NOVELS OF COMPROMISE: MARY ARNOLD WARD'S RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT OF FAITH AND DOUBT

by

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Introduction

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle
and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.
--- Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

Great conflicts are often dealt with in fiction more effectively than in other forms of written expression because the fiction writer is free to explore all sides of an issue without an obligation to adhere to "facts" in the manner of historians or journalists but often with as much or more desire to seek truth. Such a novelist was Mary Arnold Ward, who signed her novels Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Although Mary Ward wrote some two dozen novels, plus other published works, Robert Elsmere remains her most recognized work. With occasional bows to her other works, most of the praise has gone to that novel, as if it were her only influential effort. Chronologically, it is at the beginning of her literary life, but it has been treated by many critics as the culmination of her talents. I hope todemonstrate that Robert Elsmere was indeed the beginning of her efforts to promote a religious philosophy of tolerance and that she offered as much in the novels that followed.

Mary Ward fits Richard Altick's characterization of those Victorians at the end of the century who had redirected the energy once given to inner religious devotion outward to the betterment of society through social action. "If historical and dogmatic Christianity could no longer compel belief," he writes in Victorian People and Ideas, "ethical Christianity could at least serve as a guide to life" (236).

If indeed Mary Ward had not quite given up on the traditional aspects of belief, as former British Prime Minister Gladstone hoped in his review of her novel, she had surely intended to help shape opinion toward accepting the ethical purpose of religion as its most modern and spiritually rewarding need.

One may wonder how she could be characterized in this way in view of the religious turmoil of the times and in view of the instability of her own early life. A possible answer is that she was an exceptional person who found within herself great reservoirs of strength -- a quality celebrated in many of her heroines. Perhaps Mary Ward could observe the situation with equanimity because she was not herself racked by religious doubt or troubled by loss of faith in the cataclysmic sense of some of the persons she observed or wrote about. It may be appropriate to suggest

that, like many people before her and since, she carved a personal world for herself in which she could maintain a liberal religious philosophy based on a steadfast traditional faith. Rather than leaving her with an outlook that would cause her either to turn away from religious faith or to seek a more orthodox outlet, her childhood experiences seem to have given her a great sympathy for diverse religious beliefs and to have reinforced innate notions of tolerance. At least this is the attitude found in her novels, and this tolerance applies equally to devout Catholics, dissenters, and traditional Anglican clergy, as well as to people who have compromised their religious faith through error or weakness of character.

She had observed religious conflict and debate first hand, having grown up in a household in which there were several religious points of view; her father twice converted to the Roman Catholic faith, and her grandfather bequeathed a scheme for religious compromise within the existing Anglican church as a goal he hoped would be achieved. She was influenced by some of the leading liberal thinkers of the time, including her uncle, Matthew Arnold, Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, and T. H. Huxley. Her novels reveal that she was a serious observer with the instincts of a reporter, offering not a hint of satire, but providing straightforward, earnest appraisals. Although not an impartial observer, she was a resolutely tolerant one, and

this determination to be tolerant sets her apart from many of her contemporaries.

Her own background and the experiences that prompted her writing were far from ordinary. Robert Wolff points out in Strange Stories and Other Explorations in Victorian Fiction that she took her own "religious stand as far from her father's as possible" (47). Her father, Thomas Arnold, was the brother of Matthew Arnold and the son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, an "eminent Victorian" who espoused unity among the diverse Christian churches. Thomas Arnold's two conversions to Catholicism were accepted by his family, although without enthusiasm, for he had difficulty obtaining and holding teaching positions except between conversions. His wife and children apparently managed to survive throughout his series of gains and losses with the help of his family. Some of Mary's childhood was spent in her Grandmother Arnold's home, and she was, because of her intelligence and spirit, ultimately the beneficiary of a wide range of intellectual opportunities. She was very much aware of contemporary writings as they applied to the vicissitudes of religious experience. Her novels were written with the utmost seriousness of purpose, as if she truly wished to provide an anchor of understanding in a turbulent time. That she succeeded was amply demonstrated by the particular success in her own day of her novels concerned with religious themes, but it is also true that

she intended religious discussions and concerns to be vital to her other novels.

Mary Ward achieved her greatest success with her second novel, Robert Elsmere (1888), a novel about religious doubt. Her two dozen later novels, while successful, never reached an equivalent level of prominence. Helbeck of Bannisdale (1898), a later novel of religious faith, reveals a greater skill in conveying dramatic tension and urgency than that apparent in Elsmere. The path to the level of novelistic achievement reached in Helbeck winds through several novels in between the appearance of Robert Elsmere and Helbeck of Bannisdale, and one in particular, The Story of Bessie Costrell (1895), is particularly interesting for its departure in organization and style from the others. Coming as it does in the midst of her other works, it presents an interesting point for comparison because it lacks the stylistic constraints that mark Robert Elsmere. It does, however, continue the serious spiritual thread that culminates in Helbeck.

Toward the end of The Story of Bessie Costrell, Mary Ward wrote, "No human life would be possible if there were not forces in and round man perpetually tending to repair the wounds and breaches that he himself makes" (179). In thus expressing the essence of her story, she also reveals the sympathy for both traditional and modernist points of view that marks her best work. Her own ambivalence toward

the century's religous controversies is also reflected in that work, for in it a man's own rigidity of belief has caused his "wounds and breaches," which, ironically, can only be healed by the spiritual forces of his religious faith.

The irony and ambivalence of this situation are symbolic of the roiling religious argument that Mary Ward observed and in which she became an active participant, taking care to understand each side of the argument in order to comment fairly. She was capable of giving a spirited defense of liberal religious causes when needed, but in general she attempted through her essays and novels to offer a middle ground of agreement and to let it be known that such a meeting could be possible. She was interested in discussing both the effects of doubt and the effects of unswerving faith as experienced by ordinary people. Because she approached her subject without rancor, dispassionately yet earnestly, Mary Ward was in a particularly favorable position to write on issues that evoked much rancor and passion. As noted earlier, her novels reveal a compassion for human foibles and strivings and a tolerance for differing points of view. These qualities enabled Mary Wardto contribute probably as much as any writer toward educating the public during a time of vast confusion and change. Her contribution was an accomplishment that perhaps few fiction writers have cared to achieve, preferring for

their works, if required to choose, to be influential rather than educational. Nevertheless, if Mary Ward intended her work to be educational, she hoped it would be influential as well, and she achieved both goals.

Chapter I. Mary Arnold Ward: Essayist and Novelist

Mary Arnold Ward was, in her own, very distinctive way, a nineteenth-century crusader, an extraordinarily brave defender of deep religious ideals. These ideals, bound to a very liberal view of the Christian religion, are fought for in all of her writings. She used the medium of fiction to explore how the social and scientific upheavals of the time had shaken its foundations of religious faith, and although Victorian novels abound with these ideas, Mary Ward's novels approached the subject with rare perception. The uncertainties that confronted many people in regard to their religious beliefs had been treated in various ways in novels by George Eliot, Charles Kingsley, John Henry Newman, and Elizabeth Gaskell, among others, but Mary Ward's experience as both an observer and participant gave an exceptional understanding to her study of religious conflict.

In the context of these writers, Mary Ward has largely been seen in the twentieth century as a somewhat inconsequential novelist. It is the purpose of this study to show her novels as treatises of the most serious sort on the meaning of religion and the religious life. The origins of the ideas for the treatises-cum-novels can be found in her early essays. Before these treatises began to be developed

in her novels she had planted seeds of protest in an early unpublished pamphlet--seeds of protest that grew to fruition in Robert Elsmere, her first successful novel on a religious theme, and in other novels to follow. Her early pamphlet indicates that she was outspoken about her beliefs and more than willing to present them in a public forum, as she later did in lectures and published essays.

These were essays of protest, and in them Mary Ward set out several basic ideas or tenets that were to appear in her novels and that gave a foundation to her eventual view of Christianity as a literary problem: a review of the biblical literature, concentrating on the spiritual rather than the literal; criticism of church hierarchy and dogma; and, above all, emphasis on the Christian religion as a force for social reform.

Although Mary Ward was challenging the Chrisitian religion, she was committed to working within the existing religious body. Many other people found that the great social changes and scientific challenges of the time confronted them with questions that could not be answered by their faith. Where once the world had been a place of "untroubled certitude" in which "the great perplexity that haunts the modern world" (80-81) was absent, as Alfred North Whitehead has observed in Science and the Modern World, it became for many people one of troubled uncertitude. Richard Altick in Victorian People and Ideas cites the importance of

religion to the ordinary Victorian's "whole outlook upon life" and the suffering felt when the foundations to long-held beliefs were questioned. At the same time, the Anglican Church was, according to Altick, "a gentleman's religion . . . largely unaffected by the spirit of Christianity," that was hardly in a position to respond assertively to the spiritual needs of a changing society (204).

Bernard M.G. Reardon in Religious Thought in the Victorian Age comments that various opposites were combined in the nineteenth century "in a measure unique in history" --progress and order, moral certainty and experimentation. Science could offer knowledge that disputed what religion had presented as truth. "A clash between religious beliefs and scientific theory was thus inevitable: first, on the question of the Genesis story of creation, then on to Darwinism, especially as propounded by T. H. Huxley, whose respect for the susceptibilities of theologians was minimal, and finally on the doctrine of materialism generally, a philosophy destructive of all spiritual values" (13).

Those involved in the Oxford Movement were trying to hold on to the spiritual values that seemed to be ebbing away and also attempting to revitalize faith. However, Altick points out that their focus on the "remote" past ill-prepared them for the new challenges to the relevancy of that past, and it kept them from "preparing their religion

for an imminent and crucial future."

As Mary Ward recalls in A Writer's Recollections, "Newman, Pusey, Liddon--all three, great schoolmen, arguing from an accepted brief; the man of genius, the man of a vast industry, intense but futile, the man of captivating presence and a perfect rhetoric--history, with its patient burrowings, has surely undermined the work of all three, sparing only that element in the work of one of them--Newman--which is the preserving salt of all literature--i.e., the magic of personality." She further observed, with her customary broadmindedness of view and appreciation for historical tradition, that some of the most "efficacious burrowers have been their own spiritual children. As was fitting! For the Tractarian movement, with its appeal to the primitive Church, was in truth, and quite unconsciously, one of the agencies in a great process of historical inquiry which is still going on, and of which the end is not yet" (181).

The need to cling to and simultaneously question religious faith persisted. Mary Ward observed in "Unitarians and the Future" that the society of her day was "permeated with thoughts of faith . . . more open to it . . . than the society which, nearly two generations ago, bore the brunt of the Liberal and scientific reaction from the ideas of the Oxford movement." She noted that the great expansion of knowledge brought by science had not caused an eclipse of

wonder or mystery in the world, for "the more closely it correlates phenomena, or the more exactly it classifies them, the more and not the less marvellous and significant does the ethical life of man become" (33).

For some years German scholars had been examining the Bible from an historical point of view rather than as a divinely inspired document. The emphasis came to be placed upon the spiritual and ethical significance of biblical writings, timeless values that existed independently of historical fact, which Mary Ward defined as the "effort to reconceive Christianity in the light of the accumulation of modern knowledge." Her Robert Elsmere, in his biblical research, became disillusioned when he found that the historical foundations for all that he believed were unsteady, and he became a crusader for a new faith built on spiritual and ethical values. Benjamin Jowett, ultimately Mary Ward's influential friend, had espoused such ideas in Essays and Reviews in 1860. A.O.J. Cockshut, in Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century, comments that Jowett, Pattison, and others introduced a new "note into religious controversy" by way of their writings in that publication (11). A major influence was the German critic David Friedrich Strauss's Das Leben Jesu. Of deep significance to George Eliot was The Essence of Christianity by Ludwig Feuerbach. In a foreword to that work, H. Richard Niebuhr notes that George Eliot, translator of both works,

after turning away from the Evangelical orientation of her early years, "sought to retain the ethos of Christianity without its faith, its humanism without its theism, its hope for man without its hope for the sovereignity of God." Mary Ward's works expressed some of these ideas, although she had little Evangelical orientation from her childhood to refute. Rather, as her essays tell us and as her novels confirm, she would wish to retain faith, theism, and the sovereignity of God within Christianity either on coequal terms with humanism and hope for humankind or only modestly dominated by what she might view as enlightened revisions to the traditional framework.

During this time of confusion and change many people were entrenched in the old traditions, reacting with the power of pen and pulpit to the perceived threats to their religious faith, regardless of whether the threats were actually valid. As a result, holders of views that diverged from the traditional Christian view often found themselves disparaged or even denounced. Mary Ward was born into this debate, yet she was initially reticent until a dramatic confrontation occurred that caused her to abandon her reserve. "How could one show England what was really going on in her midst? Surely the only way was through imagination; through a picture of actual life and conduct . . . ," she wrote, recalling the writing of Robert Elsmere in her memoir, A Writer's Recollections (224).

It was the disturbing effect of a sermon preached at the Bampton Lectures in 1881 that galvanized her to action. Anyone who disagreed with the established church, according to the speaker (John Wordsworth), was a sinner. Most of her mentors, including her uncle, Matthew Arnold, were among those who disagreed, and she felt herself personally attacked. In protest she wrote a pamphlet, "Unbelief and Sin," only to have its publication suppressed by the clergy on a technicality: A high churchman noticed the pamphlet in the printer's shop, read it, and also noticed that it did not contain a printer's name, an illegal situation. The printer had to withdraw the pamphlet or suffer whatever consequences that might be imposed, so all the copies were returned to Mary Ward with a letter of regret.

Mary Ward said that such a mind as the lecturer's was not open to reason, certainly not the kind of reasoning she advanced. She defined "unbelief" as an intellectual challenge to historical Christianity. She saw the "Christian problem" as a "literary problem," as a question of documents, of information that was open to be analyzed or judged in the manner that other such documents and information are routinely scrutinized, and the dictum that "it is not to be judged" was challengeable. Reason being "the only instrument by which we can intellectually apprehend anything," reason then must be used, with the hope that the truth will affirm the orthodox beliefs but with the

likely feeling that it will not.

In her essay she employs a novelistic style, presenting two educated young men both seeking answers: One will give up the quest rather than pursue a path that "will waste the forces of his moral and spiritual life," but will be satisfied nonetheless with what he "knows"; the other one continues to question, for he has discovered that "the whole vast system of dogmatic Christianity, with all its lovely and imposing associations, is but one of many systems that human nature has in turn framed for its shelter and support, that like all other theologies the world has seen, it is the product of human needs and human skill" (170).

In an unfortunate turn of events, the Bampton lecturer experienced a serious accident that made him the object of great sympathy. It was clearly no time to fight for the life of her pamphlet, but its suppression eventually inspired her to present the situation through the medium of the novel, and the result was Robert Elsmere. As her daughter, Janet Trevelyan, points out in The Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward, this incident was the spark that set off a "complex train of thought which was now to work itself out through toil and stress toward its appointed end" (34).

Mary Ward's friend, Mark Pattison, the Rector of Lincoln College at Oxford, admired her for "attacking one of their strong places." He wrote in a letter to her in 1881, soon after she had sent him a copy of the pamphlet, that

"The doctrine of disbelief in Church principles being due to a propensity to secret sins is one of the oldest tenets of the Anglican party" (Trevelyan 34). Pattison observed also that it was also "a fundamental principle" of popular Catholicism. "I have heard it from the Catholic pulpit so often that it must have among them the character of a commonplace" (34).

When the essay was printed in 1889 as "Sin and Unbelief" in the North American Review, the author commented in introducing it that she was bringing with "some diffidence...this bygone protest in behalf of liberal religion once more into the light of day." She noted the popularity of Robert Elsmere with the American public, and observed, that she would in the future be confining herself, "wholly or mainly, to that type of writing which has already won a hearing," meaning the novel. Nevertheless, she observed that the "protest" meant much to her, for it "contains all the leading thoughts of Robert Elsmere," and in spite of seven years since she wrote the novel and of the knowledge acquired and reading done since its writing, she confided that she was ashamed neither of its "judgements" nor its "aspirations. Both have become more of a commonplace now than they were when these few pages were written" (162).

The sermon at the Bampton Lecture that she had found completely inadequate was made more so to her way of thinking because of the position of the speaker in the

church. She wondered how such an important religious personage, who was at the very center of intellectual life in England and whose main activity was to study religious thought and the religious life of humanity, had only the most narrow view of the upheaval in traditional religious thought, an assault that she termed "that great movement of the human mind against the traditional Christian theology which is to many of us the most important fact of our day and age" (164).

From her point of view, Wordsworth should have had a broader outlook because of his position; she sympathized with the ordinary people of orthodox beliefs who were feeling the strain that the growing influence of dissent was putting on them, but not with an experienced preacher and tutor such as Wordsworth, who had observed much loss of moral conviction among people who had fallen away from their religious faith. For him the only answer was that unbelief was sin and the unbeliever had to be tainted with moral evil, had to have low standards of character to hold such unbeliefs. He was unable to accept or "admit into argument" the other side of the coin, as she explained it, "the related and equally demonstrable truth, of the frequent connection between the highest standards of character and this same order of beliefs" (166).

By 1889 what she termed "scientific theology" had left the shelter of experts and had moved into the common mind. A

new "epoch of popularization" was occurring that would have "enormous results for our religious life and institutions" (162). Time had broken down the "irrational view of the Old Testament," and she believed the New Testament would also undergo a similar scrutiny. She had no desire for the demise of Christianity; rather, she sought a revitalization, a reexamination of traditional methods, and a response to new demands and new needs. "Faith," she wrote, "need fear nothing. There was never more of it than there is to-day in the midst of what we call our age of doubt." She acknowledged the importance of the "forms and agencies of faith in our relative world" and insisted that these forms needed to be changed or restudied (163). No matter how deep and painful the quest might be, one would at the end of it reach a spiritual goal, Mary Ward argued. "To the heart that has been darkened by the eclipse of old ideals, God, the Highest Ideal, at last reveals Himself," she wrote. "In a region far removed from the trains of thought and argument which had broken down for him the claims of received opinions; far out of reach of all questions of criticism and exegesis, of historical development and historical method, the soul rises to the source of Love, of Truth, of Beauty, and finds consolation" (172).

She also pointed out the difficulties that develop, that challenge the intellect, although, because it soars to a higher philosophic level, "such a nature as we have

imagined embraces the possibility which satisfies it most deeply, and this possibility will be God" (172). Once imbued with this sense of God, man once again becomes free to believe and is joyful for it, though he does not impose his belief on others. His life is guided by the credo, "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust," expressing his relation to God, and "This do in remembrance of me," carrying out the work of his life in the spirit of Jesus Christ, and thus returning to Christianity, "a regenerate Christian society, purified by submission to the Divine education of the world, but as fervent and as high-minded as of old" (172).

Mary Ward found it incumbent to identify and study the forces that she felt would build goodwill in the church and those she felt would create ill will. She appreciated the "Broad Church" ideal espoused by her Grandfather Arnold, and she believed that much was to be gained by "agreeing to differ," as John Henry Newman had proposed in Loss and Gain (62).

Both John Henry Newman and Charles Kingsley each in his way sought to harness the constructive and destructive forces of nineteenth-century religious thought. Kingsley was considered a "Broad Churchman" in the manner of Thomas Arnold, embracing the idea of all Christian churches under one umbrella, but he maintained vehement opposition to Catholic dogma. Perhaps not as liberal a theologian as Mary Ward's friend and mentor, Benjamin Jowett, Kingsley

nevertheless had early in Yeast put his finger on the alienation among younger people to the church; in that novel he had written that the church had "lost its hold upon the young, the active, the daring" and had "sunk into a compromise between originally opposite dogmas" (Preface).

In spite of her writings about the current state of the church and its failings, as well as her hopes for a renewal of interest and devotion to religion in general, it seems certain that Mary Ward could not be counted among the alienated young identified by Kingsley, nor, as is apparent in her remembrance of those times, had the traditional church entirely lost its hold on her in her youth. Knowing that reform was needed and wishing to retain the church's good offices, she was interested in defining and exploring the causes of alienation.

Nurtured as she had been by clergymen of liberal persuasions throughout her formative years, Mary Ward was as astute an observer of religious conflicts of her time and as committed a contributor as anyone to understanding and communicating resolutions. She understood the spiritual needs that could be fulfilled by the traditional church, as well as the disenchantment of unfulfillment. It seemed clear to her that her novels allowed various avenues for exploration of the conflict. Working for change within a church or leaving the church and attempting change in a new format were the avenues she explored.

Astute observer that she was, Mary Ward was deeply interested in the workings of religion and how people were affected in their personal lives. "All existing religions," she wrote in her review of Walter Pater's Marius the Epicurean, "have issued from the sense of reality, from a perception of some truth; certain facts or supposed facts of sense or spirit have lain at the root of them" (138). The issue was how to retain the true spirit so that it could have value for all. Compassionate and involved, she recognized that religion could be both a constructive force, building lives for the better, and a destructive force, imposing a strident will that turned thinking people away. These were people who wanted a religion that would conform to their needs. They did not want to do without religion as John Stuart Mill had proposed in "The Utility of Religion"; yet he had offered a sensible argument:

> In the present period of history . . . we seem to have arrived at a time when, among the arguments for and against religion, those which relate to its usefulness assume an important place. We are in an age of weak beliefs, and in which such belief as men have is much more determined by their wish to believe than by any mental appreciation of evidence. The wish to believe does not arise only from selfish but often from the most disinterested feelings; and though it cannot produce the unwavering and perfect reliance which once existed, it fences round all that remains of the impressions of early education; it often causes direct misgivings to fade away by disuse; and above all, it induces people to continue laying out their lives according to doctrines which have lost part of their hold on the mind, and to maintain towards the world the same, or a rather more demonstrative attitude of belief, than they thought it was necessary to

> exhibit when their personal conviction was more complete. (404)

Mary Ward understood this point of view completely, and although her "wish to believe" was very strong, she also wanted the church to offer a hospitable atmosphere. Mill presumably did not seek or require such hospitality, but Mary Ward, and many others, did have that need. William Peterson, in Victorian Heretic. Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere, describes Mary Ward's religiosity as "reverent, quasi-Christian theism" (84), a realistic assessment, which is less a dismissal of her beliefs than is found in some contemporary responses to her essays. However, all the evidence we have points to her Christianity as more than a passing resemblance to the real thing, as Peterson seems to imply. Her arguments were not with religion but with theology, as her Uncle Matthew's and her Grandfather's had been. Peterson observes that the Arnold children (Matthew, Tom, and sisters) after their father's death in 1842 would have to "face the intellectual and spiritual crises of the Victorian age with their own resources. It was a traumatic blow, the consequences of which were to be felt in the life of Dr. Arnold's most celebrated granddaughter" (29). He notes earlier that what in "old Dr. Arnold is an occasional faint distrust of the historicity of the Scriptures . . . becomes in Mrs. Ward the full rejection of Scriptural reliability in the accounts of Jesus's resurrection," which she "argued was merely a logical development of [Dr.

Arnold's] position," that she saw as relying upon the instincts of one's inner spirit when the entire fabric of the Bible is under attack" (21).

She would have been in concert with George Eliot's observation in Scenes of Clerical Life that "Religious ideas have the fate of melodies, which, once set afloat in the world, are taken up by all sorts of instruments, some of them woefully coarse, feeble, or out of tune, until people are in danger of crying out that the melody itself is detestable" (319). Early reinforcement for much of her thought on religion had come about through her translation in 1885 of the Journal Intime by Henri-Frédéric Amiel, a little-known Swiss philosopher and mystic of sorts, whose spiritual reflections affected her greatly. Amiel, a Calvinist by birth, held organized religion in low regard but never lost his reverence for God, and, like the world, "for eighteen centuries," as he put it, found "inspiration and guidance" in the religious consciousness of Jesus" (xciii).

Amiel, she observed, "as soon as his reasoning faculty has once reached its maturity, never deceives himself as to the special claims of the religion which by instinct and inheritance he loves." Amiel did not compromise either with dogma or with miracle. He could see the essential religion within and beyond the contemporary, knowing that it would endure when the various mundane aspects would be gone. As he

grew older he was able to view even more clearly and express his philosophy with more conviction as he "learns to regard all special beliefs and systems as 'prejudices, useful in practice, but still narrownesses of the mind;' misgrowths of thought, necessary in their time and place, but still of no absolute value, and having no final claim on the thought of man" (xciv). Such sentiments are completely true of Mary Arnold Ward, who unlike the secretive Amiel, boldly set forth her views for all to know, although she made no pretension to philosophy. Thus, she wrote of Amiel in a review ("The Literature of Introspection: Amiel's Journal Intime" in Macmillan's Magazine in 1883) that his religious language widened as he became more involved with his own thought, and his various personal revelations or "confessions of faith may well stand for typical utterances of that modern spirit which, in the midst of doubt, will neither sacrifice its knowing nor its believing, but clings passionately to both" (275).

