of the plot in the earlier part of the novel, turns her attentions to the much more amusing characterization of his wife? But the difficulty lies in this very wife. How could anyone, having set their sights on Emma, however misguidedly, be satisfied with Selina's sister? Or is Jane Austen's point still more subtle, that it takes a thorough knowledge of the book to understand it fully? For if Jane Austen is not to be accused of slovenly inconsistency in her characterization in a very mature, and fine, novel, it must be that Elton is all of a piece.

Emma is about the bringing of Emma to her full potential. It not only concerns her humiliation but her triumph. It reveals how Emma Woodhouse conquers the darker side of her own character. Since the other characters are largely seen through the imperfect eyes of Emma herself, with only the omnipotent Knightley (who often seems to speak for the author) to adjust the balance, and since the book shows in considerable detail this very movement of changing attitudes in the heroine, the other characters have to be shown within the pattern of these changes. Elton, like the inimitable Miss Bates, is seen largely through Emma's imperfect gaze until such time as some action of her own forces reality upon her and, perhaps, upon the unsuspecting reader. With Miss Bates, it is Emma's rudeness on Box Hill which leads Knightley to rebuke her (and presumably the reader) with the reality of the situation. They are then called to task for laughing too cruelly at a silly spinster's misfortune.⁷⁷ With Elton it is his proposal to Emma and his return with a ludicrous wife. This certainly opens Emma's eyes and the reader's too. Thus, if Elton later appears, as he must, vain, silly and small-minded, it is merely that we had been led almost not to notice these traits before. I say 'almost' advisedly, for there are other levels at which the novel's artistry is at work. For if the reader were entirely taken in from the beginning, the shock would be too

great for credulity. (This sort of shock had not been wholly prepared for in the revelation of a sympathetic Darcy in Pride and Prejudice.)⁷⁸ The elements of the 'real' character must be plain from the beginning and must certainly become obvious with a thorough knowledge of the work.

They must be plain for reasons other than mere consistency of character. A good deal of the author's irony is directed at both Elton and Miss Bates, to name only two examples, and the reader is thus allowed to enjoy the former's vanity and the latter's harmless stupidity. Emma does not see Elton's vanity, creating in her own mind a character the reader can compare with his own observations, and does not always have time for Miss Bates missing, the reader knows, a good deal of innocent entertainment. For the author's irony is also, and this is where the various tangents of the minor characters cross, directed against Emma herself. For while she feels merely annoyance and anger at Elton's proposal, the reader also is amused at them both. He further feels a sense of justice in her humiliation. In the case of Miss Bates, we have laughed all along at her silliness but, unlike Emma, until her shock at Boxhill, we have loved her for it also. If there is cruelty in our laughter, and too close an identification with the heroine will mean that there is, it is because we have not heeded the warning signs that Jane Austen has provided.

Nothing could be clearer than Jane Austen's initial description of her.

Her daughter enjoyed a most uncommon degree of popularity for a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or frighten those who might hate her into outward respect. She had never boasted either beauty or cleverness. Her youth had passed without distinction, and her middle life was devoted to the care of a failing mother, and the endeavour to make a small income go as far as possible. And yet she was a happy woman; and a woman whom no one named without goodwill. It was her own universal goodwill and contented temper which worked such wonders. She loved everybody, was interested in everybody's happiness, quick-sighted to everybody's merits, thought herself a most fortunate creature, and surrounded with such blessings in such an excellent mother, and so many good neighbours and friends, and a home that wanted for nothing. The simplicity and cheerfulness of her nature, her contented and grateful spirit, were a recommendation to everybody, and a mine of felicity to herself. 79

This is a description, without irony, of a Christian character. Certainly, as far as Jane Austen is concerned it amounts to high praise and indicates great sympathy. Search as we will for those traces of satire for which Jane Austen is famous, they are not to be found. Little mars her praise of this good-natured woman. There are indeed one or two barbs in the passage, but they are directed against society which reduces such a person to genteel absurdity. The final adjective in this list, for example, is telling; 'a woman neither young, handsome, rich,

nor married.' Nor does the following criticism of society's manners need amplification. 'She had no intellectual superiority to ... frighten those who might hate her into outward respect.' Jane Austen even reverses our expectations, in a phrase like 'quick-sighted to everybody's merits', in order to underline her point. This indication of the author's artistry finds a parallel in her portrayal of Elton. It is essential to a full understanding of the novel to appreciate these subtle changes in our view of its characters. Elton is not as admirable as Miss Bates but the development and revelation of his character is as intricate. Let us, therefore, examine the stages in Jane Austen's delineation of her clerical character.

The first mention of Mr Elton is in the conversation between three of the major characters, and thus is of some importance. In it, several facts and opinions are revealed, with Jane Austen's accustomed skill.

'Emma never thinks of herself, if she can do good to others;' rejoined Mr Woodhouse, understanding but in part. 'But, my dear, pray do not make any more matches, they are silly things, and break up one's family circle grievously.' 'Only one more, Papa; only for Mr Elton. Poor Mr Elton! You like Mr Elton, papa, - I must look about for a wife for him. There is nobody in Highbury who deserves him - and he has been here a whole year, and has fitted up his house so comfortably that it would be a shame to have him single any longer - and I thought, when he was joining their hands today, he looked so very much as if he would like to have the same kind office done for him! I think very well of Mr Elton, and this is the only way I have of doing him a service.'

'Mr Elton is a very pretty young man, to be sure,

and a very good young man, and I have a very great regard for him. But if you want to show him any attention, my dear, ask him to come and dine with us some day. That will be a much better thing. I dare say Mr Knightley will be so kind as to meet him.' 'With a great deal of pleasure, sir, at any time,' said Mr Knightley, laughing; 'and I agree with you entirely that it will be a much better thing. Invite him to dinner, Emma, and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken, but leave him to choose his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself.' 80

Here we see Emma's predetermined motives in her relationship with Elton. They are, however, although meddling and sentimental, without malice. Her father's comment reveals, as ever, that while in principle he cannot support Emma, in practice he will. Mr Knightley alone shows some grasp of reality. His attitude to Mr Elton is revealing. He certainly does not support Emma's scheme and from his almost ironical and laughing reply to Mr Woodhouse we may deduce that he has summed up Mr Elton very differently from Emma. Indeed, the last sentence suggests what we learn for certain only later,⁸¹ that Knightley has heard Elton talking on the subject of marriage in a none too sentimental manner. The reader's opinion is thus divided. He naturally tends to sympathize with the heroine and although male readers may not wish Emma's matchmaking the same easy success as female ones, the mention of her earlier happy triumph with Miss Taylor encourages the belief that Emma's art is benevolent. Mr Woodhouse, it is naturally assumed, will oppose anything liable to give pleasure and his words are taken as

evidence for the opposing case.

When Elton is next mentioned, only the most scrupulous reader will notice any hint of criticism, although this is undoubtedly there. Emma compares Mr Elton with Mr Weston and Mr Knightley and concludes that, "'a young man might be very safely recommended to take Mr Elton as a model. Mr Elton is good-humoured, cheerful, obliging, and gentle.'" ⁸² The inclusion of the word 'obliging' is suspicious, and in almost the next sentence these suspicions are confirmed.

'I do not know whether he has any design of ingratiating himself with either of us, Harriet, by additional softness, but it strikes me that his manners are softer than they used to be.' ⁸³

Jane Austen is not one to commend an ingratiating softness.

Again, in Emma's thoughtful description of Elton as a suitable husband for Harriet, there are some hidden barbs. A slight irony is apparent in 'Mr Elton's situation was most suitable - quite the gentleman himself, and without low connections.' ⁸⁴

The final phrase in this list of virtues, which precedes a dubious description of him as 'well-meaning', is also significant. 'She thought very highly of him as a good-humoured, well-meaning, respectable young man, without any deficiency of useful understanding or knowledge of the world.' ⁸⁵ Finally, he is dismissed, in effect, by the pre-eminently scrupulous Emma as 'really a very pleasing young man, a young man whom any woman, not fastidious, might like.' ⁸⁶ To the seasoned

reader, well acquainted with Jane Austen's ways, these words and phrases are strong indication of her disapprobation. The unsuspecting will probably see only a list of virtues.

With Elton's entrance in chapter six, the irony becomes more complex. For the reader is both amused at Emma and the situation she has created, and enjoys the misdirected gallantry of Elton. (Later, the reader may enjoy Jane Austen's clever manipulation of the whole episode and of himself. For, with a knowledge of the whole work Emma's description of Elton as 'a remarkably handsome man, with most agreeable manners',⁸⁷ intended to impress Harriet, sounds suspiciously like her description of Mrs Elton as "very pleasant, and very elegantly dressed",⁸⁸ intended to veil an insult.) In the opening paragraphs of chapter six other jibes are noticed. Phrases such as, 'Emma could not feel a doubt ...', 'she found her decidedly more sensible ...', 'she had no hesitation ...', 'she was soon pretty confident ...', 'she was quite convinced ...', 'she had no scruple ...', eventually undermine the reader's confidence, especially in retrospect, of Emma's infallibility. The contrast between fact and fantasy is underlined by Elton's opening remarks - which in themselves afford innocent amusement at their absurd exaggeration. "'You have given Miss Smith all that she required," said he; "you have made her graceful and easy. She was a beautiful creature when she came to you but,

in my opinion, the attractions you have added are infinitely superior to what she has received from nature."⁸⁹ Here, the 'you', following so closely upon the 'she' of the previous paragraph establishes Emma again as the prime interest. This complex amusement is present also a few lines later.

'Let me entreat you,' cried Mr Elton; 'it would indeed be a delight! Let me entreat you, Miss Woodhouse, to exercise so charming a talent in favour of your friend. I know what your drawings are. How can you suppose me ignorant? Is not this room rich in specimens of your landscapes and flowers; and has not Mrs Weston some inimitable figure-pieces, in her drawing-room at Randalls?'

Yes, good man! - thought Emma - but what has all that to do with taking likenesses? You know nothing of drawing. Don't pretend to be in raptures about mine. Keep your raptures for Harriet's face. 90

Elton's eloquence, directed more at Emma than her protégée, contrasts well with Emma's sarcasm, especially since Emma seems so knowing in her understanding of Elton's flattery where she is in fact, as the experienced reader gains great delight in knowing, so blind.

This double irony continues when Emma says, thinking she is satirizing Elton and in fact amusing us at her own expense, that "'this man is almost too gallant to be in love."⁹¹ And, following on from this is a description of Elton by Emma which, because it is slightly patronizing is undoubtedly more accurate. It is an early indication of the 'real' Elton so well hidden up to now beneath Emma's flattery and the author's subtlety.

'He is an excellent young man, and will suit Harriet exactly; it will be an "exactly so", as he says himself; but he does sigh and languish, and study for compliments rather more than I could endure as a principal. I come in for a pretty good share as a second. But it is his gratitude on Harriet's account.' 92

This last sentence should raise considerable doubts in the minds of any still unsuspecting readers. More direct is Mr Knightley's attack on Emma over her opposition to Harriet Smith's marriage to Robert Martin.

'Depend upon it, Elton will not do. Elton is a very good sort of man, and a very respectable vicar of Highbury, but not at all likely to make an imprudent match. He knows the value of a good income as well as anybody. Elton may talk sentimentally, but he will act rationally. He is as well acquainted with his own claims as you can be with Harriet's. He knows that he is a very handsome young man, and a great favourite wherever he goes; and from his general way of talking in unreserved moments, when there are only men present, I am convinced that he does not mean to throw himself away. I have heard him speak with great animation of a large family of young ladies that his sisters are intimate with, who have all twenty thousand pounds apiece.' 93

Here Elton is clearly defined. Phrases like 'a very good sort of man', 'a very respectable Vicar of Highbury' are hardly complimentary from the straightforward Knightley. The next two sentences in an eighteenth-century context may not be wholly uncomplimentary nor, in Jane Austen's view, is sentimentality to be preferred to rationality. But although this may present a man not quite as foolish as some of his more elaborate speeches to Emma might suggest, there is something not very likeable about one who "knows that he is a very handsome young

man".

Cleverly, Jane Austen follows this realistic sketch of Elton with more of Emma's dubious imaginings.

He had frightened her a little about Mr Elton; but when she considered that Mr Knightley could not have observed him as she had done, neither with the interest nor (she must be allowed to tell herself, in spite of Mr Knightley's pretensions) with the skill of such an observer on such a question as herself, that he had spoken it hastily and in anger, she was able to believe that he had rather said what he wished resentfully to be true, than what he knew any thing about. He certainly might have heard Mr Elton speak with more unreserve than she had ever done, and Mr Elton might not be of an imprudent, inconsiderate disposition as to money-matters; he might naturally be rather attentive than otherwise to them; but then, Mr Knightley did not make due allowance for the influence of a strong passion at war with all interested motives. Mr Knightley saw no such passion, and of course, thought nothing of its effects; but she saw too much of it to feel a doubt of its overcoming any hesitations that a reasonable prudence might originally suggest; and more than a reasonable, becoming degree of prudence, she was very sure did not belong to Mr Elton. 94

Such ramblings inevitably conceal falsehood. The convoluted prose should make the wary suspicious. Especially clever is the last sentence. For, of course, Elton is not endowed with great prudence. Indeed, in retrospect, when he returns with his ridiculous bride he is seen to lack prudence altogether. Ironically, it is this very lack of prudence which Emma uses as the basis of an argument which is opposite in intention. Jane Austen makes Emma seize upon the very failing in Elton which later leads to her own awakening to his true character

as evidence for the success of her own misguided schemes. Thus again is Emma satirized with Elton. The frail superstructure on which Emma's arguments in favour of Elton being in love with Harriet is once more made firm. At one level the deception continues. For the reader, however, together with this deception is a more profound understanding of, and amusement at, the relationship of the characters, and a greater appreciation of Jane Austen's art.

The business of the charade is a further example of the complex fabric of irony and humour at work in the book. By now it matters little if the reader has understood Elton's purpose. For he is still aware of what he is meant to see, through Emma's eyes, and gains pleasure from seeing both. The pleasure Emma has 'of seeing him [Elton] most intently at work with his recollections',⁹⁵ is also the reader's, who sees Elton now as rather more stupid than formerly, because of his laboured efforts. Certainly, he is becoming almost ridiculous in being 'most earnestly careful that nothing ungallant, nothing that did not breathe a compliment to the sex, should pass his lips'. The dual-edged thrust of the next sentence is further confirmation of Jane Austen's genius for the revelation of character. 'They owed to him their two or three politest puzzles', it is said.⁹⁶ And the irony continues as Emma explains away this line in Elton's charade, 'Thy ready wit the

word will soon supply.'

'Humph - Harriet's ready wit! All the better. A man must be very much in love indeed, to describe her so. Ah! Mr Knightley, I wish you had the benefit of this; I think this would convince you. For once in your life you would be obliged to own yourself mistaken.' 97

Increasingly, now, the reader's amusement is at Emma's expense and when she says, "things must come to a crisis soon now",⁹⁸ the reader cannot but agree. Yet, although Emma is wrong, and increasingly so, in her deductions, it is essential that some logic should remain with her argument at the end of the novel. For if the reader looks back and finds Emma not merely misguided but a fool, it would never do. Rather, like the foolishness of Othello in more serious circumstances, the reader must both indict and acquit the central character. She must be seen to be misguided but intent on good, not mischief. For this reason also Elton must look less pleasant as the book progresses, so that the transformation of Emma is rendered even more attractive by comparison. Thus Emma's remarks, on this excessively studied speech of Elton's, echo the reader's criticisms exactly.

'I have no hesitation in saying,' replied Mr Elton, though hesitating a good deal while he spoke, 'I have no hesitation in saying - at least if my friend feels as I do - I have not the smallest doubt that, could he see his little effusion honoured as I see it,' (looking at the book again, and replacing it on the table) 'he would consider it as the proudest moment of his life.'

After this speech he was gone as soon as possible. Emma could not think it too soon; for with all his good and agreeable qualities, there was a sort of parade in his speeches which was very apt to incline her to laugh. She ran away to indulge the inclination, leaving the tender and the sublime of pleasure to Harriet's share. 99

The reader may not only be laughing at Elton at this point, but it is good for us to remember, in retrospect, that Emma's instinctive amusement at Elton's ridiculousness was never wholly conquered by her scheming.

The latter part of chapter ten is amusing because it shows Emma's fanciful schemes at their wildest. Here everything is manufactured from her imagination without the remotest reference to reality. It is the furthest point of her delusion and as such wholly delightful. The clever use of climax and anticlimax is particularly interesting, and we must remember that for Emma, and the more critical reader who understands the intentions of Jane Austen, the effect of these climaxes and anticlimaxes is reversed. The first is the result of Emma's efforts to contrive a conversation between Harriet and Elton as they are walking home from their errand of mercy (conveniently exercised not far from the Vicarage). Emma takes a separate path first of all, only to find that 'Harriet's habits of dependence and imitation were bringing her up too, and that, in short, they would both be soon after her.'¹⁰⁰ Then she fiddles with her shoe and talks with a child in order that the 'lovers' may walk on alone. The result of this

ingenuity forms the first climax of our enjoyment. Mr Elton, Emma discovers, is 'giving his fair companion an account of the yesterday's party at his friend Cole's, and that she was to come in herself for the Stilton cheese, and the north Wiltshire, the butter, the celery, the beet-root, and all the dessert.'¹⁰¹ Emma's romantic notions are dashed. For her it is an anti-climax, 'Emma experienced some disappointment ...' and '"This would soon have led to something better of course," was her consoling reflection.'¹⁰² But the reader, knowing that Elton would have been obliged to relate the after-dinner talk in painstaking detail had not Emma interrupted, is differently affected. Emma's second attempt to allow Mr Elton to propose in peace is also thwarted. Talk loudly though she might to the house-keeper (and how we long to hear her) 'for ten minutes she could hear nothing but herself.'¹⁰³ When she returns, 'the lovers were standing together at one of the windows.' For Emma this is merely disappointing confirmation of Elton's cautiousness. '"He advances inch by inch, and will hazard nothing till he believes himself secure."' she argues.¹⁰⁴ The reader, of course, enjoys Elton's reticence for other reasons.

The last entertaining episode before Elton's disastrous proposal is the business surrounding Harriet's sore throat. Elton's first reaction to the news is excessive as ever.

"A sore throat! - I hope not infectious. I hope not of a putrid infectious sort. Has Perry seen her? Indeed you should take care of yourself as well as of your friend. Let me intreat you to run no risks."¹⁰⁵ But his reaction to Emma's kind suggestion that he should protect his own voice by giving up his evening engagement is far from gracious because, as we later realize, it does not at all suit his personal plans. Jane Austen gives a stronger pointer here to the misguidedness of Emma's opinions.

Mr Elton looked as if he did not very well know what answer to make; which was exactly the case; for though very much gratified by the kind care of such a fair lady, and not liking to resist any advice of hers, he had not really the least inclination to give up the visit, but Emma, too eager and busy in her own previous conceptions and views to hear him impartially, or see him with clear vision, was very well satisfied with his muttering acknowledgement of its being "very cold, certainly very cold," and walked on, rejoicing in having extricated him from Randalls, and secured him the power of sending to inquire after Harriet every hour of the evening. 106

This must prepare everyone for the reversal of attitudes.

John Knightley's remarks are even more pointed. They are refreshing, coming from a man who is not at all inclined to sentimentality, and Emma has to bend over backwards to defend Elton. Her words, although they intend to compliment, are delicately balanced on the borders of criticism.

'Mr Elton's manners are not perfect,' replied Emma; 'but where there is a wish to please, one ought to overlook, and one does overlook a great deal.'

Where a man does his best with only moderate powers, he will have the advantage over negligent superiority. There is such perfect good temper and good will in Mr Elton as one cannot but value.' 107

Her 'one does overlook', 'only moderate powers', 'one cannot but value' are strained praise. Jane Austen allows us to see Elton very closely at this point, and to hear him too, in a way which she has been careful not to allow before. With her usual skill she allows the dénouement (of his proposal) to be preceded by Elton at his worst, so that this impression remains with the reader and he is well able to sympathize with Emma in her annoyance as well as to be amused by her dilemma. The picture we see in these few pages is of a fussy, over-polite, over-talkative and obsequious man. His parsonical sympathy, on hearing that Harriet was not better, is also amusing and in contrast to his social gaiety.

His face lengthened immediately, and his voice was the voice of sentiment as he answered,

'Oh! no - I am grieved to find - I was on the point of telling you that when I called at Mrs Goddard's door, which I did the very last thing before I returned to dress, I was told that Miss Smith was not better, by no means better, rather worse. Very much grieved and concerned - I had flattered myself that she must be better after such a cordial as I knew had been given in the morning.' 108

The broken syntax here, and in the following, is an indication of his confused emotions.

'Mr Perry has been with her, as you probably heard.'
'Yes - I imagined - that is - I did not -.'

There is also a delightful contrast, if only because we are seeing Emma's face at the same time, between his expression of sorrow at the loss of Harriet at the party,

'Dreadful! Exactly so, indeed. She will be missed every moment.' 109

and his social trivia spoken 'in a voice of the greatest alacrity and enjoyment'.

'What an excellent device,' said he, 'the use of a sheepskin for carriages. How very comfortable they make it; - impossible to feel the cold with such precautions. The contrivances of modern days, indeed, have rendered a gentleman's carriage perfectly complete. One is so fenced and guarded from the weather, that not a breath of air can find its way unpermitted. Weather becomes absolutely of no consequence. It is a very cold afternoon but in this carriage we know nothing of the matter. - Ha! Snows a little, I see.' 110

How like Elton to seize on the most idiotic detail to eulogize at such length! It is also, we note, a detail with a hint of snobbery, 'a gentleman's carriage'. The voice of his wife does not seem to be far away.

Finally, the climax of our interest in Elton comes in his proposal of marriage to Emma. Following the analysis of Elton's former words, and with the great benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to see the scene as it might first strike a reader. There may be a few who will actually be surprised, like Emma, at Elton's behaviour. But the warning signs have been increasingly clear. The real, verbose Elton has just

recently been seen when he is described as

Declaring sentiments which must already be well known, hoping, fearing, adoring, ready to die if she refused him; but flattering himself that his ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion could not fail of having some effect, and, in short, very much resolved on being seriously accepted as soon as possible. 111

The only sorrow is that we were not present in the carriage.

The real surprise, however, is his cruelty concerning Harriet.

It is coming to the surface here:

'Good heavens!' cried Mr Elton, 'what can be the meaning of this?- Miss Smith! - I never thought of Miss Smith in the whole course of my existence - never paid her any attentions, but as your friend: never cared whether she were dead or alive, but as your friend. If she has fancied otherwise, her own wishes have misled her, and I am very sorry - extremely sorry - But Miss Smith indeed!' 112

It is more than clear, with the unnecessary and unpleasant hint, in this vain and self-important outburst:

'I think seriously of Miss Smith! - Miss Smith is a very good sort of girl; and I should be happy to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well: and no doubt there are men who might not object to - Everybody has their level; but as for myself, I am not, I think, quite so much at a loss. I need not so totally despair of an equal alliance, as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith! No, madam, my visits to Hartfield have been for yourself only; and the encouragements I received -' 113

This, indeed, is the Elton who clearly emerges in the latter half of the book

After his proposal Jane Austen is able to state

clearly what it was possible only to hint at before. She may openly reveal that which Emma's misguided descriptions had inevitably veiled. Elton becomes a rather snobbish, self-centred, socially ambitious and ingratiating clergyman, he is no longer part of Emma's self-delusions and seen through her rose-tinted gaze. This mean-spirited strain is noticeable on the first possible occasion that he is able to display it; in his letter of apology to Mr Woodhouse as he quits Highbury for Bath in search of a wife.¹¹⁴ Even Emma can now be allowed to notice his shortcomings for herself.

She admired him for contriving it, though not able to give him much credit for the manner in which it was announced. Resentment could not have been more plainly spoken than in a civility to her father, from which she was so pointedly excluded. She had not even a share in his opening compliments. - Her name was not mentioned; - and there was so striking a change in all this, and such an ill-judged solemnity of leave-taking in his grateful acknowledgements, as she thought, at first, could not escape her father's suspicion. 115

It is a pretty performance, indeed, and one which only Knightley's comments, on Elton's determination not to do badly for himself, prepare us for. Worse, however, is to come. But before he is actually seen behaving badly Jane Austen adequately prepares us by her subtle revelation of his true character. This is chiefly done through the description of his wife, whom indeed to see would be sufficient. There is no doubt that they were both as keen on the match as each other -

The story told well; he had not thrown himself away - he had gained a woman of 10,000l. or thereabouts; and he had gained her with such delightful rapidity - the first hour of introduction had been so very soon followed by distinguishing notice; the history which he had given Mrs Cole of the rise and progress of the affair was so glorious - the steps so quick, from the accidental rencontre to the dinner at Mr Green's, and the party at Mrs Brown's, - smiles and blushes rising in importance - with consciousness and agitation richly scattered - the lady had been so easily impressed - so sweetly disposed - had, in short, to use a most intelligible phrase, been so ready to have him, that vanity and prudence were equally contented. 116

Elton, for all his fine words and earnest expressions, is a man of no deep feelings. Jane Austen is careful, however, not to let Elton degenerate into a mere caricature. Indeed, on Emma's wedding visit he is allowed something verging, very nearly, on praise:

When she considered how peculiarly unlucky poor Mr Elton was in being in the same room at once with the woman he had just married, the woman he had wanted to marry, and the woman whom he had been expected to marry, she must allow him the right to look as little wise, and to be as much affected by, and as little really easy as could be. 117

In all fairness, Emma records that Mrs Elton's society^o would certainly do Mr Elton no good'.¹¹⁸ This proves to be true, for on the remaining half dozen occasions where he is mentioned, it is Mrs Elton who is always to the fore, leading her husband on or demanding his agreement.

These occasions do not show him to be at all the gallant, kind and obliging man Emma had once supposed. At the Westons' ball Mr Elton, 'sauntering about in a manner

clerical', refuses to dance with Harriet and refuses in such a pointed, unpleasant and ill-bred way that he loses any possible sympathy that might have lingered.¹¹⁹ His pompous and self-satisfied behaviour can only have been nourished by his silly wife. Before, there was not quite the common meanness of spirit. This idea is Emma's also for, as she says after this incident, 'she did not think he was quite so hardened as his wife, though growing very like her.'¹²⁰ Her words to Knightley exactly express the changed view of his character.

'I do own myself to have been completely mistaken in Mr Elton. There is a littleness about him which you discovered, and which I did not; and I was fully convinced of his being in love with Harriet.'¹²¹

As the novel progresses, however, Elton becomes almost a comic character; tarred with the same brush as his wife, no longer the amusing parody-lover of earlier chapters. This conversation between the married couple on Box Hill is a superb piece of writing because, being so exactly right, it captures in a few almost disjointed phrases the whole spirit of their relationship.

'It is a sort of thing,' cried Mrs Elton emphatically, 'which I should not have thought myself privileged to inquire into. Though, perhaps, as the Chaperon of the party - I never was in any circle - exploring parties - young ladies - married women -'

Her mutterings were chiefly to her husband; and he murmured in reply,

'Very true, my love, very true. Exactly so, indeed - quite unheard of - but some ladies say

anything. Better pass it off as a joke. Everybody knows what is due to you.' 122

How far the influence of his self-important wife has worked on Elton can be seen from his behaviour at the end of the book. For example, because he misses Knightley, when he had hoped to find him in, he complains as if some really serious injury had been done to him.

His subsequent object was to lament over himself, for the heat he was suffering, and the walk he had had for nothing.

'When I got to Donwell,' said he, 'Knightley could not be found. Very odd! very unaccountable! after the note I sent him this morning, and the message he returned, that he should certainly be at home till one.'

'Donwell!' cried his wife. 'My dear Mr E., you have not been to Donwell! - You mean the Crown; you come from the meeting at the Crown.'

'No, no, that's to-morrow; and I particularly wanted to see Knightley to-day on that very account. Such a dreadful broiling morning! I went over the fields too (speaking in a tone of great ill usage), which made it so much the worse. And then not to find him at home! I assure you I am not at all pleased. And no apology left, no message for me. The housekeeper declared she knew nothing of my being expected. Very extraordinary! And nobody knew at all which way he was gone. Perhaps to Hartfield, perhaps to the Abbey Mill, perhaps into his woods.' 123

In the end all that need be said of Elton is that he is a superficial and weak man: vain and spoilt and with too high an opinion of his importance and powers, a common clerical failing - at least in fiction. Possibly with a wiser guiding hand than his wife could ever provide he might not have become quite so malicious. Though a pride such as his could never

recover from a rebuff such as Emma's, initially Elton seems merely vain and rather wordy but within Jane Austen's early portrayal are all the seeds of the later, more clearly revealed personality. Vanity is indeed a deficiency which, although in excess it may border on absurdity, can easily, by so small a change of direction, become unpleasant. Even without the influence of his wife, Elton is not the 'good young man' Mr Woodhouse believes. Although he is by no means bad Jane Austen suggests, towards the end of the book, that in the end he deserves our censure. Her characterization of Elton is the most subtle and complex of all her clergymen. His professional capacity is never directly questioned, but we nonetheless feel that, as we see him more objectively, his personal failings are a serious hindrance to his spiritual usefulness. In Mr Elton, Jane Austen shows that she values personal virtues and domestic harmony in all men of influence. Her step by step revelation of the real Mr Elton allows her to underline her criticisms in a manner even more subtle and persuasive than direct caricature, as in the character of Mr Collins. He is more memorable, but Mr Elton is a more detailed, psychologically more telling and far more realistic character. Like all her clergy, Mr Elton is well integrated into her delineation of a whole society, but this does not mean that she is unaware of his failings or of their effect upon his pastoral function. Jane Austen does

not lecture us, she shows us his limitations, delicately but clearly.

Dr Shirley does not really appear in Persuasion, but he is mentioned in connection with Charles Hayter, who is to be his curate. Dr Shirley seems much admired and, from this description, worthy of admiration.

It had then seemed the object nearest to her heart, that Dr Shirley the rector, who for more than forty years had been zealously discharging all the duties of his office, but was now growing too infirm for many of them, should be quite fixed on engaging a curate; should make his curacy quite as good as he could afford, and should give Charles Hayter the promise of it. 124

And again,

Of his [Hayter] belonging to their dear Dr Shirley, and of dear, good Dr Shirley being relieved from the duty which he could no longer get through without the most injurious fatigue, had been a great deal ... to Henrietta. 125

It was quite in order by the standards of the time, pensions not being thought of, for clergy to engage a curate in old age. Many, indeed, engaged a curate to fulfil their duties while they were in good health elsewhere, but Dr Shirley does not seem to have taken his duties lightly. He is a good, hard-working country cleric whose merit is long forgotten in the flood of more memorable history of abuse, but whom Jane Austen notices with respect. One further description of him confirms this impression. It is from Henrietta who is keen to persuade

herself and Anne that Dr Shirley should retire to Lyme and leave her Charles, of course, as resident curate.

'Indeed I think it quite melancholy to have such excellent people as Dr and Mrs Shirley, who have been doing good all their lives, wearing out their last days in a place like Uppercross, where, excepting our family, they seem shut out from all the world. I wish his friends would propose it to him. I really think they ought. And, as to procuring a dispensation, there could be no difficulty at his time of life, and with his character. My only doubt is, whether any thing could persuade him to leave his parish. He is so very strict and scrupulous in his notions; over-scrupulous, I must say. Do not you think, Anne, it is being over-scrupulous? Do not you think it is quite a mistaken point of conscience, when a clergyman sacrifices his health for the sake of his duties, which may just as well be performed by another person?' 126

Henrietta, of course, is biased, wanting her fiancé to take Shirley's place. But despite her bias Shirley seems to be an excellent and dutiful cleric, with a wife who seems to support and encourage his labours.

Charles Hayter is also lightly sketched. The initial description leaves no doubt as to his amiability. 'Charles Hayter was the eldest of all the cousins, and a very amiable, pleasing young man, between whom and Henrietta there had been a considerable appearance of attachment previous to Captain Wentworth's introduction. He was in orders, and having a curacy in the neighbourhood where residence was not required, lived at his father's house.'¹²⁷ The different attitudes and circumstances of Jane Austen's time make his non-residency less

conspicuous than it would have appeared thirty years later. Although there is disagreement between Mary (who has the Kellynch snobbery in her blood) and her husband over the financial and social suitability of the match, there is not a word spoken against him on the grounds of character. He is not especially pleasant to Captain Wentworth in the scene where the child Walter vexes Ann,¹²⁸ but this is hardly surprising considering their supposed rivalry over Henrietta. This is soon cleared up, and the re-union of the couple shows them indeed to be a loving pair. 'Henrietta looked a little ashamed, but very well pleased; - Charles Hayter exceedingly happy, and they were devoted to each other almost from the first instant of their all setting forward for Uppercross.'¹²⁹ Of his performance as a clergyman there is no evidence, but if he has had contact with Dr Shirley, something of his diligence may well have been passed on.

Dr Grant, in Mansfield Park, does not seem diligent or amiable. The Grants are at first seen to be 'friendly and sociable',¹³⁰ and, indeed, little that is learned of Mrs Grant changes this opinion. 'The Doctor', however, 'was very fond of eating and would have a good dinner every day.'¹³¹ Even the presence of his guests, Mary and Henry, he sees as an excuse to indulge himself further. 'A talking pretty young woman like Miss Crawford is always pleasant society to an indolent,

stay-at-home man; and Mr Crawford's being his guest was an excuse for drinking claret every day.'¹³² He is disagreeable, thinking only of his stomach and the taste of things, even when being entertained in another's house. In this conversation he almost wins a little sympathy for Mrs Norris. Mrs Norris is boasting of her improvements to the parsonage.

'It was only the spring twelvemonth before Mr Norris's death, that we put in the apricot against the stable wall, which is now grown such a noble tree, and getting to such perfection, sir.' addressing herself then to Dr Grant.

'The tree thrives well beyond a doubt, madam.' replied Dr Grant. 'The soil is good; and I never pass it without regretting, that the fruit should be so little worth the trouble of gathering.'

'Sir, it is a moor park, we bought it as a moor park, and it cost us - that is, it was a present from Sir Thomas, but I saw the bill, and I know it cost seven shillings, and was charged as a moor park.'

'You were imposed on, ma'am,' replied Dr Grant; 'these potatoes have as much the flavour of a moor park apricot, as the fruit from that tree. It is an insipid fruit at the best; but a good apricot is eatable, which none from my garden are.'

'The truth is, ma'am,' said Mrs Grant, pretending to whisper across the table to Mrs Norris, 'that Dr Grant hardly knows what the natural taste of our apricot is.' 133

Later his concern for food is seen again, when Mary Crawford tells the company that '"Dr Grant is ill ... He has been ill ever since; he did not eat any of the pheasant to-day. He fancied it tough - sent away his plate - and has been suffering ever since."' ¹³⁴

Here we see a man who might well have been a Pea-

cockian cleric. But within Jane Austen's more realistic context, he is not allowed to be merely an amusing caricature. For one thing he is seen to cause other people discomfort, even those like Mary and Henry Crawford of whom we are critical elsewhere. As Mary Crawford says,

'Though Dr Grant is most kind and obliging to me, and though he is really a gentleman, and I dare say a good scholar and clever, and often preaches good sermons, and is very respectable, I see him to be an indolent, selfish bon vivant, who must have his palate consulted in every thing, who will not stir a finger for the convenience of any one, and who, moreover, if the cook makes a blunder, is out of humour with his excellent wife. To own the truth, Henry and I were partly driven out this very evening, by a disappointment about a green goose, which he could not get the better of.' 135

Jane Austen, however, also notes his better points. She does not avoid matters concerning his clerical duties as a more light-hearted treatment would have done. Her principles force her to examine the relationship between the man and his office. Fanny argues that "whatever profession Dr Grant had chosen, he would have taken a - not a good temper into it; and as he must either in the navy or the army have had a great many more people under his command than he has now, I think more would have been made unhappy by him as a sailor or soldier than as a clergyman."¹³⁶ Casuistical perhaps, but it is nonetheless true. Also, it is clear that Dr Grant is not without merit as a preacher, though Mary Crawford highlights the hypocrisy of not practising what he preaches. Fanny remarks,

'A man - a sensible man like Dr Grant, cannot be in the habit of teaching others their duty every week, cannot go to church twice every Sunday and preach such very good sermons in so good a manner as he does, without being the better for it himself. It must make him think, and I have no doubt that he oftener endeavours to restrain himself than he would if he had been any thing but a clergyman.'

'We cannot prove the contrary, to be sure - but I wish you a better fate Miss Price, than to be the wife of a man whose amiableness depends upon his own sermons; for though he may preach himself into a good humour every Sunday, it will be bad enough to have him quarrelling about green geese from Monday morning to Saturday night.' 137

It is said that Maria's wedding 'service was impressively read by Dr Grant.'¹³⁸ He is also seen to be very willing to help Edmund in his own preparations for his parish. At Fanny's first dinner party at the Grants, Edmund and the Doctor have a long discussion. Henry Crawford tells his sister that the subject is "the most interesting in the world ... how to make money - how to turn a good income into a better. Dr Grant is giving Bertram instructions about the living he is to step into so soon."¹³⁹ This conversation began, however, when 'they were all re-assembled in the drawing room, when Edmund [was] engaged apart in some matter of business with Dr Grant, which seemed entirely to engross them ...',¹⁴⁰ so it probably covered a wider range of subjects than the spinning out of a stipend. The Doctor, like most of the clerics in Jane Austen, is very much part of the social life of the neighbourhood. He dines with the Bertrams, plays cards and bets with the ladies, and is obviously used to conversing generally with everybody, as

this question of Tom Bertram's indicates, despite his bantering tone. "'A strange business this in America, Dr Grant! - What is your opinion? - I always come to you to know what I am to think of public matters.'"¹⁴¹ At Fanny's first dinner party at the Grants also there was 'much of politics between Mr Crawford and Dr Grant.'¹⁴²

He is not, however, the good-tempered man of God one might have hoped for. Tom Bertram refuses to play cards with him and Mrs Norris, as they "are always quarrelling".¹⁴³ We can only imagine that his temper is as bad in public as it can be at home. This ill-humour at cards is hinted at again where, at the end of Fanny's first dinner party, a whist table was formed after tea, 'formed really for the amusement of Dr Grant, by his attentive wife, though it was not to be supposed so.'¹⁴⁴ Again, later, in the whist game where Henry helps Fanny to play, 'when the whist table broke up at the end of the second rubber' the others left 'Dr Grant and Mrs Norris to dispute over their last play.'¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, when he invites Fanny and Edmund to dine with him, a spontaneous gesture which indicates the degree of friendship between the families, he is nothing but polite. Nor is he overbearing or over-particular about the niceties of the menu. That perhaps is to come in private between himself and his wife later. His manner is quite engaging and unpretentious.¹⁴⁶ Apart from

these few hints as to his character, which leave us in no doubt that as a cleric he lacked much, little is to be learned of him. In the final chapter it is related that 'Dr Grant, through an interest on which he had almost ceased to form hopes, succeeded to a stall in Westminster which, as affording an occasion for leaving Mansfield, an excuse for residence in London, and an increase of income to answer the expenses of the change, was highly acceptable to those who went, and those who staid.'¹⁴⁷ His death, too, is one of poetic justice, for Dr Grant brings on 'apoplexy and death, by three great institutionary dinners in one week',¹⁴⁸ so allowing Edmund and Fanny to take the Mansfield living. Dr Grant is seen to be far more the gourmet than the cleric although he is resident and preaches regularly, which is more than many did at this time. He provided, however, a useful foil in the novel to the earnest Edmund who is keen to avoid both idleness, personal extravagance and the temptation to preach one thing and practise another. On the positive side, there are few signs of meanness of temper as in Mr Elton and Mr Collins. Dr Grant is no better, but no worse, than many of his actual contemporaries, and his love of food finds sufficient parallel in the Diaries of Parson Woodforde for us to acknowledge Jane Austen's realism.

Mr Morland seems to be a thoroughly sensible man.

The first paragraph of Northanger Abbey establishes his character

which nothing later learned changes.

Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard - and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence, besides two good livings - and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. 149

He educates his daughters in 'writing and accounts', and unites with her mother in neither spoiling Catherine nor forcing her. On her return, alone, from Northanger, they show sensible and sympathetic feelings, 'without suffering any romantic alarm.'¹⁵⁰ They do not make an unnecessary fuss or bother to alarm or inflate the impressionable Catherine, to whom no real harm has been done, beyond the conjecture that 'it was a strange business, and that he must be a very strange man.'¹⁵¹ In the final chapter Mr Morland's common sense and good character is again in evidence.

Mr and Mrs Morland's surprize on being applied to by Mr Tilney, for their consent to his marrying their daughter, was, for a few minutes, considerable; it having never entered their heads to suspect an attachment on either side; but as nothing, after all, could be more natural than Catherine's being beloved, they soon learnt to consider it with only the happy agitation of gratified pride, and, as far as they alone were concerned, had not a single objection to start. 152

They have a sensible attitude to the marriage, neither mean nor grasping. They are concerned only with their daughter's happiness, and to do what is right.

There was but one obstacle, in short, to be mentioned;

but till that one was removed, it must be impossible for them to sanction the engagement. Their tempers were mild, but their principles were steady, and while his parent so expressly forbid the connexion, they could not allow themselves to encourage it... [The General's] consent was all they wished for. They were no more inclined than entitled to demand his money. 153

During the period of separation of Catherine and Henry, they are wise enough to look the other way throughout their clandestine correspondence. All that we learn of Mr Morland inclines us to believe that he is a sensible man who cares much for his daughter, and who shares the responsibilities of parenthood, and his position, with an equally sensible wife. That he is a clergyman is as natural and as little worthy of comment as the fact that Henry Tilney himself is in orders.

Mr Collins, in Pride and Prejudice, is far from sensible. He is the most amusing but least rounded of all Jane Austen's clerical portraits. All his motivations, manners and principles spring from one fact alone: he is the unworthy object of the patronage of Lady Catherine de Bourgh. Everything else is subordinate to that. Is he in love? No, merely loyally fulfilling his patron's exhortation to take a wife. Is he exercising his clerical duties? No, merely behaving in a manner befitting the clerical servant of Her Ladyship. Is he congenial company? No, merely living in a way worthy of his patron and showing his gratitude to all about

him. There is no reality of feeling, no depth of thought or individuality of action to be discovered. In lesser hands than Jane Austen's, of course, such a character based on this single idea would easily have become boring and tiresome. Jane Austen is not, after all, writing in the Peacockian style. Her aims are entirely different from his. But, although his main appearances are to be found within a few of the earlier chapters, this is never so. He is a continual source of amusement and amazement to us and, like Mr Bennet, we ever delight in his company. A moment's thought would quickly bring the realization of his two-dimensional nature. But Jane Austen never allows us to think of him at such a level. Had Charlotte Lucas been drawn in greater personal detail, and if the reader had seen more deeply into her inner thoughts and feelings, then we may have wondered more deeply about the reality of the two characters' marriage. But, on the whole, we do not. Only perhaps when Elizabeth visits the pair and talks alone with Charlotte do we begin to compare their relationship with that of Darcy and Elizabeth. Not, however, for long, because the delightful spectacle of an evening at Rosings quickly claims our attention. Our enjoyment of Mr Collins is different from our understanding and sympathy for, or antipathy to, the other characters. He is enjoyed by the reader for reasons other than those within the action of the novel. He is enjoyed as a

fictional character. In real life he would be a bore and, after a very short while, not at all amusing. But we are able to enjoy his absurdity while the characters in the novel suffer. In other words, it is only by that 'willing suspension of disbelief' that Mr Collins is acceptable. Even Mr Bennet, who can enjoy Mr Collins as an object of amusement because of his detached attitude to life, finds he has sometimes had enough.¹⁵⁴ The reader can never have enough. For the very predictability of Mr Collins's absurdity constantly amuses us and to see it displayed in every new situation is a continual source of delight.

Mr Collins is introduced to us by a letter. Surely one of the most laboured and amusing letters in fiction. It is an exercise in absurdity and stands for the man.

Hunsford, near Westerham, Kent.
15th October.

Dear Sir,

The disagreement subsisting between yourself and my late honoured father always gave me much uneasiness, and since I have had the misfortune to lose him I have frequently wished to heal the breach; but for some time I was kept back by my own doubts, fearing lest it might seem disrespectful to his memory for me to be on good terms with any one with whom it had always pleased him to be at variance ... My mind however is now made up on the subject, for having received ordination at Easter I have been so fortunate as to be distinguished by the patronage of the Right Honourable Lady Catherine de Bourgh, widow of Sir Lewis de Bourgh, whose bounty and beneficence has preferred me to the

valuable rectory of this parish where it shall be my earnest endeavour to demean myself with grateful respect towards her Ladyship, and be ever ready to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England. As a clergyman, moreover, I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence; and on these grounds I flatter myself that my present overtures of goodwill are highly commendable, and that the circumstance of my being next in the entail of Longbourn Estate will be kindly overlooked on your side, and not lead you to reject the offered olive branch. I cannot be otherwise than concerned at being the means of injuring your amiable daughters, and beg leave to apologise for it, as well to assure you of my readiness to make them every possible amends, - but of this hereafter. If you should have no objection to receive me into your house, I propose myself the satisfaction of waiting on you and your family, Monday, November 18th, by four o'clock, and shall probably trespass on your hospitality till the Saturday se'night following, which I can do without any inconvenience, as Lady Catherine is far from objecting to my occasional absence on a Sunday, provided that some other clergyman is engaged to do the duty of the day. I remain, dear sir, with respectful compliments to your lady and daughters, your well-wisher and friend,

WILLIAM COLLINS 155

The content of the letter is amusing in itself. Who but Mr Collins would spell out his reasons for visiting Longbourn in so much detail - almost to the point of proposing by post.

The real purpose of his letter is to solicit an invitation to stay with his cousin. Even this he turns into a proposal.

'I propose myself the satisfaction of waiting on you and your family,' introduced by the merest gesture of request, 'if you have no objection to receive me into your house'. He even suggests the length of his stay, 'and shall probably trespass

on your hospitality till the Saturday se'night following' adding, as if everyone is ruled by his obsession and the Bennets can have no arrangements of their own, 'which I can do without any inconvenience, as Lady Catherine is far from objecting to my occasional absence on a Sunday.' Characteristically he does not get round to mentioning the subject until the last sentence in his letter. There are only five in all, the other four being full of material which it would have been far better for him to have explained in person. But the wielding of words never daunts Mr Collins. He also, tactlessly, repeats the fact of disagreement between Mr Collins (senior) and Mr Bennet. His reticence at making amends carries filial loyalty to excess. Mr Collins had respect for the wishes even of the dead. Not that Mr Collins uses such a direct word. He then relates his own personal history as if it were Wellington's. That he is nothing more than a country parson should not be forgotten. His primary duty as a clergyman, it seems, is 'to demean [himself] with grateful respect towards her ladyship.' Obviously he does not take St Paul's words in his Letter to the Romans lightly.¹⁵⁶ Of secondary importance is his spiritual duty 'to perform those rites and ceremonies which are instituted by the Church of England.' He does admit of other duties as the next sentence shows. Again, he is able to explain his mission without appearing to lay any blame on

himself. He says, 'I feel it my duty to promote and establish the blessing of peace in all families within the reach of my influence', which seems to imply that the cause of disharmony lies within the Bennet family. Nor can he resist a word of praise for himself, in case the reader should fail to supply it. 'On these grounds I flatter myself that my present overtures of good-will are highly commendable.' Next he begins his inflated apology upon which Elizabeth makes the fitting comment, "And what can he mean by apologising for being next in the entail? - We cannot suppose he would help it, if he could."¹⁵⁷ Finally, before the real practical business of the letter he hints at the manner of making amends. He is anxious 'to assure you of my readiness to make them [the daughters] every possible amends, - but of this hereafter.' Nothing can be too delicate for Mr Collins to venture upon. He can never be too bold, for if Lady Catherine de Bourgh gives her approval, who can resist him?

The style of the letter also reveals his pompous and self-important nature. The letter is so circumlocutory that it appears like an exercise for *précis*. Phrases like 'in all the families within the reach of my influence', 'I flatter myself that my present overtures of good-will', 'I propose myself the satisfaction of waiting on you', all underline his egotism. As might be expected, there is an echo of biblical and liturgical

language in such phrases as, 'whose bounty and beneficence', 'my earnest endeavour', 'ever ready to perform', 'those rites and ceremonies', 'promote and establish' and 'the blessing of peace'. But if there is something of the sonority and reverberation of such language (created by repetition, alliteration and the use of synonym) there is none of the power, simplicity or clarity of the Scriptures. Mr Collins is always at home with a cliché. 'My late honoured father', 'to heal the breach', 'overtures of good-will', 'your amiable daughters', 'every possible amends' are but a few. He is, however, unable to supply an indication of an original or imaginative mind. Indeed, the only literary ornament is a sobriquet, 'the offered olive branch'; hardly a lively embellishment. Even the bookish Mary Bennet concedes that "the idea of the olive branch perhaps is not wholly new".¹⁵⁸ The effect of the letter on the reader is exactly that which it has upon Elizabeth and her father. "Can he be a sensible man, sir?" "No, my dear; I think not, I have great hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him."¹⁵⁹ The letter suggests a character likely to provide the reader with endless innocent amusement. Nor are we disappointed. From the first he is, as his letter promises, pompous, wordy, self-important and obsessed with his aristocratic patron.

Nothing in the rest of the novel alters our first impressions. His clerical office, moreover, enables the worst aspects of his character full play. The living of Hunsford has given him prosperity early in life, after an upbringing 'under the guidance of an illiterate and miserly father'. The profession of clergyman has encouraged his 'very good opinion of himself', and he enjoys 'his authority ... and his rights as a rector.' Although he is a graduate he has no sense, and the subjection under which he was kept by his father has now blossomed, by the favour of Lady Catherine, into 'a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility'.¹⁶⁰ He has little idea of religion and his sense of morality is wholly dictated by the prejudices of society, to which he unceasingly panders. He does not object to dancing, Elizabeth learns to her horror, among 'respectable people'.¹⁶¹ Cards, also, are innocent, since Lady Catherine commands them.¹⁶² He even threatens to sing, since he considers music is 'perfectly compatible with the profession of a clergyman'.¹⁶³ Unfortunately, the reader is deprived of that spectacle. Lydia's unfortunate alliance with Wickham, however, he cannot countenance, nor does he miss the opportunity to inform Mr Bennet, a gentleman many years his senior, that 'this licentiousness of behaviour in your daughter, has proceeded from a faulty degree of indulgence'.¹⁶⁴ Charity has no place in a mind full of unwanted

advice; tact and sympathy are choked by self-importance. The Christian virtues are wholly lacking from his assessment of the clerical profession which consists in fixing tithes, writing sermons, improving his dwelling and behaving in a conciliatory manner towards anyone of importance.¹⁶⁵ Mr Collins is all that could be expected of an officer of state religion.

As a lover, also, he is incapable of sensitivity.

"Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life," he begins his 'proposal' to Elizabeth, without venturing upon any exploration of her feelings.¹⁶⁶

The reader, of course, knows quite well that he had intended to marry Jane, until he discovered she was all but engaged. The change, from one to the other, was done 'while Mrs Bennet was stirring the fire.'¹⁶⁷

His reasons for marriage are not at all likely to stir the heart of any woman. They do not even include her. Marriage is desirable, he enumerates, "to set the example of matrimony" in the parish, because "it will add very greatly" to his happiness, and because Lady Catherine recommends it.¹⁶⁸

His conclusion, that "now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection",¹⁶⁹ is but empty rhetoric. He is quite undaunted by Elizabeth's firm and repeated refusals because he is utterly heedless of her person. She is merely an object to be gained in accordance with his pre-determined

plan. Just as his clerical function is an extension of a few narrow, half-digested notions, so as a man his actions are the logical extension of his over-inflated ego. There can be no communication with such a man, certainly not on the subject of mutual affection, since Collins is completely isolated by his own estimation of himself.

He is for this reason isolated by the author from all the other characters in the novel. A two-dimensional figure who is amusing from a distance. His marriage to Charlotte Lucas might have brought a new revelation of character, but it would have destroyed the element of caricature if it had shown anything too personal. Jane Austen's intention is obviously to retain Collins solely as the butt for her wit. His marriage is all part of the pompous persona she has created for Collins, who remains brilliantly drawn but kept from full view. Many readers, not generally disposed to admit the excellence of Jane Austen's work, find Pride and Prejudice a novel they can admire. They enjoy it for the immediate qualities of humour, wit and striking characterization. Collins is an excellent example of Jane Austen's skill at creating a character with a few, deft, but infinitely repeatable idiosyncracies. Other readers find her later novels, like Mansfield Park and Emma, both different and, perhaps, better than the sparkling Pride and Prejudice. They show Jane Austen's

profound insight into human nature and her refreshingly honest analysis of human society. Mr Collins is not portrayed for this purpose nor, as a clergyman, does he lead us to reflect on any serious issues in the way that, for example, Edmund Bertram does. If we transpose Collins to Mansfield Park, the limits of his characterization would certainly be obvious, but within the context of the novel in which he appears he is a brilliant creation; a perfect, though exaggerated, portrait of a man wholly wedded to the Established Church.

There are, finally, two characters who hardly fit into the subject of this study but must be included. Edward Ferrars, in Sense and Sensibility, is not a clergyman, though he becomes one in the novel's final chapter. Henry Tilney is in orders, though this fact is of little importance either to the story or to Jane Austen's characterization. It very probably escapes the notice of even a moderately careful reader of Northanger Abbey.

Edward Ferrars 'was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing.' He was shy, kind, sensible and intelligent but not in any particular way distinguished.¹⁷⁰ 'All his wishes centred in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life.'¹⁷¹ His mother, on whom his fortune depended, and his sister, whose meanness had already driven the ladies Dashwood from their old Home at Norland,

expected him to follow a distinguished career. It is perhaps this conflict of intentions which leads him to take orders in a quiet country parish with the equally quiet but sensible Elinor Dashwood beside him.

Although Edward Ferrars could hardly be thought of as inspiring or sparkling, it is important to note that he is drawn largely to contrast with the attractive but unscrupulous Willoughby; just as Elinor is set beside her impulsive sister Marianne. Many of the criticisms of him, therefore, are to be seen as ironic and his 'deficiencies' are intended to be seen as virtues. Thus, when Marianne declares that "'Edward is very amiable ... But yet - he is not the kind of young man - there is something wanting - his figure is not striking ... His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence'", it should be remembered that this is the judgement of a romantic seventeen-year-old.¹⁷² Her preference for good looks and vivacious personality leads her to emotional disaster. Elinor's deeper discernment is finally rewarded. Marianne thinks that "'he has no real taste'". He admires music and drawing "'as a lover, not as a connoisseur'". He reads Cowper in a tame manner.¹⁷³ Such things are heresy to the wild, impassioned nature of the young and sensitive, but Elinor, with a more mature reflection, observes his true worth. She believes that "'his mind is well-informed, his enjoyment of books

exceedingly great, his imagination lively, his observation just and correct, and his taste delicate and pure."¹⁷⁴ Because he is shy these qualities are not readily apparent, but Jane Austen clearly intends the reader to notice and admire them. He is a man not superficially striking but one who is clearly intended for our approbation. Certainly he would appear to be more suited to the quiet retirement of a parsonage than to the public world of Parliament where his mother would like to see him placed.¹⁷⁵

It is, however, likely that many modern readers, while acknowledging Edward Ferrars's virtues, nonetheless find the character of Willoughby more delightful - at least on the surface. This is a problem which also confuses judgements of the contrasting characters in Mansfield Park. It must be admitted that Jane Austen does not take great pains to make Ferrars attractive, as well as virtuous. Shy, retiring, awkward characters are difficult to make into heroes and Ferrars is no exception. Occasionally he comes to life. Here he imagines the activity of the Dashwood family if they came into a great fortune.

'What magnificent orders would travel from this family to London ... What a happy day for book-sellers, music-sellers and print-shops! You, Miss Dashwood, would give a general commission for every new print of merit to be sent you - and as for Marianne, I know her greatness of soul, there would not be music enough in London to content her.

And books! - Thomson, Cowper, Scott - she would buy them all over and over again; she would buy up every copy, I believe, to prevent their falling into unworthy hands.' 176

His enthusiasm and humour here are what one might expect of a young man in love. His sincere condemnation of the affected notions of 'picturesque' scenery, which the youthful Marianne has, of course, accepted without question, is also manly and forthright.

'I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, straight and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles, or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farm-house than a watch-tower - and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world.' 177

Such moments are exceptional. For reasons of plot (Ferrars's youthful and secret engagement to Lucy Steele, from whose clutches he only finally escapes to marry Elinor) his manner and conversation have to be subdued. In the presence of his true love, his gloomy secret hangs over him and makes him even more reserved than usual.

Again, this dedication to what Ferrars believes his duty is a barrier for the modern reader. In an age when marriages are broken as easily as 'engagements' are made it is difficult to appreciate, let alone enter into, the mental agony of Ferrars's position. It must also be admitted that over the course of this long novel Ferrars's frequent silences,

periods of grave introspection and embarrassment become tiresome. The fact that they are combined with a natural shyness and a certain awkwardness does not make his portrayal any more engaging. Ferrars is undoubtedly the least attractive of all Jane Austen's heroes. He is not allowed to develop, his secret engagement restrains what little natural joy he has, and the overall impression he makes leads us to feel that if he will be a competent, kindly clergyman, he will not be an exciting or challenging one. But then, of course, he is to take orders in the early decades of the nineteenth century when such qualities were neither expected nor required.

Henry Tilney, by contrast, is probably Jane Austen's most natural and amusing male. He is, perhaps, a little clever, a trifle priggish, but he is also amusing, charming and good-hearted. There could be no-one better than Henry to tease the naive and impressionable Catherine Morland into adulthood. The fact that he is a clergyman is of little importance, save that it indicates respectability and a secure income. It is only mentioned en passant at the end of chapter three and since the hero and heroine have already begun to fall in love, we know that, after suitable trials have kept them apart, they will finally be united. Today, of course, it would be quite impossible to make the hero of a love story (for this parody of the Gothic novel and rationalization of the Romance is also that)

a clergyman without comment. He has become far from the ordinary figure he was then; a change that began soon after Jane Austen's death. That Henry Tilney spends long periods at Bath and still lives partly at home, riding over to do his duty at his parish of Woodston, is not considered worthy of comment and the parsonage is only shown to us so that Catherine may have an opportunity to approve it.¹⁷⁸

Henry's amiable, thoroughly sensible, and humorous personality is revealed in his conversation. Besides showing Henry as a winning lover, his conversation also allows Jane Austen to satirize or parody the conventional expectations of readers of sentimental novels, like Charlotte Smith's Emmeline (1788), and Gothic novels such as Mrs Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho (1794). He also puts forward some of her own ideas about literature. At Catherine and Henry's first meeting, he makes fun of polite ballroom conversations, acting out the fictional behaviour of a young lover with a sparkle in his eye.

Then forming his features into a set smile, and affectedly softening his voice, he added, with a simpering air, 'Have you been long in Bath, madam?' 'About a week, sir,' replied Catherine, trying not to laugh. 'Really!' with affected astonishment. 'Why should you be surprised, sir?' 'Why, indeed!' said he, in his natural tone - 'but some emotion must appear to be raised by your reply, and surprize is more easily assumed, and not less reasonable than any other.' 179

Catherine is not yet sure whether she should laugh, and takes Henry's excellent pastiche of her journal-record of their meet-

ing seriously. He teases her about letter-writing and the deficiencies of the fair sex¹⁸⁰ in order to be delighted by her indignant reply but shows that his real opinion is sensible and just. "In every power, of which taste is the foundation, excellence is pretty fairly divided between the sexes."¹⁸¹ His conversation with Mrs Allen, about muslins, shops and domestic trivia, reveals him to be polite and considerate, though no doubt he, like Jane Austen, is amusing himself a little at the worthy woman's expense.¹⁸² Although he is tall, has a 'pleasing countenance' and is very nearly handsome,¹⁸³ he is far from dedicated to fashion. At another meeting with Catherine his conversation shows that he sees the social round of Bath as ideal for a holiday but believes the real business of life, marriage and home-making are more important.¹⁸⁴ Although the more serious aspects of his conversation are clear, Jane Austen makes his words witty and amusing, so that while we discover Catherine's companion to be both mature, sensible and delightful, this clergyman avoids being dull and reserved; characteristics which had marred, for example, the otherwise virtuous Edward Ferrars.

It is Henry, too, who exploits Catherine's immature fascination for Gothic horror on her visit to Northanger Abbey. Indeed, it is his amused enthusiasm for misleading the innocent girl which causes her later, wild misjudgement of the General.

The foundations of her phantasies, it is true, were laid in Bath by Isabella Thorpe¹⁸⁵ but Henry's lively and imaginative mind fans the flames. As they drive to the Abbey Henry asks, "Are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? - Have you a stout heart? - Nerves fit for sliding panels and tapestry?"¹⁸⁶

Catherine's reply shows that she has not, as yet, lost her sense entirely and can still compare reality with fiction. She replies, "I do not think I should be easily frightened, because there would be so many people in the house - and besides, it has never been deserted for years ..."¹⁸⁷ Henry then proceeds to describe what her stay will be like in terms that the readers of Gothic novels will readily recognize. Catherine will be lodged in a wing apart, conducted there by an ancient house-keeper, left in a gloomy apartment, have restless nights, discover secret passages, rooms and finally a manuscript containing more blood-chilling stories!¹⁸⁸ How amused Henry is at his young lover's eager reaction, but he does not as yet realize the seriousness with which each word has really been greeted. After Catherine's actual adventure that night, which results in the discovery of a laundry list, Henry leaves Northanger Abbey and visits his parish for two or three days.¹⁸⁹ His absence is essential. For were he to hear of Catherine's exploits he would have laughed and teased them away, and the 'Gothic' climax

of the novel would have been avoided. As it is, his sudden return, when Catherine is pursuing her investigation of Mrs Tilney's old room, and his astute cross-examination of the fanciful heroine, who has changed the General from an ill-tempered autocrat into a murderer, brings this section of the novel to a fitting end. His timely lecture to the over-excited girl combines common-sense with a shrewd assessment of reality.

'Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians ... Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?' 190

Afterwards, it is 'Henry's astonishing generosity and nobleness of conduct, in never alluding in the slightest way to what had passed,' that enables her to face 'the anxieties of common life' which were soon to beset her.¹⁹¹ Henry is her lover, teacher and friend.

Henry's views on novels and novel-reading, however, quickly alert the reader to the fact that he is also a favourite of his creator. His light-heartedness, in the face of Catherine's seriousness on the subject, and his rejection of pet words and phrases, show him to be a man of sense and verbal sensitivity. Catherine says she thought men "despised novels amazingly",

'It is amazingly;' [he replies,] 'it may well suggest amazement if they do - for they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundreds and hundreds.'

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We notice, again, that he is not anti-feminine, nor does he reject novels out of hand. He does, however, read them critically, so that Catherine's description of The Mysteries of Udolpho as "the nicest book in the world" provokes him to reply, "the nicest; - by which I suppose you mean the neatest. That must depend on the binding."¹⁹³ His defence of history further broadens Catherine's horizons and although he is not afraid of displaying his knowledge on landscape, land and politics, he is sensitive enough to be 'fearful of wearying her with too much wisdom at once.'¹⁹⁴

Henry Tilney's part in Northanger Abbey is more that of lover than cleric, and Jane Austen makes no attempt to combine the two roles. But since he is so obviously good and intelligent, sensitive and kind, one cannot but imagine that he will make good use of these qualities in his professional life.

These, then, are Jane Austen's clerical characters. They are, as we have seen, personally varied. There are young men just embarking upon their clerical career, old men near retirement, men in middle years with a family to bring up, or a cook to chide. On the other hand, all of them have modest incomes and modest needs, though Mr Elton improves his lot by

a profitable marriage and Dr Grant gains promotion through the influence of friends. Similarly, all of Jane Austen's clergy have limited horizons. None would set the world on fire, and even the serious-minded Edmund Bertram is spiritually pedestrian. It is no surprise that J.H. Newman, judging her parsons as Christian priests, found them 'vile', though the word is intemperate. Their beliefs, in so far as we glimpse at them, are respectable, moral, but little more. Religion hardly enters into Jane Austen's characterization. Yet, although this may seem remiss to a reformer, it detracts little from our interest and delight in her characters.

Jane Austen's clergy are portrayed, primarily, as men, not priests. They are lovers, neighbours, relations or parents. We learn much of their character, their outlook on life, their social behaviour and personal habits. From this, it is assumed, we will judge them, if needs be. The portrayal of clerical or religious life is not Jane Austen's aim. Her clergymen are part of her whole observation of society, not separate from it. The reasons for this, of course, are partly historical, the clergyman in Jane Austen's day was a gentleman and a Christian not a professional, and partly personal, I suspect. Coming from a family of clerics, living in a parson's family, a good deal of the professional and religious aspects of life would be taken for granted by Jane Austen. She

observed them as she observed everyone else, sharply, accurately and often with humour. Certainly the goodness of Edmund Bertram, the self-indulgence of Dr Grant, the pomposity of Mr Collins and the vanity of Mr Elton gain an added dimension from the fact that these men are in orders. It highlights their faults and brings out their virtues, but the fact is rarely central to her characterization. Only, perhaps, in Mr Collins do we see a clerical caricature rather than a clerical character.

Comparing Jane Austen's clergymen with the other male characters we see that they are no worse and no better than most. Mr Knightley seems more sensible than any of them, but Edmund Bertram would no doubt mature into a man equally dependable. There are no great intellects amongst her clerics, no saints and no great sinners. Their faults are personal, not professional. Even Dr Grant preaches well and Mr Elton is seen visiting the sick of his parish.¹⁹⁵

The portrayal of all these clergymen reflects the limited middle-class society in which Jane Austen moved. That it was only a partial picture can be proved by reading the disturbing diary of John Skinner, Rector of Camerton, only nine miles from Bath. His was a mining parish and the hardship, brutality and vulgarity of his world make a dramatic contrast to the gentle, neighbourly world of Jane Austen.¹⁹⁶ Realism,

however, does not reside in squalor. That Jane Austen's world was limited is a commonplace, but her exploration and presentation of it is far from ordinary. Her clergymen scale no heights of sanctity and reach no depths of degradation but they come alive across the years as many later, more detailed and decidedly clerical portraits do not. That they are seen as men, members of their society, is no criticism of their portrayal. Indeed, treating the clerical character as a human being is a dignity which later generations of novelists all but deprive him. Jane Austen's clergy conduct no crusade, but they are welcome at dinner, their opinion is referred to, their well-being desired. Not all of them are equally attractive, but none of them is actually wicked. They are as other men, and so they are portrayed. To be sensible and good is the most we can expect of them but that, in itself, is not a little.

CHAPTER FOUR

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK (1785-1866)

Although Thomas Love Peacock was born only ten years after Jane Austen, he outlived her by forty-nine years. His roots, like Jane Austen's, may have been in the Regency but his fame and fortune, both moderate, came in an age which could hardly be more different. Yet, in many respects, it is difficult to see Peacock as a Victorian. As a writer he is both individual and idiosyncratic and although Trollope had published many novels before Peacock died and George Eliot had made her first appearance in print, his work can be little compared with theirs. In his public life, it is true, Peacock, working his way steadily up the hierarchy of the East India Company, contributed to the expansion of trade on which the prosperity and greatness of English society was to be based. He played a considerable part, for instance, in the Company's introduction of steam navigation with India in 1837.¹ In his writings, however, little evidence can be found for this encouragement of progress and little indication that he was a man who worked at the centre of a trading empire. There is little sign of Victorian England as it is commonly, if erroneously, conceived, with its 'stuffy complacency and black-hatted moral priggery. Its frowsty crinolines and dingy hansom-cabs, its gas-lit

houses and over-ornate draperies.'² Nor is there much reflection of a more accurate view of that society, as 'a people engaged in a tremendously exciting adventure - the daring experiment of fitting industrial man into a democratic society.'³ Sir M.E. Grant Duff, meeting Peacock on business in 1852, wrote that 'he was utterly unlike anybody I have ever seen before or since.'⁴ This comment could also be applied to his novels, for although they had many admirers, Disraeli and Thackeray amongst them, there are few direct descendants.

These facts will not seem so surprising when it is recalled that all but one of Peacock's novels were written before Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837. Gryll Grange was published in 1860 but it is set in a pastoral world from which industrialization, social and political unrest and even contemporary ideas have been banished. Melincourt (1817) and Crotchet Castle (1831) had touched upon the decline of the countryside,⁵ the corrupt electoral system⁶ and, in the latter work, the imminence of civil disturbance.⁷ But they are treated not as real issues which beset contemporary England but as ideas, examples, in an unending, if lively and amusing, argument about the nature and quality of life itself. Most of his characters represent opinions or attitudes of mind, and are not fully drawn or realistic. Very often a character's name indicates his attitude and his personality and generally Peacock is

content to restrain him under this general heading. Peacock's novels belong to his intellectual hey-day, the opening years of the nineteenth century, and especially to the time when he was a friend and companion of the young genius, Shelley. In his novels a comic echo can be heard of their enthusiastic, idealistic and, no doubt, invigorating talk. Peacock's novels could also be read as indications of the decline of his radical involvement. Its highest point is in Melincourt where the over-earnest, lecturing tone suggests that the novelist had listened too much to the ideas of his companions, and insufficiently to his own inner muse.⁸ Shelley, for example, anticipated that Melincourt would be 'far superior' to Headlong Hall, his first novel, presumably because it would display Peacock's opposition 'to every shape of tyranny and superstitious imposture', which Shelley so admired.⁹ After that work, and Shelley's departure from England in 1818, gentle satire and good-humour conquered the spirit of revolt. Subsequent works come to terms with the fact that the world will not change dramatically and accept the good things, serious and amusing, that it has to offer.

This softening of attitudes - some will call it compromise, others the inevitable realism that comes with maturity - can be clearly seen in his attitude to the Christian Church. To the end, Peacock remained a resolute pagan. In the last

days of his life he told a neighbouring curate, who had tried to move him, for safety, out of his library when a fire broke out in the house, 'By the immortal gods, I will not move!'¹⁰ Previously, also, his relations with the clergy had not been happy. After the death of his second child, Margaret, he had composed the lyric 'Long night succeeds thy little day' for her gravestone. The Vicar of Shepperton (with a want of tact which reminds us of George Eliot's fictional curate of Shepperton, Amos Barton) objected to its unorthodox nature, and there was a bitter argument.¹¹ In his letters, too, there is the occasional reference to the absurdity of parsons. To Shelley, in 1818, he wrote, 'I communicate with you like a parson with his congregation, who has the talking all to himself.' because Shelley had not replied to his letters.¹² Towards the end of his life also he tells his friend, Lord Broughton, in an undated letter, of the local Evangelical parson, who paid two bargees a day's wages to attend church and later found them drunk on the proceeds, singing 'The parson is a jolly good fellow.'¹³

These are but trivial reminders of the fact that Peacock had little time for the established religion. His values came from ancient Greece and its literature in which he was exceptionally well versed. That he was called the 'epicurean Philosopher' by his friends is no accident.¹⁴ In his early poetry cursory and conventional references to the Deity

can be found, but they are couched in the blandest and most impersonal terms. This is from the 1806 version of Palmyra.

Bow then to him, the Lord of all,
Whose nod bids empires rise and fall,
Earth, Heav'n, and Nature's Sire;
To Him, who, matchless and alone,
Has fix'd in boundless space his throne,
Unchang'd, unchanging still, while worlds and suns
expire. 15

Six years later, in fact, Peacock revised this ending to Palmyra, removing references to the deity and substituting an even more general, but clearly agnostic, conclusion which refers to 'Necessity's mysterious sway', 'The universal scheme' and 'the source sublime'.¹⁶ More typical is the poetry which insists on the inevitability and unchanging nature of Death.

Man yields to death; and man's sublimest works
Must yield at length to Time ...
All that is
Must one day cease to be ... 17

Whatever lay beyond the grave, Peacock, like Socrates before him, left for the gods to decide. Like Shelley, whose pamphlet The Necessity of Atheism (1811) had caused such a stir in Oxford, Peacock found the Christian religion too limiting in the search for truth and its earthly ministers too worldly. In his first two novels the clergy are merely men who seek a good dinner and a quiet life. They have little intelligence and no conversation. They are merely the butt for occasional jibes, or bitter words about clerical selfishness.

In his novel, Headlong Hall, there is the Reverend

Doctor Gaster.¹⁸ Peacock's note on the etymological derivation of his name is an indication of his character, 'Gaster: scilicet *Γαστήρ* - Venter, - et praeterea nihil.'¹⁹ He is the first of Peacock's eating and drinking clerics. He is included amongst the three philosophers, Foster, Escot and Jenkison, in the first chapter, both as a non-intellectual foil for their talk and as a butt for Peacock's humour. Although Gaster is the only one with a Doctor's degree, Peacock underlines his intellectual status by explaining why he had been invited to Headlong Hall. 'The Reverend Doctor Gaster, who, though of course neither a philosopher nor a man of taste, had so won on the Squire's fancy, by a learned dissertation on the art of stuffing a turkey, that he concluded no Christmas party would be complete without him'.²⁰ Peacock makes the point that the knowledge of this Reverend Doctor is concerned with the things of Mammon, food being high on his list of priorities. Gaster is a 'crotchety character',²¹ like the rest in Headlong Hall and his contribution to conversation, when not on the subject of food, is usually some dogmatic pronouncement on theological matters. Since Peacock is interested less in the novelist's usual preoccupation with character than in the interplay of his character's ideas for his own humorous ends, any discussion of his clergymen must concentrate on what they say, as well as what they do.