Mary Ward hoped for a simpler Christian society that would lead to "the recovery of the religious spirit in modern life," and she felt the way to this recovery--"the one crying and desperate need"--was through rational religion. And in this rational religion, what she termed the "two guiding forces of human nature" must be compatible. These forces, "the force of reason and that spiritual force which we call faith," will work together so that the church

of the future can function with trust in God yet "independent of all 'schemes of revealed religion,'" even independent of the certainty of immortality.

In spite of this extremely unorthodox position, she would not abandon Christianity. "To break altogether with the Christian tradition, is, for those who cherish the spiritual life at all, an impossibility. To endeavor to do so in the case of any new organization would show not only spiritual insensibility but ignorance of the main lessons of life and history. The problem is how to replace Christianity of one type by Christianity of another" (178).

Looking back one hundred years, one realizes how extremely brave Mary Ward was to express her thoughts on religion in such a straightforward way. A few years later she had another opportunity to set forth her ideas on what religion should be doing. The "interests of unbelief" were being served in many ways according to some traditional minds. In 1893 the London School Board was embroiled in a controversy over the use of the Apostles' Creed as the key to religious instruction of children in the London schools. Mary Ward's opportunity to comment on the situation came when she wrote an introduction to the translation of "The Apostles' Creed Historically Examined," by the eminent German liberal theologian, Dr. Adolf Harnack. Harnack, a professor of theology at the University of Berlin, had written a pamphlet in response to his students' concerns

over the dominance of the Apostles' Creed as an instrument of Christian theology and the heresy attached to those who had opposed it. Harnack in his research had found its origins murky at best, and he could not substantiate its history as represented in orthodox dogma, that is, that it was the word of the Apostles. His pamphlet had sparked controversy the previous year over the place in religious teaching of the Apostles' Creed and the doctrine of the Incarnation, the same subject of agitation in London.

In the London School Board controversy, those opposed to de-emphasizing the Apostles' Creed in religious teaching believed the Board was hostile to the main dogmas of Christianity, Mary Ward wrote, and they believed that it was time for pressure to be applied to the Board to teach "not only 'religion but the Christian religion,'" which was exemplified by the Apostles' Creed (152). Others felt oppressed about having to recite a Creed that did not express their beliefs, although they considered themselves to be Christians. The traditionalists insisted that no matter how sincere these people were in their religious practices, without the Creed they were not Christians in the true sense. To Mary Ward this was intolerance, and her summation was representative of the religious philosophy she carried all of her days:

> A new consciousness of God, a new kindling of love to man, obtained through the preaching and personality of Jesus of Nazareth . . . . This is what, through all the Christian centuries, it has

> always meant, whatever other meanings it has taken, or seemed to take, to itself in addition. And this is what it means to-day for thousands of men and women to whom Lord Halifax [President of the English Church Union for 51 years] and the orthodox majority on the London School Board would deny the name of Christian. No, for these teachers of ours it is not enough to see in Jesus of Nazareth the historical Master of those who care for the things of the soul; it is not enough to go forth in the morning and lie down at night with his image in the heart; it is not enough to rise through the moral experience of life to a passion resting upon an intense self-association with, that perfectness of faith which was in him the ripe and fitting flower of heavenly goodness and will make him, while history lasts, the chief among many brethren; not enough to be so drawn in to the hope of eternal life. No; you must hold certain beliefs about him--beliefs coming from the devout imagings or the passing speculative needs of a bygone age: the Christian religion is 'explained by the Apostles' Creed'. Well then--one more--what in the judgement of 'the best ecclesiastical historian now living'[1] is the Apostles' Creed? (157)

Of course her stand did not pass unnoticed. The September number of Nineteenth Century carried a rebuttal by W.J. Knox Little, a famous preacher who has been described as an "uncompromising high churchman who became a religious force both in England and the United States," and who "never flinched before the fierce Puritan opposition" (Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921 815). He was obviously well aware of her outspoken views, and in his

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[1]Her note states "the words are Lord Acton's and occur in his remarkable sketch of Dr. Dollinger in English Historical Review, 1890."

essay, "Protestant Science and Christian Belief," more or less attacked her "earnest" introduction to Harnack's piece rather than Harnack's interpretation of the Apostles' Creed, although he deplored the German school's emphasis on the humanity of Christ. Belief in the Christ described in the Apostles' Creed, he emphasized, is a "wholly different Religion from a belief in a mild and virtuous enthusiast, who wakened up people to 'a new consciousness of God, and a new sense of love to man' and whose followers, whatever good they may have done, became of victims at last of foolish superstitious baseless legends, from which we can only hope now to be in part delivered by 'Protestant Science' in Germany." The people who propound such stuff are dreamers, Knox Little wrote. "It is a form of impiety and superstition, as we old-fashioned Christians think, based upon a disregard for probability, and a contemptuous repudiation of history. Those who are credulous enough to accept it may call it by what name they please, but in the interests of the morality of language, they have no right to call it 'Christianity'" (361).

The previous year Mary Ward had given an address to the Students' Guild of the University Hall Settlement that was published soon after and then reprinted in England and printed in the United States in 1898 as "New Forms of

Christian Education." In it she described how the avenues of thought in Christianity had opened over recent years, in both the resistance to and acceptance of new directions. "It is as if the Christian conscience, pondering anxiously the evolution of texts and the crumbling of doctrines, were tremulously saying to itself, like the chief of some wandering nation who looks round a camp before leaving it on the further march of aspiration and faith, 'here--ay, here perhaps-- we have no abiding city, but we seek--we seek-- one to come" (20).

In this address she laid out suggestions for Christian education in the home and she reiterated what to her was the importance of Christianity in her contemporary world as well as the importance to children to be connected to it. She felt that children should not "remain ignorant of Christian language and the voice of Christian feeling," because to be so would then cause isolation from many of the most admired people in their world, past and present. She noted that "the power of common work and sympathy is hardly impaired where two hearts hold the same image, however differently the intellect may interpret it" (28).

Recalling the view she expressed in her earlier essay about the "literary problem" in Christianity, she reinforced the time-honored presentation of Christian beliefs through

examination of the Gospels, but she compared each version with the others and treated them as accounts rather than as definitive word, allowing for a personal concept to be formed. Using this method to neutralize what she termed "the common orthodox dilemma" surrounding the figure of Jesus--"'either God or nothing,' or 'either God or a man of no particular ethical importance,'" the figure grows clearer "not by negative subtraction, but by virtue of an ever-increasing intelligence and sympathy in the beholder" to become finally "the constant and familiar friend of heart and imagination" (30).

This is her idea of Christianity; certainly it is <u>not</u> the view of her detractors such as Knox Little and, likely, of many of the clergy of the Anglican church of the time. Some people considered it a Unitarian view, but she was not a Unitarian. She focused on the drama of Jesus, the devotion his life inspired in his early followers, and what she supposed to be his ever-increasing consciousness of his mission (31, 32).

The contradictions in the accounts of his life do not matter, she asserts, for the "main lines are clear. He dies for the freedom of the spirit, for the Kingdom of God and man, and of man to his brethren" and she insists that the importance and influence of his life is because of Jesus himself--not because of others, neither the authors of the

Gospels nor the great proselytizers such as Paul (33).

For those, herself among them, who have been troubled in finding a way of defining for themselves "the central Christian truth amid the conflicting clash of evidence and explanation," (33) she avows what she feels must have been the view of the followers of Jesus after his death, that of creation of a new light for the world.

Through the method of teaching that she was advocating in this lecture, teachers were to aim for a better understanding of "the Christian Founder" and his work while alive and then to endeavor to seek to connect Christian beliefs within a universal concept of religion that will be meaningful for human life. Although she could imagine an ethical Christianity minus "the hope of God," she chose not to discourse on that but rather to emphasize that to her Christianity holds people in its power because

> in its best forms, it is the most moving and beautiful, the most striking and concrete testimony that history affords to the power of a Divine and Eternal Life, a life which is perpetually revealed in conscience, law, and knowledge, and which so presses on and appeals to the human spirit that, while its action leaves the half of existence a mystery, it can yet generate, within the sphere of contact between it and man, a faith that can transfigure these passing years and take the terror from the face of death... let us so use the life of Jesus as to make out of it the most compelling and the most fruitful symbol known to our experience of this contact between God and our poor human consciousness, which <u>is</u> religion--let us connect with it the picture of the growth

> of conscience and this many-chaptered story of the human struggle for good, and we need have no fear . . . that it will ever fail to meet religious need, or strike out spiritual response. (38)

That these philosophic words were more than words of debate for Mary Ward is evident, for they became the struggles that she dissected and attempted to resolve in The Story of Bessie Costrell and Eleanor.

She was thus a proselytizer for a liberal form of Christianity, and when she delivered the Essex Hall Lecture in 1894 on "Unitarians and the Future" she was a speaker in the spirit of the lectures, which was to consider the history and development of Christianity from a liberal and progressive viewpoint. When her lecture was published, it was, according to the publisher's note, with the "hope that it may assist in promoting the cause of true religion" [Essex Hall Lecture, Note]. For her, true Christianity was a deeply, spiritually felt adherence to the simple teachings of Jesus Christ, without dogma and without particular reliance on biblical texts.

Of principal concern to her in her lecture was to give form to her thoughts and to consider them within the context of new Christian education as it was propounded in Unitarianism and among people who had no background or connection to that religious denomination. She presented herself as one who was vitally interested in "problems of religious thought and expression" and one who felt that

"amid all modern perplexities and distractions, the old needs are as urgent, the old yearnings as masterful as they were for our fathers" (7).

To her, Unitarianism was a "religious body, claiming to possess a faith wherewith science and history many join hands, encumbered by no outworn forms, dogmatic or ceremonial," and she was appreciative that some of the truly most distinguished writers and thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic had been attracted to the denomination (8). She viewed Unitarianism in England as a society experiencing new possibilities for religion and many other aspects of life, asking many questions, and accepting many answers. All in all, as she saw it, Unitarianism was coming to grips with "the eagerest hopes and dreams of eighteenth-century philosophy -- its enormously heightened appreciation of the value of the individual life, as expressed in the social movements of the century, its scientific temper, and its keen interest in Christianity" (9).

Characteristic of the movement were the words of James Martineau, a leader of English Unitarianism, which Mary Ward quoted in her lecture. "'I cannot rest contentedly on the past,'" he said, "'I cannot take a step towards the future without its support.'" This, she felt, was the movement's "true message and mission" and separated Martineau from Pusey and Keble, the Anglican stalwarts whom she respected but whose religious intransigence had affected her need to

evaluate her faith, and also from "the man of science for whom the long religious history of mankind is a history of illusion" (21). She traces the influences on Martineau, including that of David Friedrich Strauss and the German theologians and notes that he emerged from his studies with a Christian faith "as fervent as any that have marked the course of a life which covers the century, but wholly disengaged at last from the phantom props of the past" (27). Just as Mary Ward had expressed in these various essays, Martineau also felt that the central characteristics of the teaching and the life of Christ were found in the Gospels "after legend and accretion have been cut away" (27). Her novels confront these situations when the old faith is shaken by the new revelations, and in some instances stands firm or emerges with a strengthened and emboldened view that promotes rebuilding and renewing a recalcitrant faith.

Echoing the beliefs she had expressed earlier in "Unbelief and Sin," she again stressed what she had termed the literature of Christianity and the need for critical analysis and assessment of it. "To myself it seems clear that as parable and saying after saying has been cut away from the genuine record of Jesus by processes purely critical and historical, and such as would be employed without question in any other field of the past, the figure

of the Master has become ever clearer and grander" (New Forms 34).

She was clearly in her mind a Christian, though indeed, not Knox Little's kind of Christian. She presented to her audience at the lecture on "New Forms in Christian Education" a clear desire for the endurance, even perhaps for the dominance of Christianity in the world for the future, but she also set forth an eloquent insistence on a unifying force within the religion, a quality she found and admired in Unitarianism, that has no patience with factionalism. At the same time, she also called for what may be viewed as independence from the Bible and other books, at least as direct tools for teaching, although the teacher relying upon "a certain spiritual and imaginative power," would be completely knowledgeable of the Bible," (26) with a greater opportunity for interpretation and application to the lives being reached.

Mary Ward answered Knox Little's statement yet again ten years later in a review Studies in Theology] of a collection of essays based on a series of lectures at Oxford by J. Estlin Carpenter, a former professor and vice principal at Manchester College, and Philip Wicksteed, a Dante scholar and minister of the Little Portland Street Chapel. The essays fit in very well with her aims for regeneration of Christianity and eschewing of revelation as a key factor in its belief system. "Christianity was a

faith," she wrote, long before it was dogma or philosophy." That renewed faith, she reasoned, was to gain its power from science in which it "meets and bears witness to our intelligence" and from the inward and outward moral life in which it "meets and bears witness to conscience" (159). For many educated people of the day, that encompasses "the whole of faith." She felt that the division was huge between the seekers of the faith and those trying to maintain it.

"Can the thought of our day," she wrote, "constructive and analytic, rescue Christianity sufficiently from its own decay to save for us this possession of the life of Christ, and bring it once more into vital contact with theistic philosophy on the one side, and practical ethic and organisation on the other? There lies for many of us at the present moment, the question of questions" (160). This question is central to her work. She confronted it throughout her writings and attempted with the best of her ability to offer paths to a resolution that would satisfy both organized churches and the greater society.

Chapter II. Influences on Mary Arnold Ward's Life and Thought

As we read Mary Arnold Ward's novels of faith and doubt, we may wonder what compelled her to persevere with her religious novels and how these novels relate to religious dilemmas of her own experience. One way is to examine her novels in conjunction with the intellectual influences in her life.

In an early letter to Mary Ward, Benjamin Jowett, rector of Balliol College at Oxford, a classics scholar, and one of her mentors wrote,"My feeling is that you have the ability and knowledge which would make a great authoress but in the realm of serious writing rather than of fiction." He was also one of the major influences on the development of her thought and of her religious attitudes.

In addition to Benjamin Jowett, whose essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture" reveals him as one of the most open-minded liberal thinkers of his time, other major influences on the development of her thought and of her religious attitudes include the ideas of her uncle, Matthew Arnold, whose views as expressed in Literature and Dogma and Saint Paul and Protestantism were among the most liberal of the day; of her father, Thomas Arnold, whose conversion and

reconversion to the Catholic church, caused upheavals in the family; and of H.F. Amiel, the Swiss philosopher, whose struggles with religious doubts as recorded in his Journal Intime were translated by Mary Ward from the original French.

Jowett recognized her abilities for serious writing, and she used those abilities intensely in her various essays, but it was fiction that provided the fertile field she desired. The intellectually stimulating environment that Mary Ward grew up in and her subsequent exposure to the Oxford community and to London journalistic circles after her marriage provided her with many experiences from which she could draw when she came to write her novels. Certainly the intellectual experiences of her early years contributed greatly to her narrative art as well as to the substance of her subject matter, for she was surrounded by religious debate and by religious thinkers, many influenced by her Grandfather Arnold, the renowned educator, whose influence continued long after his death.

Thomas Arnold of Rugby hoped that all branches of Christianity could one day exist under a broadened "umbrella" of Anglicanism. Although he died almost twenty years before Mary was born, Dr. Arnold's focus on religion as the centerpiece of life remained a formidable influence on his family. In spite of Lytton Strachey's effort to make his narrow piousness look fatuous nearly a century later in

Eminent Victorians, there is no doubt that Dr. Arnold was the epitome of "high" seriousness in the 1800s. His influence on Matthew Arnold was such that, according to Bernard M.G. Reardon, "Religion was in truth the apex of Arnold's whole edifice of thought." And Matthew's "own dilemma, to the resolution of which he devoted much of his best effort in prose" had to do with the importance of religion to life and the certainty simultaneously that the "orthodox Christianity of the day was no longer available to a man of critical intelligence" (383), thoughts repeatedly expressed in Mary Ward's essays. Her Uncle Matthew's works, Literature and Dogma and God and the Bible, were influential on Mary's thinking, as she herself has written in A Writer's Recollections.

Although she may not have insisted on the huge umbrella of one religion that her Grandfather Arnold had so desired, she was certainly attracted to the idea, for its intention was harmony within diversity, a concept utterly akin to her nature. Her own father, so influenced by his father, was "truly born for religion," she wrote in her memoir (27). Yet, unlike Matthew Arnold, who found no particular attraction to orthodox religion, Thomas Arnold, Mary's father, was drawn to Roman Catholicism. The portrait of her father that she gave in A Writer's Recollections reveals a romantic, impressionable person drawn to the mystical, who "found all that he needed in Catholicism, and specially, I

think, in that endless poetry and mystery of the Mass which keeps Catholicism alive" (54). She explored this mystery in both Helbeck of Bannisdale and Eleanor. In the former it is an unquestioned necessity of his life, and in the latter, it is the way of peace for a troubled soul. Mary Ward remarked that she felt certain that her father had listened only once to John Henry Newman's famous afternoon sermons while a student at Oxford in the few years remaining before Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism, whereas his brother Matthew had listened often, but years later, with their father's restraining hand gone from his shoulder, and his liberal religious tendencies surfeited, he "surrendered" to the converted Newman's "influence" (26). Once, like his brother Matthew and his best friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, he had been a liberal religious thinker, and he could never explain the "extraordinary transformation" that came to him after he had gone to live in Tasmania, had married, and had begun a family. She was not sure that her father had even spoken to John Henry Newman at Oxford, but "that subtle pervasive intellect which captured for years the critical and skeptical mind of Mark Pattison, and indirectly transformed the Church of England after Newman himself had left it, now, reaching across the world, laid hold on Arnold's son, when [the elder] Arnold was no longer there to fight it" (27). Perhaps misguidedly, she likened her father's path to conversion to Newman's and the conversion itself as a lost

battle for her Grandfather and a victory for Newman. It was Newman to whom Thomas Arnold then wrote and who wrote back to him that because of the younger Arnold's conversion all was now made up between himself and the elder, long-dead Arnold.

Ironically, perhaps, Arnold's conversion seems to have been more the result of a romantic fascination than the deeply spiritual coming to terms that it was for Newman, especially in view of some of his early letters to Clough and others in which he describes his variable religious feelings and reveals an affinity for the ideas of rebellious churchmen, such as John Wyclif, who spoke out strongly against church dogma in the fourteenth century. Years later, during the time he was at University College Oxford, before his reconversion to Catholicism, he had edited a manuscript of Wyclif's writings. But he was drawn also to more contemporary dissenting churchmen. His interest in John Wesley and Methodism was kindled by Robert Southey's Life of Wesley. His reaction to this biography, as revealed in The New Zealand Letters, caused Peter Collister in "Some Literary and Popular Sources for Mrs. Humphry Ward's The History of David Grieve," to comment that "such susceptibility" as Arnold shows in this passage, "is characteristic of that most vulnerable and idiosyncratic of nineteenth-century spiritual voyagers" (374).

Arnold's letter to J.C. Shairp was meant, according to

the editor's note to The New Zealand Letters, for all his friends in the "Clougho-Matthean circle." He had written in the third person, the editor further notes, because of his modest and retiring nature" (207). He related how he had thought for so long about what his religious life should be, and he had decided that "religion is a labyrinth without a clue." Far better, he opined, to "agree to differ" and to work instead to improve the lot of the poor, to make working conditions more endurable, and to make the cities better places to live in than to try to deal with insoluble religious problems. He was on the verge of accepting the Church's Creed, "from a distrust of his own ability to attain to anything higher." Perhaps he would do better to "accept the faith which so many of the best and purest men, for centuries past, had found sufficient to their needs" (212). The comment seems to be made sorrowfully in the letter, but it surely can be taken as a harbinger for his eventual conversion to Catholicism.

The he read the book on Wesley, and it "convinced him that he had been utterly wrong in supposing that his life could be worthily spent and its duties fulfilled, while devoting himself to even the highest and most useful practical objects, and leaving out of sight the question of religion, or the relations of man to his God." He decided that henceforth the only object of his ambition would be to know God and to be known of Him. It was thus for him

impossible "any more to serve the world, when the bright hope was thus held out to him of resting even in this life in the Eternal Arms, safe from fretting anxieties and earthly cares, and resigned obediently to the guidings of One infinitely wise and good" (213).

Arnold apparently admired those, regardless of religious persuasion, who gave their all in the service of Christianity. But, he saw Wesley and Methodism as "the last genuine development of orthodox Christianity," and he began to be convinced that the orthodox method, while admirable for its time, was not suitable for the demands of his age. If there were to be another such development like Wesley's, only a truly great spiritual leader could bring it about, and even then, he doubted, especially in light of the studies of German philosophers and others who had questioned the most deeply held biblical theories, that such a leader could earnestly "embrace those views of the human and the divine natures and of their relation to each other, which are thought essential to a belief in Christianity."

Arnold, in the third-person guise he used in the letter, decided it was impossible to espouse the ancient texts, and he reached the point where he renounced "orthodoxy and Churchmanship for ever" (214). A few years later came his "extraordinary transformation," and he embraced orthodox Christianity far more profoundly than he ever had before and during his uneasy years of seeking

spiritual truth.

In his memoir, Passages in a Wandering Life, published in 1900, he describes a long-standing dissatisfaction with the Anglican church. "For nearly ten years," Arnold wrote, "my mind had been in a welter of uncertainty on the subject of religious truth," and he went on to describe the confusion he felt during his Oxford days and afterward over what he felt he needed and could not find in his church (149).

Newman was always helpful to Mary Ward's father; she would never speak ill of him, for his own greatness was fully acknowledged. In her biography, Janet Penrose Trevelyan imagines her mother in the Hall of Oriel College looking at the portraits and instinctively "rallying to the standard of her grandfather rather than to that of his mighty opponent" (19). Dr. Arnold and Newman's quarrel, according to William Peterson, was the "expression of a basic division within the Church at large, which was worked out strangely by Mary Ward's father in the next generation" (25), that is, his conversion to the Catholic church. Janet Trevelyan described her mother's remembrance of Newman on the street in her childhood when he would be "passing gravely by on his business," and Mary Ward wrote in A Writer's Recollections that seeing him then she "had shrunk from him in a dumb, childish resentment as from some one whom I understood to be the author of our family

misfortunes" (181).

Seeing Newman in 1880 as the greatly admired Cardinal of the Catholic Church and presenting herself to him as her father's daughter, she wrote that he recalled, almost mischievously, the little girl who looked at him, warily perhaps, from a distance so many years past.

In truth, after his conversion, Mary Ward's father's life began a "long and troubled history" (29). For her mother, descended from French Huguenots, "the earth had crumbled under her" (29), and for the family there was general chaos. Though not actually forced out, he chose to give up his position as Education Secretary in Hobart, Tasmania, mainly because of the hostility his conversion engendered among the colonial clergy, and the family returned to England and the shelter of the Arnold family home.

Mary Ward spent many years away at school in England during most of the time her parents lived in Ireland where Newman found a teaching position for Thomas Arnold, but returning to England gave her the intellectual atmosphere she never could have had in Tasmania. Janet Trevelyan wrote of the impact on a child as impressionable as Mary to live in the calm, balanced, affectionate "Arnold atmosphere" (6) after the turbulence of her early years. Janet Trevelyan characterized her mother as a "Sorell by birth and temperament," after her mother, but she "gradually became an

Arnold by environment" (7).

Janet Trevelyan also remarks that Mary's father was "the special darling of the family," a feeling more exasperated than strained by his conversion. He renounced the Church in the 1860s and returned to Oxford, to the joy of his family, but in the 1870s, Janet Trevelyan noted, he was "growing restless again." As an explanation for his falling away from the Catholic church after his first conversion and adjustment to the many changes effected by it, Arnold wrote in Passages in a Wandering Life that he had been ill and unable to attend church and "the misgivings which had long slumbered in my mind that no clear certainty could be obtained as to anything outside the fields of science again assailed me," as they had in his earlier years before he first found his bearings in the Catholic church. He further noted that he might have overcome the "period of uncertainty" had he used the "weapon of prayer." Instead he wavered and was only able to return to "the firm ground of Catholic communion," after a long and difficult period of much pain; "not mine alone," he notes in his only reference to the anguish his religious vacillations may have caused others (185). After he became a Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland in 1883, he was an editor of a revised edition of A Catholic Dictionary, a work for English-speaking readers of a source of information on points of Catholic doctrine, ritual, and discipline that had

previously been compiled by Protestants.

He announced his reconversion on the eve of his election to the Professorship of Early English at Oxford, a situation that he did not relate in his memoir, and "it marked the death-knell" of their hopes at Oxford, for faculty positions could not be held by Roman Catholics. Mary's mother took in boarders, and her father eventually went again to Dublin, thanks to Newman's assistance. Shortly after, her mother became ill with cancer. Arnold noted in his memoir that he divided his time between Dublin and Oxford until his wife's death in 1888 (191). "All this could not fail to leave a profound mark on the anxious and tender heart of her daughter," wrote Janet Trevelyan, "in whom the capacity for human affection seemed to grow and treble with the years; it made a dark background to the Oxford life, otherwise so full to overflowing with the happiness of friends and home" (27). Mary Ward's theological views, according to Peterson, came primarily from her uncle and grandfather, but her "essentially religious temperament--which was a constant factor in her personality despite her departure from orthodoxy--came primarily from her father" (41).

The impact of her father's conversions, one when she was a child and the other when she was grown and beginning her own family, can be found in her preoccupation with Catholicism in several of the novels. It creeps in sometimes

unexpectedly with an ascerbic comment or sometimes in a full-blown discussion in which her point of view will often come through with remarkable sympathy rather than animosity. This preoccupation, however, did not capture her fully, although she used it to advantage in the novels. Other influences prevailed while her religious philosophy was developing.

Mary Ward comments in her memoir that Ruskin's The Stones of Venice and Modern Painters were great influences on her thought in her youth, but her Uncle Matthew's Essays in Criticism "set for me the currents of life" (77). The love of France and French literature that she gained from his writings was "a priceless boon" (77). Once she became an author, she really felt his influence on her thought, and she had more personal contact with him than she had ever had earlier in her life. "If he had not died so soon after I had really begun to know him," she wrote in A Writer's Recollections, how many debts to him would have been confessed, how many things said, which, after all, were never said!" (77). He died the year she wrote Robert Elsmere. Her daughter, commenting on the warm relationship between Mary Ward and Matthew Arnold, remarks on the importance to her of his literary and critical influence, from which she "imbibed . . . both her respect for German thoroughness and her passion for French perfection" (Trevelyan 38).

Matthew Arnold, a loving and devoted son, brother, husband, and father, was, according to his niece, a poet who grew on people and was not outgrown in their affection by the accumulation of years or supplanted by newer poets. He was, rather, taken "all the more closely to their hearts" (A Writer's Recollections 58). His sister, Mary Arnold, who was three years younger, came to know him, according to Mary Arnold Ward, much better after she read his poems. Mary Arnold, influenced as her brothers were by Emerson and Carlyle and also by the charismatic F.D. Maurice, whose sermons she heard while attending Bedford College in London, was somewhat astonished by the power of her brother's poems, and she wrote to a family member, as quoted by her niece:

> It is the moral strength, or at any rate, the moral consciousness which struck and surprised me so much in the poems. I could have been prepared for any degree of poetical power, for there being a great deal more than I could at all appreciate; but there is something altogether different from this, something which such a man as Clough has, for instance, which I did not expect to find in Matt; but it is there. (59-60)

Mary Arnold, according to her niece, found to her surprise that her brother's poems dealt with the meaning of life and they "showed a knowledge of life and conflict which was strangely like experience if it was not the thing itself; and this with all Matt's great power I should not have looked for" (59). Mary Ward, reflecting on these words nearly seventy-five years later, observed that they were "interesting proof" of how difficult it is truly to see

those closest to one.

Thus, Mary Ward had a legacy of literary style to reinvest with her own abilities. Had she been a man she might have been a successor to Matthew Arnold, perhaps not as a poet, but as an essayist. Nevertheless, as a woman in a man's world, she more than held her own. As it happens, the family connection between Mary Arnold Ward and her Arnold relatives was acknowledged early, if even mistakenly, according to a letter Matthew Arnold wrote to his sister Frances (Mary's Aunt Fan) shortly before he died describing an incident when he had been among friends at Wilton who thought Robert Elsmere had been written "by a sister of mine; by you, that is" (441).[2] Family influences were considerable and enormously respectable in Mary Ward's case. But she had numerous contacts outside the family. An introspective writer mentioned earlier who quite clearly influenced her early ruminations was H. F. Amiel. Mary Ward translated his Journal Intime over a three-year period before writing any of her novels. Amiel's Journal is a deeply reflective work, revealing his innermost thoughts as he strove to understand his own spiritual needs. He spares the reader neither his frequent plunges into despair nor his

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[2]Letters of Matthew Arnold 1848-1888, collection edited by George W. E. Russell, Vol. II, New York, Macmillan and Co., 1895, Republished 1968, Scholarly Press, Grosse Pointe, MI. Note: Russell was one of the guests present at Wilton and is mentioned in the letter for describing Gladstone's great interest in the novel.

equally frequent moments of joyful insight; he chronicled all of these feelings in his appealing and moving work.

Amiel was influenced by the humanistic ideas of Feuerbach and Strauss, the German philosophers whose works had been translated into English by George Eliot, and by Ernest Renan, the French philosopher and author of Vie de Jésus. Mary Ward, in fact, met Renan when he visited Oxford in 1880, and his widely known crisis of faith was similar to that of Robert Elsmere, the protagonist of her first acclaimed novel, published in 1888. Recalling Ernest Renan in A Writer's Recollections, Mary Ward remarked that "personally, he was not the enemy of any church, least of all of the Great Church which had trained his youth" (229).

Matthew Arnold read Amiel's Journal late in his life and wrote an article on "this disenchanted brooder" in the September 1887 issue of Macmillan's in which he made glowing reference to Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation and enthusiasm for Amiel. His enthusiasm, however, did not match that of his niece. "Tonic it is not; but it is to be read with profit, and shows, moreover, powers of great force and value, though not quite, I am inclined to think, in the exact line which his critics with one consent indicate" (374). He found no value in the "speculative philosophy" which filled the Journal, calling it "perfectly futile," (377), and he found the parts in which Amiel was most melancholy to be more interesting as a "study of morbid

pathology" than of psychology (380). Yet he admired Amiel's style and felt that Amiel's true vocation was in literary criticism, some of which had been included in the Journal, rather than in philosophy.

Walter Pater reviewed the Journal as translated by Mary Ward. In his review, which originally had appeared anonymously in The Guardian (March 17, 1886), he wrote that the work in her translation was "likely to [be] widely known among all serious lovers of good literature," and he noted that it was proof of the effectiveness of translation by persons, Mary Ward included, who possess "original literary gifts...are willing to make a long act of self-denial or self-effacement for the benefit of the public" (20). He found much to admire, as well, in her introduction. Like Matthew Arnold, Pater appreciated Amiel's literary style, but whereas Arnold had accepted Amiel's aloofness toward traditional religion, Pater felt that Amiel by stopping "short at a faith almost hopeless . . . failed . . . and missed that appeasing influence which his nature demanded" (34). This is the later Pater of whom Mary Ward writes so eloquently in her review of Marius, the Epicurean. Pater, though grateful for the finely wrought Journal, nevertheless found Amiel's melancholy nature a result of a "life which seemed to have been but imperfectly occupied" (35), but he is full of praise for the achievement of the translator in bringing the book to its English readers.

The mystical, spiritual side of human beings attracted Mary Ward greatly, and no one embodied this side more than Pater, who was her neighbor in Oxford in the early years of her marriage. Pater's Studies in the Renaissance had both "stirred and scandalized Oxford," she wrote in A Writer's Recollections, with its "gospel" glorifying esthetic pleasure in its highest forms and rejecting the self-denial and renunciation of the Christian doctrine (161). He was not intimidated, she related, by attempts to persecute him or by cries of "neo-paganism." In her view, the "revolutionary ferments" which filled his mind at that time were as sincere as his later hesitating and wistful return toward Christianity . . . embodied in Marius the Epicurean," which she regarded as the "most beautiful of the spiritual romances of Europe since the Confessions" (161). She noted that Pater's Renaissance was completely "aloof" from the Oxford Christian tradition, for he had more or less given up his Christian religious beliefs, but he had changed by 1881 when the Wards' were leaving Oxford for London, and she sensed the "tides of religious feeling flowing gently back over the bare sands" (162).

Although he did not go back to Christianity in any traditional or intellectual sense, she believed that "his heart returned to it" (162). A few years earlier that she had spoken with him with great confidence that he would agree that the orthodox position was going to be broken down

from the onslaught of "historical and literary camps," and he had replied that he didn't think so, and he couldn't see it as plainly as she could, because of that which was mysterious and unexplainable. Even if she had "explained" in a critical fashion, as she says she might have done years later, his mood was changing, and this was her first glimpse of that change. She admired Marius and reviewed it in Macmillan's Magazine. She began her review by commenting on the denunciations that Pater's Studies in the Renaissance had received upon its publication twelve years earlier, "like some heretical treatise of the second or third century [it] received definite episcopal reprimand" (132). Pater, she observed, had written a "curious" story earlier for Macmillan's, "The Child in the House," which was autobiographical in disguise, but "not disguise enough," for the need is to be "more impersonal, more remote from actual life...before the writer's thought could allow itself fair play" (133).

In the matter of personal revelations, it was Mary Ward's observation that the English "are not fond of direct 'confessions,'" and she contended that students who studied the nineteenth century in the future would not find the "deepest, most intimate, and most real" of the personal in some of the "avowed specimens" of self-revelation of the time but in such works as Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, Froude's The Nemesis of Faith, Kingsley's Alton Locke, or

Pater's Marius, the Epicurean. She felt Pater had found his autobiographical opportunity in Marius, and it was obvious to her that he took up where he left off in Studies in the Renaissance, with its emphasis on the experiences of the senses.

However, to live in pursuit of sensations, Mary Ward observed, "is outside the broad mainstream of human history" (136), so Marius could have been following a trail going nowhere in his pursuit of "exquisite moments," but what he eventually develops is a "utilitarian or Epicurean theory of morals," an ethical argument that is "essentially utilitarian" (137) and she finds the "further application of this Epicurean principle of an aesthetic loss and gain not only to morals but to religion" to be both a "principal intellectual weakness and a factor of "great psychological interest" for the book. (137)

As far as Mary Ward was concerned Pater lived somewhat apart from reality, for his cause was to capture and savor the beauty of the moment, where truth was of little consequence. In her review of Marius, she contrasted him with Clough whose pursuit of truth she found nobler, with its "heroic submissions to the limitations of life and mind...that determination of his to seek no personal ease or relief at the expense of truth, and to put no fairy tale knowingly into the place which belongs to realities" (138) and notes that his work is full of "religious yearnings and

religious passion," yet imbued with humility about his worthiness before the higher power. It would seem that everything in her education would cause her to be more receptive and understanding of the point of view she found in Clough's work. She had, after all, been a student at his sister's school, but hers was also a romantic nature and an inquisitive one as well as a practical one. Pater's work and the fact that she had such a warm friendship with him and his sisters, opened new avenues of experience that could only enhance her own work.

When she came to write her own novels, Mary Ward blended her psychological and spiritual preoccupations with the theological inclinations that took up so much of her thinking. In this area she had many mentors. Robert Lee Wolff points out in Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England, that Benjamin Jowett along with other Oxford "doubters" Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, and T. H. Green, Hegelian philosopher at Balliol College, though "not fond of one another" were her influential personal friends (455).

Jowett's letters of encouragement were invaluable to her. Jowett himself was a key figure among the new liberal theologians who developed in the latter part of the century. He and Pattison retained their orthodox connections, according to Janet Trevelyan, for both were ministers of the Church of England, but they felt strongly that the church

should tolerate both the new developments in science and the inroads made by historical criticism on orthodox theology (18).

Mark Pattison wrote in "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750" that Catholic theory withdraws Christianity altogether from human experience and the operation of ordinary laws of thought; Protestant theory of free inquiry overlooks the influences of education, but at the same time reason alone could not provide sustenance, "the knowledge with which reason could supply us was inadequate to be a guide to life" (256).

Conventional clergyman though he was, Pattison was dissatisfied with what he thought organized religion could offer, but the framework was important to him. Pattison was one of Mary Ward's most serious mentors, most influential in shaping her thought, and probably the source for her commitment to compromise in theological matters, seeking to blend the spiritual with the rational.

The influence of Benjamin Jowett, Regius Professor of Greek and Master of Balliol College at Oxford, who endorsed examining and scrutinizing sacred texts from a critical point of view as one would do with literature, is notable in "Sin and Unbelief" and the essays following after it that advocate such practice. In his essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture," Jowett wrote of the varying methods of interpreting texts according to the times and that they

"partake of the general state of literature or knowledge" (331). And his suggestion was that one should "confine the self to the plain meaning of the words and to study of the context to know more of the original spirit and intention of the authors" (340). Jowett observed to Mary Ward in 1891 that he and readers like him wanted her to show them "a modus vivendi as Christians," after she has stimulated their thoughts and unsettled their convictions with the effort of Robert Elsmere to found a new religion. "Your writings always suppose a strong belief in God . . . ." He urged her to defend her convictions that offered insight to many people.

When he wrote his essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture" in 1861, Jowett had noted the importance to science and other disciplines of building their structure on facts, but he pointed out that theology has the reverse tendency, that is "to conceal the unsoundness of the foundation under the fairness and loftiness of the superstructure... safer to allow arguments to stand, which, although fallacious, have been on the right side, than to point out their defect," and thus the emergence of beliefs that override facts (342), which traditionally would be taken on faith. Critical and discerning as he was about the trappings of religion and a most formidable presence, as Mary Ward describes him in A Writer's Recollections, he, as she came to view him after his death, was "a man perpetually

conscious of a mysterious and blessed companionship; which is the mark of the religious man, in all faiths and all churches" (174).

But he was for the high churchmen at Oxford "the symbol and embodiment of all heresy," and they had legitimate ways of holding back his salary. She could understand theirmonumental annoyance, for he was constantly assailing them, and his criticism included the dissenting religions as well, for he disliked, she noted, many Evangelical hymns, thinking them pretentious in their presumptions to heavenly favors (174). Jowett in his essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture," sought to separate early proponents of the Christian faith from any semblance of divine aspiration. "There is no appearance, " he wrote, " in their writings that the Evangelists or apostles had any inward gift, or were subject to any power external to them different from that of preaching or teaching which they daily exercised; nor do they anywhere lend us to suppose that they were free from error or infirmity" (343).

Jowett was a seeker after truth, and he felt the church was too great an institution to want to smother truth. Such parochialism would ultimately stunt any religious body. He wondered how the gospel, at war once with the "vices of mankind" could of a sudden be against "one of the highest and rarest of human virtues-- the love of truth." He was appalled at the thought that in the present day [1860s]

Christianity's object instead of wanting to change peoples' lives was to prevent men from changing their opinions, which would be a "singular inversion of the purposes for which Christ came into the world. The Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it" (374). He felt that the results of criticism could not be ignored and he proclaimed the importance of seeing Christ in harmony with them. He saw ascribing the results of criticism to atheism or unbelief as a "mischief" (374). What power Christianity could have, he observed, "if it were at one with the conscience of man and not at variance with his intellectual convictions" (376).

Jowett's philosophy helped shape Mary Ward's own, as her essay introducing Harnack's essay on the Apostles' Creed bears out. Her tendencies, shaped by her childhood exposure to liberal religious thought, no doubt made for ready acceptance of his views. Although he had expressed great confidence in her ability to be a serious writer, he had some misgivings about her entry into the arena of religious controversy once he had accepted that she was interested in novel writing, and felt, therefore, that lapses into the polemical might distract away from work more suited to her. But his response after she had written her defense of Robert Elsmere in The Nineteenth Century in answer to Gladstone's critical review, was encouraging, and he believed that she had done "no harm at all" to her cause."

Adding to her experience in absorbing divergent religious opinions was the family connection with the Huxleys. She was related by marriage to T.H. Huxley, who adopted the word "agnostic" to describe his religious beliefs. Huxley defined religion (in his essay, "Agnosticism") as a "reverence and love for the ethical ideal and the desire to realise that ideal in life."[3]

An open mind, nourished by her liberal religious heritage, and the wide experience made possible to her by her intelligence and vast intellectual curiousity, as well as by her modest journalistic desire to find answers to her questions enabled Mary Ward to consider the many forces, constructive and destructive, in the religious life that interested her so greatly.

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[3]Huxley's son married Mary Ward's sister; Mary Ward was the aunt of Julian and Aldous Huxley, eminent in the twentieth century as scientist and novelist, respectively, and bearers of their grandfather's agnostic standard.

Chapter III. Ultimate and Serious Concerns: Problems of Religion. Constructive and Destructive Forces

Charles Kingsley, a vigorous churchman, was opposed to the attempts by John Henry Newman, equally vigorous as a Tractarian leader, to bring the Anglican church closer to the Catholic by emphasizing the connections between the faiths through their historical ties. He knew the old connections could never be denied, but conversely, the differences, honed by years of desired separation, could never be resolved, only accommodated.

Kingsley, Newman, and Mary Ward's Grandfather, Thomas Arnold were all part of a period of complexity and perplexity of thought that was overwhelming to some and a welcome device for new ideas to others. Alfred North Whitehead commenting on the "perplexity" of the nineteenth century in his Lowell Lecture, "The Romantic Reaction" in 1925, cites Tennyson's In Memoriam as "exactly" expressing the period's character. In earlier times he noted that the deep thinkers in philosophy and theology were clear thinkers as opposed to what he characterized as some "muddled thinkers" in the nineteenth century. A "mood of individual distraction" abounded, and Whitehead thinks that Matthew

Arnold, "even more than Tennyson," expressed the century's "characteristic mood." He felt that the last lines of Arnold's "Dover Beach," in particular--"Where ignorant armies clash by night"--especially expressed this mood. "Their assent was claimed by incompatible doctrines," Whitehead said, "and their efforts at reconciliation produced inevitable confusion" (82).

That clarity of thought of the previous century may have been possible because the opposing forces appeared in sharp relief; but, on the other hand, in the nineteenth century, the boundaries between opposing points of view were often obscured. Matthew Arnold, suggesting the value of an appreciation for the roots of the Christian religion, urges his contemporaries, in Literature and Dogma, not to impose upon the earliest believers "a scientific affirmation which never entered their heads, and about which many will dispute," instead emphasizing the "unchallengeable," that was for them "the enduring power [of God], not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." He advised using that idea as a guide to understanding what they had to offer even though it was no longer possible to endow it with the feeling they had. He eschews the "negative name of the unknown and unknowable," preferring "the unexplored and inexpressible," and suggesting that modern theologians who lack the reserve of the Hebrews in regard to the knowability

of God have "built up a wall first, in order afterwards, to run their own heads against it," thus encouraging most of the "difficulties which torment theology" (100). The ensuing torments perhaps represented a failure rather than a revision of theology.

Instead of delving into the why that is, Arnold advised that one would be wiser to accept the what, which is "the power, the grandeur, the necessity of righteousness."

> To be sure, a perception of these is at the bottom of popular religion, underneath all the extravagances theologians have taught people to utter, and makes the whole value of it. For the sake of this true practical perception one might be quite content to leave at rest a matter where practice after all, is everything, and theory nothing. Only, when religion is called in question because of the extravagances of theology being passed off as religion, one disengages and helps religion by showing their utter delusiveness. They arose out of the talents of able men for reasoning, and their want (not through lack of talent, for the thing needs none; it needs only time, trouble, good fortune, and a fair mind; but through their being taken up with their reasoning power), their want of literary experience. By a sad mishap for them the sphere where they show their talents is one for literary experience rather than for reasoning. This mishap has at the very outset,--in the dealings of theologians with that starting-point in our religion, the experience of Israel as set forth in the Old Testament,--has been the cause, we have seen, of great confusion. Naturally, as we shall hereafter see, the confusion becomes worse confounded as they proceed. (101)

Matthew Arnold could also say, as he does in the Preface to Last Essays on Church and Religion, that he believed Christianity would survive "because of its natural truth," and that people who had cast off from it because

they could not accept what was offered to them, would have to come back to it and "learn it better." Mary Ward in A Writer's Recollections observed that Matthew Arnold put forth very much of the argument she carried on in Robert Elsmere, "but to the end of his life he was a contented member of the Anglican Church," attending services regularly and believing in the church's "mission of edification to the English people." His ideas were in harmony with those of Jowett as far as encouraging reform and modernization from within the church, and he was not really sympathetic to people who "went out." Therefore, she was certain he would not have had full appreciation for Robert Elsmere's work for church reform from outside the church, a viewpoint she herself espoused years later in A Writer's Recollections (74). The comfort that Arnold felt in the church did not preclude his interest in and campaign for modernization. He felt the old forms of Christian worship would "survive as poetry," particularly in the Catholic Church, even though the Church may not realize its potential, instead insisting that "to rule over the moment and the credulous has more attraction than to work for the future and the sane." He quoted Jowett on the interdependence of virtue and knowledge:

> This is an aspect of truth which was lost almost as soon as it was found; and yet has to be recovered by everyone for himself who would pass the limits of proverbial and popular philosophy. The moral and intellectual are always dividing, yet they must be reunited, and in the highest

> conception of them are inseparable. (Last Essays 162)

Kingsley, reflected much the same vein some years earlier in his sermon "Toleration," speaking on the difficulty of choosing which side has the truth in religious controversies where both sides hold opposite views:

> The truth rather lies, in general, not so much half-way between the two combatants, as in some third place, which neither of them sees; which perhaps God does not intend them to see in this life, while He leaves his servants each to work out some one side of Christian truth, dividing to every man severally as He will, according to the powers of each mind, and the needs of each situation. (325-326)

If many clergymen wanted to work for change from within their churches rather than leaving the church as Mary Ward's Robert Elsmere tries to do in the novel, it was because they believed, even with wavering faith, as Owen Chadwick points out in The Victorian Church, "that the church had much truth in it, and was necessary to the moral condition of society, and was wrapt with their own conscience. If they left it, they left its borders, as they believed, narrow. If they stayed in it and continued to teach, they might have a chance of widening the borders and so saving their posterity from the tension which they experienced" (137). As she has indicated, in spite of her somewhat radical writings that proposed change, Mary Ward subscribed to the idea that there was much of value to be preserved in the established church. By the time she wrote The Case of Richard Meynell, she had decided to explore the experience of a minister, the son-in-

law of Robert Elsmere, who had chosen to work from within.

In the essay, "Theodicy and Society: The Crisis of the Intelligentsia," James R. Moore describes the Victorian crisis of faith as a symptom of the immense social and economic changes occurring in society, and the fierce attempts of the liberal reformers were their reaction to this gigantic upheaval. "Religion to them," Moore writes, "was the living kernel, theology the dying husk that it inevitably outgrew" (173). There would, of course, be a religion for Victorians, Moore insists, but the dilemma was how it would be expressed.

Religion, which, according to E.J. Hobsbawm's analysis in The Age of Capital, was of much less interest to the nineteenth century than secular ideology, "still formed the idiom in which the overwhelming majority of the world's population thought" (271). He points out the great achievement of the nineteenth century's evolution of thought, namely that "the early and infantile stages of man characterized by superstition, theology, and speculation were over" (269). Neverthless, even though society was becoming more and more secularized, it was "plainly worried about the possible consequences of its own daring" in the light of advances in science and industry. Although, "God was not merely dismissed, but actively under attack" by the secularist and anticlerical movements, "a nostalgia for religion remained," he notes, "even among free-thinkers.

Middle-class ideologists, who appreciated the role of religion as an institution maintaining a state of suitable modesty among the poor and a guarantee of order," Hobsbawm further notes, did indulge in experimentation with religion, but also displayed "a genuine tendency to rescue the consolations of religion into the age of science" (273). This tendency often manifested itself in finding scientific bases for such consolations as life after death, but whereas there was an "intellectual rout of theology," there was not a comparable "decline of mass religion," and the "bulk of Anglo-Saxon middle classes remained believers . . . practising believers . . . or at any rate hypocrites" (274).

Noting the "distance" of the Established Church from the poorer classes of society, which had led to the rise of dissenting sects, E.P. Thompson in The Making of the English Working Class emphasizes the seriousness of purpose of these sects in relation to the hard work and piousness of their believers--the kind of seriousness described so beautifully by George Eliot in Adam Bede and by Mary Ward in The History of David Grieve. Thompson observes in a discussion of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, as one of the great foundation texts of the English working-class movement, the importance of the concept of an after-life to these people as "a consolation . . . but also as some emotional compensation for present sufferings and grievances . . . ." There was the matter of a future

"reward" for the pious as well as the consolation of future "torments" for their oppressors, but Thompson notes the "ambivalence" that continued late into the nineteenth century of the positive and negative aspects of the nonconformist forerunners of the dissenting sects. Along with the positive aspects of their faith were what he calls the "obvious negatives," including the "egocentric pursuit of personal salvation" (34).

As if to presage this analysis, George Eliot wrote in Scenes of Clerical Life that "the blessed work of helping the world forward, happily does not wait to be done by perfect men; and I should imagine that neither Luther nor John Bunyan, for example, would have satisfied the modern demand for an ideal hero, who believes nothing but what is graceful" (321). She goes on to define the real heroes, those "of God's making," as being quite ordinary folk of devotion and hard work, vulnerable to weakness, yet striving for strength.