The juxtaposition of Gaster's religious comments and expostulations and his continual enthusiasm for food is a source of amusement and satirical comment. The arrival of the coach at the inn for breakfast, at the beginning of the novel, is an example of Gaster's hypocrisy. The philosophers have been arguing whether or not the world is declining or improving and Escot, the deteriorationist, launches into what might have proved to be a tirade.

'Surely,' said Mr Escot, 'experience deposes against you. Look at the rapid growth of corruption, luxury, selfishness -.'

'Really, gentlemen,' said the Reverend Doctor Gaster, after clearing the husk in his throat with two or three hems, 'this is a very sceptical, and, I must say, atheistical conversation, and I should have thought, out of respect to my cloth -.' Here the coach stopped, and the coachman opening the door, vociferated - 'Breakfast, gentlemen;' a sound which so gladdened the ears of the divine, that the alacrity with which he sprang from the vehicle superinduced a distortion of his angle, [sic] and he was obliged to limp into the inn between Mr Escot and Mr Jenkison. 22

The humour is on many levels here and not least is the highly circumlocutory and prosaic description of an essentially dramatic event for comic effect. It is also a significant revelation of Gaster's character. He clears his throat in a manner which is pompous and condescending among fellow house-guests and tacitly implies his superiority on account of his profession. He also assumes that his presence automatically limits and directs the conversation. This other-worldly

superiority is soon brought down to an earthly level by the call to breakfast which is Peacock's way of diminishing his standing. Dr Gaster's over-eagerness for bodily sustenance, in one so concerned for spiritual matters, and his undignified descent from the carriage, is obviously satirical.

His over-fondness for food continues to be emphasized by Peacock. At breakfast, 'he contrived to be seated as near the fire as was consistent with his other object of having a perfect command of the table and its apparatus.'²³ And the picture of him seated 'safely in a large armchair, with his wounded leg comfortably stretched out on another',²⁴ is as vivid as it is ridiculous. As the Doctor launches into further dogmatic pronouncements, Peacock describes his preparation of a boiled egg with amusing effect. He is shown 'gracefully picking off the supernal fragments of an egg he had just cracked, and clearing away a space at the top for the reception of a small piece of butter.'²⁵ This elaborate performance is more subtly satirical. The vocabulary emphasizes, with such words as gracefully, supernal, reception, the amusingly inappropriate artistry which the clerical Gaster employs to eat a boiled egg. The word 'supernal' is especially effective and chosen because of its ambiguity. Peacock's use of the word (meaning at the top, or upper) is rare, and the reader obviously brings the word's more common usages (existing or belonging to the heavens)

to the passage.²⁶ These overtones set off the very mundane sense here to comic effect. Peacock uses a similar device elsewhere to show Gaster's preoccupations. Later, for example, he is shown sitting 'by the library fire, in profound meditation over a volume of the Almanach des Gourmands.²⁷ The religious expectations of the Doctor's contemplation are nicely dashed by their object. A few other examples give further confirmation of Gaster's character, though Peacock seems to lose interest in him as the novel progresses. At the dinner he falls asleep, probably from excess wine, and replies to the charge that the bottle stands before him with, "'it is an error of which I am seldom guilty.'"²⁸ This also occurs later in the evening and at the ball.²⁹ Gaster is certainly not the liveliest of guests. On the former occasion he dozes while the novelist Miss Philomela Poppyseed outlines her next novel to him. She is highly incensed by this but Gaster can only exclaim, "'bless me! ... What a nap I must have had!'"³⁰ He shows little consideration for the feelings of others and certainly no tact. Peacock has so emphasized his lack of asceticism that it is no surprise to learn that he takes breakfast in bed the following morning.³¹ Intellectually, Gaster shows little learning beyond his theological statements. He contributes little to the disputes of the other philosophers and makes none of the wide classical allusions common in Peacock's later clerics. His sole reading is the Almanach

des Gourmands and his intellectual interests do not appear to be very wide. His social standing is as high as other members of the Squire's party though it is not clear whence his income is derived or whether he has a parochial or private position.

Gaster's religious and theological standpoint is dogmatic, conservative and orthodox. This is a source of amusement not only in itself, although it may appear a little unbending and unintelligent beside the more liberal converse of the philosophers to a modern reader, but in contrast to his personal indulgence and worldliness. Gaster's outlook shows him as a cleric very much of the 'High and Dry' school.³² His opening conversation condemns the discussion of the deterioration of the world as 'sceptical' and 'atheistical' and he can have no part in it.³³ Indeed, he is not prepared to argue or see the teaching of the Church as a matter for debate at any time. When, for example, Mr Escot puts forward views which reflect Shelleyan vegetarianism³⁴ Gaster's viewpoint is quite clear.

'I am really astonished, gentlemen, at the very heterodox opinions I have heard you deliver: since nothing can be more obvious than all animals were created solely and exclusively for the use of man.'

'Even the tiger that devours him?' said Mr Escot.

'Certainly.' said Doctor Gaster.

'How do you prove it?' said Mr Escot.

'It requires no proof.' said Doctor Gaster: 'It is a point of doctrine. It is written, therefore it is so.'

The final phrase does not admit of further enquiry. Furthermore, those questions that cannot satisfactorily be answered in this way Gaster solves by the convenient answer, "It is a mystery."³⁶ His final words in this chapter point to his concern to be orthodox and fully in line with the teaching of the Church. That he talks in these terms at all is a sign, in the pre-Tractarian setting of the novel,³⁷ more that he is not allied with the Evangelical party than that he has advanced ideas of catholicity. At this time the literal belief in Scripture was still almost universally held. He says,

'Your conclusion is truly orthodox ... indeed, the loaves and fishes are typical of a mixed diet; and the practice of the Church in all ages shows -'
'That it never loses sight of the loaves and fishes.'
said Mr Escot.
'It never loses sight of any point of sound doctrine.'
said the reverend doctor. 38

Here, for once, Gaster scores a neat point over the often tiresome Escot.

Gaster, in common with Peacock's other clergy, occasionally uses biblical quotations but his are of a commonplace nature. In the dangerous coach journey to Squire Headlong's country hall Dr Gaster quotes the Book of Job.³⁹ At the breakfast table, when everyone else is appalled at Mr Gall's comment that "there is, in fact, no such thing as good taste left in the world" Gaster rounds matters off admirably, pouring clerical 'cold water' on the whole argument, with a quotation from

Ecclesiastes. He also shows again the justice of his name:

"Vanity of vanities", said the Reverend Doctor Gaster, turning down an empty egg-shell, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit."⁴⁰

Peacock does not develop Gaster's character as the novel progresses and his simple characteristics are never made more complex. If anything, Peacock rather loses interest in him and leaves him to drift into the wings, only to be called upon for the 'matching' in the last chapter, as his office demands. Carl Dawson suggests that Gaster 'might have remained the gluttonous clergyman who sprains his ankle in his haste to get to breakfast; instead, Peacock transforms him into a desirable companion.'⁴¹ I fail to see how this can be so for in his rare appearances after the opening chapters he seldom speaks and is three times asleep. It is true that he reluctantly agrees to dance at the ball, but his partner, the wounded Miss Poppyseed, is hardly treated with the apologetic tact the situation demands. He is blind to the offence he had earlier given and, though he thought there was something in her physiognomy rather more forbidding than usual, he gave himself no concern about the cause, and had not the least suspicion that it was at all connected with himself.'⁴²

In the early chapters he was a source of amusement and a butt for Peacock's wit. If he seems to mellow it is merely because he is given little opportunity to express him-

self in any way at all. On the other hand, in limited doses, Gaster is not wholly uncongenial, certainly not in comparison to Grovelgrub and Peppertoast, clerical characters in Peacock's second novel, Melincourt (1817).

In this novel there are three clerics, the Reverend Messrs Portpipe, Peppertoast and Grovelgrub. The first follows the pattern of Dr Gaster but is more congenial: A mild, worldly man. The other two characters are drawn with a more vicious pen. Their portraits cannot strictly be termed satirical as they are neither amusing nor ridiculous, merely obnoxious. These characters represent a watershed in Peacock's treatment of the clergy. After Melincourt he chose to follow only the milder pattern of Gaster and Portpipe, with some modifications, and abandoned the vicious anti-clericalism of Grovelgrub, along with the heavy didactic intellectualism which makes Melincourt a literary failure, though an interesting document. Why Peacock changed course so greatly after the writing of his second novel can only be a matter for speculation, though, as several critics have suggested, the removal of Shelley's influence is obviously significant.⁴³

The Reverend Mr Grovelgrub is the most malicious and unpleasant of all Peacock's characters. He is also very monotonous. His sole concern is self-interest, expressed in his desire either for preferment through the offices of a rich

patron or in a suitably profitable marriage. His callous and calculating attitude is constantly revealed by Peacock but, unlike the amusing satire of Gaster's foibles, there is little humour and less subtlety here. Grovelgrub is unpleasant, certainly, but in literary terms he is guilty of a greater offence: he is dull. This exaggerated malice reveals Peacock's heavy-handedness. Introduced as a 'parasite' of Lord Anophel Achthar⁴⁴ the first indication of his behaviour comes when he is introduced to Sir Telegraph Paxarett.

Mr Feathernest whispered to the Reverend Mr Grovelgrub, 'This Sir Telegraph Paxarett has some good livings in his gift:' which bent the plump figure of the reverend gentleman into a very orthodox right angle. 45

This subservience, in the company of his superiors, is combined with an unjustified estimation of his own importance. His vanity makes him believe that Anthelia Melincourt's politeness and charm might be 'the manifestation of something like a predilection for himself' and this leads him 'to calculate the probability of his chance of Miss Melincourt's fortune on the one hand, and the certainty of Church-preferment, through the patronage of the Marquis of Agaric, on the other.'⁴⁶ That a cleric might have such thoughts is not impossible but that they should be so crudely and definitely expressed seems rather unlikely.

The melodramatic development of this sub-plot, of

Grovelgrub's 'courting' of Anthelia and his part in her kidnapping, is weak. Grovelgrub becomes a Machiavellian villain whose schemes lengthen the novel but add little to our interest of his character or our enjoyment of the story. The first kidnap attempt by Grovelgrub and Lord Anophel is thwarted by Sir Oran Haut-ton who hurls them both to a rocky ledge. Their escape, and the rather lengthy conversation between Grovelgrub and Lord Anophel as they prepare to descend the rocky pinnacle is described. It reveals little further of Grovelgrub's character except that he knows Aeschylus and Virgil.⁴⁷ His contributions to the conversation are sickly and parsonical. Explaining Sir Oran Haut-ton's dumbness as the result of being crossed in love he remarks,

'People crossed in love, Saint Chrystostom says, lose their voice.'

LORD ANOPHEL ACHTHAR. 'Then I wish you were crossed in love, Grovelgrub, with all my heart.'

THE REVEREND MR GROVELGRUB. 'Nay, my Lord, what so sweet in calamity as the voice of the spiritual comforter?' 48

Such is the level of repartee in this chapter, which concludes with the fall of the two schemers in their descent from the rock.⁴⁹ It is a pale imitation of the wittier event in Headlong Hall⁵⁰ with none of the amusing circumlocution and technical language used to comic effect.

Apart from the worldly ambitions of Grovelgrub, we learn little about his general character and interests. His

intellect is portrayed as commonplace and Peacock uses this for several jibes at his university education. When Lord Anophel asks him,

'What is the spirit of chivalry?'
'Really, my Lord,' said the Reverend Mr Grovelgrub,
'My studies never lay that way.'
'True,' said Lord Anophel; 'it was not necessary to
your degree.' 51

Again Lord Anophel condemns Grovelgrub's classical quotation from Virgil with the words

'Confound your Greek and Latin! You know there
is nothing I hate so much; and I thought you did
so too, or you have finished your education to no
purpose at college.' 52

The implications about Grovelgrub's intellectual limitations are obvious. His days are spent in the usual pastimes of a country gentleman: shooting with Lord Anophel in the morning and drinking 'a copious libation of claret' after dinner.⁵³

His conversation at the dinner table is quite without the wit or humour even of Gaster in Headlong Hall. For example, when Grovelgrub asks Mr Derrydown to define what he means by "'the truth of things'" Mr O'Scerum comments "'troth, Sir, that is the very last point about which I should expect a gentleman of your cloth to be very solicitous.'" Grovelgrub replies, "'I must say, Sir, that is a very uncalled for, and very illiberal observation,'"⁵⁴ a remark which feebly echoes Gaster's in Headlong Hall, discussed above.⁵⁵ It is followed, however, neither by an amusing incident, nor by any wittier quips from

the cleric himself. The fact that Grovelgrub plays little further part in such conversations indicates, perhaps, that Peacock himself found the character too difficult to bring to life. The continuous over-statement of Grovelgrub's faults and the endless repetition of his base behaviour deadens any effect of serious criticism of the clergy that might otherwise have been made.

Grovelgrub is given little chance to express any religious sentiments. On occasion he makes use of biblical quotations as, for example in chapter twenty-three, when he counters Lord Anophel's suggestion to go to the nearest inn, after their fall, with the addition of "'to pour oil and wine into our wounds.'" ⁵⁶ This is a reference, ironical in the context of their kidnapping exploits, to the Parable of the Good Samaritan. ⁵⁷ Such quotations, however, are few and with no religious significance. He likewise shows no concern for social issues being "extremely indignant at Mr Forester's notion "of every real enemy to slavery being bound by the strictest moral duty to practical abstinence from the luxuries which slavery acquires;" but when he found that the notion was to be developed in the shape of a festival, he determined to suspend his judgement till he had digested the solid arguments that were to be brought forward on the occasion." ⁵⁸ Again, his hypocrisy seems prosaic in comparison to Peacock's customary wit.

The Reverend Mr Peppertoast, who appears only in chapter thirty, is, if anything, even more unpleasant than Grovelgrub. His time-serving touches only the gullible rich, whereas Peppertoast's hypocrisy harms the ignorant poor. This chapter, one of Peacock's endless asides, is an excuse for an attack on paper money. Peppertoast, 'a plump and portly divine',⁵⁹ is the local parson. Fax and Forester discover him near the crowds who are awaiting news of their investments, in the recently collapsed local bank. He, however, 'was standing at a little distance from the rest of the crowd,' and his⁸ countenance exhibited no symptoms of the rage, grief, and despair, which were depicted on the physiognomies of his dearly-beloved brethren of the town of Gullgudgeon.'⁶⁰ His position indicates his attitude; one that is ironically underlined by Peacock's use of the Prayer Book phrase, 'dearly-beloved brethren'.⁶¹

Mr Fax enquires the reason for this calmness:

'You seem, sir, ... to bear the general calamity with Christian resignation.' - 'I do, sir,' said the reverend gentleman, 'and for a very orthodox reason - I have none of their notes - not I. I was obliged to take them now and then against my will, but I always sent them off to town, and got cash for them directly.' 62

Thus, the extent of Peppertoast's charity is revealed. Any expectation of clerical altruism is speedily dashed, for when Fax asks why the divine did not warn his 'flock' of the impending danger he calmly replies, '"I dined every week with one of

the partners."⁶³ Such self-interest needs no further comment, even from Peacock. Two other attacks are made upon Peppertoast's clerical integrity. In reply to Fax's questioning of Grovelgrub's condemnation of a local 'Jacobin rascal' (one who merely foretells the collapse of the Threadneedle Street bank) he shows himself a self-confessed hypocrite. His words, "I do not know what right any one can have to ask a man of my cloth what he seriously thinks, when all that the world has to do with is what he seriously says."⁶⁴ even suggest a certain pride in the assertion. Finally, Peacock indicts Peppertoast of the worst sort of Erastianism. He is a clergyman who supports the established order not out of principle but for personal gain. He approves of paper money simply because it

'is inseparably interwoven with the present order of things, and the present order of things I have made up my mind to stick by precisely as long as it lasts.' 'And no longer?' said Mr Fax. 'I am no fool, Sir,' said the divine. 65

Although Peppertoast's unpleasantness is perhaps too openly shown to be actually credible, it is more successful as an attack on the clergy than Grovelgrub. There is less irritating flippancy here and although Peppertoast's final outburst verges on the ludicrous, its very violence partially rescues it.

'Do you hear him?' said the Reverend Mr Peppertoast; 'do you hear the Jacobin rascal? Do you hear the libellous, seditious, factious, levelling, revolutionary, republican, democratical, atheistical villain?' 66

If anything, Peacock errs on the side of too stark reality here, as he did in boring us with Grovelgrub. The weight of his attack is almost too heavy for the flimsy construction of the novel and the lack of substance in the other characters. Considered apart from the novel, it is a powerful attack but within Melincourt it is not clear whether we should laugh or not. It may also be permissible to ask if such an attack has any substance in reality.

This question can partly be answered. Although I can find no evidence of the same clerical behaviour contemporary with the writing of Melincourt, there is later indication that Peacock's criticisms are not wholly without justice. Cobbett, in his Legacy to Parsons, first published in 1835, writes that 'The public papers informed us of a bishop standing as a partner behind a banker's counter at Cambridge at the time of the panic, to pay the pressing customers, and to give his countenance in favour of the solvency of the house!' He also notes the occurrence of clerical bankers and brokers. The Rector of Stockton, he records, was a broker in his own parish.⁶⁷ This information, published a long while after Melincourt, may well be inaccurate, for Cobbett was notoriously anti-clerical, but it is possible that similar incidents were known to Peacock in the first decades of the century.

The Reverend Mr Portpipe is a very different character. He follows the model of Gaster rather than Grovelgrub. While

he prefers Madeira and good dinners to the rigorous exercise of his duty, he is without malice, the hypocrisy of the other clergy in the novel, and all unpleasantness. He does not excel in conversation, wit and learning, like Folliott and Opimian, but he is less pompous and overbearing than Gaster, worthy to be the prototype of the later clerics. Portpipe is a pleasant and by no means ignorant dinner-companion. His amiability is without question. In the opening chapter he is described, rather churlishly, as one of the 'country acquaintance, not calculated to leave behind them any lively regret, except for the loss of time during the period of their stay.'⁶⁸ But he is, despite this, a regular guest. He is hospitable to Fax and Forester during their dilatory search for Anthelia, entertaining them in his vicarage to a cold buffet and wine, and pressing them to remain overnight.⁶⁹ He is fond of food and wine, as shown in the opening chapter where he combines his duties as exorcist in the haunted wing of Melincourt castle with a good supper of venison pasty and three bottles of Madeira. This number, in honouring the Trinity, no doubt assisted his labours.⁷⁰ At the Chess Dance Portpipe is thankful to retire from the field in search of Madeira at the sideboard commenting, appropriately, that Homer 'was very orthodox in his opinion that wine was a great refresher in the toils of war.'⁷¹ At the conclusion of the Chess Dance, Portpipe 'threw himself

into an armchair and slept very comfortably till the annunciation of supper.'⁷² During the evening which follows the symposium, Portpipe, like Gaster at the ball in Headlong Hall, again falls asleep during the music, 'and accompanied the performance with rather a deeper bass than was generally deemed harmonious.'⁷³ Yet even his love of wine has an amiable side to it. When in the final chapter Portpipe celebrates Anthelia's wedding, in a manner more bibulous than clerical, it is because 'he had taken a resolution on the day of Anthelia's christening, that he would on the day of her marriage drink one bottle more than he had ever taken at one sitting on any other occasion.'⁷⁴ In the future home of the Foresters, 'there was always a cover at the table for the Reverend Mr Portpipe.'⁷⁵

At the after-dinner symposium Portpipe gives an eulogium on the wine and in reply to some verses in praise of wine from Mr Hippy he says,

'An excellent text! - sound doctrine, plain and practical. When I open the bottle, I shut the book of Numbers. [76] There are two reasons for drinking: one is, when you are thirsty, to cure it; the other, when you are not thirsty, to prevent it. The first is obvious, mechanical, and plebeian; the second is most refined, abstract, propicient, and canonical. I drink by anticipation of thirst that may be. Prevention is better than cure. Wine is the elixir of life. "The soul", says St Augustine, "cannot live in drought." What is death? Dust and ashes. There is nothing so dry. What is life? Spirit. What is Spirit? Wine.'

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This speech is important for, although Portpipe's other speeches rarely rise to this level of wit and humorous use of learning, here is the characteristic voice of Peacock's two last mature clerical characters. The short, clipped phrases, the dogmatic tone, the amusing use of classical quotations, all remind us of Dr Folliott's pronouncements. Peacock has here caught the typical speech of his successful clerical portraits and it is this which gives Portpipe added charm.

Portpipe's clerical duties are also described which, apart from the customary 'matching' of the various characters in concluding chapters,⁷⁸ is rare. In the opening chapter Portpipe is described performing the duties of an exorcist - an unusual occupation for an Anglican clergyman of this period. Peacock does not treat the matter seriously, of course. Indeed, the exorcising apparatus - 'a large venison pasty, a little prayer book' - and 'the becoming silence [he maintained] as to the mysteries of which he was a witness during his spectral vigils' are mentioned only for humorous purposes.⁷⁹ Later in the novel Portpipe is seen engaged in more usual clerical tasks. The travellers Forester and Fax discover Portpipe with 'a great press of business to dispose of, namely, a christening, a marriage, and a funeral, but he would knock them off as fast as he could, after which he should be perfectly at their service.'⁸⁰ Forester, with his

customary seriousness, laments the levity of this attitude, commenting "'with what indifference he runs through the whole drama of human life.'" Fax reasons that, "'custom has rendered them all alike indifferent to him.'" ⁸¹ Their remarks, however, are based only on this hasty comment of Portpipe's and not on any observation of his performance. Portpipe, in fact, seems over-zealous before the wedding, declaring that he will not marry the rustic whom he hears swearing at the church porch. ⁸²

If Peacock is right here in showing Portpipe as rather officious, he is unfair in his earlier criticism of his supposed liberalism. Portpipe is said, in his dealings with Sir Henry Melincourt, with whom 'no part of his vocation was in very high favour', to have adopted for his own benefit 'St Paul's precept of being all things to all men ... though he took especial care that this heterodox concession should not reach the ears of his bishop, who would infallibly have unfrocked him for promulgating a doctrine so subversive of the main pillar of all orthodox establishments.' This subversive creed is the Virgilian line, 'Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.' ⁸³ All Portpipe seems in fact to have done was to be sociable to an intelligent and hospitable neighbour which, as far as Peacock reveals, is not conducted in a spirit of gain or malevolence like Grovelgrub. Indeed, Peacock tells us elsewhere, by implication, that Portpipe was not an ambitious

man. This is at the Chess Dance when Portpipe exclaims 'with great vehemence NOLO EPISCOPARI!⁸⁴ which is probably the only occasion on which these words were ever used with sincerity.'⁸⁵ Portpipe has little opportunity to display the erudition of later clerics, but his use of classical learning and his well-chosen library⁸⁶ show him to be a man of taste and education. His own rather flat jibe about man falling by the tree of knowledge, 'which shows that human learning is vanity and a great evil, and therefore very properly discountenanced by all bishops, priests, and deacons', does not do him justice.⁸⁷

Portpipe is the first cleric to show signs of Peacock's changing attitude to the clergy who later become, not merely butts for his wit and excuses for veiled or more vicious attacks on the church, but learned and amiable conversationalists. They come to express, if not always Peacock's own views, at least those with which he has great sympathy. Peacock came to see that the clergy, for all their faults, could preserve that Attic conservatism and love of good food and wine which he personally prized. It is because of this changing attitude on Peacock's part that there seems to be a certain inconsistency in Portpipe's portrayal. Peacock starts by insinuating that as a guest at Melincourt Castle he was less than desirable, and ends by making him a regular ex-officio guest at Anthelia's board. He is not meant to have read a great deal in the last

thirty years but his conversation is far from stupid and can, indeed, be learned.⁸⁸ Despite his love of good living he is at least shown performing some clerical duties within his own parish. Perhaps the most that can be said is that any satirical intentions on Peacock's part are lost in the glimpses of a warmer and more congenial character that emerges overall.

In Nightmare Abbey (1818), the Reverend Mr Larynx is displayed as nothing but pleasant. Although he plays little part in the novel and makes few contributions to the conversation, Peacock has dropped his satirical intentions. He draws Larynx on the model of Portpipe but with none of the fullness of speech and character to be found in Folliott. There is perhaps a hint of humour at Larynx's expense in the introductory description of the divine but there is nothing more specific as there was with Portpipe.⁸⁹ He is described as 'another and very frequent visitor ... the Reverend Mr Larynx, the Vicar of Claydyke ... a good-natured accommodating divine, who was always most obligingly ready to take a dinner and a bed at the house of any country gentleman in distress for a companion.'⁹⁰ If it is true that 'nothing came amiss to him', in the course of social duty, it is also true that this was not merely ingratiating behaviour. It is out of kindness, as this example of his obliging nature shows. 'He would even dance among friends, rather than that a lady, even if she were on the wrong

side of thirty, should sit still for want of a partner.'⁹¹

The Reverend Doctor Gaster, in Headlong Hall, was also pressed into service in this way but he assisted with singular bad grace.⁹²

Another comparison, favourable to Larynx, springs to mind in the ungracious behaviour of Mr Elton towards Harriet Smith in Jane Austen's Emma.⁹³

An important qualification about all Larynx's social behaviour is added by Peacock for, while he was always obliging, his behaviour had to be consistent 'with the dye of his coat'.⁹⁴

Peacock's clergy, like Jane Austen's, are very different in their social status from the clergy of earlier generations. Even a parish priest like Larynx is welcomed at the dinner table, whereas Richard Steele, in the eighteenth century, although chaplain 'to an honourable family', was expected to retire from the table before dessert was served.⁹⁵

Larynx does not profess to be learned, though he is no fool. His perspicacious criticism of contemporary fiction reveals this when he says, '"a tale or a poem, now and then, to a circle of ladies over their work, is no very heterodox employment of the vocal energy. And I must say, for myself, that few men have a more Job-like endurance of the eternally recurring questions and answers that interweave themselves, on these occasions, with the crisis of an adventure, and heighten the distress of a tragedy.'"⁹⁶

Later in the novel he makes

fun of his unbookish nature in an amusing speech.

'I once saw a ghost myself, in my study, which is the last place where any one but a ghost would look for me. I had not been into it for three months, and was going to consult Tillotson, when, on opening the door, I saw a venerable figure in a flannel dressing gown, sitting in my armchair, and reading my Jeremy Taylor. It vanished in a moment, and so did I; and what it was or what it wanted I have never been able to ascertain.' 97

The humorous, relaxed, conversational tone of the most enjoyable of Peacock's conversationalists is apparent here. Larynx is also being modest, at least about his biblical knowledge, for in a previous speech, in this discussion on ghosts, he does not reveal himself as ignorant.

'Spectres appeared to the Egyptians during the darkness with which Moses covered Egypt. The witch of Endor raised the ghost of Samuel. Moses and Elias appeared on Mount Tabor. An evil spirit was sent into the army of Sennacherib, and exterminated it in a single night.' 98

The final reference to Larynx confirms our favourable impression of him. The butler Raven explaining to Scythrop why his guests have departed, says that '"The Reverend Mr Larynx has been called off on duty, to marry or bury (I don't know which) some unfortunate person or persons, at Claydyke.'" ⁹⁹ Larynx is an amenable house-guest but he does not, therefore, neglect his clerical duties.

The clerical characters who appear in Crotchet Castle (1831) and Gryll Grange (1860) differ in many respects from their predecessors. The Reverend Doctors Folliott and

Opimian are no longer minor figures, objects of satire or laughable parodies of the clerical profession, they are major characters. Larger indeed than many who surround them, they are central to the orchestration of the conversational music. It is quite clear, also, that Peacock admires these clergymen. They share many of his own interests and opinions. They are well-versed in the classics, fond of good food and wine, hostile to pointless progress; kindly, generous men, if also intransigent, dogmatic personalities. Far from being, like Gaster and Grovelgrub, outsiders, they are heroes. They epitomize those qualities which the novelist held dear. He, and the sympathetic reader, identify with them even if there is not always agreement with their every opinion. How is it then, that this champion of classical values who has in the past shown little respect, or admiration, for the representatives of the Christian religion, now comes to celebrate and extol their virtues? Before an answer to this question is suggested, let us look more closely at the two characters.

The Reverend Doctor Folliott is one of Peacock's most fully drawn characters. Certainly in Crotchet Castle he stands head and shoulders above the other characters. Edith Nicholls notes that Henry Cole remembered that ' [Peacock] used to say that this character was intended to make amende honorable to the clergy for the satires of them ... in previous tales.'¹⁰⁰

Folliott is one of the few clergymen to be described by another character in the same novel. The portrait is Lady Clarinda's and a fair one.

'He is said to be an excellent scholar, and is fonder of books than the majority of his cloth; he is very fond, also, of the good things of this world. He is of an admirable temper, and says rude things in a pleasant half-earnest manner, that nobody can take offence with.' 101

Peacock, on the other hand, gives his description a more satirical tone. Folliott is described as 'a gentleman endowed with a tolerable stock of learning, an interminable swallow and an indefatigable pair of lungs.'¹⁰² This off-hand manner is typical of Peacock and, on the whole, Lady Clarinda's portrait is more accurate. 'Being both learned and jolly [he] became by degrees an indispensable ornament' to Squire Crotchet's table.¹⁰³ His first appearance indicates more of the latter quality than the former. It is one of the most dramatically humorous entries in Peacock and reveals much of the Doctor's qualities to us at once.

'God bless my soul, sir!' exclaimed the Reverend Doctor Folliott, bursting, one fine May morning, into the breakfast-room at Crotchet Castle, 'I am out of all patience with this march of mind. Here has my house been nearly burned down, by my cook taking it into her head to study hydrostatics, in a sixpenny tract, published by the Steam Intellect Society, and written by a learned friend who is for doing all the world's business as well as his own, and is equally well qualified to handle every branch of human knowledge. I have a great abomination of this learned friend; as author,

lawyer, and politician, he is triformis, like Hecate: and in every one of his three forms he is bifrons, like Janus; the true Mr Facing-both-ways of Vanity Fair. My cook must read his rubbish in bed; and as might naturally be expected, she dropped suddenly fast asleep, overturned the candle, and set the curtains in a blaze. Luckily, the footman went into the room at the moment, in time to tear down the curtains and throw them into the chimney, and a pitcher of water on her nightcap extinguished her wick: she is a greasy subject, and would have burned like a short mould.' The reverend gentleman exhaled his grievance without looking to the right or to the left; at length, turning on his pivot, he perceived that the room was full of company, consisting of young Crotchet and some visitors whom he had brought from London. 104

The opening phrase is wholly typical and captures at once the tone of the Doctor's voice: lively, a little pompous and yet not without humour. The fact that he bursts into a room and, in launching into his tirade, fails to notice a room full of company, is also characteristic. He is often full of himself to the point of overflowing. His unequivocal condemnation of the 'march of mind' is enthusiastically conservative; an attitude we come to expect from Folliott. The attack on the 'learned friend',¹⁰⁵ with its complex classical allusions reveals both his anger and his digressive mind. Peacock depicts Folliott as a man well-used to talking on any subject, or a number of subjects, at will and the higgledy-piggledy nature of the arrangement of this speech is part of its humour and wholly Folliott's own. The vivid picture of his cook's antics is concluded with a terse, dry comment on her personal appearance.

It is an excellent caricature of a servant type. The speech as a whole makes an excellent introduction to the Doctor, and the novel suddenly springs to life with this vigorous character on the stage. Volatile, comic, satirical and dismissive of all fads and fancies, it is Peacock at his best.

This over, and the assembled company introduced, another great love of Folliott's, besides talking, is displayed. This is the eating and the discussion of food. Naturally the activity and the talk is laced with learning. Such an important subject as food is never treated lightly by the Doctor. As ever he has his own views on the matter which he has no hesitation in propounding. In this case the proper menu for breakfast.

'The touchstone [of a good breakfast he claims] is fish: anchovy is the first step, prawns and shrimps the second; and I laud him who reaches even to these: potted char and lampreys are the third, and a fine stretch of progression; but lobster is, indeed, matter for a May morning, and demands a rare combination of knowledge and virtue in him who sets it forth.' 106

Even the dour Scots economist, Mac Quedy, receives guarded praise for his country's fish, though other aspects of the 'modern Athens' are not so loudly praised.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the conversation bounds along, Folliott enlivening it at every turn, spicing his words with allusions. The ebullient Doctor knocks every speaker down at once. Again this is typical. Lord Bossnowl's praise of Ude, the diabolical inventor of the sandwich, Mac Quedy's promotion of Allan Ramsay, the Job-like

comedian, and Mr Firedamp's medical theories are all brushed aside.¹⁰⁸ The Reverend Doctor is undoubtedly a dogmatist. Peacock juxtaposes these speeches of the Doctor's with requests for food,¹⁰⁹ a humorous device he had used previously in Head-long Hall.¹¹⁰ An expostulation on Mac Quedy's Athenian pretensions are thus nicely capped. "Modern Athens, sir! the assumption is a personal affront to every man who has a Sophocles in his library. I will thank you for an anchovy."¹¹¹ The chapter ends, as it had begun, with the Doctor castigating the iniquities of Brougham's general education, a subject he never tires of pillorying.¹¹² It is an excellent opening. The whole chapter is an engaging, entertaining prelude to a remarkably consistent performance.

Folliot excels chiefly as a conversationalist. Indeed, Peacock delineates this character as much by his words as by his actions and thus the nature of the Doctor's conversation must be examined in some detail. Apart from the occasional outburst of pomposity or polemic, which form a contrast rather than the backbone of the Doctor's wit, Folliott is congenial company. At his best he does not allow his argumentativeness to degenerate into bad manners. During his discussion on river trout with Mac Quedy,¹¹³ he intersperses good humour in the form of "Sir, I will take a glass of Hock with you,"¹¹⁴ When he makes an erroneous statement, and one with personal implications

for his companion, he similarly covers his misdemeanour.

"Sir, I must drown my inadvertence in a glass of Sauterne with you."¹¹⁵

He can also avoid a lengthy argument, which might prove tedious, with a humorous excuse, telling Mac Quedy,

"Pray, sir, let your science alone, or you will put me under the painful necessity of demolishing it bit by bit, as I have done your exordium. I will undertake it any morning; but it is too hard exercise after dinner."¹¹⁶

At the Christmas gathering at Chainmail Hall he is conviviality itself. He adapts his temper to the festival, and the company, speaking warmly and generously; a side of Folliott some critics tend to overlook.

'I think, Mr Chainmail, we can amuse ourselves very well here all night ... Let the young folks go on with their gambols; let them dance to your old harper's minstrelsy; and if they please to kiss under the mistletoe, whereof I espy a goodly bunch suspended at the end of the hall, let those who like it not, leave it to those who do. Moreover, if among the more sedate portion of the assembly, which, I foresee, will keep me company, there were any to revive the good old custom of singing after supper, so to fill up the intervals of the dances, the steps of night would move more lightly.'

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This is a charming, even poetic, speech and certainly the essence of good-nature and good company. Folliott has the good manners to recognize that any intellectual controversies, between the merits of Athens and medieval England, must be sunk in deference to a generous host. The over-bearing side of Folliott is amply compensated by his good humour here and elsewhere.

The two main characteristics of his conversation are good humour and sound learning. Both are everywhere apparent. Lord Bossnowl's enquiry, as to why Folliott's footman was entering his cook's bedroom the night of her disastrous fire,¹¹⁹ is amusingly answered. "'Sir, as good came of it, I shut my eyes, and asked no questions. I suppose he was going to study hydrostatics, and he found himself under the necessity of practising hydraulics.'"¹²⁰ His condemnation of paper money gives him a chance for an amusing jibe at Mac Quedy, its upholder, at the Christmas Feast. He rounds the discussion off neatly with "'the dinner is coming. I think you, who are so fond of paper promises, should dine on the bill of fare.'"¹²¹ Nor is he above a witticism of a more risqué nature, though he is protected from vulgarity as it is in Greek. "'You remember the characteristics of a great man according to Aristophanes:

ὁς τις γὰρ πινεῖν οἶδε καὶ βινεῖν μόνον. Ha! ha! ha! Well, Captain, even in these tight-laced days, the obscurity of a learned language allows a little pleasantry."¹²² This sort of remark shows Folliott to be very much the Regency figure. It is a case of learning and humour combined. The former, however, is always to be found. Folliott postpones the discussion with Firedamp on aquatic matters, for example, with the words "'after dinner, sir, after dinner, I will meet you on this question. I shall then be armed for the strife. You

may fight like Hercules against Achelous, but I shall flourish the Bacchic thyrsus, which changed rivers into wine: as Nonnus sweetly sings, Οἶνον κυματοειντε μελας κελευζειν ὕδατος ."¹²³

His criticism of Oxford University's lack of learning is an occasion for an obscure quotation. Crotchet calls Oxford

"a reservoir of learning at which some may draw if they please."