In her view of Christianity as an all encompassing religion, open to many branches, as her Grandfather had envisioned, Mary Ward had very specific ideas about its structure. Her handwritten notes on the National Church attest to these ideas and also to the viewpoint that many people were left out of the opportunity to worship in the church.

"The position of the bishop in the church polity we dream of would not really be difficult to evolve, could some wise heads be set to it," she wrote. "In every diocese, and for all members of the Church, the bishop would be the state head and national representative, responsible for the buildup, and for the good conduct of those doing them. But he would be the spiritual head of his own people only."

In what points to the English Church as a kind of "middle way" that Kingsley and the early Newman had envisioned, she writes that "Anglicans, as they are now, would be provided for either by the chief bishop of the diocese--where the diocese is orthodox--or by a suffragan or suffragans where they happened to be in a minority. Ordination--the Anglican Sacraments . . . would not be interfered with in the slightest. All that the Anglican would be called upon to endure would be the sharing of the Church buildings, and of the social and philanthropic organizations of the diocese, with the followers of other uses--Evangelical--i. e., nonconformist--or Modernist."

She reflects the combative attitude of her essay on the Harnack translation by assailing those who would be opposed with the alternative of alienation that they had imposed: "The High Churchmen, say they would . . . secede if this were forced on them. If they must, they must! But let them remember that what is happening now--with them in possession--is just the quiet unnoticed confusion, for such

it really is, month by month of thousands of men and women, whose needs and beliefs find no representation and no good in the National Church." She needed to convey these feelings to a wide audience, and she did so in Robert Elsmere and other novels.

Although Mary Ward's novels that pointedly convey a religious theme--Robert Elsmere, The History of David Grieve, The Case of Richard Meynell, and Helbeck of Bannisdale--deal directly with loss of faith, assaults on a person's faith, or maintenance of faith against various temptations, some of her other works, such as The Story of Bessie Costrell, also have an important religious undercurrent. An examination of several of her other novels, including, for example, The Coryston Family, Eleanor, The Testing of Diana Mallory, and Lady Connie, reveals that in novels of political and social situations she was also preoccupied with the problems caused by either too much or too little belief. Allusions to religion occur with enough frequency to indicate that the desire to explain and illuminate religious conflicts both emotionally and intellectually underlies most of her works. Lady Connie, in fact, was published in 1916, four years before her death in 1920.

Mary Ward's need to explain and clarify and to come to terms with both constructive and destructive forces is no more gently yet forcefully expressed than in the exploration

of Catholicism in her novels. It comes to one suddenly while reading certain of her novels that Mary Ward really was trying to deal--perhaps all her life--with the conflict caused throughout her youthful years by her father's conversions to the Catholic church. In her novel Helbeck of Bannisdale the conflict is a public one, for the leading characters are of opposite faiths. But in Eleanor, the eponymous character is drawn almost desperately to the Church in her attempts to heal the wounds her life has inflicted upon her. Julie in Lady Rose's Daughter is in the Church by default. She was raised by nuns in Belgium after her parents died. Her references to it are almost asides, and her religion is simply part of the baggage she brings along with her wherever she goes.

Religious themes pervade many of the contemporary novels of writers as diverse as George Eliot (Adam Bede, Middlemarch, Romola), Samuel Butler (The Way of All Flesh), Charles Kingsley (Yeast), Elizabeth Gaskell (Ruth), John Henry Newman (Loss and Gain), and W. H. Mattlock (The New Republic and The Heart of Life). Mary Ward's novels delve as deeply as some of these novels into the spiritual values of the times, and moreso than others, and are just as in accord with the times philosophically as the works of the most notable of these writers. In Robert Elsmere and Helbeck especially, Mary Ward's own views are reflected in her handling of confrontations between Elsmere and some of his

peers and between Helbeck and his beloved Laura, which result from loss of faith and from the inner conflicts caused by religious doubt. In addition, the depth of her views is revealed in the reactions of her characters to their lives, to the social consequences of their actions, and to the lives of others with whom they become involved. In coming to grips with the changing society that was part of the basis for the religious upheaval that consumed so much of her attention, she was, as her novels reveal, vitally aware of the social and political trends of the times. Several of the novels are concerned with the way in which political ambitions affect lives. Several other novels convey a deep interest in the support of social causes, including the welfare of the poor and improvement in working conditions, as well as reforms and expansion of the educational system. Situations involving ethics in contemporary society's dealings with the fruits of affluence, either by way of new wealth gained from the hard labor of others or old wealth obtained by inheritance, were incorporated skillfully into several of her novels. However, almost every novel maintains some connection to problems of religious faith or doubt. A religious theme, in major or minor key, persists in all.

A few years before Mary Ward achieved her great success with Robert Elsmere, W.H. Mallock, an almost exact contemporary and a member of the Froude family, published

The New Republic, a novel that satirized most of the leading liberal thinkers of the time, including her Uncle Matthew, Walter Pater, her friend and neighbor in Oxford, and especially Benjamin Jowett, who had been Mallock's Master at Oxford. As a believer in the traditional Church, Mallock tried to make his nontraditional believers appear foolish. The New Republic is especially interesting when it recounts a series of conversations among a group of characters, some of whom represent points of view that the author deplored, and some of whom include his recreations of the very people who were Mary Ward's mentors or at least influential in her circle: T.H. Huxley, Mark Pattison, T.H. Green (who inspired the character of Grey in Robert Elsmere, according to Mary Ward herself), Matthew Arnold, and Dr. Jowett. Many of the statements made by Jenkinson (representing Jowett) in the novel, while occasionally equivocal, are ecumenical in a modern and humanistic way. Jowett's own statements in his essay "On the Interpretation of Scripture" do not belie the caricature presented by Mallock in the sense that they are sometimes both revolutionary and conciliatory. To Mallock, Jowett was a heretic (and the symbol and embodiment of all heresy to Pusey and Liddon, as noted earlier), and he tried to present his fictional counterpart, Jenkinson, as he thought Jowett was. But to the people who followed the liberal religious tradition that Jowett espoused, he was an illuminator of complex theological thought. Mrs. Ward

dismisses Jowett's detractors in A Writer's Recollections:

> Yet no doubt they had their excuses! For this, too, was the man who, in a city haunted by Tractarian shades, once said to his chief biographer that 'Voltaire had done more good than all the Fathers of the Church put together!'--who scornfully asks himself in his diary, a propos of the Bishops' condemnation of Essays and Reviews, 'What is Truth against an esprit de corps?' -- and drops out the quiet dictum, 'Half the books that are published are religious books, and what trash this religious literature is!' (173)

Jowett may have helped Mary Ward become the "staunch partisan of biblical criticism," that Robert Wolff appreciates, for Jowett wrote in his "Interpretation" that "whether the habit of mind which has been formed in classical studies will not go on to Scripture; whether Scripture can be made an exception to other writings, now that the nature of both is more understood; whether in the fuller light of history and science the views of the last century will hold out--these are questions respecting which the course of religious opinion in the past does not afford the means of truly judging" (Jowett 419). Earlier in the century when R.D. Hampden (Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford) stormed the fortress of traditional religious thought, one of its strongest defenders, Dr. Edward Pusey, had observed, according to Bernard M.G. Reardon, that "heretics invariably quote scripture in preference to the definitions of the Church" (48). Pusey, Alfred North Whitehead has noted, was, in John Henry Newman's phrase, "haunted by no intellectual perplexities," in contrast,

Whitehead observed, to Tennyson, Clough, Arnold, and Newman himself (82).

Mary Ward on Pusey offers no apologies: "Then--Pusey! There comes back to me a bowed and uncouth figure, whom one used to see both in the Cathedral procession on a Sunday, and--rarely--in the University pulpit. One sermon on Darwinism, which was preached, if I remember right, in the early 'seventies remains with me, as the appearance of some modern Elijah, returning after long silence and exile to protest against an unbelieving world . . . . Nevertheless, Pusey wielded a spell which is worth much oratory--the spell of a soul dwelling spiritually on the heights; and a prophet, moreover, may be as monotonous or as incoherent as he pleases, while the world is still in tune with his message." Unfortunately for him, Oxford, at least in the 1870s, was no longer "in tune with Pusey's message," and he could no longer struggle effectively when faced with the "new and stubborn forces" of Darwinism. His powers were diminished, he had "no further power to bind, and she, sympathetic, perhaps in spite of herself, remembered it as "tragic, or pathetic, as such things must always be" (183).

But, for good or bad, "New Puseys arise in every century," she noted. "The 'sons of authority' will never perish out of the earth. But the language changes and the argument changes . . . ." (184).

Somewhat in the Pusey mold himself, Mallock was unable

fully to appreciate Jowett's assaults on tradition. Ever more traditional as he grew older, but never able to decide formally to become a Catholic, Mallock was accepted into the Church on his deathbed. By contrast to Mallock's novel, Mary Ward's Robert Elsmere, rather than a vehicle for ridicule of other faiths, shows a man grappling with his own.

Another of Mallock's novels, The Heart of Things, presents a conflict of moral character in which religous beliefs are betrayed in much the same way as in Mary Ward's The Story of Bessie Costrell. It is a novel of deception and dishonesty involving an ambitious, hypocritical clergyman. Aside from a few jibes at the mores of Anglican clergymen, it is less satirical in tone than The New Republic and The Individualist, which includes a character named Mrs. Norham, who according to Robert Wolff, is a caricature of Mary Ward.

Wolff points out that Mary Ward's character Langham in Robert Elsmere, though unwitting, is a truer portrayal of a Mallock antihero as well as of Mallock himself than his unflattering portrayal of her as Mrs. Norham. "For such Victorians," Wolff says, referring to Mallock and his embodiments, "no matter how they proclaimed their emancipation and sought substitutes for faith, doubt was a disease that sapped their moral fibre and eroded their chances for effective and happy lives" (508). It may be

that in her deep probing, without the concern for satirizing, Mary Ward was able to avoid the traps that Mallock fell into. Her characters fought against weaknesses of moral fibre and erosion of the effectiveness of their lives by attempting to reconcile their doubts rather than to succumb to the pain these doubts caused.

Mallock, in any case, in the Preface to The Individualist, disclaimed any connection between his Mrs. Norham and "a certain well-known lady," whom a critic suggested as the actual person when parts of the novel appeared in Fortnightly Review before its publication in book form. He denied the charge by a critic in another journal that the situation in his novel had anything to do with the settlement founded by Mr. Passmore Edwards, with which Mary Ward (whom he does not name) was connected. He writes that he had first invented the character in a sketch written in 1880 when "the lady to whom the critic alludes was wholly unknown, till seven or eight years later, for any of these views or enterprises which have led him to suppose Mrs. Norham's career to be intended as a 'lampoon' on hers." He goes on to point out that some of his own inventions appear in some of her later writings, though "it would be the height of absurdity to suppose that this lady was an imitator of me," as it would be absurd to suggest the same of him. He insists instead that counterparts of characters if they are successfully drawn often are found in reality

"because individual men and women of similar temperaments and opinions have always a number of traits in which they resemble one another" (vi-vii).

Mary Ward does not mention Mallock's novel in her Recollections, but the Passmore Edwards Settlement was very close to her heart and is mentioned in detail. In spite of Mallock's denials, Mrs. Norham appears to be a not very subtle caricature of Mary Ward, and it is hardly surprising that some critics and probably many readers thought her so. The journal critic, according to Mallock, wrote that if Mallock had not meant his book to be an "exposé of the jealousy, littleness, and special weaknesses" of this particular person, he had nevertheless made every effort to give the readers that "mistaken impression." Mallock, who insisted that impression was falsely apprehended, could be quite malicious in his "lampoon." Early in the novel he presents her as follows:

> Mrs. Norham was beyond all doubt a celebrity. She had written a novel with a purpose which, despite its length and its solemnity, had achieved an enormous circulation, and had raised her to the ranks of a prophetess. She was now surrounded by a clique of admiring worshippers who would have taken her, were that possible, even more seriously than she took herself." (21)

It seems clear the two authors did "borrow" from each other. Mallock, for one, had the audacity to include a character in the same novel with the name Mrs. Helbeckstein (wife of a "great South African millionaire"). Such an

invention seems far from coincidental. This novel appeared one year after Mary Ward's Helbeck of Bannisdale. But Mallock was making his case for traditional religion, and he had many advocates. And like W.J. Knox Little and her other detractors, he was attacking her religious point of view rather than her literary accomplishment.

Among other novels that probed religious dilemmas of the time, Charles Kingsley's Yeast and John Henry Newman's Loss and Gain are both novels about persons struggling with problems of faith. George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, and Middlemarch also offer important points of reference to Ward's novels; The Mill on the Floss in particular contains incidents that are somewhat similar to situations found in Helbeck of Bannisdale, i.e., a rural setting, independent if thwarted spirits, and death by drowning. Mary Ward may have hoped to emulate George Eliot, whom she greatly admired, especially as a novelist of ideas and influence, even though the trappings of religious arguments essential to Mary Ward's novels were peripheral to the profound spiritual substance found at the heart of George Eliot's works. Exceedingly earnest and effective in their way, Mary Ward's works lack the Olympian authority that George Eliot's work possessed, yet offered with such modesty.

Mary Ward also is concerned with the ethical aspects of a situation, and she most notably approximates George

Eliot's approach in The Story of Bessie Costrell, which reminds one of Silas Marner with its rustic setting and characters and its single-minded pursuit of an ethical resolution.

In his introduction to the Penguin edition of Scenes of Clerical Life, David Lodge observes that the great novel of religious doubt that one would have expected George Eliot to write was written instead by Mary Ward. Although he laments that the task fell to an "inferior" talent, one can venture to suggest that most talents were inferior to George Eliot's, and that Mary Ward's acceptance and execution of this enormous task are to be appreciated. She felt that she must do it, and she gathered every facility available to her. Mary Ward wrote four such novels, seemingly trying to understand and to come to terms with her own doubts and her own need to cling to a basic faith, transferring these thoughts into fiction. Wolff observes that "to have imagined the spiritual developments and the vicissitudes that lead to the founding of a new religious movement [by Robert Elsmere] is in itself an enormous achievement" (469).

Whether or not one can agree with William Peterson's observation in Victorian Heretic that Mary Ward misread the temper of the new century: that most people were not "hungering" and "thirsting" for a new Christianity, his point that she assumed that most of her readers "shared her own deep-seated desire to return once again to the Communion

rail of the Church in order to recover an elusive "peace of mind" is certainly debatable. It can be argued that her novels do not at all suggest such a deep-rooted desire. It is certainly likely that she may not have understood that the world was becoming very secularized, or that all institutionalized forms of Christianity were in decline--another statement open to argument, in view of Hobsbawm's and Thompson's analyses--and that there was "widespread indifference to theological questions" (206). Indeed, she may have been unduly optimistic about the future for a modern Christianity, but her essential point of view retains its value for her novels.

Chapter IV. Novels of Faith and Doubt: Robert Elsmere and Significant Others

> 'Ah! sure within him and without,
> Could his dark wisdom find it out,
> There must be answer to his doubt,
>
> 'But thou canst answer not again,
> With thine own weapon art thou slain,
> Or thou wilt answer but in vain.
>
> -- Tennyson, "The Two Voices"

The pervading theme of Mary Arnold Ward's most significant novels is the challenge to religious faith caused by the climate of doubt of the nineteenth century. As she herself was one of the challengers to the established faith as well as one of its defenders, her novels for the most part present overwhelmingly positive outlooks for solutions to the problem of retention or renewal of faith in the face of relentless challenges. Mary Ward was the possessor of a "resilient optimism," in the words of Peter Collister (217), and her ability to find even a kernel of hope that religious faith will endure in some form, and that it will be worthy of the effort required for its endurance, is an important attribute of her three most significant religious novels: Robert Elsmere, The History of David Grieve, and Helbeck of Bannisdale.

In each of these novels Mary Ward offers a struggle in which the combatants are in some way defenders of religious faith or proponents of religious doubt. Unbelief can be seen as an aspect of what J. Hillis Miller in Victorian Subjects has termed "Victorian counter culture." Miller observes that this skeptical counter element was present in "the most intimate texture" of major literary works of the time, many of which appeared to be affirming the "official culture . . . some form of Christianity," and he cites the works of Browning, Carlyle, and Dickens as suggesting this idea (280). He discusses a recurring pattern in the religious outlook of many Victorians, an idea he attributes to Noel Annan, author of Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian, which is characteristic of the situations presented in some of Mary Ward's novels. This pattern, notable in the life and work of George Eliot, traces an early exposure to evangelical teachings, then a loss of faith, followed by an interest in secular humanism, all the while retaining a firm commitment to the moral and ethical, but not the religious, tenets espoused by the evangelical churches. Mary Ward's David Grieve, is essentially this kind of religious traveler.

Mary Ward and George Eliot were not among the authors who either wished or pretended to affirm the "official culture," but they share the quality common to the most eminent Victorian writers of presenting both a "manifest

religious position (whether "official or counter") and the opposing position" (281). Both authors illustrate the complexity of religious commitment that was indicative of the period and applied, in Miller's view, even in the case of Newman and Hopkins, who "go back to Roman Catholicism in order to preserve their endangered belief" (282). This view suggests that the ambiguity of outlook clearly present in Mary Ward's work was not an unusual occurrence. Mary Ward, for her part, was always concerned with discerning both sides of a question. It may be that her loyalty and love for her father fueled her ambiguous feelings for the Roman Church. Among her serious religious studies were the lives of saints and the mysteries of sainthood. She included many references to saints in both Robert Elsmere and Helbeck of Bannisdale. R.J. Schork suggests that the inclusion of references to saints in her novels is probably attributable to her father's influence, "perhaps a sublimated acknowledgement of her father's vacillating religious allegiances" (302). She was loyal as well to the Anglican Church and to her Grandfather Arnold's Broad Church view. At the same time she was receptive to the ideas of the most liberal churchmen and respectful of the platforms of the dissenting churches, for she had had exposure during her schooldays to evangelical teaching. Her lack of a fervent stand for one church over another may have caused some, like Walter Pater, to consider her an apologist for the main

church view and to welcome what they saw as her advocacy.

In Robert Elsmere, Mary Ward's first successful novel, the author brings into sharp focus the religious questions of faith and doubt as encountered by the Anglican clergyman, Elsmere, who is so unsettled by his study of ancient religious writings and his inability to find proof for the theological tenets so important to his church that he leaves the church and attempts to found a more liberal denomination. His devoted wife, while remaining loyal to her evangelical religion and dismayed at his dissension, remains by his side, assisting him in the charitable work that now is the essence of his religious mission. His moral fibre "unsapped," Elsmere chooses to leave the established church rather than to work for reform within it. As he tells a friend near the end of the novel, "The ground must be cleared; then may come the re-building. Religion itself, the peace of generations to come, is at stake. If we could wait indefinitely while the church widened, well and good. But we have but the one life, the one chance of saying the word or playing the part assigned us" (603).

Mary Ward, who favored the broad expansion of the existing church, has presented a protagonist who wants to build a new path, who cannot wait for the traditional church to see things his way. Walter Pater's review in the Guardian, noted that Elsmere evolves "into a kind of Unitarianism," but for all his sincerity "ought not to be a

clergyman of the Anglican Church." Pater felt that the priest of the Anglican Church would continue to be "one of the necessary types of humanity" and must, even in the face of doubts of the age, "achieve as much faith as possible in an age of negation," emphasizing the positive rather than the negative. Pater, however, observes that the death of Robert Elsmere is filled with "genuine piety and resignation," forming the "crowning touch in the author's able, learned, and thoroughly sincere apology [italics mine] for Robert Elsmere's position" (66). Pater, her Oxford neighbor and friend, is considered by some to be the model for Langham, Elsmere's Oxford tutor and friend[4] who is always the skeptic in this novel. Looking back one hundred years, one can think that the "apology," or more properly, regret, might be more on the order of the author's feeling of resignation that she has to show the desperation to which the intransigence of the church has brought a faithful man of intellect.

"I wanted to show how a man of sensitive and noble character, born for religion," Mary Ward wrote in A Writer's Recollections, "comes to throw off the orthodoxies of his day and moment, and to go out into the wilderness where all is experiment, and spiritual life begins again" (II.67).

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[4]John Sutherland, Mrs. Humphry Ward

Her desire also was to contrast this person with another equally noble soul of the "traditional and guided mind, and to imagine the clash of two such tendencies of thought as it might affect all practical life, and especially the life of two people who loved each other" (67). In this case, the other person was Elsmere's wife Catherine.

Mary Ward drew heavily on her mentors and friends in the Oxford community as inspiration for the characters in the novel. She drew upon the strengths and weaknesses of her father and her Uncle Matthew for Robert Elsmere himself, although he was very much a composite of many people. As mentioned earlier, her Oxford neighbor and good friend Walter Pater has been identified as the model for Langham, Robert Elsmere's Oxford tutor and friend, probably because some of the things that she has Langham say sound very much like ideas expressed in Pater's early writings. On the other hand, Janet Penrose Trevelyan stated that Amiel was the model for Langham: "Mrs. Ward confessed to her models for some of the principal characters--to the friend of her youth, Mark Pattison, for the figure of the Squire [though not as a landowner]; to Thomas Hill Green, 'the noblest and most persuasive master of philosophic thought in modern Oxford,' for that of Henry Grey; and to Amiel himself, the hapless intellectual tortured by the paralysis of will, for that of Langham" (51). That she also thought of Pater as somewhat tortured or at least perplexed about what he

believed was revealed in her review of Marius, the Epicurean.

"What makes the great psychological interest of the book," she wrote in this review, "while it constitutes what seems to us its principal intellectual weakness is the further application of this Epicurean principle of an aesthetic loss and gain not only to morals, but to religion" (137). She felt that Pater viewed whatever claims that religion might have on "the mind in search of beauty" just as he would view the claims of the "moral system of the civilised world" on that same mind.

Langham is described as one "who always treated the subjects of conversation presented to him as an epicure treats foods," and he and Elsmere did not allow their discussions to enter religious grounds, except that each could always express himself freely with the other. "The man who is religious by nature," she wrote, "tends to keep his treasure hid from the man who is critical by nature, and Langham was much more interested in other things" (Robert Elsmere 171). It is Langham who hears Elsmere's deeply felt religious beliefs as well as his earliest expressions of growing religious doubt. Elsmere tests his thoughts and ideas on Langham. The prototype of Langham, according to William Peterson in Victorian Heretic is the character Robin in an early story, "Believed Too Late." John Sutherland in his biography calls Robin Mary Ward's first

skeptic. Robin is a caddish, Byronic sort. Peterson observes that in this early story Mary Ward does not examine the "psychology of unbelief." She later explored this subject so extensively in most of her novels that it "virtually became [her] speciality" (Peterson 53).

When Elsmere tells Langham that he has finally read Darwin's The Origin of the Species and found it to be a "revelation," Langham answers that "it is a revelation, my friend, that has not always been held to square with other revelations" (171).

Elsmere understands the "natural panic" that the book caused, saying, "Men shrank and will always shrink . . . from what seems to touch things they hold dearer to them than life." He saw the panic easing and new battle lines forming. "But the old truth remains the same . . . somewhen and somehow, God created the heavens and the earth!" (171).

Langham does not say anything in response. "It had seemed to him for long that the clergy were becoming dangerously ready to throw the Old Testament overboard, and all that it appeared to him to imply was that men's logical sense is easily benumbed where their hearts are concerned" (171). Langham is the skeptic whose views are reenforced by the established church's actions, while Elsmere, who is beginning to be uneasy about the church's dogma, still clings to his basic beliefs. He does not ultimately lose his belief in God, for his quarrel is with the church's external

structure.

According to William Peterson in Victorian Heretic, Mary Ward had created a forerunner of Robert Elsmere at least physically and temperamentally in the character of Paton, in "A Westmoreland Story," but there is "no hint of heresy in his religious views" (57). Although Robert Elsmere may have taken on heretical views, as far as his church superiors were concerned, he is presented always as a man of great honesty, and he has come to his change of heart painfully with the sincere understanding that he cannot stay in his church and espouse tenets that he does not believe. Alfred Gough pointed out in a lecture on October 20, 1905, that the novel Robert Elsmere was the most effective discussion of the difficulty a clergyman had in reconciling what he had learned from the new criticism with what he had previously known from the "old faith" (175).

Mary Ward presented Robert Elsmere, bringing the newly awakening interest in problems of young and questioning minds, to the larger world at a time when religious doubters and believers were, according to Richard Church in The Growth of the English Novel, "tearing at each other," accompanied by the "hammer of industry" and the "laughter of a too-confident body of scientists" (184-185). Church, however, sees the novel as a device for voicing the "outcry of the tortured and frightened church." Having decided that Mary Ward was speaking for the established church, he noted

that she used George Eliot's novelistic methods, in spite of that writer's agnostic views, because she looked upon her as a "model of form and integrity." As has been noted earlier, Mary Ward had very specific suggestions for the national church that she set down in her notebooks, but it would be misinterpreting her intentions to suggest that she was speaking for the established church in this novel. Neither did she speak against it. She merely called attention to its faults and suggested, with much humility, possible corrective measures. "Her first concern was neither to proclaim what she thought true nor to repudiate what she thought false," Herbert L. Stewart wrote in "Mrs. Humphrey Ward and the Theological Novel" (675-686). Her admiration for George Eliot, however, was documented in her own memoir, A Writer's Recollections (I.144-148).