Folliott replies,

'But, here, good care is taken that nobody shall please. If even a small drop from the sacred fountain, παιδακος ἐξ ἐσσης ὀλίγη λίβας, as Callimachus has it, were carried off by any one, it would be evidence of something to hope for. But the system of dissuasion from all good learning is brought here to a pitch of perfection that baffles the keenest aspirant.' 124

Even in a crisis, when a riotous mob is at the door of Chainmail Hall, the Doctor best expresses himself with the aid of the classics and has time for an amusing paraphrase of their meaning. "Give them the weapons! Pessimo, medius fidius, exemplo.¹²⁵ Forbid it the spirit of Frère Jean des Entom-meures! ... Follow me who will, and stay who list. Here goes: Pro aris et focis! that is, for tithe pigs and fires to roast them!"¹²⁶

Yet, for all his learning Folliott is not without the capacity to laugh at himself. This dimension of Peacock's characterization is far too often overlooked. It is, however, very important in any assessment of his character, for without this element of self-satire Folliott could be seen as too over-

bearing. As it is, I find him strong, dominant, dogmatic but not wholly insensitive. Thus, when the discussion turns, in chapter six, to the use to which Mr Crotchet's money will be put, no agreement seems likely. Folliott is surely satirizing his own characteristic love of food when he says, "'if the money is to go in deliberative dinners, you may set me down for a committee man and honorary caterer.'" ¹²⁷ Certainly, he is not unaware of the response he will get and, I think, it is for this very reason that he speaks, when he concludes the insoluble rivalry over the production of manifestos by saying, "'gentlemen, if you are all in the humour for reading papers, I will read you the first half of my next Sunday's sermon.'" The response is, as he imagined, 'Omnes. "No sermon! No sermon!"' and he replies, "'Then I move that our respective papers be committed to our respective pockets.'" ¹²⁸ A cleric has to be excessively insensitive not to realize that his sermons are not generally considered weekday reading. Again, Folliott aims to be humorous at his own expense in his explanation, on being offered champagne, for its immediate consumption. "'Most willingly. But you will permit my drinking it while it sparkles. I hold it a heresy to let it deaden in my hand, while the glass of my comptator is being filled on the opposite side of the table.'" ¹²⁹ It is quite wrong to see Folliott without the twinkle in his eye. Too late it may be for him to

change his habits, but he is not altogether unaware of the amusement they may cause.

In argument, Folliott can rarely be rivalled. He always speaks with the authority and finality of a dogmatist, but his rhetorical skill may well conceal a logical deficiency, or his own Attic intolerance. That he often succeeds in his concealment is a mark of his rhetorical skill. His reply to Mac Quedy on political science in the argument about Modern Athens is an example of this. When Mac Quedy calls political economy the 'science of sciences' Folliott replies, damningly but with no evidence,

'A hyperbarbarous technology, that no Athenian ear could have borne. Premises assumed without evidence, or in spite of it; and conclusions drawn from them so logically, that they must necessarily be erroneous.' 130

Again, the skill with which he seizes upon his opponent's answers and turns them to his own advantage also shows his powers. His use of Mac Quedy's interpolation in the argument on education for the masses is an example of this.

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'The policeman, who was sent down to examine, says my house has been broken open on the most scientific principles. All this comes of education.'

MAC QUEDY. 'I rather think it comes of poverty.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'No sir. Robbery perhaps comes of poverty, but scientific principles of robbery come of education.' 131

Equally effective is the use of Crotchet's opinion, in the dis-

cussion of the statue of Venus, concerning the attitude of the figure. Crotchet's comment that "'nothing can be more natural'" means that he thinks the position easy and unaffected. Folliott seizes upon this with "'that is the very thing, sir. It is too natural: too natural, sir.'" He, of course, uses the word to mean nudity, or the 'natural' state.¹³² Later, in the same discussion, he uses the device once too often and, in employing the 'argumentum ad hominem' which he thinks will prove his case, asks Mr Crotchet, "'Would you have allowed Miss Crotchet to sit for a model to Canova?'" The reply, "'Yes, sir'", is not what he had expected and the startled expostulation, "'God bless my soul, sir!'", concludes the debate with Folliott throwing himself over in his chair. Peacock does not let him win this argument but he still holds the stage.¹³³

His eloquence, not surprisingly, sometimes takes on a biblical tone and he often uses biblical material to make his speech effectively homiletic. He describes Miss Crotchet to the stranger he discovers in the grounds of Crotchet Castle thus. "'Her eyes are like the fishpools of Heshbon, by the gate of Bethrabbim.'" ¹³⁴ The attack on Oxford University is a notable example of the sermon style.

'I run over to myself the names of the scholars of Germany, a glorious catalogue! but ask for those of Oxford - where are they? The echoes of their courts, as vacant as their heads, will answer, Where are they? The tree shall be known by its

fruit; and seeing that this great tree, with all its specious seeming, brings forth no fruit, I do denounce it as a barren fig.' 135

Despite his conversational pugnacity, Peacock shows us that Folliott knows the bounds of good manners. When the company assembles at Chainmail Hall for the Christmas festivities, Mr Eavesdrop is missing. This is because he printed some of the earlier conversations at Crotchet Castle in a magazine and 'had had sentence of exclusion passed upon him, on the motion of the Reverend Doctor Folliott, as a flagitious violator of the confidences of private life.'¹³⁶ The sentiment here is Peacock's also, as he had expressed it in the introduction to Melincourt.¹³⁷

It was also, perhaps, part of Peacock's 'amende honorable',¹³⁸ to the clergy that Folliott is depicted as a married man and not a celibate, which has never been favourably regarded by the Anglican Church. It is only in Gryll Grange, however, that we actually meet a clergyman's wife.¹³⁹ Folliott refers to Mrs Folliott only on three occasions. The first is when he agrees to join Crotchet's river tour. He mentions that his absence will '"deprive poor Mrs Folliott, for several weeks, of the pleasure of combing my wig."¹⁴⁰ The second is in the discussion of the nude statues, in chapter seven. His indignation is stimulated by the thought of young ladies sitting naked before the sculptor, and by the feelings of their hus-

bands. "'The phials of my wrath would overflow if poor dear Mrs Folliott -.'" Words fail him for once. The third is when he describes the newly wedded Mrs Chainmail and says, "'Never was anything so goodly to look on, the present company excepted, and poor dear Mrs Folliott.'" ¹⁴² The adjectives 'poor' and 'dear' are not altogether flattering and although we never catch sight of the lady in question, the sort of person she might well be can be imagined from another speech of Folliott's. The remark is made in the discussion concerning Athenian women and naked statues of Venus. "'The sort of person I like"' says Folliott, "'is a modest woman, who stays at home and looks after her husband's dinner.'" ¹⁴³

Finally, mention must be made of Folliott's tendency to physical violence. Certainly the altered circumstances of Regency life and the present day should be taken into account. This difference is well summarized by J.B. Priestley, in his excellent general account of Regency life.

The age swings between extremes of elegance and refinement and depths of sodden brutality and misery. It has no common belief, no accepted code, no general standard of conformity. It seems horrible one moment, enchanting the next. Anything and everything can be happening. ¹⁴⁴

Nonetheless, it is difficult to reconcile his attack on the robbers, in chapter eight, for example, with Christian charity. The fault obviously lies with Peacock for introducing this

dramatic incident into a novel ill-equipped to support such realism. The point of the episode is that Folliott believes one of the ruffians has carried off his fellow, whom he accidentally shot, to the surgeon for dissection.¹⁴⁵ It allows Folliott to condemn the 'march of mind' with weighty evidence. Yet the picture of Folliott, punctuating the following speech with lashes of his bamboo, is not altogether edifying whatever contemporary manners might have been.

'Mercy, rascal!' cried the divine; 'what mercy were you going to show me, villain? What! I warrant me, you thought it would be an easy matter, and no sin, to rob and murder a parson on his way home from dinner. You said to yourselves, doubtless, "We'll waylay the fat parson (you irreverent knave) as he waddles home (you disparaging ruffian), half-seas-over (you calumnious vagabond.)"' And with every dislogistic term which he supposed had been applied to himself, he inflicted a new bruise on his rolling and roaring antagonist.

This curious combination of parsonical talk, self-satire and insult becomes more macabre as it continues.

'Ah rogue' he proceeded; 'you can roar now, marauder; you were silent enough when you devoted my brains to dispersion under your cudgel. But seeing that I cannot bind you, and that I intend you not to escape, and that it would be dangerous to let you rise, I will disable you in all your members; I will contund you as Thestylis did strong smelling herbs, in the quality whereof you do most gravely partake, as my nose beareth testimony, ill weed that you are. I will beat you to a jelly, and I will then roll you into the ditch, to lie there till the constable comes for you, thief.' 146

There is considerable brute violence here, a sort of educated

thuggery, amidst Folliott's perhaps understandable anger.

On other occasions also, anger seems all too near the surface in Folliott's character. In one of the after-dinner debates Folliott threatens Mr Eavesdrop with the very same bamboo.

MR EAVESDROP. 'Sir, you are very facetious at my expense.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Sir, you have been very unfacetious, very inficite at mine. You have dished me up, like a savory omelette, to gratify the appetite of the reading rabble for gossip. The next time, sir, I will respond with the argumentum baculinum. Print that, sir; put it on record as a promise of the Reverend Doctor F., which shall be most faithfully kept, with an exemplary bamboo.'

Mr EAVESDROP. 'Your cloth protects you, sir.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'My bamboo shall protect me, sir.'

MR CROCHET. 'Doctor, doctor, you are growing too polemical.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. Sir, my blood boils. What business have the public with my nose and wig?' 147

No doubt the ample flow of Madeira, in this instance, had helped to rouse his wrath. Finally at Chainmail Hall a riotous rabble at the gates stimulate Folliott into action. He takes up arms against the pupils of the 'march of mind' with the enthusiasm of a crusader. His words are like a battle cry and his actions match. 'He clapped a helmet on his head, seized a long lance, threw open the gates, and tilted out on the rabble, side by side with Mr Chainmail.'¹⁴⁸ Luckily this incident is but brief. It is perhaps but an extreme revelation of an otherwise merely amiably boisterous character.

In any case, it must be remembered that the thirties were troubled times and that the revolution which was occurring in the English countryside, and in society, threatened the very survival, it seemed to some, of the pastoral tradition, in life as in literature.¹⁴⁹

Despite Folliott's attractiveness as an amusing and capable conversationalist, he does not shine as a model clergyman. Lady Clarinda had described him as fond of the things of this world.¹⁵⁰ This is shown to be so. At his first appearance we learn that his principles are somewhat worldly also.

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'My principles, sir, in these things are, to take as much as I can get, and to pay no more than I can help. These are every man's principles, whether they be the right principles or no. There, sir, is political economy in a nutshell.' 151

Certainly, it is more like an eighteenth-century gentleman than a respectable country parson to turn a blind eye to the improper behaviour of his footman. Obviously he approves worldly riches, the privileges these give and the status they confer in society. He describes Mr Crotchet to the stranger sketching in the Castle grounds as "'my good friend, and a highly respectable gentleman.'" The stranger replies, "'good and respectable, sir, I take it, mean rich?'" He receives an affirmative answer.¹⁵² Later in this conversation, he describes young Crotchet's rise to fortune in a way that reminds us strongly of the parable of the

prodigal son, only in reverse.

'The old gentleman divided his fortune into three not exactly equal portions: one for himself, one for his daughter, and one for his son, which he handed over to him, saying, "Take it once and for all, and make the most of it; if you lose it where I won it, not another stiver do you get from me during my life." But, sir, young Crotchet doubled, and trebled, and quadrupled it, and is, as you say, a striking example of the reward of industry; not that I think his labour has been so great as his luck.' 153

The use of such a close parallel, by one who could hardly be unaware of it, is surely an ironical comment on Folliott's worldly viewpoint. There is, on the other hand, his comment on the collapse of young Crotchet's firm. "'I thought they would over-reach themselves with their own tricks. The day of reckoning, Mr Mac Quedy, is the point which your paper-money science always leaves out of view.'" ¹⁵⁴ The ambiguity of the phrase 'day of reckoning', in this context, makes it just as likely to be a worldly comment as a religious one. He notes, for example, the absence of honesty in the city of London. But he is not idealistic enough to make any stand against it. ¹⁵⁵

His clerical duties, likewise, sit lightly on his shoulders. The proposal of a river tour, for example, does not deter him from absenting himself for several weeks from his parish. It only means that he must "'hire an officiating curate.'" ¹⁵⁶ In his defence, however, it must be said that

the month of the journey is July¹⁵⁷ when a holiday is not unreasonable. His interest in his duties as a preacher is, however, also lackadaisical.

The Reverend Doctor Folliott having promised to return to dinner, walked back to his vicarage, meditating whether he should pass the morning in writing his next sermon, or in angling for trout, and had nearly decided in favour of the latter proposition. 158

The incident with the Charity Commissioners, which ironically follows his beating of the thieves,¹⁵⁹ is more an attack on 'the learned friend' than Folliott. For all his faults, Folliott did not lack common sense. The Doctor's comment, on the Charity Commission and those who have set it up, is, on the evidence before him, very pertinent.

'What in the name of all that is wonderful, Mr Bluenose,' said the Reverend Doctor Folliott, as he walked out of the inn, "what in the name of all that is wonderful, can those fellows mean? They have come here in a chaise and four, to make a fuss about a pound per annum, which, after all they leave as it was. I wonder who pays them for their trouble, and how much.'

MR APPLETWIG. 'The public pay for it, sir. It is a job of the learned friend whom you admire so much. It makes away with public money in salaries, and private money in lawsuits, and does no particle of good to any living soul.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Ay, ay, Mr Appletwig; that is the sort of public service to be looked for from the learned friend.' 160

Finally, Folliott the cleric is revealed in his attitudes to the nude statues of Venus that are to be displayed at Crotchet Castle. Peacock, however, throws doubts on Folliott's moral objections to the statues at the outset.

Disposed, as he was, to hold, that whatever had been in Greece, was right; he was more than doubtful of the propriety of throwing open the classical adytum to the illiterate profane. Whether, in his interior mind, he was at all influenced, either by the consideration that it would be for the credit of his cloth, with some of his vice-suppressing neighbours, to be able to say that he had expostulated; or by curiosity, to try what sort of defence his city-bred friend, who knew the classics only by translations, and whose reason was always a little a-head of his knowledge, would make for his somewhat ostentatious display of liberality in matters of taste; is a question, on which the learned may differ. 161

His doubt about allowing the illiterate profane to gaze on works of art which, not understanding, they might find immodest is nonetheless in accord with the teaching of St. Paul.¹⁶² Later in this argument he rebukes Crotchet on two counts. First, when Crotchet calls two people (in an anecdote I am unable to unravel)¹⁶³ fools, Folliott replies with the argument that follows. It may lead one to think that Folliott is being hypocritical, especially when it is set beside his violent behaviour in the following chapter.

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Fool, sir, is a harsh term: call not thy brother a fool.'

MR CROTCHET. 'Sir, neither the cheesemonger nor the justice is a brother of mine.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Sir, we are all brethren.'

MR CROTCHET. 'Yes, sir, as the hangman is of the thief; the squire of the poacher; the judge of the libeller; the lawyer of his client; the statesman of his colleague; the bubble-blower of the bubble-buyer; the slave-driver of the negro: as these are brethren, so am I and the worthies in question.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'To be sure, sir, in these

instances, and in many others, the term brother must be taken in its utmost latitude of interpretation: we are all brothers, nevertheless.' 164

Secondly, the statues seem offensive to Folliott as they may corrupt young people. As he says, '"upon my word, sir, it matters not what godfathers and godmothers may have promised and vowed for the children of this world, touching the devil and other things to be renounced, if such figures as those are to be put before their eyes."' 165 The issue here is a strangely modern one and is still a matter about which public opinion and present legislation is confused. His division between the educated and illiterate understanding of art may still contain sense. As Folliott says,

'to anyone [else] who can be supposed to have read Plato, or indeed to be ever likely to do so, I would very willingly show these figures; because to such they would, I grant you, be the outward and visible signs of poetical and philosophical ideas: but, to the multitude, the gross carnal multitude, they are but two beautiful women, one half undressed, and the other quite so.' 166

The problem today is how the distinction may be made between that which is genuinely 'art' and that which is only indecent or pornographic.

Folliott is not, then, distinguished in his religious practice, or seen to be unduly observant in his duties. While I would not go as far as J.B. Priestley, when he says that 'if there is ever an Epicurian church he should be one of its

saints', it is true that 'there is nothing very spiritual about the Doctor who would have remained much the same if Christianity had never come into existence.'¹⁶⁷ A final remark of Folliott's which may, perhaps, contradict this judgement, though the meaning is not unambiguous, is made in the last chapter. Mr Crotchet asks him, the learned friend having taken office, whether he is afraid of his vested interests. The Doctor replies, "'Not I, indeed, sir; my vested interests are very safe from all such reformers as the learned friend.'"¹⁶⁸ This may refer to the fact that, as a Christian, the Doctor believes that his 'treasure is in heaven'. A thoroughly scriptural idea.¹⁶⁹

Of his intellectual worthiness, on the other hand, there can be no doubt. As Lady Clarinda rightly remarks, he is an excellent scholar and fond of books. The ancient books in the collection of Mr Crotchet were 'selected and arranged by the Reverend Doctor Folliott'.¹⁷⁰ He is shown quoting Chaucer from memory on his way home from the breakfast scene that introduces him.¹⁷¹ He holds Shakespeare supreme.¹⁷² His conversation everywhere shows a ready and thorough knowledge of classical authors and commentators. Modern authors, it is true, fare less well. Diderot he claims not to have heard of, and Kant he dismisses.¹⁷³ He castigates the works of Scott as the "'pantomime of literature'"¹⁷⁴ His criticism of Scott is pithy and biased but with more wit than justice. It cannot,

however, be dismissed as wholly capricious. There is an element of truth in his claim that there are marked similarities in the literature of pantomime and the pantomime of literature, the name he gives to the works of the enchanter of the North.

'There is the same variety of character, the same diversity of story, the same copiousness of incident, the same research into costume, the same display of heraldry, falconry, minstrelsy, scenery, monkery, witchery, devilry, robbery, poachery, piracy, fishery, gipsy-astrology, demonology, architecture, fortification, castrametation, navigation; the same running base of love and battle. The main difference is, that the one set of amusing fictions is told in music and action; the other in all the worst dialects of the English language. As to any sentence worth remembering, any moral or political truth, any thing having a tendency, however remote, to make men wiser or better, to make them think, to make them even think of thinking; they are both precisely alike: nuspian, nequaquam, nullibi, nullimodis.' 175

The rider, perhaps, adjusts the balance a little,

LADY CLARINDA. 'Very amusing, however.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Very amusing, very amusing.' 176

It is characteristic that Folliott's general judgement on books, "a book that furnishes no quotations, is, me judice, no book - it is a plaything."¹⁷⁷ has itself become much quoted.

Learned himself, he castigates the universities of the day for their neglect of scholarship. This was far less just, in 1831, than it had been several decades before. His comparison between the scholarship of Germany and the poverty of Oxford in this respect has already been noted. It is preceded by another attack equally eloquent, but more amusing.

At Oxford, they walked about to see the curiosities of architecture, painted windows, and undisturbed libraries. The Reverend Doctor Folliott laid a wager with Mr Crotchet 'that in all their perlustrations they would not find a man reading' and won it. 'Ay, sir,' said the reverend gentleman, 'this is still a seat of learning, on the principle of - once a captain always a captain. We may well ask, in these great reservoirs of books whereof no man ever draws a sluice, Quorsum pertinuit stipare Platona Menandro? What is done here for the classics? Reprinting German editions on better paper. A great boast, verily! What for mathematics? What for metaphysics? What for history? What for anything worth knowing? This was a seat of learning in the days of Friar Bacon. But the Friar is gone, and his learning with him. 178

This demand for a strict classical education is the reason for Folliott favouring Captain Fitzchrome whom, he believes mistakenly, to be one of the initiated.¹⁷⁹ Learning for Folliott, however, does not include the study of political or economical sciences. Indeed, Dr Folliott does not recognize them as sciences at all. As he says, '"you have given the name of a science to what is yet an imperfect enquiry."' ¹⁸⁰ Popular science, of the sort that the 'Steam Intellect Society' gives to all and sundry, obviously does not win his approval. This is how he describes the efforts of the Society, '" every thing for every body, science for all, schools for all, rhetoric for all, law for all, physic for all, words for all, and sense for none."' ¹⁸¹

A.E. Dyson criticizes this satirical attitude to science.¹⁸² He claims that Peacock makes no division in his satire between the crank and the genius.¹⁸³ Of this book

specifically, he says, 'Mr Firedamp's remedy for malaria is remarkably funny, and it is no doubt unfortunate, for Peacock at least, that it also turned out to be true.'¹⁸⁴ But it is as well to remember that it is Folliott who speaks, not Peacock, and this character is meant to be out of step with modern enquiry. In any case, Folliott's attitude, it seems to me, is not especially reprehensible. There are two passages where Firedamp discusses malaria and Folliott comments on them. Mr Firedamp says,

'Wherever there is water, there is malaria, and wherever there is malaria, there are the elements of death. The great object of a wise man should be to live on a gravelly hill, without so much as a duck-pond within ten miles of him, eschewing cisterns and water-butts, and taking care that there be no gravel-pits for lodging the rain. The sun sucks up infection from water, wherever it exists on the face of the earth.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Well, sir, you have the authority of the ancient mystagogue, who said, *'Εστιν ὕδωρ ψυχῆς θάνατος* . For my part I care not a rush (or any other aquatic and inesculent vegetable) who or what sucks up either the water or the infection. I think the proximity of wine a matter of much more importance than the long-inquiry of water.' 185

Here Folliott first comments seriously, with a classical allusion, the ambiguity of the quotation notwithstanding, and then makes an amusing comment, which is wholly characteristic, about wine. He is not as dismissive as Dyson would have us believe. On the second occasion Folliott is decidedly brusque but one would not expect a man of his sturdy constitution to have a great deal of sympathy with the hypochondriacal alarms of

Firedamp. In the circumstances his remedy, although not medically accurate, seems very sensible. The middle of an English winter is not the most likely time to contract malaria.

Proceeding to the edge of the moat, they fished up Mr Firedamp, who had missed his way back, and tumbled in. He was drawn out, exclaiming, 'that he had taken his last dose of malaria in this world.'

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Tut, man; dry clothes, a turkey's leg and rump, well devilled, and a quart of strong punch will set all to rights.' 186

'Wood embers,' said Mr Firedamp, when he had been accommodated with a change of clothes, 'there is no antidote to malaria like the smoke of wood embers; pine embers.' And he placed himself, with his mouth open, close by the fire.

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Punch, sir, punch: there is no antidote like punch.' 187

Folliott, perhaps with the voice of Peacock more clearly heard than is usual, merely jests at the excesses and absurdities of theorists, without passing judgement on the truth of the matter. It is often the case that truth is stranger than fiction and the novel, in any case, is rarely the place for scientific discussion.

Folliott is, on the other hand, very critical of the Edinburgh reviewers.¹⁸⁸ His attack is stringent and cutting; the language incisive and damning. Here is an excellent example of Folliott's critical faculties at their sharpest. His displays of physical violence do him little credit, but this verbal attack displays a strength that is not out of place. It shows him to be not only an easy conversationalist with

pronounced opinions but someone with discerning critical faculties. His criticism may perhaps be too damning, for the Edinburgh Review provided much that was of interest to the contemporary reader, but it must be admitted that their treatment of recognized writers of the age often deserves the sharpness of his criticism.

THE REV. DR FOLLIOTT. 'Well, sir, these gentlemen ... have practised as much dishonesty as, in any other department than literature, would have brought the practitioner under the cognisance of the police. In politics, they have run with the hare and hunted with the hound. In criticism they have, knowingly and unblushingly, given false characters, both for good and for evil: sticking at no art of misrepresentation, to clear out of the field of literature all who stood in the way of the interests of their own clique. They have never allowed their own profound ignorance of any thing (Greek, for instance) to throw even an air of hesitation into their oracular decision on the matter. They set an example of profligate contempt for truth, of which the success was in proportion to the effrontery; and when their prosperity had filled the market with competitors, they cried out against their own reflected sin, as if they had never committed it, or were entitled to a monopoly of it. The latter, I rather think, was what they wanted.' 189

It is noticeable that Mac Quedy, an ineffectual character, has no reply to make.

The basis of Folliott's intellectual position is, of course, Greek and the Athenian achievement. It is the attitude of a dogmatist, but a dogmatist well informed and sure of his facts. Mr Chainmail says that '"I am for truth and simplicity."' Folliott's reply shows the basis of his thinking.

"Let him who loves them read Greek: Greek, Greek, Greek."¹⁹⁰
For the Reverend Doctor, nothing can ever match the Athenian civilization. All Mac Quedy's talk of Edinburgh as the 'modern Athens' is but chaff before the wind. "Modern Athens, sir! the assumption is a personal affront to every man who has a Sophocles in his library."¹⁹¹ This is an amusingly epigrammatic statement of his fundamental position. Folliott everywhere displays, in his conversation, attitude, argument and learning, that he is faithful to his interpretation of this classical position. He may carry his loyalty to extreme lengths but it is an intellectual position for which there must be, at the very least, recognition, even today. Social issues enter Crotchet Castle with more insistency than in any of the other novels, including Melincourt. For this reason some critics have found this novel less satisfactory than the others.¹⁹² Folliott's attitudes to social issues are as one might expect. His very first speech indicates his essentially conservative outlook, in that he has no time for the 'march of mind.'¹⁹³ The working classes, as he says of the cook that he wishes upon the 'learned friend',¹⁹⁴ should concentrate on their jobs and not attempt to educate themselves. In Folliott's opinion any such attempts only lead to discontent. Ultimately, the Doctor believes, it leads to the rioting of 'Captain Swing' and the like whom he manfully fights off in the last chapter,¹⁹⁵ and

the burning of haystacks.¹⁹⁶ He may even think that it would lead to revolution. Folliott does make one speech in which he explains how he thinks society should, ideally, be governed. It is interesting, in that it partly appears contradictory to his more usual outbursts. There seems to be an element of Bentham's philosophy in it¹⁹⁷ and a desire, too, for social equality. It shows, perhaps, that the divine is not wholly unaware of the injustice of poverty.

'Now I say, [if this be so,] riches are not the object for a community to aim at. I say, the nation is best off, in relation to other nations, which has the greatest quantity of the common necessities of life distributed among the greatest number of persons; which has the greatest number of honest hearts and stout arms united in a common interest, willing to offend no one, but ready to fight in defence of their own community against all the rest of the world, because they have something worth fighting for.' 198

The frankly bellicose nationalism, however, may seem alarming. Folliott, it has already been seen, seems to ally himself with the 'rich and respectable',¹⁹⁹ in society, but he is not, on the other hand, unaware of the dishonesty of this class of society.²⁰⁰ Folliott has not time for the 'learned friend' and his schemes for reform,²⁰¹ nor for the education and emancipation of women.²⁰² He is, however, conscious of the damages of industrialization. His comment that "'mud, filth, gas dregs, lock-weirs, and the march of mind, developed in the form of poaching, have ruined the fishery.'" ²⁰³ seems more

pertinent now, even than it must have been at the time.

Everywhere Folliott shows that his attitudes are based on a secure income and cultured, intelligent society. For the 'rabble' he has little time except to guard their morals from corruption by works of art which they might misunderstand.²⁰⁴

If he is not especially enlightened, he is not so very different from most of Peacock's other characters. The attitudes Folliott adopts are largely those of the world that Peacock's characters inhabit. It is useless to wish they were different; for a change would mean a lessening of delight.

The clergy, for whom Folliott is an 'amende honorable', might be flattered that a cleric takes the centre of the stage in this novel though not, perhaps, entirely with the character himself. As a priest and pastor he is sadly lacking. As a dinner guest, however, a scholar, wit and conversationalist he is unrivalled. Perhaps his vivacity grows almost too lively on occasion; his voice too domineering. Certainly his capacity for physical violence is hardly in keeping with his profession. Yet, curiously, Folliott remains in our minds distinctly as a clergyman. As J.B. Priestley says, 'there is nothing of the lay figure about him; we see him as a real person; he has an attitude of mind and a tone of voice of his own.'²⁰⁵ Howard Mills thinks that 'Folliott threatens the novel when Peacock over-indulges his liveliness and so lets him

overdominate the conversation.²⁰⁶ But one could not imagine many of the conversations, and indeed the book itself, without him. For Folliott is entertaining, serious, amusing, pompous, alert, reactionary, all together in a curious and convincing mixture. Certainly, he is thoroughly alive. Should it be said, furthermore, that this combination of wit, acid humour and the clerical profession is unlikely, one only need turn to the biographies and works of the Reverend Sydney Smith - one of the wittiest, naughtiest and clever clergymen of all times.²⁰⁷

The last of Peacock's clerical characters, the Reverend Doctor Opimian, in Gryll Grange (1860), seems to come from quite a different world from Folliott. In some ways, of course, he does: this novel followed Crotchet Castle after twenty-nine years. Yet, on closer examination, all the old ingredients are still to be found: wide classical learning, multifarious conversation and good humour. But they have undergone a change in Opimian. The classics are no longer ammunition in the war against modern barbarism; that war has long since been won. The evils of modern society are strongly criticized, but from the secure, accepted ground of classical antiquity. The conversation of Opimian lacks none of Folliott's learning; though his barbed wit is missing. The satire remains but it has mellowed. It is less topical and more general in scope. In Gryll Grange there are no arguments; only discussions. No

fight or battles with a 'rabble-rout'; the country-folk are in the pastoral tradition. Opimian, from his opening words, shows himself sedate and serene. Folliott 'burst' upon his audience;²⁰⁸ Opimian is discovered at dinner discoursing on the soup.²⁰⁹ Opimian is less amusing than Folliott; and less laughable. Above all he is more tolerant: a rounded, likeable character and one whose religious beliefs, though never obtrusive, seem firmly infused into his character and outlook. For the first time a pastor is seen as well as a parson.

Lord Curryfin well described the divine. "'He is not a man made to pattern. He is simple-minded, learned, tolerant, and the quintessence of bonhomie.'" ²¹⁰ Peacock's description, also, unlike that of Folliott, ²¹¹ does nothing to counteract this impression. It is worthwhile noting this description in full for it notes all the characteristic qualities of Opimian. First, the divine is socially and financially well placed, but by no means living in luxury.

The worthy divine dwelt in an agreeably situated vicarage, on the outskirts of the New Forest. A good living, a comfortable patrimony, a moderate dowry with his wife, placed him sufficiently above the cares of the world to enable him to gratify all his tastes without minute calculations of cost. His tastes in fact were four: a good library, a good dinner, a pleasant garden, and rural walks. He was an athlete in pedestrianism. He took no pleasure in riding, either on horseback or in a carriage; but he kept a brougham for the service of Mrs Opimian, and for his own occasional use in dining out. 212

The characteristically amusing phrase 'athlete in pedestrianism' befits one who is

... a man of purple cheer,
A rosy man, right plump to see? 213

His concern for his wife is important for the Opimians are obviously a close and happy family as, indeed, this description of their life together shows.

In the morning, while Mrs Opimian found ample occupation in the details of her household duties and the care of her little family, the Doctor, unless he had predestined the whole day to an excursion, studied in the library. In the afternoon he walked; in the evening he dined; and after dinner read to his wife and family, or heard his children read to him. This was his home life. 214

The love of cookery and good wine is what we have come to expect from Peacock's clergy. Opimian, with an interest shared by Peacock himself,²¹⁵ kept a manuscript volume of recipes, as well as printed sources, and his lady 'studied them carefully, and by diligent superintendence left the Doctor nothing to desire in the service of his table. His cellar was well stocked with a selection of the best vintages, under his own especial charge.'²¹⁶ His social life is limited to dining out 'more frequently than at any other place with his friend and neighbour Mr Gryll, who entirely sympathized with him in his taste for a good dinner.'²¹⁷ Peacock's amusing vignette of the whole household is in his maturest style.

From the master and mistress to the cook, and from

the cook to the tom cat, there was about the inhabitants of the vicarage a sleek purring rotundity of face and figure that denoted community of feelings, habits, and diet; each in its kind, of course, for the Doctor had his port, the cook her ale, and the cat his milk, in sufficiently liberal allowance. 218

Possibly, the more gentle and kindly nature of Opimian can be attributed to his family life and the presence of children. The family, Opimian believes, adjusts the gloomy picture of the world. As he says to his wife,

'A hermit reading nothing but a newspaper might find little else than food for misanthropy; but living among friends, and in the bosom of our family, we see that the dark side of life is the occasional picture, the bright is its everyday aspect. The occasional is the matter of curiosity, of incident, of adventure, of things that really happen to few, and may possibly happen to any. The interest attendant on any action or event is in just proportion to its rarity; and, happily, quiet virtues are all around us, and obtrusive vices seldom cross our path. On the whole I agree in opinion with Theseus, that there is more good than evil in the world.' 219

His love of children, and his high opinion of marriage and the benefits of a good wife, play a large part in the plot of this novel. It is Opimian, and his eulogies on these subjects, who persuades Falconer to leave his ideals and enter the real world, through marriage. His enthusiasm is explained thus to Falconer.

'I have been an exception to the rule that "the course of true love never did run smooth." Nothing could run more smooth than mine. I was in love. I proposed. I was accepted. No crossings before. No bickerings after. I drew a prize in the lottery of marriage.' 220

He also suggests that the examples of misery and divorce gleaned

from history are not normative.

'The conspicuous are not the frequent. In the quiet path of everyday life - the secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae [221] - I could show you many couples who are really comforts and helpmates to each other. Then, above all things, children. The great blessing of old age, the one that never fails, if all else fails, is a daughter.' 222

Finally, when Falconer marries Morgana, Opimian's wedding eulogy is all that it should be. It is a comment also on his own marital felicity.

'Most earnestly do I hope that the promise of their marriage morning may be fulfilled in its noon and in its sunset; and when I add, may they all be as happy in their partners as I have been, I say what all who know the excellent person beside me will feel to be the best good wish in my power to bestow.' 223

Opimian's match-making activities, in discovering seven male rustics for Falconer's vestals is a further proof of his good nature. In a strange book, Prairie Parson, we find a parallel. Here a Scottish minister, in Canada, arranges the marriage of six settlers with six Scottish volunteers from 'the home country'. His work completed the minister ends by 'thanking the good God for the happy beginning of a glorious scheme.' Alas, whether or not this is a factual parallel to Peacock's delightful fiction, I cannot discover.²²⁴

Nothing illustrates the essential qualities of gentleness and charm that Opimian everywhere displays than his praise of the traditional Christmas. It is personal and

warm; marked by an excellent blend of good cheer and knowledgeable descriptions of well-known customs. The passage typifies the best of Gryll Grange. Opimian is everywhere responsible for this pleasant tone.

'I myself think much of Christmas and its associations. I always dine at home on Christmas-day, and measure the steps of my children's heads on the wall, and see how much higher each of them has risen, since the same time last year, in the scale of physical life. There are many poetical charms in the heraldings of Christmas. The halcyon builds its nest on the tranquil sea. "The bird of dawning singeth all night long." [225] I have never verified either of these poetic facts. I am willing to take them for granted. I like the idea of the Yule log, the enormous block of wood, carefully selected long before, and preserved where it would be thoroughly dry, which burned on the old-fashioned hearth. It would not suit the stoves of our modern saloons. We could not burn it in our kitchens, where a small fire in the midst of a mass of black iron, roasts, and bakes, and boils, and steams, and broils and fries, by a complicated apparatus, which, whatever may be its other virtues, leaves no space for a Christmas fire. I like the festoons of holly on the walls and windows; the dance under the mistletoe; the gigantic sausage; the baron of beef; the vast globe of plum-pudding, the true image of the earth, flattened at the poles; the tapping of the old October; the inexhaustible bowl of punch; the life and joy of the old hall, when the squire and his household and his neighbourhood were as one. I like the idea of what has gone, and I can still enjoy the reality of what remains.' 226

The love of food, and discussion about it, is seen in Opimian, as it had been in Folliott. The hostility, however, is lacking between the old and the new methods. The discussion about dining à la Russe between Mr MacBorrowdale

and Opimian might, with Folliott and Mac Quedy, have proved occasion for argument. Here they are largely in agreement, Opimian merely suggesting modifications. At the entry of a large sirloin of beef, Mr MacBorrowdale says,

'I detest and abominate the idea of a Siberian dinner, where you just look on fiddle-faddles while your dinner is behind a screen, and you are served with rations like a pauper.'

THE REV. DR OPIMIAN. 'I quite agree with Mr MacBorrowdale. I like to see my dinner. And herein I rejoice to have Addison on my side; for I remember a paper, in which he objects to having roast beef placed on a sideboard.' 227

The Reverend B.J. Armstrong, however, writing in 1859, found the practice convenient. He notes in his diary, 'had a dinner-party on the sensible principle ... called à la Russe ... the plan worked very well, and the cook said it was much easier for her.'²²⁸ The question, obviously, was topical.

Again the attacks on the 'learned friend' and the like, well known from Crotchet Castle, continue. They are, however, less personal and barbed. Moreover, when Opimian recalls that he is a friend of Lord Curryfin, also present, he demurs from further attack. '"He has helped introduce much change; whether for good or for ill remains to be seen. I forgot he was your Lordship's friend. I apologize, and drink to his health.'"²²⁹ Folliott also apologizes to Mac Quedy in similar circumstances, but this did not stop his criticisms.²³⁰ Opimian is of a gentler breed. Discussion,

he says, is '"very absorbent of claret. But I do not think it otherwise an incongruity after dinner, provided it be carried on, as our disquisitions have always been, with frankness and good humour."' 231

Opimian may also admit of being wrong. His opinion of Lord Curryfin, for example, changes in the course of the novel. From being one of the horde of lecturing Lords, he becomes a suitable candidate for Opimian's ultimate prize - marriage.

'He has very much to recommend him: and I discover in him one quality which is invaluable. He does all he can to make himself agreeable to all about him, and he has great tact in seeing how to do it. In any intimate relation of life - with a reasonable wife, for instance, he would be the pink of a good husband.' 232

This largesse is something of which Folliott, one imagines, would be incapable. Opimian is not without an appreciation of beauty. His description of rural scenery, for example, is admirable. He says to Falconer,

'Look at that old oak with the deer under it; the long and deep range of fern running up from it to that beech-grove on the upland, the lights and shadows on the projections and recesses of the wood, and the blaze of foxglove in its foreground. It is a place in which a poet might look for a glimpse of a Hamadryad.' 233

His behaviour towards the serving ladies, who minister to Falconer, prove that his enjoyment of beauty is not limited to landscape. 234

Opimian's religion, as I said, is not obtrusive.

His character is the best testimony to his virtues. Other more specific references to religion reveal, with an understandable exception, the same tolerance and good sense one might expect of him. The exception is his condemnation of Mormonism, the culmination as he sees it of a collection of quackeries.

'It is thought something wonderful that uneducated persons should believe in witchcraft in the nineteenth century: as if educated persons did not believe in grosser follies; such as this same spirit-rapping, unknown tongues, clairvoyance, table turning, and all sorts of fanatical impositions, having for the present their climax in Mormonism. Herein all times are alike. There is nothing too monstrous for human credulity.' 235

Opimian's general religious position is characterized by Falconer as "'a tolerant liberality.'" ²³⁶ It arises from the discussion, which recurs elsewhere, concerning Falconer's interest in St Catherine. The subject is first mentioned at the end of the seven sisters's musical recital when Falconer explains that, "'we usually end ... with a hymn to Saint Catherine, but perhaps it may not be to your taste; although Saint Catherine is a Saint of the English Church Calendar.'" Opimian replies that he is "'not disposed to object to a saint of the English Church Calendar.'" ²³⁷ Later, he makes it clear, to Miss Gryll, that he does not think the devotion improper, even if it is unusual.

'He kept very carefully in view that Saint Catherine

is a Saint of the English Church Calendar. I imagine there is less of true piety than of an abstract notion of ideal beauty, even in his devotion to her. But it is so far satisfactory that he wished to prove his religion, such as it is, to be within the pale of the Church of England.' 238

By the time this novel was written (1860), the Oxford Movement was well under way, but its revival of ritual, certainly at this time, raised fierce and widespread opposition. Certainly, most non-Tractarian clerics of this time would have been less than enthusiastic about Falconer's bedroom with its altar, statue, painted panels and stained glass windows of Saint Catherine, despite her being retained as a saint in the Reformed Church.²³⁹ The Oxford Movement had not, as yet, changed Opimian's view sufficiently for him to regard the English Church as Catholic. Indeed, a warning about Romish error is gently administered at the end of Falconer's delineation of his treasures. "'At present your faith is simply poetical. But take care, my young friend, that you do not finish by becoming the dupe of your own mystification.'"²⁴⁰ This Protestant viewpoint is more clear when he says, "'I should be sorry to find you far gone in hagiolatry. I hope you will acquiesce in Martin, keeping equally clear of Peter and Jack.'"²⁴¹ His replies in the following conversation, however, which clearly refer to the Tractarian revival of Catholic worship and devotion to Our Lady, show him to be by no means unsympathetic. The account comes from the doctor

who attends Miss Gryll, who has been 'a traveller'.²⁴² Doctor Anodyne says,

'In an age like ours, in which music and pictures are the predominant tastes, I do not wonder that the forms of the old Catholic worship are received with increasing favour. There is a sort of adhesion to the old religion, which results less from faith than from a certain feeling of poetry; it finds its disciples; but it is of modern growth; and has very essential differences from what it outwardly resembles.'

THE REV DR OPIMIAN. 'It is, as I have frequently had occasion to remark, and as my young friend here will readily admit, one of the many forms of the love of ideal beauty, which, without being in itself religion, exerts on vivid imaginations an influence that is very often like it.'

MR FALCONER. 'An orthodox English Churchman was the poet who sang to the virgin:

Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
As to a visible power, in which did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in thee,
Of mother's love with maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with terrene.'

THE REV. DR OPIMIAN. 'Well, my young friend, the love of ideal beauty has exercised none but a benignant influence on you, whatever the degree of orthodoxy there may be in your view of it.' 243

Opimian is also portrayed as the pastor and a friend of the other characters in a manner that none of the other clerics were. His kindly and paternal interests in Falconer, and his anxiety that he should meet and marry Morgana Gryll, extend far beyond the friendly courtesies that the other clerics paid as dinner guests. The initial contact with Harry Hedgerow, whose matrimonial fortunes he follows and assists throughout the novel, is indicative of his pastoral concern which he does not

limit to the rich or socially important. The 'doleful swain' is bemoaning his fate when the Doctor discovers him.

The Doctor approaching, kindly inquired, 'What is the matter?' but he was answered only by a redoubled burst of sorrow and an emphatic rejection of all sympathy.

'You can't do me any good.'

'You do not know that,' said the Doctor. 'No man knows what good another can do till he communicates his trouble.'

For some time the Doctor could obtain no other answer than 'You can't do me any good.' But at length the patience and kind face of the inquirer had their effect on the sad shepherd. 244

Later, his words are shown to be appreciated by Harry who says, "'it is a comfort to me to see you, and hear the sound of your voice, sir. It always does me good.'"²⁴⁵ Opimian also extends his friendship and hospitality to the fellow in a friendly manner.

'Why then, my young friend, you are most heartily welcome to see and hear me whenever you please, if you will come over to the Vicarage. And you will always find a piece of cold roast beef and a tankard of good ale; and just now a shield of brawn. There is some comfort in them.' 246

His advice that "'whatever happens in this world, never let it spoil your dinner,'" sounds much more like common-sense than cynicism in its context.²⁴⁷ It is well meant pastoral advice from a cleric of the old school.

Intellectually, Opimian is a match for all his predecessors. Of them all, he is most fittingly a Doctor of Divinity. There is in his conversation a continual undertone

of learning. With Folliott there was the impression, on occasion, that his scholarship was thrust upon the listener. Opimian is gentler, more discursive, bringing the riches from his store with no desire to impress. He quotes from, or refers to, among others, Shakespeare,²⁴⁸ Chaucer,²⁴⁹ and Milton²⁵⁰ obviously, Middleton²⁵¹ and Addison,²⁵² Burns²⁵³ perhaps surprisingly, and Tennyson²⁵⁴ not very flatteringly. His main concern is for Greek and Latin in which 'he thought himself a match for any man.'²⁵⁵ His attitude is epitomized in his comment about mixing wine. "'The Greek taste was so exquisite in all matters in which we can bring it to the test, as to justify a strong presumption that in matters in which we cannot test, it, it was equally correct.'"²⁵⁶ Numerous examples of his classical learning need not be given. Suffice it to say that the scholarly tone of Opimian is more discursive than that of Folliott. There is much more discussion, either by Opimian himself, in soliloquy, or with others, of minor matters of classical detail. The reader in search of a witty interplay of ideas finds less to amuse him but the different tone gives this book a more restful, autumnal character: it is best enjoyed by those with similar interests. I quote his extensive soliloquy, concerning Falconer's female servants and the knotty problem of the vestal virgins' hair, as the best example of the type of learned conversation that the Doctor displays. The great

length of his musings is characteristic, and indicative of the pace of the book as a whole. Ovid, Euripides, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Terence, Homer and Pliny are all touched upon. The wealth of detail and the gentle, unhurried style amply demonstrate the Doctor's intellectual character. There is nothing polemical in his approach, as there might have been in Folliott, and the final thoughts show that the Doctor knows the place of his scholarship. He uses it to enhance reality and does not confuse the two.

The Vestals had head-dresses, which hid their hair, if they had any. They were shaved on admission. Perhaps the hair was allowed to grow again. Perhaps not. I must look into the point. If not, it was a wise precaution. 'Hair, the only grace of form,' [257] says the Arbiter Elegantiarum, who compares a bald head to a fungus. [258] A head without hair, says Ovid, is a field without grass, and a shrub without leaves. [259] Venus herself, if she had appeared with a bald head, would not have tempted Apuleius: [260] and I am of his mind. A husband, in Menander, [261] in a fit of jealous madness, shaves his wife's head; and when he sees what he has made of her, rolls at her feet in a paroxysm of remorse. He was at any rate safe from jealousy till it grew again. And here is a subtlety of Euripides, which none of his commentators have seen into. Aegisthus has married Electra to a young farmer, who cultivates his own land. He respects the Princess from magnanimity, and restores her a pure virgin to her brother Orestes. 'Not probable', say some critics. But I say, highly probable: for she comes on with her head shaved. There is the talisman, and the consummate artifice of the great poet. It is ostensibly a symbol of grief; but not the less a most efficient ally of the aforesaid magnanimity. 'In mourning,' says Aristotle, 'sympathizing with the dead, we deform ourselves by cutting off our hair.' And truly,

it is sympathy in approximation. A woman's head shaved is a step towards a death's head. As a symbol of grief, it was not necessary to the case of Electra; for in the sister tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, her grief is equally great, and she appears with flowing hair; but in them she is an unmarried maid, and there is no dramatic necessity for so conspicuous an antidote to her other charms. Neither is it according to custom; for in recent grief the whole hair was sacrificed, but in the memory of an old sorrow only one or two curls were cut off. [262] Therefore it was the dramatic necessity of a counter-charm that influenced Euripides. Helen knew better than to shave her head in a case where custom required it. Euripides makes Electra reproach Helen for thus preserving her beauty; [263] which further illustrates his purpose in shaving the head of Electra where custom did not require it. And Terence showed his taste in not shaving the head of his heroine in the Phormio, though the severity of Athenian custome would have required it. Her beauty shone through her dishevelled hair, but with no hair at all, she would not have touched the heart of Antipho. **Ἀλλὰ τίη μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελεξατο θυμός;** [264] But wherefore does my mind discourse these things to me? suspending dismal images on lovely realities? for the luxuriant hair of these young girls is of no ordinary beauty. Their tresses have not been deposited under the shadow of the sacred lotus, as Pliny tells us those of the Vestals were.' 265

In a lighter vein is the discussion with Mr Gryll, in the opening chapter of the novel, on Palestine Soup and other culinary misnomers. This combines the best elements of classical learning with a mellowed humour.

For science, however, the Doctor has little time, like his predecessor, commenting on Lord Curryfin's lectures that,

'It will be at least harmless, as long as it is like Hamlet's reading, 'words, words, words'. [266]

Like most other science, it resolves itself into lecturing, lecturing, lecturing, about all sorts of matters, relevant and irrelevant: one enormous bore prating about jurisprudence, another about statistics, another about education, and so forth; the crambe repetita of the same rubbish, which has already been served up "twies hot and twies cold", [267] at as many other associations nick-named scientific.' 268

Opimian is, however, more perceptive than Folliott, and indeed prophetic, in seeing the ultimate outcome of reckless scientific achievement. The questions of explosions, speed, pollution and machines are discussed in a manner which seems all too accurate in our present society, even if it must have appeared old-fashioned prejudice at the time. Intellectually, the Doctor is wise enough to draw the essential distinction between knowledge and wisdom. The speech that follows is very homi-lectical certainly, but it is powerful also. The excellent exemplar of science as a double-edged tool, the rhetorical device of repeating the imperative 'See ... ' and 'Look ...' and the final solemn summary make this powerful prose. The content of the speech is open to debate but there can be no doubt as to the Doctor's mental skill in his manner of presenting the argument.

'Science is one thing, and wisdom is another. Science is an edged tool, with which men play like children, and cut their own fingers. If you look at the results which science has brought in its train, you will find them to consist almost wholly in elements of mischief. See how much belongs to the word Explosion alone, of which the ancients knew nothing. Explosions of powder-mills

and powder-magazines; of coal-gas in mines and in houses; of high-pressure engines in ships and boats and factories. See the complications and refinements of modes of destruction, in revolvers and rifles and shells and rockets and cannon. See collisions and wrecks and every mode of disaster by land and by sea, resulting chiefly from the insanity for speed, in those who for the most part have nothing to do at the end of the race, which they run as if they were so many Mercuries, speeding with messages from Jupiter. Look at our scientific drainage, which turns refuse into poison. Look at the subsoil of London, whenever it is turned up to the air, converted by gas leakage into one mass of pestilent blackness, in which no vegetation can flourish, and above which, with the rapid growth of the ever-growing nuisance, no living thing will breathe with impunity. Look at our scientific machinery, which has destroyed domestic manufacture, which has substituted rottenness for strength in the thing made, and physical degradation in crowded towns for healthy and comfortable country life in the makers. The day would fail, if I should attempt to enumerate the evils which science has inflicted on mankind. I almost think it is the ultimate destiny of science to exterminate the human race.' 269

Although Opimian's attitude to science in this speech shows his obvious prejudices, it reveals also a certain insight. The direction that science has taken has indeed led to the atomic bomb and excessive pollution. It has also given immense benefit to mankind in medicine, agriculture and industrial manufacture. The point, that increased mechanization has given men more leisure time which they little know how to employ, is just. (One would like to have heard Opimian's learned condemnation of the television.) Opimian's words are certainly a warning; their justice remains.

A.E. Dyson suggests that Opimian speaks 'fairly directly' for Peacock himself. He is, Dyson thinks, 'not so much a benevolent Tory as a reconciled Canute'.²⁷⁰ This is, of course, partly true but Opimian nonetheless does seem to stand for, and indeed embody, many good qualities of the scholarly, Christian gentleman that the more informed liberal conscience, for all his good sense and lack of reactionary prejudice, often lacks. It is not that Opimian is against science in a blind, unthinking way, it is rather that he realizes that along with the improvements come distinct disadvantages to the quality and pace of man's way of life. It still remains a moot point as to whether the immense material improvements of scientific achievement have led to significantly happier or more fulfilled lives. Opimian's answer to his wife's point that, '"if the world grew ever so honest, there would still be accidents"', is an important one. It shows that Opimian placed people, their welfare and protection above material or scientific improvements for their own sakes. '"Honesty"' he replies, '"would materially diminish the number"' of accidents which occur when the motive of profit is paramount. This motive of profit, it might be argued, substantially increased with the spread of mechanized industry and a universal commercialism.

'High-pressure steam boilers would not scatter death and destruction around them, if the dishonesty of avarice did not tempt their employment, where the more costly low pressure would ensure absolute

safety. Honestly built houses would not come suddenly down and crush their occupants. Ships, faithfully built and efficiently manned, would not so readily strike on a lee shore, nor go instantly to pieces on the first touch of the ground. Honestly made sweetmeats would not poison children; honestly compounded drugs would not poison patients. In short, the larger portion of what we call accidents are crimes.' 271

We see here, I suggest, that despite all his apparent limitations Opimian has many right priorities. Furthermore, I would not wholly equate the views of Opimian with those of Peacock. Certainly, the view that Peacock, in 1869, wrote Gryll Grange from the position of a reconciled Canute is a reasonable one. The attitudes and opinions of this book belong more to Peacock's Regency hey-day than to the contemporary mid-Victorian world. But Peacock's work for the East India company, and especially his industrious and far-sighted labours for the introduction of steam navigation in the company's trading with India, show him to be less hostile to the benefits of science than Opimian's outlook would suggest.²⁷²

Opimian also attacks, and perhaps with more justice, the parliamentary authorities which control and direct the application of scientific discovery. His words certainly seem apposite here.

'The wisdom of Parliament is a wisdom sui generis. It is not like any other wisdom. It is not the wisdom of Socrates, nor the wisdom of Solomon. It is the wisdom of Parliament. It is not easily analysed or defined; but it is very easily under-

stood. It has achieved wonderful things by itself, and still more when Science has come to its aid. Between them, they have poisoned the Thames, and killed the fish in the river ... The Wisdom has ordered the Science to do something. The Wisdom does not know what, nor the Science either. But the Wisdom has empowered the Science to spend some millions of money; and this, no doubt, the Science will do. When the money has been spent, it will be found that the something has been worse than nothing. The Science will want more money to do some other something, and the Wisdom will grant it.' 273

On the other hand, his critical views on the abilities of members of Parliament are surely dated. They seem more appropriate to the Parliaments before the Reform Bill than to the conscientious Victorian parliamentarians of the period. It underlines the fact that the novel may have been written in 1860 but has its roots, in many respects, back in the twenties.

'Ask the honourable member for Muckborough on what acquisitions in history and mental and moral philosophy he founds his claim of competence to make laws for the nation? He can only tell you that he has been chosen as the most conspicuous Grub among the Money-grubs of his borough to be the representative of all that is sordid, selfish, hard-hearted, unintellectual, and antipatriotic, which are the distinguishing qualities of the majority among them.' 274

It is here that Richard Garnett's words, about Peacock, are appropriate to Opimian also. He commented that it was a misfortune not to be able to go with one's age but that Peacock could serve as a model for those who stood still.²⁷⁵ Some of Opimian's criticisms are appropriate and perceptive in view of later developments. Others seem to ignore or be ignorant of

the progress of the age. Another of Opimian's dislikes is the system of competitive examinations. These have now been accepted as an unsatisfactory necessity and the demands of society which, Miss Ilex suggests, make success dependent upon them. Even so, the system has many defects which Opimian is wise to criticize. His words about forcing are very apt.

THE REV. DR OPIMIAN. 'Forcing, forcing, seems to be the rule of life. A young lady who forces her voice into altissimo, and young gentleman who forces his mind into a receptacle for a chaos of crudities, are pretty much on a par. Both do ill, where, if they were contented with attainments within limits of natural taste and natural capacity, they might both do well. As to the poor young men, many of them become mere crammed fowls, with the same result as Hermogenes, who, after astonishing the world with his attainments at seventeen, came to a sudden end at the age of twenty-five, and spent the rest of a long life in hopeless imbecility.'

MISS ILEX. 'The poor young men can scarcely help themselves. They are not held qualified for a profession unless they have overloaded their understanding with things of no use in it - incongruous things too, which could never be combined into the pursuits of natural taste.' 276

The amusing quip of Opimian's that a competitive examination man '"would not allow a drayman to lower a barrel into a cellar unless he could expound the mathematical principles by which he performed the operation"',²⁷⁷ has increasingly more truth in it.

There are three other social issues on which the learned Doctor expresses opinions and which are worthy of note.

The first is his attack, in the poem 'A New Order of Chivalry', on the conferring of Christian decorations on Jews.²⁷⁸ It is not in modern taste, although clearly the poem satirizes the absurdity of the situation rather than intending any direct anti-semitism. It is a piece of satire that must be viewed in its historical context. Secondly, there is his opposition to slavery. He first attacks the Americans who, by importing negro slaves, he argues "'substitute the worse for the better race; the Negro for the Red Indian.'" This superiority he thus explains,

'The Red Indian will not work for a master. No ill-usage will make him. Herein, he is the noblest speciman of humanity that ever walked the earth. Therefore, the white man exterminates his race. But the time will come, when by mere force of numbers, the black race will predominate, and exterminate the white. And thus the worse race will be substituted for the better, even as it is in Saint Domingo, where the Negro has taken the place of the Caraib. The change is clearly for the worse.'²⁷⁹

For his time these opinions seem not unreasonable. It is clear that Opimian does not uphold the ill-treatment of the non-white at least. Nor does he hold, necessarily, that the white race is superior to the red, for he says, "'I leave that as an open question. But I hold, as some have done before me, that the human mind degenerates in America, and that the superiority, such as it is, of the white race is only kept up by intercourse with Europe.'" ²⁸⁰ Nor is Opimian blind to

the economic difficulties in freeing the slaves or to the hypocrisy of governments in their political manoeuvres in this matter. His final words are black indeed and almost revolutionary in aspect. His sense of social injustice, however, is not lacking. Again, I suggest, his priorities are right even if, to modern minds, not all of his attitudes may withstand criticism. Of slavery he says that,

'If it be not redressed, as I trust it will be, it will work out its own retribution. And so it is of all the oppressions that are done under the sun. Though all men but the red men will work for a master, they will not fight for an oppressor in the day of his need. Thus gigantic empires have crumbled into dust at the first touch of an invader's footstep. For petty, as for the great oppressions, there is a day of retribution growing out of themselves. It is often long in coming. Ut sit magna, tamen certe lenta ira Deorum est. But it comes. ' 281

Lastly, his attack on speed, travel and telegraphic communication is apposite today. It is summarized in his reply to Lord Curryfin's remark that scientific progress allows us to "see the world with little expenditure of labour or time". Opimian answers,

'You may be whisked over it, but you do not see it. You may go from one great town to another, where manners and customs are not even now essentially different, and with this facility of intercourse become progressively less and less so. The intermediate country - which you never see, unless there is a show mountain or waterfall or ruin, for which there is a station, and to which you go as you would to any other exhibition - the intermediate country contains all that is really worth seeing, to enable you to judge of the various characteristics of men and the diversified objects of

nature. '282

Here we have more than a mere condemnation of the aimless tourist. Taken with his attacks on over-examination, and 'science-run-riot', it criticizes a world that is so keen to arrive, that it has no time to enjoy or comprehend the journey and, in many cases, no proper idea of an ultimate destination. It is a criticism which attacks a way of life through individual manifestations of it. Opimian characterizes this society ably in his comments on the newspaper - society's mirror.

'For, let us see, what is the epitome of a newspaper? In the first place, specimens of all the deadly sins, and infinite varieties of violence and fraud; a great quantity of talk, called by courtesy legislative wisdom, of which the result is "an incoherent and undigested mass of law, shot down, as from a rubbish-cart, on the heads of the people;" lawyers barking at each other in that peculiar style of hylactic delivery which is called forensic eloquence, and of which the first and most distinguished practitioner was Cerberus; bear-garden meetings of mismanaged companies, in which directors and shareholders abuse each other in choice terms, not all to be found even in Rabelais: burstings of bank bubbles, which, like a touch of harlequin's wand, strip off their masks and dominoes from "highly respectable" gentlemen, and leave them in their true figures as cheats and pickpockets; societies of all sorts for teaching everybody everything, meddling with everybody's business, and mending everybody's morals; mountebank advertisements promising the beauty of Helen in a bottle of cosmetic, and the age of Old Parr in a box of pills; folly all alive in things called reunions; announcements that some exceedingly stupid fellow has been "entertaining" a select company; matters, however multiform, multifarious, and multitudinous, all brought into family likeness by the varnish of false pretension with which they are all overlaid.'

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Set against this picture is Opimian's description of the old family Christmas, quoted above,²⁸⁴ or his picture of rural society gone almost for ever. It is contained in his reply to Miss Ilex on the decline of quadrille.

'Nothing was more common in country towns and villages, half a century ago, than parties meeting in succession at each other's houses, for tea, supper, and quadrille. How popular this game had been you may judge from Gay's ballad, which represents all classes as absorbed in quadrille. Then the facility of locomotion dissipates, annihilates neighbourhood. People are not now the fixtures they used to be in their respective localities, finding their amusements within their own limited circle.' 285

Perhaps Miss Ilex's comment that "'it is one of the evils of growing old, that we do not easily habituate ourselves to changes of custom'"²⁸⁶ is appropriate here. Opimian is an elderly man and Gryll Grange was written when Peacock was well on in years. Thus, if it seems at times that his picture of the past is too idyllic, with none of the harsh edges remaining, this is the reason.

A final word from this gentle, scholarly divine.

He says to Falconer, "'certainly, there is much in the material world to displease sensitive and imaginative minds'"²⁸⁷ but he clearly believes, as he says later, that "'there is much good in the world; more good than evil, I have always maintained.'"²⁸⁸ Let this stand for the man. He is not eaten away by misery and reaction; nor angry and intolerant as Folliott could be,

except at injustice and unnecessary evil. Throughout the book Opimian spreads a spirit of kindness and benignity which are never outweighed, I feel, by the understandable limitations of a man of his years and outlook. Even by the sceptical standards of today, Opimian has a claim to stand as the Christian gentleman. Imperfections he has and his view of the world is from the stance of a good income and secure, well-ordered home. But this does not alter his attitude to life which makes him more than an adequate 'amende honorable' for the earlier clerical satires. Opimian, on balance, displays something of life's reality; far more than any of Peacock's other characters.

Opimian is, I imagine, a clergyman with whom Peacock had considerable personal sympathy. This novel itself certainly reflects Peacock's changed attitude to religion, revealed in both Opimian and Falconer, as it had been previously, to some extent, in Folliott. It is known, for example, that Peacock, like Mr Falconer, in later years collected and admired prints and engravings depicting St Catherine. He repeatedly read Aretino's Vita di Santa Caterina Vergine e Martire (Venetia 1636). Some friends believed he had become a Roman Catholic, but there is no evidence for this.²⁸⁹ Nonetheless, this interest in traditional Catholic spirituality, probably aesthetic, together with the more congenial tone adopted by Peacock

in his characterization of his two last clerics, indicates a change of attitude. It may, perhaps, be put down to increasing years and greater toleration, though it is not unlikely that the scholarly nature of the Tractarian movement, which had done much to revive interest in the saints and non-biblical traditions, met with Peacock's approval. I would suggest, however, that this benign emphasis upon his clerical characters need not necessarily have a religious explanation at all. In the changing atmosphere of early Victorian England, where good scholarship was being replaced by competitive examinations, a secluded, rural, learned life by the urban bustle of commerce, the clergy symbolized adherence to the old values. Always, in theory, a learned profession they became the mouthpiece of classical wisdom. Traditionally the clergyman had been reckoned a gentleman and to Peacock he now became the character who upheld the comforts of his class. It is interesting also that Folliott and Opimian are married men; both of them extol the domestic advantages of this state. The married clergyman is an Anglican compromise with Catholic practice and shows that Peacock was, by no means, mindlessly enamoured of traditional theology. His clergymen, Folliott and Opimian, have become the heroes of his fictional world. They are not men of action but men of considered opinions. They are not radicals, but benign conservatives whose values are largely Peacock's own.

To some, no doubt, this change of attitude will seem like confirmation of the charge that Peacock became, or indeed always was, a cosy reactionary. To others it is an indication that Peacock became more tolerant, more genial, perhaps even more wise. Few can continue the radicals they may have been in their youth - Shelley died too young to be put to the test - but Peacock shows that he came to see good, even in the clergy whom, at one time, 'his fine wit' had spared very little.²⁹⁰

His portraits of the clergy are not generally realistic although, in Opimian and Folliott, we hear the voices of real men. They are not typical, in their learning and good living, of the new breed of more dedicated nineteenth-century clergymen. They are, however, far from the rustic simplicity of eighteenth-century clergymen captured, in literature, in Parson Adams or the Vicar of Wakefield. Henry Cole is right when he says that Peacock distils in his clerical portraits 'the transition view of the position of the sacerdotal class in this country'.²⁹¹ They are neither lowly innocents, nor a religious, but separate species. Perhaps one would not travel far to hear many of them preach, but it is a pleasure to hear most of them talk. This, in itself, is no small praise.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANTHONY TROLLOPE (1815 - 1882)

Many readers, if asked to name a clergyman in fiction apart from those in Jane Austen, would pick on a character in Trollope. Archdeacon Grantly, perhaps, over-bearing, dogmatic and tyrannical, would represent in their minds the power of the Church establishment in an age when ecclesiastical affairs dominated the minds of too many men. Or, it may be Mr Harding the kindly but incompetent holder of a sinecure which diverted monies from the deserving poor. Mr Slope would occur to some, as an example of the clerical hypocrite; the sensual wolf in a sheep's clothing of sanctity. These characters, from Trollope's Barchester novels, are far more vivid to many than even the most eminent real clergymen, fading in the annals of ecclesiastical history. Furthermore, the reader remembers,¹ and research confirms,² The Warden (1855) was based on actual incidents, the St Cross scandal at Winchester and the struggles of Mr Whiston at Rochester; evidence that Trollope's fictions were firmly planted in fact.

Most critics believe that Trollope is a 'realistic novelist', though recently there have been attempts to define this description more exactly. Frederick Harrison, in 1911, for example, wrote that 'his work has most of the merits and

some of the weakness of the best photography. It is almost painfully realistic...'³ Michael Sadleir also, with a confidence from between the wars, suggests that 'to him everything is material for observation' and that we who inherit his works, 'have but to drink at will, and in the novels that he left behind to savour the essence of life as once it was, as still it is, as - likely - it will remain.'⁴ A.O.J. Cockshut emphasizes that Trollope's realism was not merely superficial and that if he were a photographer, 'he must have been an X-ray photographer'.⁵ David Cecil takes pains to define the nature of Trollope's realism also and concludes that 'he observed the surface of life more accurately' than other contemporary novelists.⁶ Even Ruth apRoberts, in her stimulating defence of Trollope's deeper qualities, does not deny his realistic outlook, though she argues that 'mere photography could not conceivably hold us as these novels do.'⁷ Scholarly opinion would appear to support the general impression that Trollope's characters are realistically portrayed.

Furthermore, apart from Trollope's slight bias against Evangelicals, which no-one can reasonably ignore, it is sometimes supposed that Trollope's novels represent fairly accurately, as fiction goes, the church of this period. Paul A. Welsby's opinion is a fairly typical, if late, example of this sort of simple acceptance of Trollope. His commentary

concludes approvingly that 'Anthony Trollope's novels are a window through which we look at an age utterly different from our own ... and we are shown national institutions basking in the sun of Victorian security and stability.'⁸ This, of course, is just what the Victorian Church was not doing at this time. Encouraged by the fact that The Warden seems to be a dramatization of actual events, this instance becomes an easy generalization. Arthur Pollard, similarly, gives this notion qualified approval, suggesting that the ecclesiastical world that Trollope portrays 'manifests the late flowering glories of the Church of England'.⁹

In fact, at no time, it might be argued, did the Anglican Church struggle through - or with - so many crises. Nor were these only concerned with salaries and the distribution of sees. Indifference may have lost the Methodists to the established church at the start of the century but the Evangelicals were a force to be recognized and their contribution to church life was immense and largely beneficial. To see it, like Trollope, in terms of oily palms and an obsequious, cringing manner is utterly to ignore their work in temperance, slums, orphanages, prostitution, education and all that followed from their changes in the moral awareness of post-Regency England. If Evangelicalism might be broadly characterized as a lay influence, the Tractarians succeeded in raising clerical

awareness and stimulating theological study. The religious debates and party bickerings, even riots, at Oxford, the influence of Tracts for the Times and the later battles of ritualism could not be further from the erroneous notion of 'security and stability'. Even here, for Trollope seems in favour of High Church Anglicans, he misinterprets. Well before Barchester Towers was written, in 1857, it was clear that the Tractarians were no mere extension of high-church Toryism.¹⁰ They stood not for amiable, scholarly, gentlemen-priests like Arabin,¹¹ but for a renewed spirituality, a vigorous and ascetic ideal, epitomized in over-emphasis by that lonely saint, Edward Pusey. As if this were not enough, the Victorian church had also to come to terms with a re-awakening of science and to revise its theology in the light of contemporary philosophical and critical thought. Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species was published in 1859, George Eliot's translation of Strauss's Das Leben Jesu in 1846, and the fifties brought considerable, if unseemly, controversy over the work and beliefs of F.D. Maurice, Bishop Colenso and Benjamin Jowett.¹² Yet, as late as the seventies (in Is He Popenjoy? 1878) the Dean of Brotherton treats his clerical duties as little more than a hobby and his belief is no more than might be expected of any unthinking fellow. Frank Fenwick (in The Vicar of Bullhampton, 1870) who actually makes a theological point accurately,

seems not much different from the gentleman-parson of a previous generation. Certainly, in chapter three, he takes to the cudgel with all the alacrity of Peacock's Dr Folliott.¹³

'No one doubted in 1860', Owen Chadwick writes, 'and few will doubt now, that the clergy of 1860 were more zealous than the clergy of 1830.'¹⁴ No-one that is, except Trollope. Of course, it could be argued that although Trollope wrote the Barchester novels in the fifties and sixties they were set in the forties and fifties,¹⁵ and that the novelist is not necessarily required to be prophetic. But the clergy in his later novels, like The Claverings (1867) and Is He Popenjoy? (1878), had changed very little from those in The Warden (1855). In any case, the changes that Chadwick describes could not have taken place overnight, and there is a wealth of evidence to indicate that they did not. Even as early as the thirties there is the ministry of Augustus Hare, at Alton-Barnes in Wiltshire. He helped to clothe and feed the poor from his own pocket, and ran a shop 'in which he sold at two-thirds of the cost prices all kinds of clothing and materials of clothing'.¹⁶ More important was his dedicated teaching and preaching to a mostly illiterate rustic congregation. This work was not confined to Sunday services. 'It was in the winter of 1830, that, finding how ignorant they were of the meaning of what they heard in church, he began assembling the men of both parishes once a week in a barn adjoining the rectory. One of

the Gospels, or the Acts, was then gone through, and explained in a familiar way, illustrated so as to bring it home to their comprehension, beginning and ending with a short prayer'.¹⁷

He provided extra services 'on all Saints Days, and on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent ... at such an hour as might best suit the habits of the labouring poor.'¹⁸ He laboured in a neighbouring parish which had no church and formed a clerical society for the mutual edification of local clergy.¹⁹ In the words of another clergyman, Hare's 'heart was in his work as a Minister of Christ, and ... he had truly devoted his life to the care of "those few sheep in the wilderness" to whom he had been sent as shepherd.'²⁰ Owen Chadwick's record of the work of William Wayte Andrew in a small Norfolk parish from 1835,²¹ or the Anglo-Catholic Benjamin Armstrong's diary,²² indicate a much more lively spiritual life in mid-Victorian parishes. Furthermore, by the forties the agitation of the Chartist labourers, and the work of priests like Charles Kingsley at Eversley,²³ reveal a very different world and a very different clergyman from the one Trollope usually describes. By 1870, when The Vicar of Bullhampton was published, attitudes generally, and the Church's standing as a whole, had undergone a considerable change.²⁴ The clergymen mentioned above were men for whom the spiritual welfare of their parish was paramount. They took their duties seriously and were sincere in their purpose.

They are, indeed, individual cases - there are, of course, many more - but they do suggest strongly that, for example, Mark Robarts,²⁵ however good-natured he appears, could well be an anachronism in 1861.

A final example, pertinent to Trollope and to the actual state of spiritual awareness of the clergy, might also be given. This relates to Trollope's satirical portrait of Archdeacon Grantly's youngest son Samuel, in The Warden. The vignette, which occurs in chapter eight, is an obvious picture of Samuel Wilberforce (1805-73) who at the time The Warden was written was Bishop of Oxford.²⁶ Although Trollope may be said to have taken the sting out of his satire by making his character that of a child, it is still obviously a caricature based on Wilberforce's nickname, 'Soapy Sam', which was widely used after about 1853.²⁷ Trollope portrays him as 'soft and gentle in his manners, and attractive in his speech', 'a boy of great promise, minding his books and delighting the heart of his masters. His brothers, however, were not particularly fond of him; they would complain to their mother that Soapy's civility all meant something.' And, Trollope concludes, 'to speak the truth, Samuel was a cunning boy, and those even who loved him best could not but own that for one so young, he was too adroit in choosing his words, and too skilled in modulating his voice.'²⁸ Apart from Chadwick's impartial assesment

of the real Wilberforce, we may also refer to the Bishop's Addresses to the Candidates for Ordination given by him at successive Oxford ordinations and first published in 1859.