While people outside the established church found much to applaud in Robert Elsmere, others within the church found much to criticize. One of its most famous critics was William Gladstone, who was at the time in between terms as Prime Minister of England. Consummate politician that he was, Gladstone was also a serious traditional churchman. Writing in The Nineteenth Century ("Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief"), he wrote a kindly if very analytical review. He felt the book marked a temporary lapse in her religious consciousness, but he was confident she would return to the fold. He offered the consolation "that if the

ancient and continuous creed of Christendom has slipped away from its place in Mrs. Ward's brilliant and subtle understanding, it has nevertheless, by no means lost a true, if unacknowledged, hold upon the inner sanctuary of her heart."

The Ward-Gladstone situation is interestingly observed in W. Somerset Maugham's Cakes and Ale, when the characters are discussing Oxford and late Victorian novels and novelists:

> But we all found it very interesting to hear Mrs. Encombe talk of the people she knew. My uncle had been at Oxford, but everyone he asked about seemed to be dead. Mrs. Encombe knew Mrs. Humphry Ward and admired Robert Elsmere. My uncle considered it a scandalous work, and he was surprised that Mr. Gladstone, who at least called himself a Christian, had found a good word to say for it. They had quite an argument about it. My uncle said he thought it would unsettle people's opinions and give them all sorts of ideas that they were much better without. Mrs. Encombe answered that he wouldn't think that if he knew Mrs. Humphry Ward. She was a woman of the very highest character, a niece of Mr. Matthew Arnold, and whatever you might think of the book itself (and she, Mrs. Encombe, was quite willing to admit that there were parts which had better have been omitted) it was quite certain that she had written it from the very highest motives. (81-82)

That people would become insecure in their opinions and be receptive to new ideas because of Robert Elsmere is exactly what the author hoped for. But that some people would believe it was better to be without such ideas was also the reaction she expected and received from many quarters.

Although Gladstone quite definitely appreciated Mary Ward's high character, which may account for the lack of acidity in his review, he simply did not have many good words for the novel. According to some, he "put on the whole armour of God to defend Christianity from her invasion,"[5] although such reaction to his review seems exaggerated in view of the harsher criticism she encountered later on with her other writings.

"The work may be summed up in this way," Gladstone wrote, "it represents a battle between intellect and emotion. Of right, intellect wins; and, having won, enlists emotion in its service" (12). Gladstone further notes that Mary Ward expresses "what appears to be her thoroughly genuine belief that historical Christianity has, indeed, broad grounds and deep roots in emotion, but in reason none whatsoever" (12). He felt that the novel was an example of "the tempered but aggressive action of the sceptical intellect," and that perhaps Mary Ward was somehow persuaded to "charge her tale with such a weight of matter from a desire to give philosophical completeness to her representation of the main springs of action which mark the life of the period" (15).

Gladstone did not believe that taking the mystery and the miraculous out of religion would transform it into

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[5]Basil Willey, "How Robert Elsmere Struck Some Contemporaries." Essays and Studies, London: John Murray, 1957.

something more accommodating to the modern viewpoint. In his view, Christianity,

> in the established Christian sense, is the presentation to us not of abstract dogmas for acceptance, but of a living and a Divine Person, to whom they are to be united by a vital incorporation. It is the reunion to God of a nature severed from God by sin, and the process is one, not of teaching lessons but of imparting a new life, with its ordained equipment of gifts and powers. (19)

When Mary Ward responded to Gladstone in Nineteenth Century, she did not agree that she had misplaced her faith, but rather that she was aiming to gain a stronger one that was broader than her traditional belief had been. Gladstone was correct in suggesting that she retained remnants of an old faith, but he failed to understand that for her those old remnants could fit into the new framework. She found no incompatibility in her approach, perhaps as a reflection of her grandfather's ideas of an all encompassing church and her own inclination toward compromise.

Mary Ward recorded an account of a conversation she had with Gladstone shortly after the publication of Robert Elsmere, which is included in her daughter's biography. When the point came to talk about religion, Gladstone told her that he did not believe in "any new system," that he clung to the old, and to the old traditions, which were what he cared about. "I believe in a degeneracy of man, in the Fall --in sin--in the intensity and virulence of sin. No other religion but Christianity meets the sense of sin, and sin is

the great fact in the world to me" (Trevelyan 59).

Her contention, she told him, was that moral evil was connected to "physical and social and therefore removable conditions," and he, in turn, pointed out that to him the worst evils were committed by the "highest and most favoured class 'of educated people'" (Trevelyan 59). Gladstone later wrote her that he had not said or thought that she attacked Christianity, but that her proposed substitute for it, which was "reached by reduction and negation" was illusory--she was "dreaming the most visionary of all human dreams" (Trevelyan 60).

Mary Ward replied that she thought that through the power of righteousness sin could be weakened by individuals and by society. "And as to that sense of irreparableness, that awful burden of evil both on the self and outside it, for which all religions have sought an anodyne in the ceremonies of propitiation and sacrifice, I think the modern who believes in God and cherishes the dear memory of a human Christ will learn humbly, as Amiel says, even 'to accept himself,' and life, as they are, at God's hands" (61). She had a long-standing correspondence with Gladstone, and this correspondence reflects the mutual respect they felt toward each other, although "agreeing to differ."

Although Mary Ward's work was valued by many highly placed people besides William Gladstone, the opinions evoked by the novel were sometimes poles apart in religious

orthodoxy. Even though the London Times review of April 7, 1888, accused Mary Ward of showing "a Christian evolving into 'Unitarianism' of a type indistinguishable from rationalism," Basil Willey has noted that she had called Unitarianism "the most illogical creed that exists" (62), using the term metaphorically, perhaps, because Unitarianism has no formal creed. In her essay, Unitarians and the Future, she had identified what to her were certain "disadvantages" or aspects of the denomination that were not attractive to her, such as its "indecision," meaning no doubt its supreme ambiguousness on matters of faith, and its standing away from the "main channels of national life," alluding perhaps to its position outside an established church that was deeply entwined with national politics. She described both the new faith and the older one it had come from as "a logical whole," yet recognized a perpetual struggle between the old and new elements (61).

Whatever her inclination may have been toward their faith, Unitarians found the novel inspiring and some found it inspirational for sermons. Charles William Wendte, who was minister of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California, observed in a sermon in 1888 that "there is many a sermon preached in a good novel," dealing with moral and spiritual problems. His list of the novelists who would preach "sermons" included George Eliot and Charles Kingsley in Yeast, and he felt that Robert Elsmere, setting forth the

"great conflict between authority and freedom, tradition and truth, the letter and the spirit" was a "work of genius" (4).

Illustrating the contradictory views that Robert Elsmere inspired, Wendte contrasted Gladstone's view of Robert Elsmere as a "serious menace to the established church and the Christian religion" to the atheist Colonel Robert Ingersoll's dismissal of the book as "altogether too conservative in temper as a weak attempt to save something from the universal wreck of Christian tradition" (1), a view that leans more toward Richard Church's identification of Mary Ward as a spokesperson for the established church rather than one of its hopeful reformers.

Because Robert Elsmere was read widely, Mary Ward became a much-quoted and sought after authority on the vicissitudes of religious doubt. Her position can be seen as a compromise between that of the established church and the agnosticism practiced by T.H. Huxley. In fact, she became an intermediary with her essay, "The New Reformation," which she wrote as a reply to criticisms of Robert Elsmere. The essay is actually a dialogue between a cleric of the established church and a former theology student who has studied in Germany. The two converse extensively about the meaning and influence of the German "Higher Criticism," the old cleric blaming its influence for the English church's problems and the younger man seeing it

as a way to make the church compatible with contemporary thought. The essay was included among a series of other articles in Nineteenth Century in which Huxley eloquently expressed the agnostic view and Bishop Wace held forth for the established church. The very complex subject was made more so by the intensity of debate between Huxley, who offered remarkable insight into the scientific aspects of the controversy, and Wace, who possessed a formidable intransigence in regard to any departures from orthodox belief. It was left to Mary Ward to referee the debate, for in her dialogue she made the subject available for ordinary understanding.

Ten years later she was again asked to contribute to Nineteenth Century in a retrospective. This article, again titled "The New Reformation," was a further chance to explain her position. She wished to illustrate the difficulties pressing on a person whose "mind was at once educated and religious," but who nevertheless wants to stay in the Anglican church through which he has been "brought to faith" by way of reflections on moral and intellectual experience.

Having placed Elsmere outside the established church, Mary Ward wrote a sequel to the novel in which the protagonist, Elsmere's son-in-law, Richard Meynell, attempts to work for change within the established church and is charged with heresy. The Case of Richard Meynell did not

enjoy the success of its predecessor, although some reviewers found it singular for its religious optimism (Trevelyan 259). Mary Ward wrote in A Writer's Recollections of her intense interest in liberal movements wihtin the established church and that she had begun to think of "the other side of the Modernist message . . . that life itself, the ordinary human life and experience of every day as it has been slowly evolved through history, is the true source of religion, if man will but listen to the message in his own soul, to the voice of the Eternal Friend, speaking through Conscience, through Society, through Nature" (II.108).

Robert Elsmere had many supportive readers and reviewers in Britain, but liberal religionists in North America were the more favorably disposed to Mary Ward's tradition-challenging novel. Edward Everett Hale, Unitarian clergyman and author of The Man Without a Country, writing in The North American Review in 1889 with sympathy for Robert Elsmere's quest for knowledge about the beginnings of his faith, observed that study of the early centuries of Christianity reveals a simpler religion than that propounded since the Middle Ages, for "those people who have always taken their Christianity simply from the four gospels have always known that the Saviour of mankind said that love of God and love of man is the whole of it." This, of course, was exactly the point that Mary Ward had made in

her various essays.

Julia Ward Howe (author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"), writing in the same issue of The North American Review, was another American Unitarian favorably disposed toward the ideas expressed in Robert Elsmere, though she was critical of its literary style. Her most cutting remark, however, was reserved for Mr. Gladstone, when she notedthat he "does not appear to have much understanding of the comparative value of different religious ideas." (Mrs. Howe was later to take Mary Ward to task publicly about her views on woman suffrage.)

Although her subsequent books never experienced the kind of extravagant success that rewarded her efforts in Robert Elsmere, at least several of these books are as thought-provoking as that novel is. She picked up the thread of religious debate so intimately woven into Robert Elsmere and carried it through in both The History of David Grieve and Helbeck of Bannisdale, employing a style more attuned to the literary than the polemical.

In The History of David Grieve, Mary Ward's second successful novel, her concern is with a man's quest for a spiritual life. David Grieve's religious heritage is partly Catholic through his French mother, but his exposure as a young child and adolescent had been to evangelical and dissenting religious groups.

David Grieve is a "quick-minded" fellow, Mary Ward

writes (47), and he is "greedy of all human experience." David and his free-spirited sister, Louie, orphaned as young children, have been raised by their Uncle Reuben, a kind, but ineffectual man, and his termagant wife Hannah (whose hard heart is softened finally years later by David's little son, Sandy). These people scratch a living from their farmland, and all about them in this Lancashire area are working people. P. J. Keating wrote in The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction of the working-class novelist as an explorer in both the industrial and urban traditions. Mary Ward was not a working-class writer, but she often wrote about working-class people, especially in The History of David Grieve, less with the sense that she was "exploring" unknown territory than that she was writing about a world she knew intimately. She showed great familiarity with these hard-working country folk of the English north and also with the hardships that they endured. Keating points out that her work, specifically Robert Elsmere, was somewhat responsible for helping to change the attitude of priests and intellectuals toward working in the area of social reform (123), where they had had little interest. This active pursuit of social reform becomes Robert Elsmere's main concern and is an integral part as well of the ministers' work in The History of David Grieve. Alfred Gough felt this novel was a "great advance" over Robert Elsmere (176) in showing this social responsibility to the

congregations, but as in Elsmere, he felt she had struck her "deepest notes" and revealed her "profound spiritual insight and her intense sympathy with the struggles of the soul in its aspirations after truth, after parting from its moorings in the old faith" (178).

David experiences many religions in his quest to find the true meaning of his life. He journeys from the early evangelical religion of his youth through the "secularist" phase of his early manhood, to his later, more traditional faith. All these aspects of his spiritual life have depended on the influence of various people. As a boy he came under the influence of the minister Ancrum who also recognized his exceptional intellectual ability. The feeble old teacher, 'Lias Dawson, whose flawed life was governed by the supernatural, nevertheless gave him great books and encouraged questions. Later on in Manchester he worked in a bookshop run by the fundamentalist Purcell, whose sweetdaughter, Lucy, he later married. His own exploring religious mind was countered by Lucy's cousin, Dora Lomax, a pious and near saintly churchwoman, who was the daughter of the vagabond bookseller, Adrian Lomax, an unrepentant secularist. Dora retained a steadfast though unrequited love for David in spite of their theological differences.

David had also been influenced intellectually by the old journalist Barbier, who fled France for political reasons and supported himself in Manchester by teaching and

calligraphy. Mary Ward describes him as "a fanatic, a Red,[6] much possessed by political hatreds, which gave savour to an existence otherwise dull and peaceable enough. Religious beliefs were very scarce with him, but he had a certain literary creed, the creed of 1830, when he had been a scribbler in the train of Victor Hugo, which he did his best to put into David" (242-243) and thus engendered David's eclectic approach to literature.

After a sojourn in Paris during which he becomes involved romantically for a time with a young painter, Davidreturns to Manchester and finds a brief happiness with Lucy. He has abandoned his rebellious sister Louie in Paris in the aftermath of his illfated romance with the painter Elise Delaunay, and she comes to grief about the same time that his wife Lucy dies of cancer. David is left to raise his son, to run his book business with concern and devotion to the wellbeing of his employees, and to be a respected and admired member of the community.

The minister Ancrum reappears in David's life after he comes to Manchester. Years earlier Reuben Grieve, David's uncle, had been a member of Ancrum's Brethren congregation in the village of Clough End. This congregation, according to Mary Ward, "represented one of those curious and independent developments of the religious spirit which are

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[6]"a sans-culotte" in the Westmoreland edition, Honnold manuscript, Box X, No. 13]

to be found scattered through the teeming town and districts of northern England." It was not connected to any regular religious body, although its members had come to it from the Anglican Church and from Baptist, Independent, and Methodist congregations. These were millworkers and shopkeepers, "penetrated on the one side with the fervour, the yearnings, the strong formless poetry of English evangelical faith, and repelled on the other by various features in the different sects from which they came--by the hierarchical strictness of the Wesleyan organisation, or the looseness of the Congregationalists, or the coldness of the Church" (94). They were seeking more intimate communication through a faith, and yet in the end Ancrum, who had come with a great missionary sense and had worked tirelessly for them, was removed because of petty grievances of a few members of the congregation. His ordeal recalls the treatment of Mr. Tryan, the much-loved evangelical minister in George Eliot's story, "Janet's Repentance" in Scenes of Clerical Life, worn in body and mind, whose missionary success in the town had angered the traditional church members led by Janet's husband into constant derision of the man and countless humiliations.

Ancrum becomes the embodiment of Gladstone's comment that the novel displayed "every kind of religionist," for he, the life-long dissenter, ill near the end of his life, finds that he may at the end seek comfort in the Catholic

church:

> You may hear any day that I have been received into the Catholic Church, or you may only hear itwhen I am dying. One way or another, you will hear it. It has been strange to go about all these years among my Unitarian and dissenting friends and to know that this would be the inevitable end of it. I have struggled alone for peace and certainty. I cannot get them for myself. There is an august, an inconceivable possibility which makes my heart stand still when I think of it, that the Catholic Church may verily have them to give, as she says she has. I am weak--I shall submit--I shall throw myself upon her breast at last. (Collister 495)

David understands his friend and early mentor's change in spiritual needs, for he himself spends hours in the study of ethics pertaining to religious concepts and the study of Christian origins. He would write his thoughts in his journal, or he would voice them in talks with Ancrum, "whose love soothed him, and whose mind, with all its weaknesses and its strong Catholic drift, he had long found to be infinitely freer and more hospitable in the matter of ideas than the average Anglican mind . . . " (552). His small family has become even smaller with the death of his wife and sister, who died within days of each other. His sister Louie, never tamed to life, took her own life in France after her little daughter's death from diphtheria. Louie had made an unfortunate marriage to an artist who abused and abandoned her, but her child offered the single positive note in her fractured life. Immediately after Lucy's death David rushed off to France to try to rescue Louie. Dora

Lomax, reluctant to leave Lucy in her last hours, went on ahead to France at David's behest, but their attempts to rescue Louie ultimately prove useless.

For Louie, throughout the novel, is a counterforce, as truly self-destructive as David is self-evolving. During their early days in Clough End and later in Manchester, David had always looked after her, showing in Ancrum's view, "a wonderful patience," which manifested itself in many ways, but especially toward repairing the damage caused by her impetuous and sometimes cruel behavior. "He was evidently haunted by a sense of responsibility towards his sister," Mary Ward wrote, "and, at the same time, both tormented and humiliated by his incompetence to manage or influence her. It was curious, too, to watch how by antagonism and by the constant friction of their life together, certain qualities in her developed certain others in him. Her callousness . . . did but nurture a sensitive humanity in him" (241). As time went on he realized that "Louie's wildness was by no means the wildness of an ignorant innocent, likely to slip unawares into perdition" (242). Her blatant heedlessness of convention, fed by "a passionate greed for amusement and pleasure, and a blank absence of principle" eventually repulsed him, and he sensed his inability to protect her from herself and her unsavory entanglements, although he never ceased trying. The ever-willful Louie, as one of Mary Ward's most interesting,

though unresolved, characters, is a forerunner of women who dominate her later novels, although not always successfully. Louie calls to mind George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth and Maggie Tulliver, and even Thomas Hardy's Eustacia Vye. She has the intemperance of Gwendolen without her conscience, the capriciousness of Maggie without her spirituality, and the recklessness of Eustacia without her strength.

Dora and David, though dearest of friends, remained far apart in religious point of view. Dora, the traditional Churchwoman, bound to good works and pious faith, could never ascertain David's mixture of what he calls Socialism and Christianity, which eschews dogma in everything. The novel ends with a paen to David Grieve's inner life:

> He knew the perils of his own nature, and there was in him a stern sense of the difficulty of living aright, and the awfulness of the claim made by God and man on the strength and will of the individual. It seemed to him that he had been 'taught of God' through natural affection, through repentance, through sorrow, through the constant energies of the intellect. Never had the Divine voice been clearer to him, or the Divine Fatherhood more real. Freely he had received--but only that he might freely give. On this Christmas night he renewed every past vow of the soul, and in so doing rose once more into that state and temper which is man's pledge and earnest of immortality--since already, here and now, it is the eternal life begun. (576)

Peter Collister finds Mary Ward's "fine compassion for the ambiguities and reversals of human feelings" in The History of David Grieve worthy of comparison with George Eliot and comparable to Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton. Perhaps more to the issue of her sense of social responsibility,

Collister points out in his discussion of The History of David Grieve that Mary Ward had a goal far beyond "offering belated remedies for continuing social abuses," for "on this journey man is feeling towards a culture in which creative vision can replace outworn dogma" (230).

Collister notes the growing importance to the author of presenting the inner life, although this approach, he insists, means she must render the context less precisely. "The individual's sense of personal ends, of giving shape to what Clough called 'the substance of the shadowy day,' marks the novel's historical significance," Collister notes. He emphasizes Mary Ward's "trust in the inherently divine aspect of social institutions, parliament, and all the temporal machinery of civilization," which she has derived, he suggests, from the writings of her Grandfather Arnold and the trust of which "gives strength and unity to the belief that in this divine source is located the means of society's improvement" (231).

William Gladstone, who had been variously seen as both denouncing and celebrating Robert Elsmere and was described by Alfred Gough in his lecture as "remorselessly pulling it to pieces" and then later extolling it for the "sensible impression" it would make among thinkers (175), was won over immediately by The History of David Grieve. Writing to Mary Ward in 1894, Gladstone paid tribute to her nonprejudicial view toward the holders of opinions differing from hers. He

had been reading a novel by another writer whom he does not identify and found its lack of tolerance toward other opinions to be at such variance with the attitude displayed in her novels that he had thought immediately of her. As earlier noted, he thought that "every kind of religionist" could be found in The History of David Grieve, and she had presented all of them with a great generosity of spirit. It is a tribute to the friendship between two who held such different opinions that he would write, "This is the spirit which will I hope grow and prosper among us" (Collister 291).

Mary Ward was often criticized for writing "novels with a purpose," especially drawing in the religious and the philosophical, but she agreed in her "Preface to The History of David Grieve" with an earlier admonition that if any novelist writes a dull story, it can't be saved by "all the religious argument in the world." She wanted to give a large and accurate portrait as well as one with depth, and strove, not always successfully, to avoid the ponderous. Although her intention in Robert Elsmere may have been mainly to present an idea rather than to develop a character, as Mildred L. Culp has suggested (36), she clearly moved in subsequent novels toward emphasis on developing characters and depicting situations from life. A friend writing after her death described The History of David Grieve as marking a new path that led her from the religious to the society

novel. "When she laid that crutch aside [religious controversy]," she had nothing to depend upon but her power of interesting the reader in her story and characters," Margaret L. Woods wrote in "Mrs. Humphry Ward: A Sketch from Memory" (148).

Support for this view can be found in the "Preface" in her statement that she preferred to be among the writers who treated the whole of life, blending the highest ideas with the most commonplace. "I am so made that I cannot picture a human being's development without wanting to know the whole, his religion as well as his business, his thoughts as well as his actions. I cannot try to reflect my time without taking account of forces which are at least as real and living as any other forces, and have at least as much to do with the drama of human existence about me" (xvii). Janet Trevelyan remarks in her biography that in this book her mother felt herself "more thoroughly the master of her material" than she had in Robert Elsmere (Trevelyan 95), and she notes how warmly the book was greeted by many readers, among them T.H Huxley and Edward Burne-Jones, and that Jowett called it "the best novel since George Eliot" (99).

Calling Mary Ward the "legitimate successor to George Eliot," not only for her novels, but also for her essays, Alfred Gough in his 1905 lecture considered her to be a "controversial essayist of the first order" (Gough 178). He insisted she was still a "good Churchwoman, although

decidedly not orthodox" in contrast to Meredith, Hardy, Eliot, and others who to him were uncompromisingly skeptical (171). Margaret Woods observed that Mary Ward's descripton of life at Needham Farm where David Grieve and his sister lived with their Uncle and Aunt was "grimmer than George Eliot would have made it, but worthy of her" (155). With all due respect to these thoughtful tributes to Mary Ward's developing style, it should be noted that she displayed a completely polished technique in Robert Elsmere, even if it was in the service of her religious ideas. It is important to remember that these religious ideas never left her mind and continued to play as significant, if not as conspicuous, a role in her novels.

Walter Pater, quoted by Janet Trevelyan (99), said of David Grieve that it had "all the forces of its predecessor at work in it, with perhaps a mellower kind of art--a more matured power of blending disparate literary gifts in one." Her old friend from the Oxford days, Mandell Creighton, who, Janet Trevelyan noted, "never tired of poking fun ...about the 'higher criticism'" wrote an intense letter of "pseudo-solemn investigation into the authenticity of David's life-story," with the reservation that he was ready to accept David Grieve as a real person but he realized that there were many "mythical elements" in his story, and "it is the function of criticism to disentangle the real man from the legendary accretions which have gathered round him." She

responded that some of the reviews had angered her, and he responded in regard to "ungenerous" criticism that being a teacher requires a certain responsibility and accepting the "inevitable antagonism which the claim arouses. It has been so always. No amount of rectitude or good intentions avail" (100).

Mary Ward approached the religious inner life from a totally different point of view in Helbeck of Bannisdale. The protagonist Helbeck comes from an old Catholic family that had never flirted with any other faith. She employed contrasting personalities in the novel as she had done both in Robert Elsmere and The History of David Grieve, which can at times be seen as constructive and destructive forces. Elsmere has close friends who fit both categories, and his wife's religious outlook is traditional while his is visionary and revolutionary. Helbeck of Bannisdale is Mary Ward's novel about English Catholicism, and in it she is concerned with the life of Alan Helbeck, a devout Catholic, and his love for Laura Fountain, a non-Catholic, who tries without success to understand his commitment to his faith.

In Elsmere's case, his wife's love and support for him overrode her religious conservatism. David Grieve's wife Lucy, whose estranged father eschewed established religion, was accepting of David's ideas because she respected his inner goodness. David's sister Louie, although converted to Catholicism upon her marriage, remains unreachable and

becomes a destructive force, totally indifferent to displays of goodness from anyone, yet ultimately capable only of self-destruction.

Constructive and destructive forces clash head on in Helbeck of Bannisdale. Helbeck's love for Laura Fountain and hers for him is a doomed relationship. For Laura had run away from Helbeck's influence, and she had left him a letter in which she described this influence as "tyranny," a word that "had wounded him to the very quick." Against all odds these diverse people had fallen in love. Laura and her stepmother, who was Helbeck's sister Augustina, had come to live in Helbeck's house after the death of her father, Stephen Fountain. Laura could see that marriage to Helbeck, the serious and devout Catholic, could not be like the intermarriages she had observed among friends wherein the participants "agreed pleasantly to differ all their lives" (Helbeck, 279). Helbeck berated himself for not having seized the moment early in their relationship when she was so open to his influence that he could have won her over to his side before "the will and mind that might have been captured at a rush had time to harden--the forces of revolt to gather" (Helbeck of Bannisdale 360):

> What wonder? Oh! blind--infatuate! How could he have hoped to bring her, still untouched, within the circle of his Catholic life, into contact with its secrets and its renunciations, without recoil on her part, without risk of what had actually happened? The strict regulation of every hour, every habit, every thought, at which he aimed as a Catholic--what could it seem to her but a dreary

> and forbidding tyranny? to her who had no clue to it, who was still left free, though she loved him, to judge his faith coldly from outside? And when at last he had begun to drop hesitation, to change his tone--then, it was too late! (360)

Laura had made several attempts to understand his faith, and she had come very close to conversion, only to imagine that she heard her father's voice telling her not to do it. She appreciated the beauty and spirituality found in the church. "There was an extraordinary life in it all," she decided on a day in London when she stole off by herself to the church of the Brompton Oratory and found herself at a Benediction. "Here was not languid acceptance of a respectable habit. Something was eagerly wanted--diligently sought." Her thoughts were transported to the chapel in Helbeck's home and she "had been almost happy" in that remembrance (328).

Mary Ward noted that if their differences had been differences of opinion, they would have melted like morning dew" (276). But their differences were much deeper.

> Helbeck, indeed, was in his full maturity. He had been trained by Jesuit teachers: he had lived and thought; his mind had a framework. Had he ever felt a difficulty, he would have been ready, no doubt, with the answer of the schools. But he was governed by heart and imagination no less than Laura. A serviceable intelligence had been used simply to strenghthen the claims of feeling and faith. Such as it was, however, it knew itself. It was at command. But Laura!--Laura was the pure product of an environment. She represented forces of intelligence, of analysis, of criticism, of which in themselves she knew little or nothing, except so far as they affected all her modes of feeling. (276)

Laura had nothing to fall back upon, nothing that would help her either to understand or to resist the kindly but insistent people who wanted to make her acceptable to Alan Helbeck's Catholic life:

> For she had been bred in that strong sense of personal dignity which in all ages has been the alternative to the abasements and humiliations of religion. And with that sense of dignity went reserve--the intimate conviction that no feeling which is talked about, which can be observed and handled and measured by other people, is worth a rush. It was what seemed to her the spiritual intrusiveness of Catholicism, its perpetual uncovering of the soul--its disrespect for the secrets of personality--its humiliation of the will--that made it most odious in the eyes of this daughter of a modern world, which finds in the development and ennobling of our human life its most characteristic faith. (278)

Laura at the end could not live a lie that her conversion would mask. She could not submit, although she loved Helbeck. To do so would be a betrayal of him, for he was committed to his faith, a true believer. In Laura's sense, ". . . the priests want my inmost will--want all that is I--and I know when I sit down to think quietly, that I cannot give it." She knows that she cannot fit into Alan Helbeck's life. Her life ends tragically in what appears to be an accidental drowning. But it is not. She had sent a letter to her friends, the Friedlands, explaining that her death would not be an accident. Dr. Friedland, a Cambridge professor and friend of Laura's late father, has loved Laura like his own daughter and has come to regard Helbeck as a "good and noble man" (388).

Friedland understands well the spiritual quality of Catholicism and especially the importance of the Mass, which he feels is the single element that has held the religion together over the centuries. Ruminating on this tenacity, Friedland had once said, "What will the religion of the free mind discover to put into its place? Something, it must find. For the hold of Catholicism--or its analogues--upon the guiding forces of Christendom is irretrievably broken. And yet the needs of the soul remain the same." This had been said to instruct Laura, and Friedland, who, like Mary Ward's great mentor, Benjamin Jowett, was "in truth one of the most religious of men and optimists," was later troubled by the negative cast of his "sermon" (332).

Laura, however, coming to terms with having to relinquish Helbeck, thinks that all religion does not need to be as it is for him. She realizes that the Friedland's religion is "a faith convinced of God, and of a meaning for human life, trusting the 'larger hope' that springs out of the daily struggle of conscience, and the garnered experience of feeling." Laura knows that both Friedland and his wife "breathed a true spiritual dignity and peace." Neverthless, she is not moved by their own faith. "She put away the suggestions of it with impatience. Her father had not been so. Now that she had lost her lover, she clung the more fiercely to her father. And there had been no anodynes for him" (343).

Laura perhaps might eventually have struggled to find a faith, but at this time she does not have the desire to struggle with herself and with her memories to do so. She gives up her life rather than go on in turmoil.In Helbeck's case, Friedland believes, the resolution will be to enter the Jesuit order and give his life formally to the Church.

"What a fate!" Friedland cries at the end of the novel, "--that brought them across each other, that has left him nothing but these memories, and led her, step by step, to this last bitter resource--this awful spending of her young life--this blind witness to august things!" (389).

Friedland was said to have been modeled on Thomas Hill Green, the Oxford luminary upon whom Mary Ward is believed to have modeled Grey in Robert Elsmere, and he is the soul of liberal thinking. It may seem that all opinion is against Helbeck and his family's ancient devotion to the Catholic faith, in view of the liberal position of Friedland and his companions. But Laura, it is important to recall, has an awakening spirituality that has never grown beyond curiosity. It was her lot to fall into the "wrong company" through fate--wrong for her because she was never able to comprehend their faith, and also because they were never able to accept her free-thinking spirit. She could never really see all sides of an issue, even Friedland had said as much, and thus, she was poorer for this lack, just as David Grieve was richer for having had the many experiences that

opened his mind. Neither he nor Robert Elsmere were coerced into their ultimate faiths, and perhaps that is the positive message inherent in these novels, which celebrate a clear-eyed, open approach to religious faith.

The noted editor and writer Boris Ford claims[7] that Helbeck, which he considers Mary Ward's greatest novel, had"all the qualities of Grecian tragedy." He found her fairness in handling both sides of the conflict between the two--Helbeck's deep Catholic faith and Laura's "passionate belief in freedom of conscience"--to be extraordinary.

Noting the relevance to twentieth century religious quandries in her discussion of the conflicts that she deals with, he perceived her question in this novel to be "Are some parts of life too far apart to be reconciled?" According to Françoise Rives, Laura cannot bring herself to yield to Helbeck's spiritual tyranny" (73), and her reluctance illustrates the essence of Mary Ward's "feminism," which, in Rives's view, is a quiet but determined assertion of the fundamental equality between men and women" that was "inevitable, undeniable progress" (77). Mary Ward's situations are in general beyond the question of gender, but the strength and assertiveness of most of her heroines should not be dismissed simply because she succeeded as a mainstream writer for her time. Her cause was

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[7]emeritus professor of the University of Bristol, in a lecture at the CUNY Graduate Center in 1988.

not gender-related, but universal, which, it may be suggested, is the reason that it could inspire Françoise Rives's enlightened comment. Unfortunately, in Laura's case the two people could only have reached equality if she had accepted Helbeck's religion. That she could not do so had little to do with equality and much to do with completely opposite philosophies--too far apart to be reconciled.

A contemporary critic, A. Arnold, writing in 1899, observed in "Some Questions Suggested by Helbeck of Bannisdale" that Mary Ward "had shown forth with a directness that allows of no comfortable compromise, the great and ever-recurring conflict between the forces of rationalism on the one hand, and those of obedience to the dictates of faith in a revealed gospel on the other" (493) and in doing so "has laid her finger upon a very real problem going deep down into our spiritual nature"; for here is "the gulf between two who love each other" brought about by the spiritual and moral tendencies inherited on either side... by the apparently impassable differences between the outlook and conviction of a Catholic and one trained and bred in the modern rationalistic spirit" (494). On the one side is the view of things in the light of man's free will and the rejection of those things that cannot be explained by reason. On the other side is the obedience to authority, the faith in things unseen, and the surrender of the will, involving a "mysticism utterly at variance with and

incomprehensible to those who feel it not" (493).

This review considers the unreconcilable issue to be the "evolution of a God rather than the revelation of Him by intuition and by authority" (495). Laura Fountain, who was raised by her father to hate "the intolerance and bigotry of professing Christianity," finds that Helbeck's religion makes demands on her will that are to her "incomprehensible and unnatural." As noted earlier, she had never gained "the necessary knowledge to sift these arguments concerning great facts so resolutely asserted and denied by theologians and their opponents." Laura's father had made her "a child of Knowledge, a child of Freedom, a child of Revolution," the family friend John Friedland says to his wife, but this was "without an ounce of training to fit her for the part. It is like an heir--flung to the gipsies." Friedland says she stood fast when put to the test, but it cost her dearly (Helbeck 315). The underlying tragedy, according to A. Arnold, is that their "souls must perforce clash--and break unless indeed the one yields to its own undoing and to the indirect harm of the other" (496). For the unbending Helbeck, the issue was his innate sense of his own guilt, both for loving someone who could not share his life and for encouraging her love, and it led him to seek salvation and self-surrender in his faith. For Laura, moved deeply always by the pain and death of others and by the sight of human suffering--and not possessed of a faith that could explain

or accept such miseries, submitting her will to the Church was something she could not do, as it would render her, in her view, subservient and dispossessed of her will. She thus could not in reality be part of Helbeck's life. Tragically, there could be no reconciliation, no compromise, and compromise was the essence of Mary Ward's religious outlook.

Helbeck of Bannisdale was both defended and maligned in Catholic-oriented publications. Most reviewers praised the book on its literary merits even if they disagreed with its content. Both The History of David Grieve and Helbeck of Bannisdale were reviewed in many publications, and the reviews varied considerably in approbation. Mary Ward's earlier novels, with their intensely serious religious themes, were the most well-received critically of all her novels. Her later novels on political and social themes were less appreciated; they may seem superficial by comparison to her religious novels, but all have an earnestness of purpose in conveying the importance of their subjects. Some of her reviewers included the most famous writers of the day, such as Henry James, George Gissing, and William Dean Howells. Not all the famous writers were enchanted by her style and subjects. In his review of Janet Trevelyan's biography of her mother written five years after her death, Edmund Gosse remarked that Mary Ward's "weakpoint as an imaginative writer" was her "terrible earnestness,"

and "she was full of the gold of enthusiasm and nobility, but something fatal in her temperament transmuted it to lead." As Gosse suggests, in truth, Mary Ward had a heavy hand at times, a very likely consequence of her earnestness. Her forte was intelligent discussion rather than lightness of touch.

Could it be, as William Peterson observes in Victorian Heretic, that she "habitually ignored the true emotional background of her writings and placed the entire emphasis instead upon intellectually respectable influences," (43) such as her Uncle Matthew, T.H. Green, and the German biblical critics? Perhaps she intended to do so, and, although this observation might be true of Robert Elsmere, it does not quite fit some of the other novels. When one considers the emotions riding in The Story of Bessie Costrell and Eleanor, it may be agreed these were held in check in Robert Elsmere rather than recognized, as Peterson suggests. But they take over in Eleanor, giving that book its raw power. It may be that she wanted to "intellectualize" somewhat in all her novels to avoid presenting what could have been termed a "woman's book."Her ideas, characters, and situations are far too serious to deserve any such compartmentalization. Rather, it may be suggested that her intelligence was her resource, and the motivation it gave to her in any given novel guided the novel's style and presentation, from the ambitious works

discussed in this chapter to the slight but skillful novel that came between The History of David Grieve and Helbeck of Bannisdale and seems to be a most likely transition between her early and later novels: The Story of Bessie Costrell.

Chapter V. A Pivotal Novel: The Story of Bessie Costrell

In The Story of Bessie Costrell, Mary Ward continues to assess the climate of doubt in the nineteenth century and its challenge to religious faith, although less specifically than in Robert Elsmere and The History of David Grieve, which are long, multifaceted novels. This slight and skillfully written novel was written quickly in between The History of David Grieve and Helbeck of Bannisdale. The Story of Bessie Costrell, which is based upon a real life tragedy, is narrow in scope, where Robert Elsmere and The History of David Grieve are broad, and its religious interest is confined to one dissenting Protestant denomination. Unlike Helbeck of Bannisdale, it is concerned with the moral consequences of human actions rather than the religious. In place of serious intellectual discussion, the concern is morality and ethics: essentially, sin and forgiveness. Nevertheless the tone of this novel and its seriousness of theme make the creation of Helbeck of Bannisdale soon afterwards a very logical consequence. What differentiates The Story of Bessie Costrell from these other novels, aside from its brevity, is that its very compactness and simplicity of style and its emphasis on redemption give it

the effect of a biblical parable. The themes of wavering religious faith, morals, ethics, and religious intransigence that inform the other novels continue to fuel her imagination in this novel, but they travel along a narrower path. Instead of directly confronting feelings of doubt as they do in the longer works, the characters in this novel rarely indulge in introspective thought, but their confrontation remains very real, neverthless, and is ultimately a moral one. These qualities, which signal the direction of her later works, thus make The Story of Bessie Costrell a pivotal work in Mary Ward's career.

Mary Ward wrote in A Writer's Recollections that when she was writing Helbeck of Bannisdale she found herself "never more possessed by a subject" except when she was writing The Story of Bessie Costrell (Vol. II.182). The "grimy little tale," as she put it (Trevelyan 112), became a widely read book. As noted earlier, Henry James, whom she considered a "true friend and mentor" and "whose opinion she valued more highly than any other," found the novel too simply wrought for her talents and urged her to spend her time on more challenging subjects (Trevelyan 112-113), but it seems that the subjects of temptation and retribution, and, above all, of simple human failure could not have been more challenging for this author.

All of the themes--wavering religious faith, morals, ethics, and religious intransigence--mentioned above are

interwoven into the plot of this novel, and the conflict within these themes is what interested Mary Ward, as she explained in response to a letter of support that she had received after a negative review of Helbeck of Bannisdale. That review, in which a priest accused her of caricaturing Catholicism, had appeared in Nineteenth Century. (Other reviews had accused her of presenting the church via Helbeck himself in too flattering a way!) Janet Trevelyan recorded Mary Ward's response in her biography:

> I think a novel with me generally springs from the idea of a situation involving two or three characters. Helbeck arose from a fragment of conversation heard in the North, and was purely human and not controversial in its origin. It is in these conflicts between old and new, as it has always seemed to me, that we moderns find our best example of compelling fate,--and the weakness of the personal life in the grip of great forces that regard it not, or seem to regard it not, is just as attractive as ever it was to the imagination--do you not think so? The forms are different, the subject is the same. (150)

"Compelling fate," along with "the weakness of the personal life in the grip of great forces that regard it not," energizes The Story of Bessie Costrell, in the way that the loss of religious faith or struggles with doubt provide the major emphasis in the other novels. In this novel fate challenges faith, and doubt enters when faith is shattered or, perhaps, misunderstood. The "sinner" rather than the seeker after faith provides the route of salvation, which the "righteous" person may never find.

Perhaps her interest in the "sinner" and the

"righteous" was born from her early affinity for the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, whom she had discovered in her youth in the 1860s. She found the same haunting quality in his works that she had also found in Ruskin and was drawn to these authors not because of her critical sense, which was yet to be developed, she said, but rather because of "an appealing beauty" she sensed that was "so closely mingled with magic and mystery that it haunted memory 'like a passion.'" This disclosure was included in an appreciation of Hawthorne written for the centenary of his birth. She wrote that she was drawn to his "austerity," to the "deep-rooted Puritanism," the "'sense of sin' in him" (67).

William Peterson notes that she devoted much of her career as a novelist to an exploration of her Puritan heritage, which was characterized by "intense but ambivalent emotion" (Peterson 55). This is perhaps overreaching a bit, although ambivalent is certainly the proper term. Whether her ancestors were as austere as Peterson suggests, in The Story of Bessie Costrell she explores the severity of a certain kind of religious faith, for Isaac's faith is as unequivocal as that of the inhabitants of Salem in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter.

In her appreciaton of Hawthorne she recalls the last scene of that novel when the dying Dimmesdale responds to Hester's entreaties with "I fear! I fear!" and Mary Ward writes how "the awe and shudder of such a last denial of

hope has always remained with me as one of the greatest things of imagination, deriving its power from that stern spiritual energy which is its ultimate source" (168). It seems that she tried to harness that "stern spiritual energy" herself in The Story of Bessie Costrell, which is as concise and self-contained in its style as The Scarlet Letter and as compelled by fate.Not coincidentally, as well, its outcome illustrates her fascination with that "last denial of hope."

Mary Ward writes that in Hawthorne, "The preacher indeed is ultimately absorbed in the poet, and his final aim is not reform but beauty--the eternal immortalising of the artist. While for him, also, the spectacle of human character and human suffering is in itself so absorbing, that he is able to communicate his vision to us, just because his touch is so disinterested and true..." (170). She herself may not quite have achieved this immortal artistry, but she refined her touch to be as "disinterested and true," and certainly she strove to achieve the visionary aspect inspired by Hawthorne's work.

Having portrayed rural people effectively in The History of David Grieve, and later in Helbeck of Bannisdale, where she enjoys describing the country folk who inhabit the patrician Helbeck's neighborhood, Mary Ward's skill at bringing rural people to life becomes even more evident in The Story of Bessie Costrell. In this novel she displays her

skill even more effectively than in The History of David Grieve, for her power of drawing rural people is given full play without the distractions of varied settings and time periods. Janet Trevelyan observes that her mother had expended "extraordinary concentration of effort" on this novel and was absorbed to the point of being possessed with a tragic story that had taken place in Aldbury, a country village near Mary Ward's country home, Stocks, in Hertfordshire. This time, a tragic occurrence, rather than a fragment of conversation, as in Helbeck, inspired the novel, and the emphasis is on the impact of fate and personal weakness as much as on the story itself.

The story told in essence is that Bessie's husband, a man of righteousness and pious religious faith, is unable to forgive her for spending a relative's money entrusted to them for safekeeping. In despair, she seeks redemption in death, and her husband is left to contemplate his unbending religious conviction and what it has caused. The novel is valuable for its insights into human frailty, as well as for its suggestion that forgiveness is a greater act of faith than the most pious prayer. Mary Ward at one blow has demonstrated the untenability of the old religion at its most inflexible point as well as the lasting value of spirituality.

Mary Ward has told the story in dramatic style, designating the five divisions of the book as scenes. The

novel opens as the elderly laborer John Bolderfield is returning to his sister-in-law's home where she lies dying. He has lived in her house for many years and now muses that he will have no one left after her death except his niece Bessie Costrell and her husband Isaac, who, he is certain, will offer him a lodging, especially since they know that he has carefully saved a large amount of money. He keeps the money in a chest under his bed and when he prepares to go away to do work in a nearby town he thinks he can safely leave the chest with Bessie and Isaac.

"You might call Isaac rather a fool, what with his religion and 'extempry praying, an that,'" Bolderfield says to himself. He is always struck by the sureness of Isaac's religious faith; so much so that he is often awed by the man. "If ever there was a man secure of the next world it was Isaac Costrell. His temper, perhaps, was 'nassty,' which might pull him down a little when the last account came to be made up; and it could not be said that his elder children had come to much, for all his piety" (9). Nevertheless, Bolderfield wishes that his own place in the next world were as certain as he feels Isaac's is, and for this reason he thinks that of his few possibilities for depositing his treasure, it would be safest with the Costrells.

Bessie has been "a wasteful woman all her life," in Bolderfield's mind, with no savings, but always cheerful and generous with what little she has. The ominous warning from

his sister-in-law on her deathbed that he is not a good judge of people and he'll "repent it" if he leaves the money with Bessie and Isaac is ignored for the expediency of leaving the box with them instead of with Saunders, a former friend whom he no longer trusts, or in a savings deposit with the postmaster, as the minister, for whom he has little admiration, suggests. In addition, Bolderfield fears formalities he does not understand, with "the peasant's rooted distrust of offices, and paper transactions, of any routine that checks his free will and frightens his inexperience" (23). Because Eliza has sunk too deeply into a coma, she is never able to tell why she did not want him to leave the money with Bessie, and he is thus never to know why she was so "set against 'Bessie's 'avin it.'"

Indeed, Bessie for her part is all too glad to have it, for her feelings had been somewhat wounded that he had not asked her to keep the chest for him in the first place. Bolderfield is called "Borrofull" in the village dialect, which may be a play on words on the author's part to reflect villagers' judgment of the man because he has lived on his sister-in-law's kindness for so many years. Bessie quickly points out the "nassty" talk that Saunders, his former friend, had generated in the village concerning Bolderfield's ability to use or protect his money wisely, for all the village has known about Bolderfield's indecision as to what to do with his "hoard."

Bolderfield, in his way as penurious and hardhearted as David Grieve's Aunt Hannah, is so flattered when Bessie relates that the minister Drew has expressed admiration for his exemplary thrift in having accumulated a sizable fund from his meager earnings as a laborer that her words have a calming affect on him. "The temper and obstinacy in the eyes began to yield to the weak complacency that was their more normal expression" (36). He is swayed by flattery rather than logic. Bessie has her sly side; she is not basically deceitful or dishonest, but she recognizes an opportunity, which she is unrestrained by conscience or conviction from attempting to seize.

Bessie is considered "caselty"--flighty, reckless--by the villagers, even though she has many friends, and she thinks that such a show of trust by Bolderfield will enhance her image. It also passes through her mind that Bolderfield may die before he can come back for the money, and she will have the money for her children. Nevertheless, her "passionate desire to get the money into her hands" was motivated more by the affront to her vanity if she should be passed over than by the "mere sordidness of 'expectations.'" Bessie "longed to feel herself trusted and important. Her self-love was too often mortified in these respects" (41) by the image she presents. She is like Louie Grieve in her careless disregard for consequences, although Louie is far more reckless and has ego and self-admiration to spare.

Bessie also lacks the intellect that would dispose her to self-destructiveness of the kind that led to Louie's end. Her tragedy is mainly propelled by fateful circumstance.

As a generally contentious individual in his home, given less to concern for the needs of others than for his own preoccupations, Bessie's husband is not eager to have the worry that someone else's money given over to his care would bring. A gardener by profession, he is mainly interested in a "kind of religious dreaming," and he spends much of his time and thought in the village's small Independent chapel. Bessie is his second wife; when he married her he was a widower some years older than she with two older children. He and Bessie have four young children. Although appearing to the world as a somewhat docile man, he is in fact quite volatile of temper, and his wrath is especially aroused in matters concerning the established church, which he views as the enemy of his Dissenting theology. Bessie, who has "leanings to the Establishment" and finds the established church a more sociable place than the Independent chapel, sometime earlier aroused his anger by suggesting that their new baby be taken to the church for christening, a practice of many Independents. No church discussion is involved in the situation of Bolderfield's hoard, however, and Isaac, who loves his children and Bessie in spite of his irascibility, is appeased by her argument that in caring for the money they may eventually be left

with it for good.

Some months later, Bessie has become the subject of talk in the village. The Independent minister Drew, who relies on Isaac, is dismayed to see her going to a public house in the village. "Isaac was his right-hand man: dull to the rest of the world but not dull to the minister," for they would often talk of religion, and Isaac would speak "with that accent of truth which lifts common talk and halting texts to poetry" (59). Isaac in his perpetually dreaming state has not noticed Bessie's activities. Soon after Bolderfield's deposit of his treasure chest, Bessie received a small legacy from a relative in another town. Never having cared for her family, Isaac had no interest in the legacy nor in how she used it. Eventually that money wasgone, and Bessie, owing money after her newfound extravagance, discovered a way to open Bolderfield's chest. Bolderfield had written to her that he was ill, and, she reasons that, after all, no one will inform her if he dies.

Bessie, in retrospect, sinks into despair because of all the money she has taken from the chest. She becomes fearful that Isaac, who knows nothing, will find out. And then, the remainder of the money is stolen by Isaac's eldest son, Timothy.