Here we not only discover that Trollope's suggestions are unjust, which we might have expected, but discover at first hand something of what was expected of the clergy in both spiritual and practical matters about the time that The Warden was written.

While I am not advocating a direct comparison between Trollope's novels and a series of sermons (although Trollope himself suggested a clear correlation between the two²⁹) it will help us to appreciate something of the spiritual tone of the times if we examine these addresses briefly. They were, after all, delivered at 'successive ordinations' and presumably influenced the thinking and, one hopes, behaviour, of far more ordinands than those whose 'urgent request' led Wilberforce to publish them.³⁰ Also, we may presume, although Wilberforce was one of the more notable ornaments of the Bench, his thoughts were not entirely unique and his assumptions about clerical duties and the priestly character were, at any rate, shared by others. An indication of the sort of change which had occurred since the day of Archdeacon Paley can be seen at once in the preface. Paley had said, in 1785, that 'if there be any principal objection to the life of a clergyman ... it is this -

that it does not supply sufficient engagements to the time and thoughts of an active mind.'³¹ Wilberforce refers to the priesthood as 'the great and blessed, but at the same time, perilous office of Ministers of Christ'; a notion which would be unfathomable to Paley. Indeed, these thirteen addresses have enough spiritual insight, theological learning, and practical advice to be delivered today. Here are no pious platitudes, no general moral exhortations but a profound and challenging call to a serious and devout life.

Wilberforce first makes it clear that the clergyman's 'one work is to win souls to Christ: not to produce a certain general decency and amendment in the face of society.'³² He makes it clear that it is not enough to enter the Ministry 'as men may choose lawfully any ordinary business or profession'; not 'merely because it is an honourable profession, and has attached to it a certain rank, respectability, or endowment; or because his friends have designed him for it; still less, because he has a family living waiting for him; or has good prospects of preferment; or, least of all, because he is unfit for any other business or calling.'³³ These would, at one time, have been perfectly respectable reasons for seeking ordination. Instead, the reality of the priestly work is emphasized. It is not enough to visit because it is a duty, he urges, but rather because the parishioners 'have souls, and you have com-

mitted to you (feeble as you are) the task of saving them.'

The spiritual advice is tempered by the practical. He tells the candidate, 'when you talk with them, beware of the dreamy listlessness which would decently fill up some ten minutes with kindness ... be real with them ... smite through ... to their heart of hearts.'³⁴ Wilberforce deals with the particular temptations to which a priest is subjected - enjoyment of popularity, pride in his preaching, desire for worldly gain.³⁵ He emphasizes the need for prayer,³⁶ and diligent study.³⁷ He also gives practical guidance on these difficult and personal aspects of the priestly life. Above all he underlines the difficulties and the challenges of the work. In public and private, Wilberforce exhorts them to be diligent and alert. 'Men in general', he says, 'think that there are but few calls for courage in the life of a clergyman; but there cannot be a greater mistake. At every turn of our lives we need courage of the highest and rarest quality; simple, calm, persevering.'³⁸

Here, indeed, is a call to a life of which no man need feel ashamed. It is certainly a long way from the popular misconceptions of Trollope, many of whose portraits provide admirable examples of the mistaken notions that Wilberforce here tries to correct. Trollope, however, was a popular novelist and not a bishop. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to see his clergy as accurate portrayals of contemporary clergy. They

are, rather, the epitome of all the Anglican church was commonly thought to be in the thirties and forties but, in general, had ceased to be by the time Trollope was writing.

Trollope's view of the clergy can best be seen in the anonymous series of articles that he contributed to The Pall Mall Gazette on the Clergyman of the Church of England.³⁹ They consist of ten character studies, or types of clergy, - from archbishop to curate - characterized in a reasonably amusing manner and from the popular viewpoint. (The articles are frankly journalistic in tone and content and followed similar series in the same periodical entitled 'Hunting Sketches' and 'Travelling Sketches' also by Trollope.) It would be foolish to take them too seriously. Dean Alford made this mistake in his hostile review,⁴⁰ but Trollope's amiable amateurishness is difficult to attack; it tends only to make the attacker ridiculous - as in Alford's case. What can be taken seriously is Trollope's attitude. For this is the same that informs the clerical portraits in his novels. Most obviously it is a lay attitude, and a fairly superficial one at that. The second article, 'English Bishops, old and new', admirably illustrates this.

Trollope sees the bishop, not in terms of his office - for as he later says 'it is very difficult, or I may say impossible, [to define] ... a bishop's functions'⁴¹ - but in terms of

his 'image'. In the past, he claims, there was 'an odour of pious decorum round the episcopal wig'. Now it has been abandoned, 'so much of awe has gone'.⁴² Bishops may now be seen 'sitting in cabs, trusting themselves to open one-horse chaises, talking in the market-places, and walking home after an ordination'.⁴³ This, Trollope thinks, is a loss.

In seeking for the useful, we are compelled to abandon the picturesque. Our lanes and hedgerows and green commons are all going; and the graceful dignity of the old bishop is a thing of the past. 43

This reveals the paradoxical nature of Trollope's attitude. He condemns the laziness and lack of spirituality of the past but sentimentally laments its passing. He deplores the sight of a bishop calling his groom in the High Street, in the modern world, and yet equally deplores the fact that, in the past, the episcopal bench 'was not conspicuous for its clerical energy, for its theological attainments',⁴⁵ or for its impartial use of the great church patronage which it possessed.⁴⁶ Yet he does not see, or at any rate regrets, that in order to fulfil his clerical duties he must be seen. He must cease to be 'picturesque' and become active. He must interfere in the real world, impinge on people's lives, influence society - a role which Trollope finds far less congenial. A clergy that is picturesque can conveniently be ignored. Trollope has a decidedly Erastian conception of a bishop's functions. He talks of him as 'a working man' and refers to his 'increased

industry' as if his activity can somehow be separated from his spiritual office.⁴⁷ He mounts a hobby-horse of his own - the question of patronage - seemingly unaware that it is not the system of patronage which was at fault (it largely still obtains) but the unspiritual exercising of it. This had, in fact, already begun to change by the fifties with the founding of theological colleges, ordination examinations and greatly increased spiritual awareness. Nevertheless, Trollope denies, or passes over, or undermines with tepid satire, here and in his fiction, the bishops' spiritual function while still making fun of their ineffectiveness and human foibles.

The bishop in The Way We Live Now (1875) is a good example of this method. Here is Trollope's description.

The bishop was a man sixty years of age, very healthy and handsome, with hair just becoming grey, clear eyes, a kindly mouth, and something of a double chin ... Among the poor around him he was idolized, and by such clergy of his diocese as were not enthusiastic in their theology either on the one side or on the other, he was regarded as a model bishop ... He was an unselfish man, who loved his neighbour as himself, and forgave all trespasses, and thanked God for his daily bread from his heart, and prayed heartily to be delivered from temptation. But I doubt whether he was competent to teach a creed, - or even to hold one, if it be necessary that a man should understand and define his creed before he can hold it. 48

What exactly does Trollope mean by this last sentence? On what grounds does Trollope make his assertion? How exactly is his creed to be defined in the context of a novel where the bishop is but a minor character, and who otherwise behaves with

rectitude and is said to be pastorally zealous and personally kind? A few lines later, Trollope continues his praise of the bishop's outward behaviour.

He was diligent in preaching, - moral sermons that were short, pithy, and useful. He was never weary in furthering the welfare of his clergymen. His house was open to them and to their wives. The edifice of every church in his diocese was a care to him. He laboured at schools, and was zealous in improving the social comforts of the poor; but he was never known to declare to man or woman that the human soul must live or die for ever according to its faith.

Trollope concludes, 'Perhaps there was no bishop in England more loved or more useful in his diocese than the Bishop of Elmham.' Nonetheless Trollope condemns him because 'he never spoke of his faith, or entered into arguments with men as to the reasons on which he had based it.'⁴⁹ Yet, a few chapters later, the bishop does declare his creed to Roger Carbury (a dreary prig who represents the conservative ideal in a crumbling society) and very neatly too. It is clear that although the bishop is an optimist, and believes that society is slowly improving as the moral and social influences of Christianity become more widespread, he does not divorce this from the personality of Christ nor from individual Christian behaviour.

'It is very hard to see into the minds of men,' said the bishop, 'but we can see the results of their minds' work. I think that men on the whole do live better lives than they did a hundred years ago. There is a wider spirit of justice abroad, more of mercy from one to another, a more lively

charity, and if less of religious enthusiasm, less also of superstition ... Taking society as a whole, the big and the little, the rich and the poor, I think that it grows better from year to year, and not worse. I think, too, that they who grumble at the times, as Horace did, and declare that each age is worse than its forerunner, look only at the small things beneath their eyes, and ignore the course of the world at large.'

'But Roman freedom and Roman manners were going to the dogs when Horace wrote.'

'But Christ was about to be born, and men were already being made fit by wider intelligence for Christ's teaching.' 50

Ironically, Carbury, who insists on the importance of traditional religious practice is shown to be less charitable than the kindly 'radical' bishop.⁵¹

The real reason for Trollope's criticisms of the bishop, I suggest, is that he wants to contrast him with the Roman Catholic priest, Father John Barham, who obviously 'stands' for dogmatic belief. A dinner party is just over the page and Trollope already has in mind some witty verbal by-play at the expense of the Anglican bishop and his double chin. Trollope has no consistent view of many of his clerical characters but takes what opportunities he can for humour, as they arise. He also, as here, makes moral judgements without any very clear grounds for his character's condemnation. He hints at a profundity which does not, and cannot, exist. Because Trollope himself adopts no clearly defined position, it is often difficult for the reader to know exactly what he is meant to think. The Bishop of Elmham would seem to be admirable, for

example, but Trollope suggests he is not. His grounds, a rather vague assertion about his inability to define a creed, are in themselves insufficiently defined. What exactly was Trollope's view of belief?

Something like an answer, for it is by no means straight-forward, can be gleaned from the final essay in Clergymen of the Church of England, entitled 'The Clergyman who subscribes for Colenso'.

It is very hard to come at the actual belief of any man. Indeed how should we hope to do so when we find it so very hard to come at our own? [Notice with what ease Trollope asserts what a moment's thought will reveal to be quite untrue for many people.] How many are there among us who, in this matter of our religion ... could take pen in hand and write down even for their own information exactly what they themselves believe? [52] Not very many clergymen even, if so pressed, would insert boldly and plainly the fulminating clause of the Athanasian Creed; and yet each clergyman declares aloud that he believes it a dozen times every year of his life. [Is belief to be equated with one clause of a particular, historical expression of defined dogma?] Most men who call themselves Christians would say that they believed the Bible, not knowing what they meant, never having attempted ... to separate historical record from inspired teaching. [Critical exegesis of the Scriptures is, in fact, irrelevant to the original proposition, belief in the Bible.] 53

It is this kind of slipperiness which makes Trollope very difficult to analyse in depth. In his novels also, he is always changing his ground and qualifying his opinions, even adding to them as the plot and the moment require. We are very often left wondering whether it is Trollope or a character

who speaks, or whether we are supposed to identify the two.

We see this sort of thing in The Bertrams (1859).

George Bertram is a young man who gains a double-first at Oxford at the height of the Oxford Movement. At Oxford, he 'was unsparing in his ridicule of the Remains, set himself in full opposition to the Sewells, and came out as a poet ... in direct opposition to Keble and Faber'.⁵⁴ Travelling to meet his father in the Holy Land his notion of becoming a clergyman is confirmed on the Mount of Olives. He tells his father, "'I love our liturgy, and I like the ritual.'", a curious statement for a non-Tractarian, but adds, somewhat obscurely, that "'the only objection I have is the system of the establishment.'"⁵⁵ A little before this, Bertram visits the Tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre to place his hand on the tomb.

As he did so, two young greeks ... pressed their lips vehemently to the marble. They were dirty, shorn about the head, dangerous looking ... men very low in the scale of humanity when compared with their fellow-pilgrim; but, nevertheless, they were to him, at that moment, objects of envy. They believed; so much at any rate was clear to him.

Then Trollope interposes

By whatever code of morals they might be able to govern their lives, whether by any, or as, alas! might be too likely, by none, at least they possessed a faith. Christ, to them, was an actual living truth, though they knew how to worship him no better than by thus kissing a stone, which had in fact no closer reference to the Saviour than any other stone they might have kissed in their own country. They believed; and as they

reverently pressed their foreheads, lips, and hands to the top and sides and edges of the sepulchre, their faith became ecstatic. It was thus that Bertram would fain have entered that little chapel, thus that he would have felt, thus that he would have acted had he been able. So had he thought to feel ... But he did not kneel at all. 56

What exactly is Trollope saying here? For one thing, faith appears to be something quite separate from behaviour. It is open to men who are 'filthy, foul ... abominable to an Englishman'.⁵⁷ For another, their faith is based on a blind, but vital, acceptance of dubious evidence. Is Bertram shown to be envious of their enthusiasm but unable to cast aside his intellectual scruples? Yet it was in another such place that he felt his vocation confirmed,⁵⁸ and he later maintains that his 'only' objection is the establishment. Or is Trollope suggesting that, as an Englishman and a gentleman, such a faith as theirs is inappropriate? He would do better to stick to the way of life that civilized England had evolved. Miss Waddington, with whom Bertram falls in love, derides his notion of becoming a clergyman and Bertram 'had not strength of character to laugh at her description ... He must either tell her that she knows nothing of a clergyman's dearest hopes, or else he must yield to the contempt which her words implied.'⁵⁹ He chooses, of course, the latter, and goes on not to ordination but to write a work entitled the 'Romance of Scripture' about which Trollope is equally vague.⁶⁰ Thus the reader is confused

about the actual nature of Bertram's doubt and, indeed, the sort of faith to which Trollope is comparing it.

The book seems to be about the choice between the spiritual and the material - success, money, ambition are often mentioned and the less brilliant friend, Wilkinson, who follows his father into a country living is thrown in for comparison. At the end of the book, which is a love story too, when Bertram finally marries Miss Waddington, Trollope asks, 'Can you remember the aspirations of George Bertran, as he sat upon the Mount of Olives?' This, then, is supposed to make things clear. But it does not. The nature of his doubt, though central, is unexplained. Nor could any romantic enthusiasm in the Holy Land, masquerading as faith, be much use to an Oxford double-first in Victorian England. It is as if doubt, once encountered, is both inevitable and disastrous, which is absurd. Bertram's 'faith' crumbles at the laughter of a pretty woman. Is his doubt the inevitable consequence of being unable to swallow naive superstition? This is what Trollope seems to imply in his final essay in Clergymen of the Church of England. He becomes almost poetical as he laments the inexorability of doubt.

'If one could stay, if one could only have a choice in the matter, if one could really believe that the old shore is best, who would leave it? ... But this new teacher [has] ... made it impossible for us to stay. With hands outstretched towards the old places, with sorrowing hearts, - with hearts which still love the old teachings which the mind will

no longer accept, - we, too, cut our ropes, and go out in our little boats, and search for a land that will be new to us ... Who would not stay behind if it were possible to him?' 61

Cockshut is right when he says that Trollope 'was not gifted with the power of analysing ideas'⁶²

What, then, are we to expect from Trollope with regard to his clerical characters? In the last of the Barchester novels Trollope does define his purpose. It is, he claims, to delineate the social behaviour of the clergy and not their beliefs or religious ideals.

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 [sic] 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. 63

First, of course, this does not square with what we actually find in the novels - even if we take 'pulpit' in its most literal sense. (There are sermons described in chapters six and twenty-three of Barchester Towers, for example.) More important though, is the fact that his characterization of Slope, Crawley or Arabin, for example, springs largely from Trollope's reference to their theology and religious belief. Even

Archdeacon Grantly is shown to be governed by personal religious scruples,⁶⁴ and the portrait of Harding throughout the series is effective only because his goodness is implicitly compared with godliness. Secondly, did Trollope really believe that a clergyman's social and professional life could be separated? This could only be maintained by suggesting that a clergyman is religious in the pulpit, at the altar, and no further - a form of antinomianism with which Trollope could hardly be charged. Grantly's temper, Slope's hypocrisy, Crawley's mixture of humility and pride, all spring from this contrast between actual behaviour and the common expectations concerning a clergyman's character. The description of Mr Oriel, in chapter thirty-two of Dr Thorne, also is built wholly upon this juxtaposition. Doubts may arise as to whether Trollope understood the nature of Christian behaviour sufficiently to satirize it accurately, but it cannot be denied that this is what he did. Thirdly, how can this declaration of Trollope's be set beside his other statements, in his Autobiography, that 'the novelist, if he have a conscience, must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman'?⁶⁵ Or perhaps we are not meant to take all Trollope says too seriously?

Certainly, although we take note of Trollope's definition of his limits, we need take no more notice of them than he does. We must not judge Trollope as we would George Eliot.

Ruth apRoberts believes that 'Trollope arrived at much the same position as the "thinkers" like George Eliot.'⁶⁶ In fact, there is a world of difference, in heart and soul, if not in mind. True, they both valued custom and convention, relativism and casuistry, but George Eliot for all her clumsiness, over-seriousness, her tortuous prose and air of contrivance, does passionately feel and honestly care, and is seen to do so. With Trollope we are unsure. His work is marred by this good humour, this urbane irony, which his champions so admire. Good humour in fiction as in life is, of course, an admirable quality but there are places it cannot go. Excellent though Trollope's picture of Crawley is, in The Last Chronicle of Barset, and compared with much of Trollope it is very good, it is certainly not King Lear. Yet the comparison is by no means absurd. The despair, the self-doubt, the mixture of pride and pitiful humility and the vision of a soul on the brink of madness make the two men seem very close at times. Close and yet so far apart.

Trollope admits that there was an air of contrivance in this novel and no one doubts, at least not for any length of time, that the novelist is close by to protect us and to smooth out all the difficulties by the last chapter. This is a good example of a frequently felt frustration, caused by the mutual strain of enjoyment of the characters and impatience

with the plot. Generally Trollope's style, which is as winning as his good humour, carries us along, but at really serious moments it fails, and fails very badly. His clerical characters suffer more than any others from this failure because, try though Trollope will to conceal it, we are aware that there are far more serious issues, emotions and principles at work. George Eliot's novels prove, too, that these questions can be dealt with quite independently of Christian belief. Although Trollope's clerical portraits are often endearing, and usually amusing, they are not particularly searching or always truthful. Where a character is caught in some moral or religious dilemma, Trollope's portrayal often appears vague or confused. He asks questions, reveals problems for which he has no, or no coherent, answer. His solutions come all too often from the novelist's stock cupboard. The very neatness of his conclusions jars us. Let us now turn, however, to individual characters.

Undoubtedly the largest congregation of clerics in Trollope's fiction come under the heading of 'gentlemen'. There are, of course various degrees even here, from the Reverend Henry Clavering, a baronet's uncle who eventually succeeds to the title, in The Claverings (1867), right the way down to the impecunious the Reverend Oliphant Outhouse, Rector of St Diddulph's in the East, a dockyard parish in London, in He Knew He Was Right (1869). It includes Archdeacon Grantly; the

Warden and Precentor of Barchester Mr Harding; Canon Hold-enough of Brotherton, Is He Popenjoy? (1878), whose family stretches back to the Conquest; the respectable Canon of Salisbury, the Reverend Henry Fitzackerley Chamberlaine, in The Vicar of Bullhampton (1870) and the not especially respectable, non-resident lepidopterist the Reverend Doctor Vesey Stanhope of Barchester. Dr Wortle, from Dr Wortle's School (1881), is both headmaster and owner of a prestigious private school besides his benefice. Mark Robarts, Framley Parsonage, and Frank Fenwick, The Vicar of Bullhampton, both have enough money to enable them and their families to live comfortably and, of course, respectably. Indeed, woe betide any clergyman who is not a gentleman in Trollope, for that is the main qualification for orders in his eyes. As he writes, in the essay The Parson of the Parish, 'in no capacity is a gentleman more required or more quickly recognized than in that of a parson'.⁶⁷ What, then, makes these clergy gentlemen or, for that matter, in what are these gentlemen clerical? Cockshut provides a useful generalization when he says that 'apart from the extreme evangelicals most of Trollope's clergy have little concern with religion. They are primarily men with a stake in the country, men with a recognised and honourable position based on education, property, and the habit of reverence paid to them in a conservative society.'⁶⁸

Dr Vesey Stanhope would seem to be most the gentleman and least the priest of all Trollope's clergy. 'He held a prebendal stall in the diocese' of Barchester 'and the two large rectories of Crabtree Canonorum and Stogpingum. Indeed, he had the cure of three parishes, for that of Eiderdown was joined to Stogpingum. He had resided in Italy for twelve years. His first going there had been attributed to a sore throat; and that sore throat, though never repeated in any violent manner, had stood him in such stead that it enabled him to live in easy idleness ever since.'⁶⁹ Trollope's description of Stanhope himself reminds us of the sort of clergymen we were accustomed to meet in Peacock, worldly, literary and devoted to food in which, of course, he also resembles Dr Grant of Mansfield Park. It is at this kind of humorous but barbed portrait that Trollope excels.

He was a good-looking rather plethoric gentleman of about sixty years of age. His hair was snow-white, very plentiful, and somewhat like wool of the finest description. His whiskers were very large and very white, and gave to his face the appearance of a benevolent sleepy old lion. His dress was always unexceptionable. Although he had lived so many years in Italy it was invariably of a decent clerical hue, but it never was hyperclerical ... His reading seldom went beyond romances and poetry of the lightest and not always most moral description. He was thoroughly a bon vivant; an accomplished judge of wine, though he never drank to excess; and a most inexorable critic in all affairs touching the kitchen. 70

Such a life was not unknown in the Church of England.

V.H.H. Green records the case of Francis Egerton, Fellow of All Souls, and a prebendary of Durham, 'who lived at the Hotel de Noailles, Rue St Honoré, Paris'. He kept a house full of cats and dogs dressed like ladies and gentlemen, who went riding with him in his carriage. Although Stanhope shares with him a love of foreign lands and might also be said to have a family of animals, Egerton was a fellow at Oxford in 1780 before Dr Stanhope was born.⁷¹

Trollope also discusses Stanhope's religious character.

As Dr Stanhope was a clergyman, it may be supposed that his religious convictions made up a considerable part of his character; but this was not so. 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 pre-determined never to influence their thought; but he was so habitually idle that his time for doing so had never come till the opportunity for doing so was gone for ever. 72

Typical is Trollope's use of impersonal language when he speaks of religion, 'it may be supposed that ...' or, 'that he had religious convictions must be believed'. It is one way in which Trollope distances his criticism while yet, as here, making the contrast with personal character clear. It suggests that Trollope mentions such matters not in a critical way but as a matter of course, whereas in fact it leads the reader to conclude that if Stanhope has religious convictions they cannot be worth very much at all so distant are they from his behaviour.

In Peacock's description of Dr Gaster who, like Stanhope, seems not in the least scholarly the contrast between the words and actions of his clergyman emphasizes his religious hypocrisy:⁷³ the spiritual in pursuit of the eatable. In Trollope, we are not sure whether Stanhope's fault is clerical or simply because, as a gentleman, his neglect of his family causes greater offence. His family are certainly an unruly crowd - though very amusing, but they offend because they are badly brought up not because they are irreligious. When Stanhope is at the end of his tether over his son Bertie, there is this conversation, which concisely captures the difficulty.

'It means this,' said the doctor, speaking more loudly than was his wont, and with wrath flashing from his eyes; 'that as sure as God rules in heaven, I will not maintain him any longer in idleness.' 'Oh, ruling in heaven!' said Charlotte. 'It is no use talking about that. You must rule him here on earth; and the question is, how can you do it.' 74

Trollope, like Stanhope, takes refuge in religious platitudes when it suits him, but they have a hollow ring. The religious language is but rhetoric. Stanhope is condemned in the novel far more by his children's behaviour than by his non-residence: as a gentleman, as well as a clergyman.

The Reverend Henry Fitzackerley Chamberlaine is also distinctly a gentleman, and a clergyman, in the old style. It is a style that Trollope quite obviously admires even though, as in this case, he feels some apology is needed for presenting

it to his readers as late as 1870. Chamberlaine is introduced into The Vicar of Bullhampton to provide a contrast with Frank Fenwick, a younger and heartier clerical specimen. He comes to stay with his nephew, Gilmore, the local Bullhampton squire. 'He came with his own carriage and a pair of post-horses, as befitted a prebendary of the good old times.'⁷⁵ Nonetheless, he was not such, though, 'it suited his tastes and tone of mind to adhere to the well-bred ceremonies of life, so many of which went out of fashion when railroads came in'. The truth is that it suits Trollope, and thus Chamberlaine is a pleasantly anachronistic portrait. There is no reason, of course, why the novelist should not entertain himself and some of his readers with such characters, especially when a novel is written for serialization, and the ostensible hero and heroine would hardly inspire anyone to turn to the next page. The description of Chamberlaine abounds too in those nicely chosen barbs for which Trollope's style is admirably adapted. It is not exactly satire, nor is it direct criticism, it is, rather, like the smallest touch of a pin on the back of the hand. The effect is to undermine any thought of Chamberlaine as a good clergyman though one is hard pressed to say exactly why. Certainly he cannot be faulted on good taste, good manners, or the size of his income. He was 'a gentleman of about fifty-five years of age, unmarried, possessed of a comfortable private independence'. He was also

the non-resident incumbent (certainly one of the last) of a fen parish, 'which he never visited - his health forbidding him to do so'. But his conscience, and our criticisms, are salved when we learn that his curate receives two-thirds of the salary, and charity the rest. All he really keeps it for, we suspect, is to annoy the local bishop. To Chamberlaine is thus imputed all the naughtiness of clerical abuse without any of the attendant evils.

Trollope continues his description,

He was a very handsome man, about six feet high, with large light grey eyes, a straight nose, and a well cut chin. His lips were thin, but his teeth were perfect - only that they had been supplied by a dentist. His grey hair encircled his head, coming round upon his forehead in little wavy curls, in a manner that had conquered the hearts of spinsters by the dozen in the cathedral.

We, of course, remembering his teeth, wonder if his hair curls as unnaturally. His voice, too, was fine and could be heard 'from the far-off end of the choir during the communion service, altogether trumping the exertion of the other second-rate clergymen ... at the altar'. The word 'trumping' is excellent, implying both the impropriety and competitiveness of cards and the noisiness of a trumpet. The words 'second-rate' are less so and spoil the delicacy of the humour.

As we would imagine, Chamberlaine is also an excellent preacher, his sermon was always noble, 'and there was a grace

about it that was better than any doctrine'. (The play on the word 'grace' makes this remark doubly amusing.) Everything he did, and had, his clothes, his house and his cellar were of the best and in the best possible taste so that 'even the boy who blacked his boots felt that he was blacking the boots of a great man'. 'And yet Mr Chamberlaine was only a prebendary, was the son of a country gentleman who had happened to marry a wife with money, and had absolutely never done anything useful in the whole course of his life.' This is quite a different criticism from all the others. By introducing the idea of usefulness Trollope changes the level of his comments completely. The little indications of Chamberlaine's vanity and theatricality are all within the confines of Trollope's comedy but to ask a fundamental question about the prebendary's function - and since he outwardly conforms to all that is clerically required of him, the question has to be directed to his spiritual function - throws the portrait off balance. Useful in what way, we might ask? There is no answer. It is only a momentary uneasiness, for Trollope moves ably on, but one needs to be on the alert in reading Trollope or one misses the details that, cumulatively, contribute to a feeling of dissatisfaction.

In the Reverend Frank Fenwick's battle with the Marquis over a dissenting chapel being built opposite to the Vicarage, Chamberlaine at first supports the aristocratic auto-

crat. 'He was very clear in his opinion that the Marquis had the law on his side in giving the land for the purpose in question.'⁷⁶ There is, however, a dilemma. The Marquis had behaved in such a manner that even Chamberlaine is forced to admit that, 'it is very ungentlemanlike'.⁷⁷ Later, when it is discovered that the land is, in fact, glebe land and belongs to the Vicar, Chamberlaine changes sides. Now he represents the Church militant, whereas before he had merely acknowledged, as a gentleman, the superior might of a Marquis. '"the glebe of Bullhampton, Mr Fenwick ... has not been confided to your care for the propagation of dissent."' ⁷⁸ Sometimes the gentleman-parson faces a division of loyalties.

This is one of the problems that faces Mark Robarts in Framley Parsonage. Mark Robarts, the son of an Exeter doctor, was educated privately and at Harrow with the young Lord Lufton. Through this friendship he is presented to the Lufton living of Framley, worth £900 a year, after a twelve-month curacy in the same diocese. He also gains a handsome wife, and children, and they all lived in a parsonage furnished 'in the very best style of clerical comfort'.⁷⁹ The village was small. It consisted only of a grocer's shop, a public house, a few farm houses and labourers' cottages, beside Framley Court. The two schools had been built by Lady Lufton's labours and she also had plans for a bigger church. Her own

High Church ideas were an extension of her political and personal conservatism and should not be confused with any form of Tractarianism except that both shared a dislike of Evangelicals. Although Framley Parsonage is set in the fifties⁸⁰ and was written two years after The Bertrams, which recognized the influence of the Tractarian Movement, the religion of Framley Court was that of an earlier generation. Lady Lufton's notions of propriety had little, if anything, to do with religion.

She liked cheerful, quiet, well-to-do people, who loved their Church, and their country, and their Queen, and who were not too anxious to make a noise in the world. She desired that all the farmers round her should be able to pay their rents without trouble, that all the old women should have warm flannel petticoats, that all working men should be saved from rheumatism by healthy food and dry houses, that they should all be obedient to their pastors and masters - temporal as well as spiritual. 81

Everybody was expected to obey her, and her parson is no exception. It is because of this that difficulties arise for Mark Robarts. The loyalties of gentleman and parson might be thought to be the same. They were for Lady Lufton, who thought of her parson as an extension of the largesse of Framley Court.

Robarts's difficulties are seen very early in the novel. In the first chapter, he gives in to Lady Lufton over the appointment of the village schoolmistress. Robarts thinks that a trained schoolmistress would be better than her Ladyship's protégée, although he has no personal objection to the girl.

"Sarah Thompson is very respectable; the only question is

whether she can teach."" His behaviour as a clergyman should be different from that expected of a mere gentleman, who might properly concede to the higher authority of his patroness. Mr Collins in Pride and Prejudice would have had no difficulty in making a decision but, forty years before, the views of God and the hierarchy were identical. Robarts makes a political rather than a moral choice. "'If I persist this time, I shall certainly have to yield the next; and then the next may probably be more important.'"⁸² The next occasion is not too far distant for Robarts has been invited to a country house-party at Chaldicotes. Since this visit, and what follows, forms the central theme of the novel - Lord Lufton's courting of Lucy Robarts is the love story but this is, as Trollope says,⁸³ only a necessary adjunct to the work - it must be examined in some detail.

The events, briefly, are these. On the invitation of the local Whig member, Sowerby, Robarts spends a week or so at Chaldicotes and from thence he goes, via Barchester Palace, to Gatherum Castle, the local Whig headquarters. Foolishly, he guarantees a bill for the unscrupulous Sowerby which leads to yet another signature and the demands for payment bring bailiffs to Framley parsonage. Lord Lufton extricates him from his debt, before marrying his sister; Robarts resigns his appointment to a Barchester Stall - as he feels it might be

seen as payment for his services to Sowerby. Incidentally, he rides to hounds and is late for church one morning when he is the visiting preacher.

First, let us look at the attitude of the other characters to Robarts. Do they take him seriously as a clergyman? Do they take note of his religious vocation? Lady Lufton's we have already touched upon. Her principal objection to Chaldicotes and the Duke of Omnium is that they were Whigs. The latter indeed she regarded as 'an impersonation of Lucifer upon earth', especially since he was unmarried. The root of her fears was that 'he should come to be possessed ... of any of the fair acres of Framley Court'.⁸⁴ This is an understandable, conservative attitude. The bishop was also included in her hostilities because he was one of the 'new' men and 'by no means a High Church dignitary'. 'She could not say in words that Bishop Proudie - bishop as he certainly must be called - was no better than he ought to be; but by that curl of her lip she did explain to those who knew her that such was the inner feeling of her heart.'⁸⁵ Her attitude is mere prejudice, in fact, and she 'felt all a patron's anger when she heard that her clerical protégé was about to seek such society.'⁸⁶ Robarts was, in effect, her servant and should reflect her political opinions and indeed lend his clerical weight to their moral condemnation. Lord Lufton had no such notions, indeed

he had flirted a little with the Whigs himself. He sees Robarts, with whom he was brought up, as a gentleman like any other. "He doesn't hunt, you know - not as I do," he would say. "And if he did, I really don't see the harm of it. A man must have some amusement, even if he be an archbishop."⁸⁷ Over the question of Robarts's financial dealings, Lord Lufton is at first unfair, though finally generous. He is annoyed with Robarts mainly because his own financial dealings with Sowerby are revealed to the clergyman and, in chapter nineteen, seems almost to shift the blame from himself to Robarts. His main assumption in this affair is that although a Lord with large estates may behave foolishly, a clergyman had better look out or people will talk. As Sowerby himself says to Lord Lufton, "You have accused me, I say, and I believe that you have accused him. But it has never occurred to you, I dare say, to accuse yourself."⁸⁸ To him, a clergyman's behaviour rests not so much upon morality as upon public relations.

Fanny Robarts has a clearer notion of the clerical vocation but even she argues that Mark must behave as befits a gentleman - though she cannot finish her argument conclusively. "People can't always go exactly where they will be best off. Gentlemen sometimes must - "⁸⁹ she argues with reference to her husband's absence at Chaldicotes. Bishop Proudie sees nothing particularly amiss in Robarts's presence at Chaldicotes.

"He was delighted to meet Mr Robarts ... quite delighted. Was he not going to preach on behalf of the Papuan Mission next Sunday? It was a good work, an excellent work."⁹⁰ Later he asks, "'Shall I meet you at the Duke's next week, Mr Robarts?'" without any sense of impropriety, even though he remembered 'that the moral character of his bachelor grace was not the very best in the world'.⁹¹ When, after a little debate, Robarts finally agrees to go, 'the bishop joked with him and said that he knew he would not give up good company so soon'.⁹²

Sowerby, as one might expect, assumes the basest motives are the most natural. "'What is the good of a man keeping a curate if it be not to save him from that sort of drudgery?'" he asks, in reply to Robarts's vague insistence on his 'duties'. He argues that "'if you are content ... to live at Framley all your life ... it may perhaps be useless for you to extend the circle of your friends; but if you have higher ideas than these ... '" - do not decline the Duke's invitation.⁹³ 'Higher' here, of course, means lower.

'Mrs Proudie was fond of having an attendant clergyman; and as it was evident that Mr Robarts lived among nice people - titled dowagers, members of Parliament, and people of that sort - she was quite willing to install him as a sort of honorary chaplain pro tem.'⁹⁴ To her, the gentleman was more than the clergyman. Miss Dunstable and Mrs Harold Smith flirt innocently with

Mr Robarts as they ride behind the hunt in Mrs Proudie's carriage. To them the man is more important than either.⁹⁵

Only one person in the novel calls Robarts to account as a Christian, and a priest. This is the Reverend Josiah Crawley, perpetual curate of Hoggstock. Even he is called upon as the sort of spiritual henchman of Lady Lufton's secular arm. (He cannot refuse her offer of luncheon - 'in a matter of hospitality she did know what she was about' - and at the table he 'became humble, submissive, and almost timid',⁹⁶ as if religion and society were quite separate.) His words to Robarts are a clear call to religious values. Cockshut says that Crawley 'is like a voice from another world'.⁹⁷ Certainly, there is nothing about gentlemen here. "'You owe it to those around you", he tells Robarts, "to live a godly, cleanly life; - as you owe it also, in a much higher way, to your Father who is in heaven ... I now make bold to ask you, Mr Robarts, whether you are doing your best to lead such a life as may become a parish clergyman among his parishioners?"⁹⁸ There is one point to be noted about this meeting. This is what Trollope reveals of Crawley as he breakfasts with Robarts. It is a gentleman's breakfast that they share. 'Perhaps a thought did pass across [Crawley's] brain,' Trollope notes, 'as to the difference between the meal which he had left on his own table, and that which he now saw before him; and as to any cause

which might exist for such a difference.'⁹⁹ I shall return to this point later.