Ironically, Isaac returns to the house after having "passed an hour listening to a good man's plain narrative of a life spent for Christ, amid fever-swamps, and human beings

more deadly still." He had been in the company of the Vicar and his friend, a High Churchman and missionary bishop. Although Isaac, was "a staunch Dissenter by conviction and inheritance," who had no good thoughts for both "bishops and Ritualists," he, "nevertheless had been touched; he had been fired. Deep, though often perplexed instincts in his own heart had responded to the spiritual passion of the speaker. The religious atmosphere had stolen about him, melting and subduing" (89). The enlightening effect of this experience had moved him momentarily beyond his own needs to think about his wife and family. He feared that Bessie might become like his drunken wastrel of a son and that, essentially, he had neglected them all. She is soothed by his new, kindly attention almost into telling him of the robbed box and the lost money until he breaks the news that Bolderfield has been seen in the other town and will return the next day for his money.

On his way to Bessie's home, Bolderfield learns from Watson, the village policeman that Bessie has been spending considerable sums of money, presumably from her inheritance. When Watson tells him Bessie has been spending sovereigns, not shillings, he is stunned.

"'Suverins!' he repeated, in a low hoarse voice. "She ain't got 'em, I tell yer--she ain't got 'em!' The last words rose to a sort of cry, and without another word to Watson the old man started at a feeble run, his head

hanging" (104). He confronts Bessie, who with enormous dignity, utterly denies having touched his hoard of money, and when she insists that the sovereigns came from her relative's lawyer, Bolderfield calls her a liar and a thief.

"She fronted it with perfect composure. Her fine eyes blazed, but otherwise her face might have been a waxen mask. With her, in the scene, was all the tragic dignity; with him, the weakness and vulgarity" (115). Bolderfield enlists Saunders, the man he did not trust to keep his money originally, to help him, and they soon find Bessie's secret key to the cabinet that holds the treasure chest.

"He [Saunders] held up the key triumphantly. By this time, no Old Bailey lawyer making a hanging speech could have had more command of the task." This, now, to an audience that includes Isaac who has returned home incredulous to find Saunders, for he was "one of the main props of Church Establishment in the village," and he did not think much of Isaac Costrell, "who stood for the dissidence of dissent" (134). Saunders, as righteous and triumphant as Hawthorne's Chillingworth, informs the bewildered Isaac that Bessie has been spending the sovereigns on drink for the gatherings at the public house, and he shows one of the old coins to Bolderfield, who recognizes it as one of his. Isaac makes the visitors leave and is left alone with Bessie, who continues to deny any connection with her spending and Bolderfield's money.

Everything has changed in Isaac's household, and his entire framework of life is under siege. He does not believe Bessie's denials. "He was at bottom a man of violent passions, and in the presence of evil-doing so flagrant, so cruel--of a household ruin so complete--his religion failed him" (145). Isaac's Christianity, it turns out, is of a shallow sort and cannot stand up to the challenge of Bessie's "sin." For all his piousness and meditation, he has lost any semblance of Christian charity toward Bessie and can think only in terms of retribution. Isaac sees the ruin of his respectable life:

> For his world, too, lay in ruins about him. Through many hard-working and virtuous years he had counted among the righteous men of the village--the men whom the Almighty must needs reckon to the good whenever the score of Clinton Magna had to be made up. And this pre-eminence had come to be part of the habitual furniture of life and thought. To be suddenly stripped of it--to be, not only disgraced by his wife, to be thrust down himself among the low and sinful herd--this thought made another man of him; made him wicked, as it were perforce. For who that heard the story would ever believe that he was not the partner of her crime? Had he not eaten and drunk of it; were not he and his children now clothed by it? (153)

But Bessie no longer fears him or his reaction. She only sees herself being marched through the village in disgrace and shame. She implores him to help her pay back the money.

Isaac is merely repelled by her pleading, which "only maddened the man's harsh and pessimist nature the more." In his way of thinking, she could not expect to escape

punishment, and he is overcome by the "melancholia, which religion had more or less restrained and comforted during a troubled lifetime" (160). Bessie laboriously writes a note to Isaac who has fallen asleep in the kitchen. One last impulse impels her to call to him before going into the wintry night, but he does not hear her call in time.

> Isaac roused by her call from the deep trance of exhaustion which only a few minutes before had fallen upon his misery, stood up, felt the blast rushing in through the open door at the back, and ran blindly.
>
> The door had swung to again. He clutched it open; in the dim weird light, he saw a dark figure stoop over the well; he heard something flung aside, which fell upon the snow with a thud; then the figure sprang upon the coping of the well. He ran with all his speed, his face beaten by the wind and sleet. But he was too late. A sharp cry pierced the night. As he reached the well, and hung over it, he heard, or thought he heard, a groan, a beating of the water--then no more. (166)

Bessie in her final letter reproaches Isaac for not showing her mercy, insisting that though he was cruel to her, she loved him. She asks him to care for their children and asks him to kiss her and forgive her in death, for 'p'raps I may 'ear it without your knowin'" (171-172).

> Isaac bent over her. Was this Bessie--Bessie, the human, faulty, chattering creature--whom he, her natural master, had been free to scold or caress at will? At bottom he had always been conscious in regard to her of a silent but immeasurable superiority, whether as mere man to mere woman, or as the Christian to the sinner (173-174).
>
> Now--he dared scarcely touch her. As she lay in this new-found dignity, the proud peace of her look intimidated, accused him--would always accuse him till he too rested as she rested now, clad for the end. Yet she had bade him kiss her--and he obeyed her--groaning within himself, incapable

> altogether, out of sheer abasement, of saying those words she had asked of him. (174)

Isaac is thus unable to forgive Bessie. He has not been guided by his religion's principles, following insteadonly the vague and introspective practices that have failed to bring him beneficial human connections; connections, in fact, that were of little concern in his life.

By contrast, Bolderfield, bemused about religious principles and practices, has emerged from the tragedy with an unlikely human connection that will prove his saving grace. Mary Anne, the kindly and pious neighbor in the manner of Dora Lomax in The History of David Grieve, has taken charge of Bolderfield as she had promised his sister-in-law before her death that she would do. Bolderfield is unable to speak of forgiving Bessie or even to thank Mary Anne for her help, but once again a kindly woman's ministrations have calmed him. "He had always been weak and dependent, in spite of his thrift and his money. He would be far more weak and dependent now and henceforward. But again, he had found a woman's tenderness to lean upon, and as she ministered to him--this humble shrinking creature he had once so cordially despised--the first drop of balm fell upon his sore" (176). Thus someone else's charity provides benefit to Bolderfield, and innate goodness has prevailed, as it so often does in Mary Ward's work.

The minister who relied so much upon Isaac as a pious churchman tries unsuccessfully to help him. "The man who had

refused his wife mercy, shrank with a kind of horror from talking of the Divine mercy," and the minister muses that at least he is no hypocrite. He realizes that "Isaac Costrell's was a strange and groping soul" (179).

Having confronted the shallowness of his beliefs, Isaac no longer derives "much comfort from the aspirations and self abasements of religion." Mary Ward brings in at this point her fine conclusion, offering her own positive and generous religious faith:

> No human life would be possible if there were not forces in and round man perpetually tending to repair the wounds and breaches that he himself makes. Misery provokes pity; despair throws itself on a Divine tenderness. And for those who have the 'grace' of faith in the broken and imperfect action of these healing powers upon this various world--in the love of the merciful for the unhappy, in the tremulous yet undying hope that pierces even sin and remorse with the vision of some ultimate salvation from the self that breeds them--in these powers there speaks the only voice which can make us patient under the tragedies of human fate, whether these tragedies be 'the falls of princes' or such meaner, narrower pains as brought poor Bessie Costrell to her end. (179-180)

With its taut style, The Story of Bessie Costrell foretells the style of Helbeck of Bannisdale. On the other hand, at about the same time Mary Ward also had written Marcella, a long novel of social and political mores, and she was working on its sequel, Sir George Tressady, when she wrote The Story of Bessie Costrell. With such different works written close together she resists compartmentalization as an author. She thus could not be

described as only one particular kind of writer, for she did not confine herself to one theme in her novels; she broadened her subjects as she saw fit to do, occasionally laying aside what her friend Margaret L. Woods described as the religious "crutch" on which she depended for her earlier efforts and from which Woods felt she eventually liberated herself. Although Mary Ward often wrote with enthusiasm about other than religious subjects, the religious themes and ideas were pervasive in her work, as has been noted earlier, regardless of the subject. Thus the evidence is very strong that she required no "liberation" from her dependency on them.

Henry James, in a letter to Mary Ward reproduced in Janet Trevelyan's biography, hoped that she really did not consider this little novel as "one of her best things," but he did, for his sake, like her "unalembicated rustics," calling her simple, unrefined characters "a tremendous rest after Hardy's" (Trevelyan 112). He admired the "infalliblity" of her feeling for village life and found her story to be "very straightforward and powerful--very direct and vivid, full of the real and the juste" (112).

All the same, James did feel that her talents were more suited to more complicated subjects. Why would he not think this novel worthy? One might think that it did not match his guidelines for a novel, except that it seems to be the epitome of the kind of work he celebrates in his own essay

on "The Art of Fiction." He states that "the supreme virtue of a novel" is its "air of reality," and he stresses the importance of the author's skill in producing the "illusion of life," that truly reveals the "art of the novelist" (36). These are qualities inherent in The Story of Bessie Costrell.

It appears, however, that James was inspired enough by Mary Ward's success, as Enid Huws Jones reports in her biography, Mrs. Humphry Ward, to write a story the summer after the little novel was published in which his character, a successful novelist, "'yearned to be... but of course, only once, an exquisite failure.'" Jones writes that Mary Ward decided to try a short work as a discipline for herself since her publisher, George Smith, had signalled the demise of the three-volume novels that had been her arena. With this little book, Mary Ward, according to Jones, had once again "caught the trend" (113). The novel was a great success and not an "exquisite failure," as in the hoped for case of James's Mrs. Highmore.

At the same time, James's Guy Domville proved a failure when it was produced on the stage. Jones reports that Henry James was very depressed about this failure and was "touched and amused" that the "best-selling writer...was still clamourous for his praise" (113). James wrote his story, "The Next Time," in 1895 for The Yellow Book. Leon Edel in his biography of Henry James comments that in this story

James "had satirized [Mary Ward's] kind of literary aspirations" for "artistic rather than popular success" (293). Mary Ward and James were such very good friends that the story turns out to be the gentlest of satires. With true literary license, James seems to have been making use of Mary Ward's successful career as an interesting point of departure to frame his story. James seems to have included himself in the story as well, for the author, Ralph Limbert, in rather desperately seeking popular success, seems to be very much like him. Fred Kaplan describes him as James's "alter ego" (411).

Mrs. Highmore, the financially successful author described in the story is a friend and benefactor to struggling writers, and the author of very long books that come out in three parts, which are likened to triplets. Mrs. Highmore, unlike Mary Ward, has no children but a doting husband. Limbert has a lot to learn, he insists, "but what's life, as Jane Highmore says, but a lesson? I must get all I can, all she can give me, from Jane. She can't explain herself much; she's all intuition; her processes are obscure; it's the spirit that swoops down and catches her up. But I must study her reverently in her works" ("The Next Time" 262). Mary Ward, of course, explained her thoughts very well. She clearly relied on intuition as one of her resources, but not the only one, and her processes for writing her novels were very likely to be far less obscure

than James's were. She, however, relied on his analysis, although Kaplan notes it had "no effect on her practice" (Kaplan 278), and Edel points out that although he gave her much advice on "the art of fiction--his art" throughout their friendship, he knew he would never get across to her about writing "his kind" of novel" (Edel 293).

Adeline R. Tintner, writing about four women writers who wrote about Henry James, notes that in James's "teacher-student relationship with Mary Ward, he tried to "get her to undestand that the art of fiction done his way was the only way, and he continued to "rewrite her books until 1905" (44). Tintner further notes that Mary Ward was such a careful reader of James's books that "she had other reasons for taking revenge on his pilfering from the very books he was rewriting" (45)--by gently portraying him in her own work.

Around this time the literary world was full of critics and would-be writers who found her success somewhat disquieting. Arnold Bennett, not yet a published novelist, remarked rather grudgingly in a letter that "'She makes a healthy sort of second to Hardy himself . . . though of course there is an impassable gulf between them'" (Jones 113). The gulf is not really "impassable" when one considers that the kinds of rural people Mary Ward deals with are very similar to Hardy's. But the gulf between Hardy's outlook and Mary Ward's is another matter. For the most part her books

lack the disillusionment and despair that makes Hardy's books so relevant to the twentieth century. Eleanor, which will be discussed in the next chapter, has the darkness predicted by her style in Helbeck and is a deeply psychological study very much in the manner of Edith Wharton and James himself.

Contrary to what might be expected, Mary Ward's first novel, Miss Bretherton, which she based on a real person, had been the story of the ups and downs of an aspiring actress. It was from that early effort that she moved on to Robert Elsmere, realizing her ambition to write about serious subjects, which, as noted earlier, she had always handled very effectively in essays.

The Story of Bessie Costrell is unique in comparison to her other novels, but it can also be seen as central to Mary Ward's work, rather than as an aberration. It fuses the religious elements used so forcefully in Robert Elsmere and The History of David Grieve with the succintness later employed successfully in Helbeck of Bannisdale and evident in many of the novels that followed. Because of this fusion and because many of the succeeding novels follow a similar pattern, although all are longer, judgment of The Story of Bessie Costrell as a pivotal novel for Mary Ward seems reasonable. The religious elements that drew readers to the early novels--doubt, controversy, faith--and significant in The Story of Bessie Costrell were usually present in some

ways in the novels that came later, and, as this novel illustrates so well, Mary Ward was at this point fully relying upon her powers as a storyteller and creator of characters.

Chapter VI. The Religious and Political Novel: Religious Flirtations, Ultimately Serious--Eleanor

All the elements of doubt, challenges to faith, and theological debates important in major and minor ways in the novels discussed so far are present in Eleanor. In addition, the theme of "compelling fate" that is so significant a factor in The Story of Bessie Costrell and to some extent in Helbeck of Bannisdale moves throughout Eleanor as the characters interweave with each other. As in Helbeck of Bannisdale, the Catholic Church maintains a commanding presence. Another aspect of the novel is its variation on the theme of self-sacrifice, important to several of the characters, in which one person figuratively sacrifices another, reprieving the ancient myth of slayer and slain presented early in the novel during a visit to the site of an ancient temple. Adding to its mythical qualities and unlike the religious novels that precede it, this novel has a unity of time and space that almost gives it the feeling of Greek drama. The figures in the drama are portrayed boldly on the Italian landscape, a setting lovingly described by Mary Ward, who had enormous sympathy for the country and its democratic struggles, while immersing herself in the adored surroundings. This love of Italy she

shared with Henry James, and it was one of the shared interests that promoted their friendship over many years.

Into the lovely Italian landscape and turmoil of the country's politics Mary Ward has placed several people whose lives have been broken by circumstance. The eponymous protagonist of Eleanor, retreating from an unhappy life in England, finds herself contemplating, like the heroine at the end of Marcella--Mary Ward's novel of social and political ascendancy--an absence of identity, a lack of place where she might exist as an independent spirit. In Marcella's case, she has dissolved herself into her husband's life as helpmate and has felt unappreciated. "But she had given away all rights--even the right to hate herself" (560). The suggestion is that Marcella's sacrifice of self is too great--it has taken her whole being. It soon becomes clear, however, that she is both appreciated and cherished, for her husband acknowledges that she is essential to his career and life. By contrast, Eleanor Burgoyne seems to have given away everything and has retained nothing for herself in her effort to aid Edward Manisty in his study of Italian politics. She has been a willing participant in her sacrifice of self, as long as she felt herself helpful.

Edward Manisty is a dilemma unto himself. In his perception, which he has been attempting to translate into a volume of work, the ability of Italy to function as a nation

is inseparable from the moral guidance provided by the Catholic Church. Manisty's point of view has no basis in deeply held religious beliefs. On the contrary, he is, in fact, without particular religious beliefs. He sees his position as practical: He has no confidence in the modern, secular state that has evolved in Italy. He has chosen an unpopular and, to many, an unrealistic and indefensible position. His views are refuted as false, dilettantish, even perverse, for "he has chosen to attack not the violence of the Church--but the weakness of the State," and his detractors come from the ranks of church reformers as well as politicians. In recent months Eleanor, a distant cousin, has provided the only steady and truly helpful influence in Manisty's life. She has studied Italian church history and old manuscripts so that she can assist him in his writing."No writer herself, but born to be the friend and muse of writers" (495).

Also working against Manisty is his personality: He is an uncongenial man. Mary Ward wrote in her notes for Eleanor that Manisty was to have "alternations of conceit, recklessness, pose, and extraordinary charm," which cause alternative feelings of consternation and submission in his companions and make him for most of the novel an ambiguous, somewhat destructive presence, one who slashes about without consideration for human sensibilities. His ambiguity is heightened by his striking physical appearance, with such

handsome and bold facial features, neither soft nor hard but somewhere in between, that a French painter had described him as "Begun by David--and finished by Rembrandt," (Ward, Eleanor 3). His portrait has been painted by a number of artists.

Ostensibly about Manisty's nonromantic involvement with Eleanor Burgoyne, for whom he bears affection but not passion, and his potentially romantic involvement with the American Lucy Foster, the novel contains serious theological discussions about Anglican and Catholic politics and practice. One of the main avenues for discussion is the situation of an iconoclastic Catholic priest, Father Benecke, a German who has spoken out and written critically too many times for the Church to permit him to remain unchastened. Manisty has been a correspondent and friend, to whom Father Benecke turns when he faces the Church's punishment. Father Benecke perhaps can be seen as a conduit for Mary Ward's view of the Church as both a constructive and destructive force.

The theme of constructive and destructive forces dominant in Mary Ward's best novels manifests itself complexly in Eleanor. Manisty's destructiveness is balanced by the sensitivity of Eleanor, who is in her turn as compatible and constructive a presence as he is not. With the introduction of Lucy Foster, who is to be a guest in Manisty's entourage because of kindnesses to Manisty by her

relatives in America, Eleanor loses her positive qualities for a time because of Manisty's obvious attraction to the younger woman. Added to the situation is Eleanor's frail health. In attempting to cope with her difficulties, she, although not a particularly religious individual, has taken refuge in the mysteries of Catholicism. She does not seek to be a a convert but finds the sympathy of people in the religious community to be helpful to her.

Conversely, Lucy Foster comes from a strict American Puritan-Calvinist religious background. She becomes the beneficiary of Eleanor's creative efforts to transform her from an austere, plain woman into an attractive, vibrant creature and attracts Manisty's favorable attention, adding to an interest in her already kindled by an independent pattern of thought that is so at odds with his own. "Her very difference from himself was a challenge and a delight to him." She was no "docile echo of his thoughts and way" and "her strength of nature, her alien traditions might easily . . . clash with his own" (Manuscript 452). Because of her straightforward religiosity she is eventually overcome with remorse for a situation she feels she has provoked--the attention of Manisty away from Eleanor--and, to make amends, she becomes a confidante and loyal companion to Eleanor. Lucy, with her New England Puritan stock and staunch congregationalism, reminds one in her distrust of Catholicism of Laura Fountain in Helbeck of Bannisdale. In

unfamiliar territory, both physically and intellectually, "she [Lucy] found herself living with two people for whom Catholicism was not indeed a personal faith...but a thing to be passionately admired and praised, like art, or music, or scenery" (101). Lucy is alternately repelled and fascinated by their attraction to the Church. She is, however, thoroughly enchanted with the loveliness of the Italian surroundings and of the great religious art works so casually discovered wherever she goes.

In the midst of this domestic situation is thrust the figure of Manisty's deranged sister, Alice. Far more destructive than David Grieve's sister Louie, who is not psychotic at any point in her short life, Alice Manisty is like an uncontrollable force of nature. In contrast to Louie who wears down those who love her by her own obsessions and who cannot be rescued from the consequences of her own perverse behavior, Alice Manisty suffers from a severe mental illness that her brother is only beginning to recognize. But like Louie Grieve, Alice also is involved with a painter, and she comes to her brother to obtain the release of money he holds in trust for her so she can finance the painter's work. Rather than being a victim of her own excesses as Louie is, Alice has lost control of her emotions, and her life is governed by irrational actions. Other lives are seriously threatened, and those whom she encounters have to be rescued from her irrationality. As

with Bessie in The Story of Bessie Costrell, both Eleanor and Alice are doomed by the capriciousness of fate. Alice is only in the novel for a brief time, but her presence moves the action and contributes to the ultimate reversal of feeling among the characters.

Alice's presence contributes also to the theme of sacrifice, for she is almost a slayer and is figuratively slain. The theme of slayer and slain has been discussed by several critics in relation to this novel. If taken as a theme, it can be assigned to various characters and situations, and, in fact, can be interchanged among them, if viewed in the context of other novels where the theme is of self-sacrifice or redemption through suffering.

The theme of sacrifice is presented in both constructive and destructive ways. Eleanor, sacrificing herself to what she considers a worthy cause, is also trying to rescue herself. She is a young woman, barely thirty years old, who suffered a great tragedy a few years earlier when her husband, terribly ill from pneumonia, threw himself from a cliff. The sickness had affected his mind and when he killed himself he was holding their infant son in his arms,who was also killed, compounding the tragedy immeasurably. Eleanor, thus, has suffered the kind of enormous heartsickness that often does not permit rehabilitation, yet she has tried to rehabilitate herself through scholarly work, in spite of failing health--the

physical manifestation of the tragedy over which she has no control.

A clever woman whose abilities had not been appreciated by husband or father, with whom she had been living since her tragedy, she had absorbed herself in books and finally had found an outlet for her abilities as an assistant to Manisty. Although first simply a way to pass time, her reading had become a great remedy and "gradually there had sprung up in her that inner sweetness, that gentle restoring flame that comes from the life of ideas, the life of knowledge, even as a poor untrained woman may approach it. Her nature dreaded rebuffs; and her father had no words sharp enough for any feminine ambition beyond the household and the nursery" (41).

These womanly avenues having failed her, she found another, when her cousin, noticing that she seemed in poor health, brought her to Italy for the winter. They came together at a particularly serious period for him "when he was divided between fierce regrets for the immediate past, and fierce resolves to recover and assert himself in other ways; when he was taking up again his earlier function of man of letters in order to vindicate himself as a politician and a man of action" (41). Unfortunately, Manisty's book turns out to be less a discussion of an Englishman's impression of modern Italy than his "Apologia," a defense of certain activities that had put him at odds with the

political party, in which his family history placed him. He had been in Parliament but had turned against the party and resigned his office when he felt he could not work in what to him had become "a party of revolution, especially in matters connected with Religion and Education" (42). He thought he would study Italy, "the new country, made by revolution, fashioned, so far as laws and government can do it, by the lay modern spirit,--as an object lesson to England and the world" (42). His objective was a serious one, but also eminently hostile to the democratic goals of the new country.

Mary Ward toured the area around Rome with Henry James, and both used the scenes that they visited in novels. One in particular was the site of an ancient spring, called Egeria's spring after the woman who had taught about kinds of worship to the second king of Rome and had also loved him. ". . . the idea of an Egeria--a woman who gives of herself to the enhancement of a man," according to Leon Edel, exists though differently in both Mary Ward's Eleanor and James's novel The Sacred Fount (297). Janet Trevelyan, writing of the family's stay at the Villa Barberini near the ruined temples at Nemi, notes that readers of the novel "will remember how the motif of the "Priest who slew the slayer" is woven into the fabric of the story," and she mentions an expedition by Mary Ward and Henry James to the temple area similar to the one taken by Eleanor, Lucy, and

Manisty, which turns out to be "the turning point" in their drama. When Mary Ward and Henry James went there, she was given a basket of small terra cotta heads, "votive offerings of the Tiberian age," like the ones that Manisty finds at the site and gives to Eleanor (161).

Henry James's friendship was of great importance to Mary Ward, even if she could not make her novels what he would want them to be. She had always been guided by mentors, and in turn, she featured them in her novels. James was no exception, for he may reside in a minor character, a man of letters called Mr. Bellasis in Eleanor, the writing of which he influenced by his presence in Italy and his advice. Adeline Tintner notes that James himself thought he was the model for Bellasis because of several Jamesian sentences, but she also points out that he is actually not like James in person (45).

Another point of view is offered by Jill Colaco, writing in Notes and Queries. Mary Ward had modeled her story of Eleanor on the French critic and writer Charles Augustin Saint Beauve's account of the romance of the Vicomte de Chateaubriand and Pauline de Beaumont. The original of Bellasis, Lamartine in Saint Beauve's Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire, is an unpleasant character in the story, and, if he was supposed to be James, Colaco insists, then it would have been an "intentional caricature of the Master by one of his close acquaintances"

(409). Colaco suggests that rather than modeling Bellasis after James, Mary Ward instead gave his well-known cordiality in dealing with ordinary Italians to the unlikely character of Manisty. "This trait in the moody, aristocratic, intellectual Manisty is unexpected: more than that, it is actually at odds with the trend of his development, in which his interest in the Italian people is a late growth. It could well have been included by Mrs. Ward in an attempt to pay homage to her renowned guest" (410), and this was her way of recording James's visit.