Finally, what of Mark Robarts himself? What are his views of his vocation, duties and behaviour? We must beware of assuming that Trollope's views are identical to Robarts's but, of course, Robarts can only say what Trollope thinks of first. Trollope can comment on a character's words or behaviour but he must do so carefully. Too much interference may lead to a loss, not an increase, of confidence in his characters. It is no good, for example, introducing the moral aspects of marital fidelity into a bedroom farce - unless, of course, the writer is deliberately wishing to question the validity of the genre. The difficulty for the critic in Framley Parsonage is knowing what questions may properly be asked, without taking the discussion outside the novel's proper bounds.

For example, what exactly are Robarts's offences? They seem to be hunting, mixing with company above his station, getting into debt, though vicariously, and thus one presumes, neglecting his clerical duties. Hunting is Trollope's standard example of clerical misdemeanour. Not because he had anything against hunting, which was one of his chief pastimes, but because it was no longer considered seemly for a priest to hunt, on grounds of time, expense and, perhaps, owing to the

likelihood of bad language amongst the huntsmen.¹⁰⁰ As Lady Lufton expresses it, "'The world has agreed that it is unbecoming in a clergyman.'" ¹⁰¹ Cockshut suggests that Robarts's fear of Lady Lufton makes it seem 'as if he recognised Lady Lufton as the legitimate keeper of his conscience'. ¹⁰² This is not strictly true, though he fears to offend her, because he is clearly shown to have a conscience of his own. It may not be very fully developed, but it is there.

He had taken himself to task more than once, and had promised himself that he would not become a sporting parson ... 'I will not affect to think that to be bad,' said he to himself, 'which in my heart of hearts does not seem to be bad.' And thus he resolved that he might live without contamination among hunting squires. And then, being a man only too prone by nature to do as others did around him, he found by degrees that that could hardly be wrong for him which he admitted to be right for others. 103

When the plain speaking Trollope resorts to circumlocutions like 'affect to think', it is usually a sign that he is trying to reveal the irrationality of his character's serious thinking, or to say something important himself. ¹⁰⁴ Robarts has a conscience but it is, in itself, insufficient to meet the forces that work against him. It is a corruptible, not an absolute standard. This is theologically sound, though it assumes that there are higher values acting as an ultimate safeguard. Otherwise Robarts must be judged not as a clergyman and a Christian but like any other man, who has only his 'lights' to guide him.

The difficulty is that Trollope applies both, indeed many, standards and not always consistently. This may be seen as an advantage, since it reveals, as Ruth apRoberts argues, 'complexity' and therefore 'reality',¹⁰⁵ or it may just show muddle-headedness and lead to confusion. Trollope qualifies Robarts's attack of conscience over hunting, for example, by adding that, 'indeed, where would be his hopes of ulterior promotion, if he allowed himself to degenerate so far as [to become] a sporting parson?'¹⁰⁶ His motives for ceasing to hunt, though based on an awareness of what is right for a clergyman, are in themselves suspect and worldly. Elsewhere, however, he is condemned for having the same worldly motives for wanting to go hunting and to mix with the country gentry.

Mark ... had risen in the world ... by knowing great people; and he certainly had an ambition to rise higher. I will not degrade him by calling him a tuft-hunter; but he undoubtedly had a feeling that the paths most pleasant for a clergyman's feet were those which were trodden by the great ones of the earth. 107

Stay or go, it seems, he is wrong. His present position has come to him by his association with rank. Trollope, however, earlier said that 'the dowager and the doctor were justified in their choice [of Robarts] by the life and principles of the young man'.¹⁰⁸ At the end of the novel, Trollope qualifies this by suggesting that Robarts was not mature enough, or strong enough, to hold such a position.

Had he remained as a curate till that age, subject in all his movements to the eye of a superior, he would, we may say, have put his name to no bills, have ridden after no hounds, have seen nothing of the iniquities of Gatherum Castle. There are men of twenty-six as fit to stand alone as ever they will be ... but Mark Robarts had not been one of them. He had within him many aptitudes for good, but not the strengthened courage of a man to act up to them. 109

It was his youthful lack of strength, then, that made him give in to ambition? If he had been older and wiser he would have resisted temptation? In chapter four, however, Trollope writes, 'It is no doubt very wrong to long after a naughty thing. But nevertheless we all do so ... ambition is a great vice ... But then, how many of us are there who are not ambitious ... there is nothing viler than the desire to know great people ... we all know this ... But presuming that a way into the society of Park Lane was open to us ...' who would not take it, Trollope asks?¹¹⁰ This we know is Trollope's own view¹¹¹ but how does it match his previous words? Perhaps Trollope believes that clergymen should be different from other men? Yet, in the very next lines, Trollope rejects this idea.

I trust that the fact of his being a clergyman will not be allowed to press against him unfairly. Clergymen are subject to the same passions as other men; and, as far as I can see, give way to them, in one line or another, almost as frequently. 112

While Trollope is quite right to suggest that clergy-

men are flesh and blood, it is clear, as I have said earlier, that most of his humour and a large part of his moral criticism of them rests on the fact that they do not, and should not, behave simply as other men. If they could, why should not Robarts hunt, or go to Chaldicotes? Trollope clearly does not agree with Lord Lufton who thinks a clergyman needs entertainment like any other man, or with his mother who condemns the Duke's set because it is the Duke's set. (Trollope says, 'but now as to this Chaldicotes set. After all, there was nothing so very dangerous about them.'¹¹³) Robarts's visit did indeed lead him into an act of financial foolishness, but this could have happened to any young and inexperienced gentleman - as the parallel case of Lord Lufton shows. The whole moral crux of the book, with respect to Robarts, is that, as a clergyman, he has responsibilities and duties which cannot be, and should not be, neglected. A clergyman's responsibilities are different from, higher than, those expected from a gentleman. This is certainly the moral force of the powerful scene with Mr Crawley. As Crawley says, "'you owe it to those around you to live a godly, cleanly life'" like any Christian gentleman but, "'you owe it also, in a much higher way, to your Father who is in heaven.'" Robarts's reply to Crawley's challenge, whether or not he lives as befits a clergyman, reflects Trollope's own casuistical attitude. "'There are

but few of us ... who could safely answer that question in the affirmative."¹¹⁴ But this appeal to circumstances, to the situation in which Robarts finds himself, which he shares with many others, does not abrogate his personal vocation and responsibility. As Crawley explains to Robarts, even if there are many who could not claim wholly to do their duty, "'would you, young, enterprising and talented as you are, be content to be numbered among them? Are you satisfied to be a castaway after you have taken upon yourself Christ's armour?"¹¹⁵ Clearly, this appeal of Crawley's is meant to be powerful. In moral terms it is a clear, even prophetic, call to absolute standards. In artistic terms also Trollope deliberately draws Crawley differently from the other worldly and easy-going characters. He is poor, deeply religious, ascetic, unattractive and yet compelling. His words affect Robarts deeply. He 'was almost reduced to sobbing'. 'He allowed his head to sink upon his arms, and he buried his face between his hands.'¹¹⁶

This would seem to be, in the moral drama of the novel, if not the dénouement then at least an important point of reference and comparison. This is what Trollope said he was writing - 'a morsel of the biography of an English clergyman who should not be a bad man, but one led into temptation by his own youth and by the unclerical accidents of the life of those around him.'¹¹⁷ It is Trollope's fictional equivalent

of Newman's sermon, entitled 'The Weapons of Saints'. 'Some must be great in this world, but woe to those who make themselves great; woe to any who take one step out of their way with this object before them.'¹¹⁸ But is it this? Does Trollope's dramatic scene have any real moral force?

At least two things point strongly to the conclusion that Crawley's argument is not, in Trollope's eye, as absolute as it appears. Most important is the character of Crawley himself. Earlier I noted Trollope's description of Crawley's thought at Robarts's breakfast-table. This is important, for it reminds us of Trollope's characterization of Crawley at the beginning of the chapter. Here it is clear that Trollope does not mean us to see Crawley as ideal. He is an embittered, broken, proud, even occasionally almost insane man whose position in life and whose sufferings lead him to the verge of suicide. Crawley's character is examined in greater depth in The Last Chronicle of Barset but even here, in the quiet neighbourhood of Framley, we see that he is an unhappy blend of principle and prejudice. Trollope may claim that Crawley's thoughts of Robarts's plenty were 'very fleeting' but it is a particularly sensitive moment even to mention such a thing. The reader cannot help at least questioning the impartiality of a man who comes to condemn the very things which, by their absence, have caused him so much misery. It does not negate

Crawley's words, for we know him to be dedicated and dutiful, but it introduces a touch of grey to the one remaining area that the reader might rightly have considered to be black and white.

In another passage also Trollope undermines the evidence on which the moral issue of Robarts's clerical duties rests. It concerns the matter of Robarts riding to hounds. 'It would be absurd', Trollope comments, 'to say that his time would be better employed at home in clerical matters, for it was notorious that he had not clerical pursuits for the employment of half his time.'¹¹⁹ Even if he wished to be conscientious, he could not be so. Finally, can we reconcile Crawley's words, about Robarts's previous behaviour, with Trollope's record of Robarts's views concerning the clerical vocation? Crawley calls Robarts's hunting activities '"a terrible falling off."' '"You become a hunting parson ... you, whose aspirations were so high, who have spoken so often and so well of the duties of a minister of Christ ... it cannot be that I have had a hypocrite beside me ..."'¹²⁰ This is how Trollope describes Robarts's aspirations.

It had been his intention, in reviewing what he considered to be the necessary proprieties of clerical life, in laying out his own future mode of living, to assume no peculiar sacerdotal strictness; he would not be known as a denouncer of dancing or of card-tables, of theatres or of novel-reading; he would take the world around him as

he found it, endeavouring by precept and practice to lend a hand to the gradual amelioration which Christianity is producing; but he would attempt no sudden or majestic reforms. Cake and ale would still be popular, and ginger be hot in the mouth, let him preach ever so - let him be never so solemn a hermit; but a bright face, a true trusting heart, a strong arm, and an humble mind, might do much in teaching those around him that men may be gay and yet not profligate, that women may be devout and yet not dead to the world. 121

How can we believe that such a man, who speaks of lending a hand to Christianity, would appear to a rigorous ascetic like Crawley to have spoken 'so well' of the clerical office?

The passages are not compatible. On the one hand, Trollope wishes to show that Robarts had a sense of his clerical vocation, though little opportunity to exercise it, and had been led astray. On the other, he is trying to fit the clerical life into his own ideas of moderation and good sense. 'A bright face, a true trusting heart, a strong arm', are Trollopian virtues. Admirable, humane, no doubt, but not especially Christian; not even spiritual. There is nothing in them that any moderate fellow could not aspire to. This clerical vocation is Trollopian, not Christian. It springs from Trollope's desire (the references to theatres, novel-reading, cake and ale give him away) to avoid anything suggesting an Evangelical. In the dramatic scene with Crawley, Trollope can conjure up the emotion necessary to condemn Robarts, by biblical language and religious rhetoric. Yet in his own calmer description of

Robarts, Trollope wants to show him as the sort of fellow he could admire: easy-going, amiable, amateur, not at all like the serious professional cleric the novel, as a whole, seems to demand from Robarts. This sort of clergyman is always, for Trollope, an Evangelical, and thus unsuitable to be a hero at all. This might be less important if the novel were not about Robarts's temptation from his vocation and duty. For as Trollope explains his duty and vocation, there seems to be very little in either. Certainly not enough to justify such comparisons as this.

The German student when he first made his bargain with the devil felt an indescribable attraction to his new friend; and such was the case now with Robarts. 122

How, then, is Framley Parsonage to be interpreted? It is possible to follow Ruth apRoberts who claims that all these inconsistencies, special pleadings and the multiplicity of contrary motivations and explanations point in themselves to a consistent philosophy. (This is based on Cicero's humanitas. Trollope's novels are a fictional form of 'situation ethics'.¹²³) Trollope, she suggests, thought that 'all we can do is extend our understanding to each case, and work out an ethical decision with the most humanitas available to us'.¹²⁴ 'Nobody wins', she argues, but 'this kind of art lives on realism'.¹²⁵ His complexity reflects reality¹²⁶ which is merely a series of 'situations'. Quite apart from

the fact that this view of reality could be, and is, disputed by theologians, novelists and readers alike, Ruth apRoberts has to prove that this is what Trollope actually believed, or since this is unlikely, what he actually did. In Framley Parsonage there is some evidence to support such a view. How, though, does Crawley's call to spiritual standards fit in? It is true that Trollope scrapes away at the edges by slyly suggesting dubious motivation but does this remove the moral force of the argument for Robarts, or the dramatic effect of the scene in the structure of the whole work? Robarts ends up in tears and later says, 'Mr Crawley had been right when he told him that he was a castaway.'¹²⁷ Even Trollope exclaims, 'let us hope that [Robarts's] thoughts and mental resolves were then of service to him', after Crawley's visit.¹²⁸ Is Trollope sincere? Or are we to assume that his appeal to Christian duty especially in the scene with Crawley is mere rhetoric. Is Crawley not just a voice from another world, but from another book where the issues are real and serious?

Trollope moves from comedy to a more serious level with an unsettling ease. The dramatic tension of Robarts's predicament, which rests on Christian principles, is undermined by Trollope's casuistry. In the best scenes - those with Crawley, Lord Lufton in London, and Mrs Robarts - Trollope presents Robarts's moral crisis clearly and well. Elsewhere,

Trollope's commentary dilutes the reader's involvement. This is because Trollope is at his weakest when showing us the complex, inner motivation of his characters. Their intellectual and spiritual psychology seems always hazy. Trollope tells us what happens but does not show us. Trollope writes, for example, towards the end of the novel, Robarts 'thought also of the manner in which he had been tempted to the house of the Duke of Omnium, and the conviction in his mind at the time that his giving way to that temptation would surely bring him to evil.'¹²⁹ But looking back, at chapters three and four, we see very little of it. Indeed, these are the chapters where the author interrupts the narrative most frequently with asides and explanations. These supplement but can never replace the reader's own insight, most especially in a novel which purports to present a moral problem in human rather than abstract terms. Newman, in his sermon quoted above, says that 'no-one is safe from the intrusion of corrupt motives; but I speak of persons allowing themselves in such a motive, and acting mainly from such a motive'.¹³⁰ Trollope, it seems to me, though he indicates Robarts's motives, and discusses whether or not they are 'corrupt', is not skilful or convincing enough in portraying that essentially dramatic process whereby Robarts 'allows' them. Subtle twentieth-century philosophical explanations may well rationalize Trollope's hazy intellectual position, but they

cannot make Framley Parsonage successful, artistically, as a novel. Loose ends, complex motivations and a shifting morality may, indeed, be what we find in real life, but that is altogether different from suggesting that Trollope reflects real life satisfactorily in a work of fiction. Framley Parsonage fails because it is neither strong enough to bear a serious moral drama, nor profound enough to reveal a more complex, psychological casuistry. As a superficial comedy it fails also because it continually raises questions that can never be answered.

In The Claverings, the Reverend Henry Clavering, like Robarts, is aware of the responsibilities of his calling, but any idea of responding to them has long since lost its urgency. He has been paralysed by his own good fortune. He is so much the gentleman that there is no room left for the priest.

He was a kind, soft-hearted, gracious man, tender to his wife ... ever patient with his parishioners, and awake, - though not widely awake, - to the responsibilities of his calling. The world had been too comfortable for him, and also too narrow; so that he had sunk into idleness. The world had given him much to eat and drink, but it had given him little to do, and thus he had gradually fallen away from his early purposes, till his energy hardly sufficed for the doing of that little. 131

Trollope, however, does not leave his portrait of the complaisant parson here. He gives it a slight twist which adds a little depth to an otherwise conventional Trollopian cleric. For, he writes, Henry Clavering 'was not a happy man. He knew that he had put off the day of action till the power of action had

passed away from him.' Clavering has a conscience but, as Trollope had also suggested in Robarts's case, what was there for him to do? In those days, scholarship was one outlet for the country parson and Clavering's 'library was well furnished, but he rarely read much else than novels and poetry; and of late years the reading even of poetry had given way to the reading of novels.' Clavering used to hunt but Bishop Proudie put a stop to that, and even Clavering saw that a clergyman might rightly be called upon to do so. '"As the matter is one simply of my own pleasure, I shall give it up"' he declares. As for doing something positive, however, like some pastoral work in his parish, this seemed unthinkable. 'He kept a most energetic curate, whom he allowed to do almost what he would with the parish ... Once every Sunday he preached, and he resided in his parsonage ten months every year.'¹³² The removal of actual vice, it appears, does not actually lead to virtue. Clavering has a conscience but seems quite unable to follow its promptings.

'I see a better path, and know how good it is, but I follow ever the worse.' He was saying that to himself daily, and was saying it always without hope. 133

This attitude is explored, though fairly superficially, in Clavering's relations with two other characters in the novel. The first is his son, Harry, fellow of a Cambridge college whom his father expects to take orders as a matter of course. His father's reasons for recommending ordination are based on the

traditional expectations of education, position and privilege, familiar ever since Jane Austen's day.

'Your education has adapted you for it. Your success in it is already ensured by your fellowship ... you need not even live at Cambridge. Take a church in London. You would be sure to get one by holding up your hand. If that, with your fellowship, is not sufficient, I will give you what money you want.'

Nothing could be more comfortable or convenient or more in keeping with that traditional view of the English church, as part of the country landscape, which stretches back to the eighteenth century. For Harry Clavering, though, it is not enough. He wants to earn his bread. "'I do not feel myself qualified to be a good clergyman"' he explains. His father wonders if he had 'doubts' - that nigger in the nineteenth-century woodpile. "'I might have them if I came to think much about it - as I must do if I took orders"' his son replies, with characteristic Trollopian evasion. This is not the main reason. He said, we should notice, that he does not feel qualified to be a good clergyman. Doubts would not stop him being a mediocre one if he were content to be intellectually lazy, like his father. His real objection is this. "'I do not wish to be crippled in doing what I think lawful by conventional rules.'"134 His father can scarcely understand this, as he shows when he argues that "'in our church the life of a clergyman is as the life of any other gentleman,- within very broad limits.'"135

This is not enough for Harry. He does not wish to be an amateur gentleman-parson, stopped from hunting like his father, forced to grapple with matters of belief which are best left unexplored. Harry sees that the world has changed and that it is no longer sufficient to drift into orders as his father did. He wants a life which brings respect, challenge, a chance to succeed and to be admired.

The Reverend Samuel Saul is different from both of these characters. This character provides Trollope with an artistic and intellectual problem which he seems unable to solve. For Harry, Saul is the type of clergyman whom he least wishes to emulate. "'I don't believe a better man breathes, but I shouldn't like his life.'" he declares. The conscientious, religious curate is even more unattractive than that aimless amateur, his father. "'It seems to me'", he tells his father, "'that a clergyman has nothing to do in life unless he is always preaching and teaching. Look at Saul ... he has literally thrown off all worldly cares, - and consequently everybody laughs at him, and nobody loves him.'" ¹³⁶ Harry sees that to be a good clergyman he must undertake his professional duties. To him these are neither pleasant nor gentlemanly, in so far as the term covers hunting and all that represents. His father, on the other hand, although he has some notion of clerical duties, and knows he has not fulfilled them, fails to

understand why they cannot be combined with the good things of the world. Saul's ascetic, other-worldly life is as abhorrent to him as it is inexplicable. It is just as bad, in his eyes, as his own laziness. It is eccentric and thus ill-mannered. "It is not that he mortifies his flesh, but that he has no flesh to mortify. He is unconscious of the flavour of venison, or the scent or roses, or the beauty of women."¹³⁷

Trollope held both these opinions himself. He saw the Church could not survive long with men like Henry Clavering as its priests, and it offended his sense of fairness that a man should be paid well for doing nothing; he who prided himself on his pay per page. On the other hand, he sympathized with the gentlemanly abhorrence for professional duties and what he saw as excessive religious commitment. Thus, the character of Saul is a puzzle for Trollope. Saul is a good, hard-working and obviously spiritual man. He carries all the parochial work on his shoulders, besides the local school. (In the second chapter, for example, we see him engaged in the business of buying and erecting a mission church in the nearby hamlet. Clavering, on the other hand, can hardly rouse himself to visit it.) Henry and Harry Clavering's testimony, damning though it is to them, is in fact praise. A clergyman who spends his life preaching and teaching would seem to be doing his duty. Whether or not he cares for venison, roses

and women is not a moral, even if it is an aesthetic, judgement. Trollope denies none of this and yet his sympathies obviously lie with the Claverings. This is clear from his earlier description of the Reverend Henry Clavering who was accustomed to smoke a cigar or two during the day. Trollope comments, 'I do not know whether the smoking of four or five cigars daily by the parson of a parish may now-a-day be considered as a vice in him, but if so, it was the only vice with which Mr Clavering could be charged.'¹³⁸ This statement, on Trollope's own evidence, is, of course, untrue. Clavering's real vice is that he does nothing. Moreover, the phrase 'now-a-day' indicates that Trollope means now that Evangelical notions have become prevalent. Over Bishop Proudie's rebuke concerning hunting he remarks, 'Had I been the parson of Clavering, I should, under those circumstances, have hunted double.'¹³⁹ The idea of a mere Whig bishop interfering with a gentleman's pleasures! Clavering is a man with whom the archdeacon of his Clergymen of the Church of England could certainly 'take his glass of wine after dinner and talk pleasantly of old college days.'¹⁴⁰ Saul, on the other hand, is in Trollope's view, as Sir Hugh Clavering remarks, '"that most offensive of all animals, a clerical prig"'.¹⁴¹

In other novels Trollope had solved this problem (of upholding the gentleman rather than the professional) by

suggesting that Evangelicals, like Slope, were either hypocrites or, what was worse, not gentlemen. Here he can do neither. Saul's devotion to duty is obviously more desirable than Clavering's laziness and, because of the demands of the plot, (Fanny Clavering later marries Saul) he has to be a gentleman. Trollope thus contents himself by making Saul physically unpleasant or introducing other little sneers, such as Saul's unhappiness with the Claverings' boisterous horse.

Mr Saul was very tall and very thin, with a tall thin head, and weak eyes, and a sharp, well-cut nose, and, so to say, no lips, and very white teeth, with no beard, and a well-cut chin. His face was so thin that his cheekbones obtruded themselves unpleasantly. He wore a long rusty black coat, and a high rusty black waistcoat, and trousers that were brown with dirty roads and general ill-usage... But that he was a gentleman I think he knew well enough. 142

There is a certain suggestion of unpleasant Jewish caricature here too, which reinforces the notion, should it be necessary, that Trollope's dislike of religious earnestness is merely an ignorant prejudice.

Trollope's attitude can also be seen in his description of Saul's room, in chapter thirty-four. It is an interesting passage because the room is very similar to that of Edgar Tryan's, the Evangelical clergyman, in Janet's Repentance by George Eliot.¹⁴³ The two writers approach the scene with very different attitudes. George Eliot is concerned to strip away the reader's romantic notions of a clerical study, with

its gothic furniture and 'choice divinity in sombre binding' and reveal the ugly but simple, pure surroundings of a good man.¹⁴⁴ Both are portraying men who lead ascetic lives but George Eliot does it with love and admiration. Trollope, partly in his own matter-of-fact tone of voice, and partly through the eyes of Harry Clavering, does it with distaste.

Mr Saul ... inhabited a big bedroom, in which there was a vast fireplace and a very small grate ... One of the large windows facing towards the farm-yard had been permanently closed and in the wide embrasure was placed a portion of Mr Saul's library, - books which he had brought with him from college; and on the ground under this closed window were arranged the others, making a long row, which stretched from the bed to the dressing-table, very pervious, I fear, to the attacks of mice. The big table near the fireplace was covered with books and papers, - and, alas, with dust; for he had fallen into that terrible habit which prevails among bachelors, of allowing his work to remain ever open, never finished, always confused, - with papers above books, and books above papers, - looking as though no useful product could ever be made to come forth from such chaotic elements. But here Mr Saul composed his sermons, and studied his Bible, and followed up, no doubt, some special darling pursuit which his ambition dictated. But there he did not eat his meals; ... and his chop, therefore, or his broiled rasher, or bit of pig's fry was deposited for him on the little dressing-table, and there consumed. 145

The sneer at his college books, the mice, the 'darling' project and the 'bit of pig's fry' combine to give the description a slightly patronizing air. Neither writers, we know, loved Evangelicals, but George Eliot, although she had rejected this type of religion in her youth, goes deeper than Trollope who,

though he appears more winning, is far more superficial.

In fact, it is difficult to understand Saul's place in the book at all. The love interest with Fanny Clavering is dealt with in a manner perfunctory even for Trollope. Fanny's attitude to Saul is so guarded as to be incomprehensible. Why she should love him, given Trollope's descriptions, is almost inexplicable and never explained. What the novel might have done, though really only attempts, is to contrast the two clergymen by placing them in opposition to each other both ideologically as well as socially. Trollope grasps, indeed suggests, the differences but is quite unable to explore them. Instead, he trivializes the whole business into his eternal question of 'gentlemen'. There is, perhaps, a feeling that this stands for much more but too much relies on the reader's own appreciation of the questions raised, very little on Trollope's insight or understanding. The scene in which the two meet to discuss Saul's 'absurd proposition' of marriage to Fanny is weak.¹⁴⁶ Clavering is high-handed; Saul forthright and proud. Nothing is achieved and Trollope adds nothing to our understanding of the characters. The scene is simply reported. Should it be said that this, in itself, is to be admired, I would answer that it is not, when the author elsewhere raises fundamental questions about the nature of his characters, their role and the moral positions which a confronta-

tion such as this might properly have explored. The conversation between Henry and his son at the end of the book exemplifies the trivial tone of the whole.¹⁴⁷ Instead of understanding, or even exploration, there are platitudes - in plot as well as attitudes. By a convenient accident, Henry's nephew dies and he becomes the baronet. He no longer has to preach the sermons for which he is so ill-fitted and Saul is given his living and, thus, his daughter. "'There are to be no more cakes and ale in the parish.'" says Clavering, but perhaps something of Christianity.¹⁴⁸ It would be comforting to believe that Trollope saw further than his characters, but it is open to doubt. Whatever profound perceptions of reality we may wish to ascribe to him, we are left, in the end, with conversations like this; created by Trollope but not commented upon, even implicitly, with any degree of clarity.

'He's a very good young man, and nobody would work harder in the parish. I always thought I was very lucky to have such an assistant. But upon my word I cannot understand Fanny; I cannot indeed.'
'She has been taken by the religious side of his character,' said Harry.

'Yes, of course. And no doubt it is very gratifying to me to see that she thinks so much of religion. It should be the first consideration with all of us at all times. But she has never been used to men like Mr Saul.'

'Nobody can deny that he is a gentleman.'

'Yes; he is a gentleman. God forbid that I should say he was not; especially now that he is going to marry your sister. But - I don't know whether you quite understand what I mean?'

'I think I do. He isn't quite one of our sort.'

'How on earth she can ever have brought herself to look at him in that light!'

'There's no accounting for tastes, sir. And, after all, as he's to have the living, there will be nothing to regret.'

'No; nothing to regret. I suppose he'll be up at the other house occasionally. I never could make anything of him when he dined at the rectory; perhaps he'll be better there. Perhaps, when he's married, he'll get into the way of drinking a glass of wine like anybody else.' 149

It is hard, therefore, not to conclude that Trollope, too, believes a glass of wine would cure all ills; just as Peacock believed in the efficacy of two mutton chops, well peppered.¹⁵⁰ Peacock, on the other hand, never claimed that his canvas was 'crowded with real portraits'.¹⁵¹

The Vicar of Bullhampton (1870) reveals some of Trollope's best qualities but again underlines his weaknesses. The Vicar Frank Fenwick's battle with the Marquis of Trowbridge is delightful, revealing Trollope's humour, good sense and shrewd depiction of character. Fenwick is the type of clergyman who best filled Trollope's notion of what a country parson should be, as Sadleir says. We need not necessarily agree, however, with his further conclusion that, 'the world will surely be in agreement' with this ideal.¹⁵²

He is a tall, fair-haired man, already becoming somewhat bald on the top of his head, with bright eyes, and the slightest possible amount of whiskers, and a look about his nose and mouth which seems to imply that he could be severe if he were not so thoroughly good-humoured. He has more of breeding in his appearance than his friend ... He was a man who read more and thought more than Harry Gilmore, though given much to athletics and very fond of

field sports.

Good humour, good breeding, good health and income are everywhere apparent. His wife, Mary, is 'a handsome, pleasant, well-dressed lady, who has no nonsense about her.'¹⁵³ The parish of Bullhampton is small, though much larger than Framley, but equally a backwater.¹⁵⁴ It is, in fact, ideal as the setting for Trollopian comedy on a small scale where life's broader and more complex problems can be excluded; the action concentrated in a few individual characters. Fenwick's antagonist, the Marquis of Trowbridge, is a self-important and silly man, who objects to Fenwick primarily because he is not willing to toady at Turnover Park, and because he was a great friend of Squire Gilmore, who did not vote as the Marquis expected. Furthermore, Fenwick 'had contradicted the Marquis flat to his face' and Mrs Fenwick, who came from an ancient county family, had patronized the Marquis's middle-aged daughters.¹⁵⁵ Since the vicar had refused a Trowbridge alliance Mr Puddleham, the Methodist minister, had become their parish representative - unlikely, but convenient to the plot. The rivalry between the two ministers is on the level we expect in Trollope's tales. Fenwick, we are told, 'rather likes his rival ... because Mr Puddleham is an earnest man, who, in spite of the intensity of his ignorance, is efficacious among the poor. But Mr Fenwick is bound to keep up the fight.'¹⁵⁶ The rivalry is comic rather than serious or theological, arising from the foolishness of the

Marquis and the obstinacy of Fenwick. It is in part the assertion of independence by the ordinary gentleman from the unreasonable claims of the great nobleman, which all Trollopian Englishmen naturally admire.

The personal hostility of these two men begins at a meeting of the two factions at the home of a murdered farmer. Sam Brattle, the miller's son, has been arrested on suspicion but Fenwick, knowing the lad since he was a youth, is anxious that he should be released on bail. Fenwick, quite rightly, is anxious that Sam should not be condemned without evidence or simply through prejudice - "'He's entitled to fair play ... and he is not getting it.'" ¹⁵⁷ He is determined that the Marquis shall not condemn a man simply because he may wish to do so. Here, at last, in Trollope is a clergyman who will defend interests not simply his own. For the Marquis is anxious that Gilmore should drive Sam, and possibly his family, from the parish altogether. Fenwick, who stomachs the Marquis's arrogance for as long as he can, finally speaks up.

'This young man is to be turned out because a tenant of his lordship has been murdered! He is to be adjudged guilty by us, without any trial ... and to be forbidden to return to his own home, simply because Lord Trowbridge thinks him guilty! ... Were I to suggest to you to turn out your daughters, it would be no worse an offence than your suggesting to Mr Brattle that he should turn out his son.' 158

This reference to the Marquis's daughters incenses him beyond reason and he calls for his carriage 'calling on the very gods

to send down their thunder to punish such insolence as this.'¹⁵⁹
Having so dealt with the Marquis, the vicar, his pugnacity aroused, turns to the obsequious Methodist. He had spoken of Brattle's daughter as a prostitute, as she had previously left the village in disgrace. The conversation is interesting not only as a witty victory over Evangelical cant, in its own biblical terms, but also as a serious plea for charity, so often missing in Trollopian clergymen. It makes a religious point and not merely an ecclesiastical one and thus, more convincingly than any descriptions of Fenwick's bright eyes and fair hair, reveals him as a priest of some calibre.

'What you said about poor Carry Brattle. You don't know it as a fact.'

'Everybody says so.'

'How do you know she has not married, and become an honest woman?'

'It is possible, of course. Though as for that, - when a young woman has once gone astray - '

'As did Mary Magdalene, for instance!'

'Mr Fenwick, it was a very bad case.'

'And isn't my case very bad, and yours? Are we not in a bad way, - unless we believe and repent? Have we not all so sinned as to deserve eternal punishment?'

'Certainly, Mr Fenwick.'

'Then there can't be much difference between her and us. She can't deserve more than eternal punishment. If she believes and repents, all her sins will be white as snow.' 160

To the matter of Carry Brattle we shall presently return.

The Marquis, however, does not allow the matter to rest there and promptly writes to the bishop, his anger slightly distorting the facts.¹⁶¹ Fenwick had not made any insinuations

about his daughters, which is what the Marquis now suggests, but had merely made a rather tactless comparison. The bishop, for once both wise and diplomatic, sends the letter to Fenwick with his own observation that ' a spirit of pugnacity, though no doubt it may lead to much that is good, has its bad tendencies if not watched closely. '162 The vicar sees the humour of the situation and admits his fault, revealing his good sense and self-knowledge. Nor is his placatory letter to the bishop hypocritical. His wife suggests Fenwick take a stronger line over the Marquis but he says he will,

'Write about the Marquis with the kindest feelings.'

'But you don't feel kindly?'

'Yes, I do. The poor old idiot has nobody to keep him right, and does the best he can according to his lights. I have no doubt he thinks that I am everything that is horrid. I am not a bit angry with him, and would be as civil to him tomorrow as my nature would allow me, if he would only be civil to me.' 163

Fenwick likes a fight, and is good in one, but we forgive him because he has few delusions about himself. (Perhaps, in this, Fenwick is a good illustration of Trollope's otherwise eccentric observation that 'the parish parson generally has a grievance, and is much attached to it - in which he is like other men in all other walks of life.'164)

The final battle in the war with the Marquis is over the building of a Methodist chapel - offensive enough in itself, for an Anglican parson, since the Marquis should naturally

support the establishment to which he so vociferously belongs. It is its position, however, (directly opposite the vicarage) and not the building itself that upsets Fenwick. In fact, in the past he has behaved kindly to Puddleham, sending his family fruit and vegetables and even helping to choose a site for the chapel - remote, of course, from the church and the vicarage.¹⁶⁵ Puddleham, however, thought 'that it would be a good thing to quarrel with the vicar under the auspices of the landlord. Fenwick's character had hitherto been too strong for him, and he had been forced into parochial quiescence and religious amity almost in spite of his conscience.'¹⁶⁶ Once more Trollope reduces religious rivalries to personal squabbling. Unfortunately for the Marquis, the chapel is built on what turns out to be glebe land and the vicar has every right to demand its removal. Nonetheless, he does not. It is one of those delightful twists with which Trollope uncannily captures the quirkiness of human nature. Fenwick admits that the conventicle "'is the most hideous, abominable, and disagreeable object that was ever placed upon the earth!'" but, for that very reason, refuses to "'touch a brick of it. It shall be my hair shirt, my fast day, my sacrifice of a broken heart, my little pet good work."¹⁶⁷ This seems most unlike the boisterous and belligerent vicar, and most unlike Trollope who hated asceticism above most things. The next lines, however, explain that Fenwick's

action is a sort of parody self-sacrifice, a humorous jibe at the ascetic ideal, partly, it must be said, at his own expense. "It will enable me", he explains, "to take all the good things of the world that come in my way, and flatter myself that I am not self-indulgent."¹⁶⁸ In any case, as Fenwick sees very clearly, he has the consolation of a moral victory over his old foe. With characteristic pleasure he puts pen to paper, and with characteristic vigour he deals the Marquis a deadly blow. After paragraphs which echo with the confidence of victory he writes

I will not conclude this letter without expressing my opinion that gross as has been your lordship's ignorance in giving away land which did not belong to you, your fault in that respect has been trifling in comparison with the malice you have shown to a clergyman of your own church, settled in a parish partly belonging to yourself, in having caused the creation of this chapel on the special spot selected with no other object than that of destroying my personal comfort and that of my wife. 169

What Fenwick has done is understandably human but even his wife sees that he has shown little mercy; that he has, in fact, behaved as uncharitably, as proudly, as the Marquis himself. In one sense he has right on his side but as a minister of forgiveness, and apostle of humility, he has not. Unfortunately for Frank, the Marquis's son is alive to this higher standard of behaviour. After apologizing to the vicar and ordering the removal of the chapel he takes him to one side. "Don't you think this quarrelling between clergyman and land-

lord is bad for the parish?" he asks. "If you, for the sake of the parish, and for the sake of Christian charity and goodwill, are ready to meet him half way, all this ill-will may be buried in the ground." The irony of this is very clear and very clever. It makes a delightful conclusion to a charming comedy.

What could the vicar do? He felt that he was being cunningly cheated out of his grievance. He would have had not a minute's hesitation as to forgiving the Marquis, had the Marquis owned himself to be wrong. But he was now invited to bury the hatchet on even terms, and he knew that the terms should not be even ... He did not like to be cheated out of his forgiveness. 170

In fact, should we think ill of Fenwick for nursing a grievance, the tale is concluded with the Fenwicks accepting the Marquis's invitation to stay at Turnover Park. They will go, the vicar decides, "because he owns the land on which the people live with whom we are concerned. It is for their welfare that he and I should be on good terms together."¹⁷¹ Thus, in a slightly revised form, Trollope restates the old loyalties of land and property; the church's deference to rank.

This description of The Vicar of Bullhampton though it dwells on its well-written and amusing aspects is, however, far from a complete account. It omits two-thirds of the book altogether, and the most important part of the novel. This concerns the Brattle family and, more particularly, Carry Brattle, a fallen woman, outlawed by her inflexible father, whom Frank

Fenwick is determined to help. Cockshut calls the book a 'problem-novel',¹⁷² a description one might think too strong until one turns to Trollope's own preface, or the relevant passage in his autobiography.¹⁷³ Here we see that Trollope was attempting to draw the reader's pity for the female castaway. 'I have endeavoured to endow [Carry] with qualities that may create sympathy, and I have brought her back at last from degradation at least to decency.' Trollope wishes to concentrate on the social context of the girl's dilemma. To suggest that 'she is what she is, and remains in her abject, pitiless, unutterable misery, because [the] sentence of the world has placed her beyond the helping hand of Love and Friendship'.¹⁷⁴ Trollope acknowledges her moral fault but both he and Fenwick are impatient of it. '"How small is the sin, and how terrible the punishment!'" Fenwick exclaims.¹⁷⁵ The preface defends the novelist's right to discuss such matters and hopes that a realistic treatment of the theme may lead to greater thought and greater charity, so that it may, 'at last be felt that this misery is worthy of alleviation, as is every misery to which humanity is subject'.¹⁷⁶ Most people would admire, I think, Trollope's concern and his charity, but how effective is the book in capturing the feelings of the characters and the response of society?

In one very important respect Trollope fails entirely.¹⁷⁷

He creates no very firm impression either of the society at Bullhampton, or of the more general world. It is a social problem novel set almost in a vacuum, very different from George Eliot's analysis of social forces in Janet's Repentance, or in Mill on the Floss (1860), where a variety of attitudes, from a range of social classes, are admirably delineated. Trollope's description of the town, in the opening chapter, is cursory and immediately absolves him from any wide-ranging description of the social fabric. 'Bullhampton is very quiet. There is no special trade in the place. Its interests are altogether agricultural. It has no newspaper. Its tendencies are altogether conservative.'¹⁷⁸ Moreover, the place seems almost depopulated. Trollope hardly mentions a single person not absolutely essential to the story. The gossip which drove Carry Brattle from the community is not revealed to us, it is merely noted. Frank Fenwick is presumed to be an active priest, but all Trollope can think to say of his work is that he spends his mornings 'saying comfortable words to old women, and gently rebuking young maidens'.¹⁷⁹ In a comic novel about a battle between vicar and Marquis, this would be sufficient but for an analysis of the causes and problems of the castaway woman in contemporary society, it is not. Trollope is altogether so circumspect in discussing the problem of Carry's seduction and disgrace that he does no more than allude to it, in the most

general of terms.

She was such a morsel of fruit as men do choose, when allowed to range and pick through the whole length of the garden wall. Fair she had been, with laughing eyes, and floating curls; strong in health, generous in temper, though now and again with something of her father's humour. 180

This description of the girl, somewhere between a pet animal and a ripe peach, was written, of course, in an age very different from our own. Nonetheless, even for Victorian times, I suggest, it is particularly vague and timid. George Eliot's portrayal of Janet Dempster, in Janest's Repentance may gloss over her alcoholism a little but it does not exclude physical descriptions, emotional struggles, nor a delineation of the causes of her marital difficulties.¹⁸¹ It treats her, in fact, as a human being. I do not think Trollope's sex entirely explains this difference. His grasp of social problems generally, seems more superficial. This aside, on those who fall into 'bad habits', is a typical example of this. It is noticeable, even here, that there is a very middle-class air, although the subject is supposedly the most degraded poor.

When it is found that a young man is neglecting his duties, doing nothing, spending his nights in billiard rooms and worse places, and getting up at two o'clock in the day, the usual prescription of his friends is that he should lock himself up in his own dingy room, drink tea, and spend his hours reading good books. It is hardly recognised that a sudden change from billiards to good books requires a strength of character which, if possessed, would probably have kept the young man altogether from

falling into bad habits. 182

For Trollope, the most dire evil is laziness and the most effectual remedy for all ills is good character. He seems quite unable to analyse why good character might be lacking in wrongdoers, or to discern that some of the more widespread evils of his day (drunkenness, prostitution, theft) are not simply removed by sympathy or common-sense.

Frank Fenwick's sympathy for Carry Brattle is, similarly, coloured by kindly notions, but the lack of a more profound understanding of the question is also noticeable. Indeed, when he is faced by the offender his reaction is hardly religious at all. Trollope resorts, instead, to that patronizing masculine weakness for a pretty girl, which, in the less scrupulous, was presumably the cause of her downfall.

She looked up into the face of the clergyman with a gentle, tamed, beseeching gaze, which softened and won his heart at once. Not that his heart had ever been hard against her ... At this moment, remembering the little Carry Brattle of old, who had sometimes been so sweetly obedient, ... whom he had loved undoubtedly in part because she had been so pretty ... he would now, at this moment, have taken her in his arms and embraced her, if he dared, showing her that he did not account her to be vile, begging her to become more good, and planning some course for her future life. 183

Apart from the disturbing sexual undertones here (disturbing because Trollope suggests the main cause of Fenwick's charity is Carry's attractiveness) it is clear that Carry is to be redeemed only as the passive object of pity. The peach that

hung along the garden wall was plucked and bruised, now it must be cushioned in cotton wool and placed by the fireside. Trollope elevates Fenwick's humanitarian outlook above the dogmatic attitudes of religion.

He thought for a moment that he would tell her that the Lord loved her; but there was something human at his heart, something perhaps too human, which made him feel that were he low upon the ground, some love that was nearer to him, some love that was more easily intelligible, ... would in his frailty and his wickedness be of more immediate avail to him than the love even of the Lord God. 184

In doing so, however, apart from revealing Trollope's limited and remote conception of God's love which, if it exists, must be broader and deeper than man's, he entirely rejects the possibility of Carry's own response. She, like the tenantry in Coningsby, must gratefully receive. She is even denied the dignity of guilt for her downfall, which would be more deeply humanitarian, and any procedure for its expiation. Trollope, for all he pretends to deal with a modern social problem, has Fenwick resort, on leaving the girl, to sentimental euphemisms.

'Don't drown yourself, Carry, and I'll care for you. Keep your hands clean. You know what I mean, and I will not rest till I find some spot for your weary feet.' 185

In so far as Fenwick can deal with the moral problem at all, he can only do so where repentance is 'written in' beforehand. That Trollope is aware of the broader moral questions might be suggested by this conversation between the vicar and his wife. The vicar argues that Carry ought to be forgiven by her married

sister, who is implacably 'respectable'.

'Surely, Frank, you know the unforgiving nature of women of that class for such sin as poor Carry Brattle's?'

'I wonder whether they ever say their prayers.'
said the Vicar.

'Of course they do. Mrs Gay, no doubt, is a religious woman. But it is permitted to them not to forgive that sin.'

'By what law?'

'By the law of custom. It is all very well, Frank, but you can't fight against it. At any rate, you can't ignore it till it has been fought against and conquered. And it is useful. It keeps women from going astray.' 186

In this novel, however, Trollope does ignore the question of the law of custom, to say nothing of broader social issues. He neither analyses its foundations, nor its power, nor suggests how it might be changed. Ruth apRoberts claims that in this conversation, Trollope 'strikes to the base of the popular Victorian morality' and that in doing so he is 'fighting a very insidious abuse of the time.'¹⁸⁷ I cannot see that Trollope does any more than identify the problem. Certainly, the rest of the novel adds very little to his attack. Bullhampton may seem a little more realistic than Barsetshire, but it is a long way from the real issues and ethical problems of contemporary Victorian England. The novel is far from a full, satisfying, or even provocative presentation of the problem that Trollope professed to present.

The feeble nature of Trollope's exploration of his theme is confirmed by an examination of the plot's other strand,

the love of Squire Gilmore for Mary Lowther. This is one of those 'will she? won't she?' stories, which alternates with the more serious matter of the novel. In the end Mary does not marry Gilmore, because she does not love him. Fenwick, however, has all along urged the match, because he thinks her a suitable wife for the squire, even after he learns that Mary does not love him. Fenwick's encouragement of the match, on these terms, would seem to be condoning a union as loveless as that which he condemns in the case of Carry Brattle. Trollope does not develop this. Nor does he allow this section of the story, also concerned with women's rights, expectations and privileges, to become intertwined with the broader social issues in the novel. Frank Fenwick is a lively, intelligent and wholly good-hearted clergyman; but little more. The expectations which Trollope arouses in the novel are not satisfactorily met. This clerical portrait remains as limited, though not as conventional, as his others.

An ethical question, supposedly, is the theme of Dr Wortle's School (1881), though whether the ethical problem is actually the subject of the novel, or only the starting point for it, it is difficult to decide. Dr Wortle, 'a man much esteemed by others - and by himself ... combined two professions, in both of which he had been successful.'¹⁸⁸ These were Rector of Bowick and headmaster and owner of a private

preparatory school. The story, briefly, is this. Dr Wortle engages as his assistant a former Oxford fellow, the Reverend Mr Peacocke, and Peacocke's wife whom he had met while teaching in America. Mrs Peacocke refuses to make, or receive, calls. Gossip has it that she is not legally married. She is not. Although the couple had thought her previous (roguish) husband dead when they married, he later returns demanding money. Parents remove their children from Wortle's school, the bishop writes an unfortunate letter, but Wortle refuses to discuss his friend. A compromise is reached whereby Peacocke returns to America, to discover that his wife's husband is by now dead, while his wife remains in Wortle's care. All ends well.

Is the book concerned to argue the case for common-sense and charity in judging personal issues, as against an inflexible moral dogmatism, or is it concerned only to show the effect of the moral dilemma on various individuals, particularly Dr Wortle? Sadleir thought the book was a personal plea, on Trollope's part, designed to show 'his generous tolerance of Peacocke's "sin"'. In Wortle's 'stubborn determination not to be bullied by gossiping women and a nervously conventional prelate; and in his keen appreciation of the practical element in a man's duty to himself and family', Sadleir sees Trollope's personal attitudes personified.¹⁸⁹ Sir Hugh Walpole also took the view that Trollope was 'advancing now to the modern view

of greater consideration for the individual case.'¹⁹⁰ Cockshut, on the other hand, believes that 'the moral problem of the book is subtler than this. The real point lies not in the conduct of Peacocke and his wife, but in that of Dr Wortle on discovering the facts.'¹⁹¹ John Hampden had also made this point when he wrote that the novel 'shows all Trollope's delicate, true perception of motive and his skill in depicting a good man caught agonisingly between conscience and convention.'¹⁹²

Whichever of these two aims may have been uppermost in Trollope's mind, and obviously both were present, it seems to me that the novel is a satisfactory presentation of neither. As a fictional discussion of a moral issue the book seems contrived, confused and unreal. As a psychological portrait, it is detailed but not profound; wide ranging, but superficial; potentially stimulating but finally stagnant. Not that the novel is badly written. Dr Wortle's School shows Trollope at his clearest; the plot is remarkably uncluttered, his characters are deftly sketched, the writing peculiarly sharp; but these virtues belong to light comedy where the author's distance, speed and wit show to advantage. In the delineation of inner turmoil, of psychological subtlety, where action is subservient to motivation, they are largely misplaced. This is a story which, in another's hands, might well have been a fine novel. Henry James, for example, who published The

Portrait of a Lady in the same year as this novel, would have been quite at home with the necessary psychological analysis - though would hardly have cared for the clerical setting.

Thomas Hardy, who had already published two of his great dramas,¹⁹³ could have imbued the marital tragedy with passion. Trollope did neither. Furthermore, his style and pre-conceptions come from a previous generation. It is not that Trollope lacked psychological perceptiveness, although his unending common-sense inevitably limits his sympathies, but rather that, as a writer, his gifts were not suited to the delineation of men's inner lives. It was this incapacity, of course, which led him wholly to misunderstand George Eliot. In his remarks it is clear not only that the very powers he dislikes are those which made Middlemarch profound and which, by their absence, make Dr Wortle's School banal, but also that he did not perceive the direction in which fiction was moving. He writes,

Her imagination is no doubt strong, but it acts in analysing rather than in creating. Everything that comes before her is pulled to pieces so that the inside of it shall be seen, and be seen if possible by her readers as clearly as by herself ... I doubt whether any young person can read with pleasure either Felix Holt, Middlemarch, or Daniel Deronda. I know that they are very difficult to many that are not young. 194

Trollope may well have seen, and sympathized with, Dr Wortle's dilemma but it is not possible for his readers to see 'the inside of it' as clearly as he did. The 'outside' is,

as usual, well defined, but the very balance of the prose seems a barrier to anything further. Dr Wortle,

liked to be master, and always was. He was just, and liked his justice to be recognised. He was generous also, and liked that, too, to be known. He kept a carriage for his wife, who had been the daughter of a poor clergyman at Windsor, and was proud to see her as well dressed as the wife of any county squire. But he was a domineering husband. As his wife worshipped him, and regarded him as a Jupiter on earth from whose nod there could be and should be no appeal, but little harm came from this. If a tyrant, he was an affectionate tyrant. His wife felt him to be so. His servants, his parish, and his school all felt him to be so. They obeyed him, loved him, and believed in him. 195

Such descriptions show Trollope at his best - and at his worst. It is not that we do not learn a great deal about Dr Wortle, his fights with his interfering bishop, his dislike of curates with 'grace of godliness' about them,¹⁹⁶ the superior, exclusive nature of his school, his pride, his kindness or his honesty, but that we do not sufficiently care. Owen Chadwick is right when he says that in this novel the Victorian parson and his school are 'portrayed so charmingly'. But his reminder that preparatory schools of this sort were less common after the mid-century underlines the dated nature of the work.¹⁹⁷ Charm in fiction can rarely be combined with moral seriousness and it is difficult to take a work seriously which reveals the real relationship of Mr and Mrs Peacocke in this way.

And now, O kind-hearted reader, I feel myself constrained, in the telling of this little story, to

depart altogether from those principles of story-telling to which you probably have become accustomed, and put the horse of my romance before the cart. 198

In this manner Trollope continues the paragraph. This is not because this tone is uncongenial, but because it is unsuitable. We cannot believe Trollope himself to be very interested in the matter, and this feeling is communicated to, and then shared by, the reader.

Sometimes his tone is the reversal of fanciful, but then it seems not emotive but rather, as here, academic. Wortle is discussing with his wife whether or not Mrs Peacocke should have left her husband upon discovering they were not truly married. Mrs Wortle thinks she ought.

'Ought we not to be kind to one to whom Fortune has been so unkind?'

'If we can do so without sin.'

'Sin! I despise the fear of sin, which makes us think that its contact will soil us. Her sin, if it be sin, is so near akin to virtue, that I doubt whether we should not learn of her rather than avoid her.'

'A woman should not live with a man unless she be his wife.' ...

'She was his wife, as far as she knew.'

'But when she knew that it was not so any longer - then she should have left him.'

'And have starved?'

'I suppose she might have taken bread from him.'

'You think, then, that she should go away from here?'

'Do you not think so? What will Mrs Staniloup say?'

'And I am to turn them out into the cold because of a virago such as she is? You would have no more charity than that?'

'Oh, Jeffrey! What would the Bishop say?'

'Cannot you get beyond Mrs Staniloup and beyond the Bishop, and think what Justice demands?' 199

Sitting in the Rectory at Lowick, which he had been lent for a

writing-holiday,²⁰⁰ perhaps Trollope had thought to answer that final question in this novel. But he could not do so without either rejecting the Christian religion, or, more exactly, the 'given' structure of morality which Trollope generally equated with Christianity, or by serious thought about the social codes of his day. Trollope had neither inclination, aptitude nor, perhaps, at so many pages per day, time for such a task. For all the discussion that there is in this novel, and the above quotation is a fair sample, there is very little progression. We never feel the problem has been solved nor, since problems of this sort may have no solution, even seriously explored. We are shown every facet of the question but, in the end, it is put down with the same detachment as it was taken up. In a novel like The Warden, the 'problem' seems less significant than the characters and Trollope's charm. Here the characters are at the mercy of the plot.

The delineation of Wortle's inner conflict is particularly unsatisfactory. Trollope becomes almost tortuous in his delineation of the Doctor's thoughts. His style, too, apparently precise and yet so circumlocutory, is unsuitable. Trollope's prose is remarkably free from images and metaphors, and these are generally essential in recreating, rather than only reporting, the mental process; this is imaginative as well as intellectual. The Doctor,

was hitherto altogether at a loss as to what he should do in this present uncomfortable emergency. He could not bring his conscience and his inclination to come square together. And even when he counselled himself to yield to his conscience, his very conscience - a second conscience, as it were - revolted against the first. His first conscience told him that he owed a primary duty to his parish ... school ... wife and daughter. ... But then there came that other conscience, telling him that the man had been more 'sinned against than sinning' ... Then this second conscience went on to remind him ... 201

Thus, the possibilities are reviewed. The only outcome of this circular argument is a decision to consult his wife. Their conversation we have seen. Wortle also consults a neighbouring cleric, Mr Puddicombe. In so far as he is characterized, and all the portraits in this work, save Wortle's, are sparing, he is seen to represent strict adherence to the letter of the law. In a more relaxed novel he would have been an Evangelical, but Trollope has no energies for cheap humour here. Puddicombe, thus, is

a dry, thin, apparently unsympathetic man, but just withal, and by no means given to harshness. He could pardon whenever he could bring himself to believe that pardon would have good results; but he would not be driven by impulses and softness of heart to save the faulty one from the effect of his fault, merely because that effect would be painful. He was a man of no great mental calibre - not sharp, and quick, and capable of repartee as was the Doctor, but rational in all things, and always guided by his conscience. 202

This reference to conscience seems particularly confusing in view of the fact that Trollope had, only a few pages before, suggested how divided a conscience could be. Puddicombe, as

Wortle expects, advises that Peacocke be dismissed. Then

Trollope concludes the chapter with these words.

With this the conference ended, and Mr Puddicombe took his leave. As he left the house the Doctor declared to himself that the man was a strait-laced, fanatical, hard-hearted bigot. But though he said so to himself, he hardly thought so; and was aware that the man's words had had effect upon him. 203

This is exactly the sort of comment which makes the novel so unsatisfactory. What is the reader meant to understand by it? That there is a difference between speech and thought we accept, but what is it in this case? How, and why, does it occur? What exactly is the 'effect upon him'? Here, at the end of a chapter, is the real substance of the work; the effect of outward forces upon the inner man. Yet it is here that Trollope becomes ambiguous and perfunctory. The next chapter starts with Wortle's mind made up. The psychological drama is lost as we turn the page.

The interference of the bishop, and the righteous indignation of meddling mothers who remove their sons from Wortle's school as scandal spreads, Trollope handles with his customary skill. Incisive character sketches of pompous prelates, ridiculous letters, pithy replies, the revelation of provincial hypocrisy, is the very stuff of Trollopian fiction. Here is action, which Trollope ably dramatizes, instead of elusive thought-processes which can only generally be described.

Even here, though, Trollope confuses the reader with his divided attention; between the inner and outer action. The imputation of a newspaper, that Wortle has been behaving improperly in his visits to Mrs Peacocke, naturally incenses the Doctor. The actual words accurately capture journalistic scurrility.

'While one gentleman is gouging the other - as cannot but be expected - the Doctor will be at any rate in security, enjoying the smiles of beauty under his own fig tree at Bowick. After a hot morning with "--" in the school, there will be "amo" in the cool of the evening.' 204

Trollope, however, cannot resist, in his catalogue of every possible motivation, from making the same imputation himself. Wortle is, Trollope says, 'a man with a kind, tender, affectionate nature. It would perhaps be unfair to raise a question whether he would have done as much, been so willing to sacrifice himself, for a plain woman'.²⁰⁵ As we see, Trollope does raise the question, and indeed repeats the inference.²⁰⁶ He does not, however, develop it. We do not discover if, or how, this suggestion relates to Wortle's psychological motivation. This very natural Victorian impulse - the male protecting the wounded female - is not, as in the case of Frank Fenwick, given as a major cause of Wortle's action. Whether or not it was a cause at all, however, could have been shown, and might profitably have been explored; more especially since Trollope also touches upon the possibility of Mrs Wortle's jealousy.²⁰⁷

Dr Wortle's School is a mixture of moral and personal

issues but Trollope's legalistic, analytical mind renders the discussion of the former arid, while his natural reticence never allows a searching examination of the latter. The clerical setting, though it provides Trollope with ample scope for comedy, seems less appropriate to this story than in the ecclesiastical struggles of Barsetshire. J.C. Maxwell finds that the novel depicts 'an age that is more human and morally sensitive'.²⁰⁸ I cannot agree. Trollope's use of clergymen seems particularly to limit and narrow the ethical questions by pre-defining and taming the scope of the discussion. The moral uprightness of Wortle, Puddicombe and even Peacocke who behaves, his marital difficulties aside, with exceptional correctness, takes this 'special case' into an atmosphere so rarified and particular that its general application seems negligible. At a time when divorce was increasingly discussed, and practised,²⁰⁹ the nicety of Trollope's moral point must have been lost on many. Worse, from the literary viewpoint, is the fact that the use of clerical characters divided Trollope's interests. So accustomed was he to caricature, that their serious portrayal appears problematic. Wortle, like Fenwick, is excellent when bellicose, but evasive about more fundamental religious questions. By 1881, such clerical tales would already have appeared dated and unless, as in George Eliot's novels, the clergy were from a previous age, more searching portraits, in a serious novel such

as this, would certainly have been more effective.

Trollope is far more effective with a clergyman decidedly of the old school; a 'High and Dry' Tory, for example, like Dr Harford in Rachel Ray (1863). There is something about such portraits, captured to perfection in Archdeacon Grantly of Barchester, which is infinitely satisfying, although they are largely effective by virtue of their restrained qualities of caricature. Although it may pain some readers to suggest it, I believe Trollope is most effective as a writer, and certainly most enjoyable, when he is not dealing with intellectual or ethical matters but with those quirks of character which spring from strongly held, if uninformed, opinion. Trollope captures this particular aspect of character perfectly. As with Grantly, so here in Harford, Trollope makes such clergy even more effective by placing them in a world which seems to crumble away, like sand beneath the feet in a rising tide. The historical context, with such clergymen, seems less important than with more realistic figures because, we feel, their dogmatism is an attitude of mind which would discover decline in any age.

Dr Harford had been rector of Baslehurst for nearly half a century. He was neither idle nor inefficient.

But, now in his old age, he was discontented and disgusted by the changes which had come upon him; and though some bodily strength for further service still remained to him, he had no longer any aptitude for useful work ... In his parish he had been

more than a clergyman. He had been a magistrate, and a moving man in municipal affairs. He had been a politician, and though now for many years he had supported the Conservative candidate, he had been loudly in favour of the Reform Bill ... But liberal politics had gone on and had left Dr Harford high and dry on the standing-ground which he had chosen for himself in the early days of his manhood. 210

Even worse, in Harford's eyes, were the reforms of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners which divided his parish and left it 'to such inexperienced hands as chance might send thither - then Dr Harford became a violent Tory'.²¹¹ This process of reaction, well known in life, is ably documented by Trollope, who is often a most delicate chronicler of middle-years and old age.

The beauty of his life was over, and the contentment of his mind was gone. He knew that it was only left for him to die, spending such days as remained to him in vague prophecies of evil against his devoted country - a country which had allowed its ancient parochial landmarks to be moved, and its ecclesiastical fastnesses to be invaded! 212

When Trollope concludes his description with the words, 'all this was, to say the least of it, a pity, for it disfigured the close of a useful and conscientious life',²¹³ the quality of his portrait is made clear. Trollope's tone is a judicious blend of pity, regret and gentle humour at the faintly ridiculous. 'This is how he was', Trollope seems to say, 'would that he were not so, but there we are!' For all the distortion of reality that we find in Trollope - and reality is as much

distorted by common-sense as by passion - there is at times a gentleness, which makes the portraits of clergy like Harford not full, but endearing. When Harford comments on the election of Jews to Parliament,²¹⁴ we discover not only, as Cockshut says, 'a man drunk with the odour of the decay of all he values',²¹⁵ but a man who is falling; crying out for help. What he says he says to shock, but his awareness of the effect of his words gives Trollope's portrait an added dimension

'Well; why not a Jew?' said the doctor. Where-upon Mr Comfort, and Butler Cornbury, and Dr Harford's own curate ... all stared at him; as Dr Harford had intended that they should. 'Upon my word,' said he, 'I don't see the use for caring for that kind of thing any longer; I don't indeed. In the way we are going on now, and for the sort of thing we do, I don't see why Jews shouldn't serve us as well in Parliament as Christians.' 216

This is a passing vignette but a fine one. It may nonetheless lead us to reflect that had Trollope treated the character at greater length, he probably would not have given him any greater depth. Trollope's clerical portraits are not wholly limited but they have their limits. They have possibly become popular for that very reason, especially today, since the parson of fiction can be more readily passed over when he fades easily into stereotype. Trollope would seem to be the master of the clerical stereotype, but it is worth noting that on closer inspection there is, in fact, a little more verisimilitude than we commonly suppose.

Far less common, in Trollope, though not in his day, is the clergyman who is not a gentleman (unless he be an Evangelical) or who is too poor to live like one. In his essays, Clergymen of the Church of England, Trollope makes much of this question, insisting that 'in no capacity is a gentleman more required or more quickly recognized than in that of a parson'.²¹⁷ There had, in fact, always been curates whose position could hardly be called gentlemanly. A. Tindal Hart, in The Curate's Lot, points out that 'public advertisements for curates vividly portrayed their humiliating position'. Their duties may have included the tutoring of their incumbent's children and they were expected to be hardworking and humble. Their pay was often as low as £70 to £100 per year, or less, and although they may have had a free house, such a sum did not go far when there were several children.²¹⁸ Except for the Reverend Josiah Crawley, in The Last Chronicle of Barset, the curate's lot was little portrayed by Trollope, and rarely with sympathy.

With the Reverend Mr Quiverful, in Barchester Towers, Trollope could not bring himself to be especially charitable though he was a man whose income hardly allowed him to add worldly dignity to his religious position. When Mr Slope suggests that Quiverful might be offered Mr Harding's old post of Warden, 'Mr Quiverful, with his fourteen children and his four hundred a year ... was very grateful to him. To what clergymen so

circumstanced would not such a prospect be very grateful?'²¹⁹
Although Trollope makes Quiverful dubious for a moment of accepting the post, since Mr Harding had always been friendly towards him, he stresses the fact that with such a man material claims must obviously be more pressing than moral ones.

The impossible task of bringing up as ladies and gentleman fourteen children on an income which was insufficient to give them with decency the common necessities of life had had an effect upon him not beneficial either to his spirit, or his keen sense of honour. Who can boast that he would have supported such a burden with a different result? Mr Quiverful was an honest, painstaking, drudging man ... 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. 220

Cleverly, Trollope makes Quiverful's wife adopt the more unscrupulous attitude to her husband's promotion, thus removing absolute guilt from the parson's shoulders.

Her husband had no right to be Quixotic at the expense of fourteen children ... 'And what signifies it whom he offends, as long as he gets the place? He does not expect anything better. It passes me to think how your father can be so soft, while everybody around him is so griping.' 221

This problem of the clerical wage was, and indeed is, a serious and real one. (Trollope does elsewhere allow himself a lengthy aside on the subject, in chapter fourteen of Framley Parsonage, but this is occasioned by reference to the income of Crawley, whom Trollope clearly sees as a far worthier,

because a more gentlemanly, character than Quiverful.) Trollope nonetheless treats Quiverful without the sympathy and understanding of, say, George Eliot, whose portrait of the Reverend Amos Barton, in Scenes of Clerical Life, is far finer and more realistic. I suspect that although Trollope strongly disliked the inequality of clerical stipends, he much preferred the clergy of his own class and income. This follows his view, elsewhere expressed, that 'the society of the well-born and of the wealthy will as a rule be worth seeking'.²²² Certainly, although he does not wholly blame Quiverful for being a 'pains-taking, drudging man' he does not noticeably warm to him, or his lot.

Trollope has hardly any sympathy at all for a clergyman like the Reverend Mr Thumble, who replaced Slope as Bishop Proudie's chaplain. He held the view, I suspect, that any clergyman who acted as secretary or assistant, anything, indeed, except a parish clergyman, was some sort of lazy parasite. Thumble, attending the clerical commission which was to investigate Crawley and which was led by Dr Tempest, a fine, fair, old school Tory, is described as 'a poor creature - so poor a creature that, in spite of a small restless ambition to be doing something, he was almost cowed by the hard lines of Dr Tempest's brow'.²²³ Thumble's feeble attempts to appear important are quickly silenced.

Mr Thumble ... having heard his own voice once, and having liked the sound, thought that he might creep into a little importance by using it on any occasion that opened itself for him. 'If you will allow me, sir, I will venture to state my views as shortly as I can,' said Dr Tempest ... 'Oh certainly,' said Mr Thumble, 'I didn't mean to interrupt.' 224

Tempest, who has twice fought and won verbal battles with Mrs Proudie,²²⁵ is not to be guided by her feeble emissary. The discussion between Quiverful and Thumble after the meeting is interesting because it reveals Trollope's sympathies even further. The two men are complaining that their expenses are not to be met by the diocese.

'I shan't come again, all the same, unless I know where I'm to get my expenses.' said Mr Quiverful as he got into the gig.

'I shall come,' said Mr Thumble, 'because I think it a duty. Of course it is a hardship.'

Mr Thumble liked the idea of being joined with such men as Dr Tempest, and Mr Oriel, and Mr Robarts, and would have paid the expenses of a gig ... out of his own pocket, for the sake of sitting with such benchfellows. 226

Quiverful is merely poor, Thumble is a place-seeker and a toady. As the dust of Robarts's fast gig flies up into Thumble's face when they pass on the road, 'there is no doubt', Mario Praz observes, 'where Trollope's sympathies lie'.²²⁷

Trollope lived in, and liked, a society where the idea of expenses, tax-relief, bonus-schemes and pensions seemed like bad form. He did not really see that if the church were to survive it must begin to pay its clergy a fair wage, and not rely on private incomes. The time was fast approaching,

indeed had already arrived, when not all clergy could be expected to provide horses and servants as many previously had done. By the seventies young men had far more lucrative careers to choose from and the church, inevitably, suffered. 'The value of clerical stipends did not keep pace with the stipends of other professions.'²²⁸ The picture of Thumble, struggling from Barchester to Hogglegstock on a worn out old pony of the bishop's,²²⁹ may well be amusing but, in the light of historical reality, it is a bad joke. Major Grantly finds the suggestion that he should give Thumble a ride home shocking, though he is engaged to a poor parson's daughter. His haughty reply, '"I am sorry to say that it is quite out of my power"',²³⁰ emphasizes the distinct social gap between a wealthy archdeacon's son and a man like Thumble. It is perhaps a sign of the times that Thumble even dares to ask such a favour and, to Trollope, an ill-omen of future decay. Trollope believed that 'under the new order of things', the English parson 'will be an altered man, and as a man less attractive, less urbane, less genial'.²³¹ The Church of England was, in fact, to need less urbanity, if it was to survive in a world that became less congenial as it became more urban.

Trollope is almost singular, amongst novelists of this period, in his delineation of the higher clergy. Archbishops do not appear in his fiction, though in his essay on the modern

archbishop, the most trivial and superficial of them all, he suggests that the best candidate is the 'good old man' who 'commits himself to nothing'.²³² Bishops abound, however, and there are notable deans, archdeacons and canons. On the whole, Trollope has hardly a generous word for members of the episcopate who appear in his novels. This attitude was obviously idiosyncratic, and inaccurate, since at no time since the Reformation, possibly, were bishops more active, influential and religious than in Victorian England. In retrospect, they may seem cautious in theological matters, or sometimes dull, but rarely, I think, as stupid, interfering and feeble as Trollope portrays them. W. Leask claims that the real life of the higher clergy 'is to be found in Trollope, whose novels will one day be a veritable social mine to the future historian'.²³³ This is unlikely. Although few may have the appeal of Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford, Bishops Van Mildert of Durham, Blomfield of London and, later, Benson (finally of Canterbury), King of Lincoln and Frederick Temple all contributed usefully to the church of their day.²³⁴ Trollope's viewpoint springs partly from his inadequate conception of a bishop's office, but also from his natural love of independence from any authority, and a streak of puritanism, which shrank from expressions of religious sentiment, formal show or public ceremony. He could not resist, therefore, the notion that a man in an exalted

and revered position must be also a charlatan. This is paradoxical, in a writer who elsewhere seems to respect rank and privilege, but Trollope is full of inconsistent individualism. Few people, Trollope among them, knew a bishop intimately but most men liked to imagine that, secretly, great figures are as silly, or sorry - as human as they are themselves. Trollope shows us with all the 'little man's' sturdy resilience to rank, that bishops are as other men or even, with a delightful disregard for deference, worse. It would be futile to investigate whether or not such obviously comic portraits are just - in the case of the ordinary clergy the evidence is more commonplace and more specific - but it is interesting to see the portrait he presents, and how he impresses it upon the reader's mind.

Trollope's description of Dr Wortle's bishop is an excellent example of his skilful undermining of conventional expectations. It also reveals the somewhat perverse limitations of Trollope's attitudes. (My commentary is in square brackets.)

The bishop was a goodly man, comely in his person, possessed of manners which had made him popular in the world.

[The word 'goodly' gently detracts from the full force of a plain good. Do we like a man who is 'comely'? Should a bishop be popular 'in the world'? In the biblical sense of 'world' (i.e. ungodly) any active bishop must be unpopular.]

He was one of those who had done the best he could with his talent, not wrapping it up in a napkin, but getting from it the best interest which the world's market could afford.

[This play on the biblical parable (Matthew XXIV v 14f) is interesting because, of course, in the scriptures the man with one talent had buried, not used, it like the others. The bishop, although fulfilling the master's suggestion to his wicked servant (to bank his talent and receive the interest) appears to be indulging in commercial speculation, not spiritual activity. What, in any case, was his talent? Comeliness, popularity or manners?]

But not on that account was he other than a good man.

[A clever disclaimer by Trollope, after his previous insinuations.]

To do the best he could for himself and his family - and also to do his duty - was the line of conduct which he pursued.

[Trollope cleverly exploits the 'double standard'. A cleric should put his duty above all else. The layman, perhaps, might be excused for providing a good home and income for his family?]

There are some who reverse this order, but he was not one of them.

[That these are, in fact, very few Trollope naturally does not say.]

He had become a scholar in his youth, not from love of scholarship, but as a means to success.

[Here begins the catalogue of qualities which might be thought virtues, but nonetheless are twisted to appear rather less. Today, of course, to study hard with a view to advancement is considered a virtue; though scholarship alone could hardly be thought of as a means to success, even in an aspiring prelate.]

The Church had become his profession, and he had worked hard at his calling.

['Profession' and 'calling' are meant to suggest opposites. Calling is spiritual; profession worldly. This I think is the root of Trollope's criticism - that the calling of bishop could become

a profession. The 'professional' was a man Trollope particularly disliked because he cut across the traditional concept of the gentleman-amateur. The distinction between professional and 'gentlemen' cricketers is another example of this attitude.]

He had taught himself to be courteous and urbane, because he had been clever enough to see that courtesy and urbanity are agreeable to men in high places.

[The implication here is that the man was not naturally, or genuinely, courteous, and that his urbanity was a further sign of his worldliness.]

As a bishop he never spared himself the work which a bishop ought to do.

[This can now be said without fear that it will affect the pre-conceptions already implanted in the reader's mind.]

He answered letters, he studied the characters of the clergymen under him, he was just with his patronage, he endeavoured to be efficacious with his charges,

[outwardly he was, in fact, a model bishop]

he confirmed children in cold weather as well as in warm,

[a vague jibe]

he occasionally preached sermons,

[but only occasionally?]

and he was beautiful and decorous in his gait and manner, as it behoves a clergyman of the Church of England to be.

[This final trivial description returns the accent to those qualities, hardly pre-possessing in themselves, with which Trollope had started his account.] 235

Thus Trollope cleverly suggests that the bishop is all that might be expected but little more; not exactly to be condemned but hardly to be praised. Furthermore, he achieves this effect effortlessly. The reader hardly notices what closer examination only laboriously reveals.

(CHAPTER FIVE CONTINUED IN VOLUME TWO.)