James knew a great deal about Italy's history, its landscape, and people. Leon Edel points out that James was reading proofs of Eleanor at this time and had already outlined his own next novel in his notebooks. Edel says that it is not known whether he had actually started the novel, which turned out to be The Sacred Fount, published in 1901, one year after Eleanor, but James had already made notes about this novel in his notebook in 1894 (James, Notebooks 275). James's novel is entirely different and is not set in Italy, although the dominant theme, as in Eleanor, is one of self-sacrifice. An older woman married to a younger man seems to grow younger and more beautiful as he ages and another man, dull in personality grows wittier and more intelligent. Tintner observes that the Egeria episode is common to both novels and in both translates into "the cannibalistic theory of one person feeding off the other"

(45), viewed by other critics as the slayer and the slain. Tinter further notes that Eleanor and Mrs. Server in The Sacred Fount are both "emotionally depleted" women, having each lost her husband and child.

Elaborating on the theme of sacrifice, Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, writing in South Atlantic Review, notes the "profound tension" created in the novel, which as "ostensibly a book celebrating the ethic of female sacrifice...subtly attacks the destructive consequences of that ideal" (41). She further notes that while most of her novels investigate the theme of "spiritual self-sacrifice and growth through suffering," Mary Ward provides a new element in Eleanor: for in that novel "the theme of sacrifice" is connected with "bloody pagan rituals and authoritarian, anti-intellectual Catholicism . . . cruel religious traditions that she could not embrace" (51). Neither could she, it may be suggested, reconcile these traditions with the mystical spiritual element that she found attractive and for which she appears to have had great respect.

Eleanor's preoccupation is with these spiritual aspects, "her craving is for religion, for certainty" (Ward, Notebooks 43) and also for the cathartic qualities that abide within them. In one of her notebooks, Mary Ward wrote down observations made during a mass and was struck with "what the modern mind cannot reconcile . . . the personal

abjection of Catholicism." She further asserts that "Darwin's title [Descent of Man] contains the whole counter theory in a nutshell":

> Is man a fallen wretch, a criminal from whom his creator, aided by the strange expedient of the Incarnation must gradually wring the full penalty of sins determined for him by a written and traditional code? Or is he a being sprung from the gulf indeed, but from the beginning the fellow-worker of the God who conceived him. The God whose nature is best expressed through the ever advancing ideals of man?" (Notebooks 13.36)

The dilemma of this contradiction was outlined in her notes on Professor Friedland in Helbeck of Bannisdale. For Friedland, "to make oneself well-acquainted with the history of a dogma is to be freed from that dogma as a tyrant of the mind." He saw history and the Catholic Church as "contradictions," because the Church sees itself as a "teaching body claiming absolute truth." However, the Professor ruefully notes that most people in the world do not care very much about history, but they do know and do care very much about religion. "It is not therefore wonderful that they should reject history where it seems to them to clash with religion" (Notebooks 13.30b).

As noted earlier, Mary Ward's Eleanor Burgoyne gives everything she has in her--all her intelligence and all her energy--to Edward Manisty, the former member of Parliament and would-be political scientist, and this latter gift eventually has fatal consequences, for her health is extremely frail.

Manisty curiously is a subscriber to the idea that what he terms "irresponsible science and free thought" are "enemies of the State," for the State "must . . . and can only live by religion" (151). In conversations with his admiring friend, Vanbrugh Neal, a Cambridge don and devout Anglican, he is constantly required to defend his point of view. Manisty is dependent on Neal's opinion, but Neal is critical of the unfinished book, seeing it as an example of the great "gulf between a literary and a practical Christianity" (152). Neal tells him that instead of studying the subject he has produced a pamphlet favoring the Church's view. When Manisty replies that he had to have information and went to "headquarters" to get it, Neal tells him that he has paid too high a price. "Your book is a plea for superstition" (151), and Manisty is shaken by his friend's criticism.

In pursuing his theories he has evidently been confronted with the strong suggestion that their foundation, is in fact, doubtful. He loses interest in finishing his project, and at the same time has diminishing interest in Eleanor's usefulness to him. Eleanor wonders if he will finish the book after she has observed the recent challenges to his ideas and the lack of support for them. It occurs to her that the project may indeed have been a mistake, but she remembers Manisty's depression before he embarked upon it and how much the work had meant to

both of them:

> "---Surely he will finish it? He cannot forego the effect he is almost sure it will produce. But he will finish it with impatience and disgust, he is out of love with it and all its associations." She realizes that his conversation before friends that evening showing a loss of interest in the work "represents what I had most share in,--the chapters which brought us most closely together. How happy we were over them! And now, how different!" (157)

Manisty's inconstancy is predicted in Mary Ward's notes on the novel, for she describes him as "one of those men who have no reasoned body of principle, who aregoverned by their temperament which dictates to them the sympathies or antipathies of the moment--hence they appear and indeed are inconsistent and capricious--still their actions have . . . a harmony of temperament." Rather than pursuing the more reasonable, most effective avenue, they will pursue the most dramatic, "what maintains a certain pose--what separates them from the common herd . . . . The temperament is egotistic--but it is so to speak a generous egotism--they must be loved and admired . . . . A woman's life is not safe in their hands. But part of their charm perhaps is the risk that attends them--the uncertainties, the danger, and the triumphs they have to offer" (Notebooks 47).

Speaking with some Italian friends, Lucy learns that they have little confidence that Manisty will finish his book:

> "Oh! he won't finish it. It's a folly! And I know, for I made him read some of it to me and my sister. No; it is a strange case--is Manisty's. Most Englishmen have two sides to their brain--while we Latins have only one. But Manisty is like a Latin--he has only one. He takes a whim--and then he must cut and carve the world to it. But the world is tough...We can't go to ruin to please him. Italy is not falling to pieces--not at all." (328)

Lucy in her spirited way has confronted Manisty with the effrontery of his coming to Italy, in his words, "to attack a free government and flatter Catholicism." And in answer to her comment that he is not Catholic, and thus his flattery lacks substance, he asks why may not he "claim the rights of the mere aesthetic spectator?" But Lucy responds, "No!--not in religion!--And you are so unjust to Italy" [Box XII, No. 31, from Act I of manuscript of dramatized version]. Lucy, coming from America, cites her sympathy with Italy as a new nation, as her country is. ". . . Liberty matters!" she says.

"Liberty to make fools of ourselves, in short--the great modern panacea," Manisty replies. He is incorrigible about Italy, he insists, and she will have to persuade him about her own country. Manisty often gives the impression that he is playing with the most serious and revered concepts simply as an exercise, and thus he reveals his dilettantish preoccupations.

Manisty's beliefs are debated in Mary Ward's notes when she describes the thoughts of another of Manisty's

acquaintances, the British Ambassador: "Manisty writes of religion with a political conviction. But that is not enough. The feeling, the conscience of mankind find you out. The man who writes of faith, must believe. Religion is too big a [passion] for any man's fame." In contrast is the work of his old friend, "a persecuted old priest," Father Benecke, who is also Manisty's friend.

When the English group meets with their Italian friends and acquaintances, the Italians feel that Manisty has, with the usual foreigner's lack of insight, seen only the turmoil and not the cooperation that underlies the state and Church. The Italians' discussion serves as a dissection of Manisty's work and character. "He sees only the ugly gases and the tumult of the cauldron," says the Marchesa Fazzoleni, who is described as having "all the practical sense of the north and all the subtlety of the south" (330). She offers the idea that everyone should be angry about something but Manisty's time is wasted being angry with too many things.

"His book is a blunder," says another acquaintance, Count Fioravanti, who considers Manisty a "poseur," a description applied to Manisty throughout the novel. He feels that by the time the book comes out, "it will look absurd. He says we have become atheists, because we don't let the priests have their own way" (332).

The elegant neighbor, Madame Variani, comments that northern Europeans can never understand their southern

contemporaries. "It is the same with all you Anglo-Saxons . . . . . You think Catholicism is a tyranny--and we must either let the priests oppress us, or throw everything overboard. But it is nothing of the kind. We take what we want of it, and leave the rest. But you!--if you come over to us, that is another matter. You will have to swallow it all. You must begin even with Adam and Eve!" (333). The sentiment of taking what they want from their religion and not troubling about the rest is repeated later on by the Contessa Guerrini, Eleanor's benefactor during her and Lucy's exile from Manisty at Torre Amiata near Orvieto. The Countess, however, could not apply such a toleration toward Father Benecke, the German priest who figures so importantly in the novel's theological discussions. For to her as a Catholic, he, after his estrangement from the Church, is to be run away from. "A priest that disobeys--that deserts . . . is another matter" (469).

Fioravanti wonders how Eleanor, who is admired by all for her intelligence and sensitivity to the Italian culture, could have allowed his book to be as it is. "She ought to have given the book another direction--and she could . . . . She knows that caricature is not argument" (334). Fiercely protective as Manisty is of his ideas, it is doubtful that he would have permitted Eleanor to influence the direction of his book, even if it meant the difference between success and failure.

Eleanor has carried with her a deep need for Manisty's admiration and approval, but "purged of passion, dignified by secret thoughts and hopes unknown to them," Mary Ward notes that the two "set conventions a good deal at Defiance. She plays at Catholicism. He from his Pagan point of view." (Notebook, Box XII, No. 1). They are odd companions, each filling a need for the other: She to be needed and he for someone to work in his trenches.

"How strange that she and he should be engaged in their work together--this impassioned defense of tradition--of Catholicism and the Papacy as the imperishible and destructive things . . . ." Mary Ward notes in her manuscript. "She, a woman who had at one time ceased to believe because of an unbearable anguish, and was now only creeping slowly back to faith to hope, because -because- Ah! -with a littleshiver, she recalled her thought as a falconer his bird-before it struck."

Father Benecke comes to Manisty on a day when his sister's problems are most acute, and his attention is diverted. It falls to Eleanor to hear him out, and although embarrassed to be alone with her, her kindness and sympathy draw him out. Eventually Manisty returns and sees that Father Benecke's dilemma is a true endangerment of his once basically secure, if potentially tenuous position, and Manisty is confronted by the paradox of his views. Benecke addresses him in his "fine, literary English,"

> of which the very stumbles and occasional naïvetés had a peculiar charm; like the faults which reveal a pure spirit even more plainly than its virtues.
>
> He reached his climax, in a flash of emotion--"My submission, you see--the bare fact of it--left my cause intact. It was the soldier falling by the wall. But my letter must necessarily be misunderstood--my letter betrays the cause. And for that I have no right. You understand? I thought of the Pope--the old man. They told me he was distressed--that the Holy Father had suffered--had lost sleep--through me! So I wrote out of my heart--like a son. And the paper this morning!--See--I have brought it you--the 'Osservatore Romano.' It is insolent--brutal--but not to me!--No, it is all honey to me! But to the truth--to our ideas.--No!--I cannot suffer it. I take it back!--I bear the consequences." (257)

He gives Manisty the letter to read, and Manisty's own ambivalence toward the Church's abuse of authority and the importance of its retaining power is obvious in his response:

> "Yes--you have been abominably treated--no doubt of that. But have you counted the cost? You know my point of view! It's one episode, for me, in a world-wide struggle. Intellectually I am all with you--strategically, all with them. They can't give way! The smallest breach lets in the flood. And then, chaos!"
>
> "But the flood is truth!" said the old man, gazing at Manisty. There was a spot of red on each wasted cheek.
>
> Manisty shrugged his shoulders, then dropped his eyes upon the ground, and sat pondering a while in a moody silence. Eleanor looked at him in some astonishment. It was as though for the first time his habitual paradox hurt him in the wielding--or rather as though he shrank from using what was a conception of the intellect upon the flesh and blood before him. She had never yet seen him visited by a like compunction. (257,258)

The priest seems not to recognize that Manisty is rejecting his argument. "From the beginning he had always instinctively appealed from the pamphleteer to the man," in

spite of Manisty's usual frankness on the subject. The priest had appealed to "some core of thought in the Englishman that it seemed only he divined," and he was so directed and impervious in his train of thought and attitude that Manisty's own "turbid and ambiguous nature" had engendered a mutual admiration, almost like father to son. (258-259).

In Mary Ward's notes for the dramatized version of Eleanor, Manisty and Father Benecke engage in a dialoguethat illuminates Benecke's understanding of Manisty's character. Manisty says that all his life he has been "a person in quest of adventures. If the adventures amuse me, well and good. If not . . . ." And Benecke "(scandalized)" says "You call your political career an adventure?"

Manisty explains that at first he was a traveller and a writer. "My calling took me wherever there was excitement to be got. Life was one long adventure." Once he got to age thirty, he became restless and wanted to try something else."That is your way of putting it," says Father Benecke. "An old-fashioned person like myself would say that your conscience reminded you of your duties" (Notebooks, Box XII, No. 33).

Unfortunately, Eleanor's and Manisty's preoccupation with his sister prevents them from offering any more consolation to Father Benecke in his distress, and he leaves them "in a sad abstraction," with the words, "It will be as

God wills" (259). Eleanor in a moment of sorrow and envy comments that he "suffers from such high things!"

Manisty, realizing that his book will be met with derision, turns to a new pursuit: to persuade Lucy to become his companion. He hopes to enlist Eleanor in currying her favor, but Eleanor, deeply hurt, does a small thing that Manisty would never expect. She takes one of two tiny terra cotta figures that he found near the temple ruin at Nemi and gave to her on their visit there and throws the figure out of the second floor window. It lands in pieces near his feet, for unknown to her, Manisty had been walking in the garden. Not understanding why she would do this, he begins to find the friendship of Lucy and Eleanor threatening to his own plans. He slowly comes to a realization that he meets "with the defiance of new-born passion--with the resolute planning of a man who feels himself obscurely threatened, and realizes that his chief menace lies, not in the power of an outside enemy, but in the very goodness of the woman he loves" (368).

With the complicity of Manisty's Aunt Pattie, who is also part of his entourage, Lucy and Eleanor leave the villa and go into hiding from Manisty. Lucy is the mastermind of this maneuver because she wishes to discourage Manisty's attentions, even though she is attracted to him. Eleanor, whose new resolve is to keep Manisty away from Lucy, is becoming ever more frail, but she proposes that they go to

Orvieto, where Manisty is unlikely to look for them. Eleanor, who has given all to Manisty for his work, now feels her efforts were for naught and has no recourse but to leave. She has written to him to explain that she and Lucy have gone away to travel together for awhile before Lucy returns home. In truth, of course, she still loves Manisty, and she has been jealous of his new feelings for Lucy. She wonders how he has received her letter. "Sometimes she thought of his anger and disappointment with terror, sometimes with a vindictive excitement that poisoned all her being. Gentleness turned to hate and violence--was it of that in truth, and not of that heart mischief to which doctors gave long names, that Eleanor Burgoyne was dying?" (380). The reader has no difficulty accepting this analysis: Eleanor, while for a time reasonably well because she had, so to speak, a will to live--her contribution to Manisty's work--has been in very precarious health all along, and now her illness has returned in force, encouraged surely by her emotional turmoil, but nevertheless genuinely in existence.

Soon after they take up residence near Orvieto, Father Benecke appears, now a "suspended priest," who no longer has friends among his old flock and few sympathizers among the devout local villagers. Lucy is full of anger and pity. "The priest's crushed strength and humiliated age--what a testimony to the power of that tradition for which Mr.

Manisty was working--its unmerciful and tyrannous power!" (422). When he speaks quietly with Eleanor, he explains that after his meeting with her and Manisty he tried to withdraw his letter and critical book.

It is clear that he has been excommunicated, and the devastation to him is beyond any words, for he cannot bear being unable to receive the sacraments. Eleanor understands his grief; she has understood and envied the cravings for sacrifice that the Church demands of its minions. She tries to comfort him, "dwelling on his comradeship with all the martyrs of the world." She feels that he will find people who will help him and give him support, and "as she talked there grew up in her mind an envy of him so passionate, so intense, that she could have thrown herself at his feet there and then opened her own wretched heart to him. He, tortured by the martyrdom of thought, by the loss of Christian fellowship!--She, scorched and consumed by a passion that was perfectly ready to feed itself on the pain and injury of the beloved, or the innocent, as soon as its own selfish satisfaction was denied it." She is embarrassed by her own unworthy struggles in the face of his pain (424).

As if to aid Eleanor in her spritual struggles, Mary Ward has thus provided two characters who are living embodiments of their faiths: Lucy Foster and Father Benecke. Feverish and ill, Eleanor has had to allow Lucy to take charge of their lives, and as a result she harbors

suspicions of Lucy's activities. They never speak of Manisty, but Eleanor nevertheless suspects that Lucy may try to contact him. She soon learns that Lucy is above reproach in all her dealings and is with her to repair whatever damage she feels she may have caused, however unwillingly and unwittingly. She is there to serve Eleanor, and in no way does she succumb to the role of martyr. She is a clear-headed being, genuine in her kindness to the tormented woman.

Father Benecke, gradually finding peace in his surroundings, has discovered that after all his years of careful restraint, during which he had hoped to offend no one, and yet instead had placed himself in great conflict with the Church, out of his "final act of defiance" has come a "marvellous liberation of soul." He will now write his philosophical book anew. Whereas he had once written "like one walking on the burning ploughshares of the ordeal" to avoid saying what could not be said within the bounds of Church dogma, he now felt free to write scientific truth as he knew it. "His temperament was that of the ascetic and visionary religious [man]. His intelligence had much the same acuteness and pliancy as that of another and more pronounced doubter" another South German like himsef, David Friedrich Strauss, author of Das Leben Jesu (436). At the same time, he had never in his ascetic, quiet life been exposed to real friendship with women. "Towards women he

felt, if the truth were known, with that strange unconscious arrogance which is a most real and very primitive element in Catholicism, notwithstanding the worship of Mary and the lories of St. Teresa and St. Catharine" (437).

In the small Italian village Father Benecke finds himself in close contact with Lucy and Eleanor. Lucy's daughterlike friendship with many gentle kindesses brings him considerable joy. Eleanor astonishes him with her knowledge about his own work, as well as about religious and political subjects in his native Germany. Mary Ward interjects that his first reluctance to engage in deep discussion with Eleanor reflects his consciousness of "the male revolt of St. Paul!--'I suffer not a woman to teach'" (438). But ultimately he accepts her suggestion for ways to strengthen his book and present his case to a German journal. Eleanor is again in the intellectual situation she was in with Manisty, as reader, editor, and critic. However, her real interest in Father Benecke is not as the controversial man of letters but as "the priest, the Christian, the ascetic . . . the embodied conscience, the moral judge, who is indifferent to her as a woman, observant of her as a soul" (439) and for whom she is not a "mere woman" but rather a "spirit, and immortal" (440).

Eleanor seeks guidance, tormented as she has been by profound anger and jealousy. The priest presents for her the chance to enter a place of "spiritual independence where she

is the slave, not of man but of God" (440). Father Benecke brings her an article from a German newspaper and his written reply, which he has also sent to Edward Manisty--to Eleanor's shock--who can be reached through his bank. Manisty, who is still in Italy, replies to his letter, showing great sympathy, although retaining his familiar point of view that the Church did not have room in it for one of Father Benecke's liberal philosophy.

"All the same, their answer to you is still as good as ever. The system must either break up or go on. They naturally prefer that it should go on. But if it is worked by men like you, it cannot go on. Their instinct never wavers; and it is a true one" (473). Manisty also makes it clear that he has a current preoccupation aside from politics and philosophy, and he intends to achieve success. Eleanor knows that Manisty refers to finding Lucy. The priest notices her discomfort, although he does not realize its real cause, and he assures Eleanor that he has not told Manisty of her whereabouts. At this moment Eleanor asks him to hear her confession--although she is not a Catholic--as a human being. She seeks direction "from someone accustomed to look at people as they are . . . and to speak the truth to them," for, in this case the fate of three lives may rest in his hands (475). She wonders "how far one may fight--how far one <u>should</u> fight--for one's self," when she seemed to have such a chance for happiness in her life, after years of

unhappiness with someone who seemed really to care for her, and she had lost out to another, whom she had succeeded in spiriting away. The nobleness and goodness of this person have affected her in such a way that her conscience preys upon her. Should she now make amends? she wonders of the priest. He advises her to submit herself to God and cast away her sin of selfish desire.

"All selfish desire is sin--desire that defies God and wills the hurt of man. But you will cast it out. The travail is already begun in you that will form the Christ", he says.

Eleanor responds that "creeds and dogmas mean nothing" to her, and he asks her if religion also means nothing.

"Oh! I am a weak woman . . . . I throw myself on all that promises consolation. When I s ee the nuns from down below pass up and down this road, I often think theirs is the only way out; that the Catholic Church and a convent are perhaps the solution to which I must come--for the little while that remains" (481). In her heart of hearts she thinks in truth it would be difficult to bear their pity. "These Christians are hard--<u>hard</u>" (494).

An escape is what she seeks, in Father Benecke's mind, and to him the path is clear: She is asked to give up her desire, as only the strongest are asked to give up what is dearest to them. "Virtue is the victory of the will over nature," Mary Ward notes in her manuscript (XII.17). Father Benecke's every effort is aimed at convincing Eleanor that

salvation is within her grasp, if only she will reach for it. Eleanor is gracious but not accepting of his counsel because it would wound her too deeply to give Lucy over to Manisty. The priest is moved to reflect, on what he, as a defrocked priest, can offer in the way of guidance and comfort, and he realizes that it is within his power to help.

> What troubled him was this consciousness of the woman, a apart from the penitent, which had overtaken him; the woman with her frail physical health, possibly her terror of death, her broken heart. New perplexities and compunctions, not to be felt within the strong dikes of Catholic practice, rushed upon him as he sat thinking under the falling night. The human fate became more bewildering, more torturing. The clear landscape of Catholic thought upon which he had once looked out was wrapping itself in clouds, falling into new aspects and relations. How marvellous are the chances of human history! The outward ministry had been withdrawn; in its stead this purely spiritual ministry had been offered to him. (484)

Feeling the burden on his mind of the three lives that Eleanor had placed there, his solution is to invite Manisty to visit him without mention of the women's presence in the area and with no word to them that he has done so. When he goes again to see Eleanor, ostensibly to talk about literary matters, she sees him willingly, although she believes that he had been unmoved by her plight and had given her only the "sterotyped answer of the priest and preacher." In spite of her feelings toward his counsel, it is as if they have forged a true bond of friendship. They begin to have deep conversations on a range of controversial religious

subjects, and often he speaks of his own inner spiritual torment.

> She felt herself pursued; felt it with a mixture of fear and attraction. She had asked him to be her director; and then refused his advice. She had tried to persuade him that she was sceptic and unbeliever. But he had not done with her. She divined the ardor of the Christian; perhaps the acuteness of the ecclesiastic. Often she was not strong enough to talk to him, and then he read to her--the books that she allowed him to choose. Through a number of indirect and gradual approaches he laid siege to her, and again and again did she feel her heart fluttering in his grasp, only to draw it back in fear, to stand once more on a bitter unspoken defence of herself that would not yield. Yet he recognized in her the approach of some crisis of feeling. She seemed herself to suspect it, and to be trying to ward it off, in a kind of blind anguish. (496)

The bond that has grown up between Eleanor and Father Benecke is a genuine reconciliation of opposing ideas and views. Patricia Meyer Spacks observes that a hallmark of Mary Ward's novels is that they "try to reconcile opposites" and further that in her effort to reconcile old ideas with new she confronts obstacles.[8] From there it is only a small leap to suggest that these obstacles are what create the tension in her novels. Mary Ward's solution to reconciling opposites and resolving this tension in Eleanor and throughout her novels is through compromise.

Father Benecke, visiting often, is touched by the obvious love between Eleanor and Lucy, and he is uneasy

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[8]"The 'Good Woman' at Work: Mrs. Humphry Ward," presented at the Colloquium on " Women at the Turn of the Century 1880-1910," October 30, 1992, Columbia University.

about the impending arrival of Manisty brought about by his letter, although he has not told Manisty of their presence at Torre Amiata. Lucy finds evidence that Manisty is there, fears that Father Benecke has betrayed Eleanor's wishes, and tells nothing of her discovery to Eleanor. Later walking near his garden wall she hears them speaking and hears Manisty say that he intends to walk around the old convent --where she and Eleanor are staying without his knowledge-- before he leaves. She writes to Father Benecke telling him she knows of Manisty's presence and urging him to ask him to stay away for Eleanor's sake, since she has made it plain that she wishes to see no one. He replies that he has not revealed their presence, but he implores her to see Manisty when he is on his way to the old convent.

Lucy is unsettled by his reply, for "she felt none of that spell in the priestly office which affected Eleanor." She feels that he knows more than he will admit. Knowing of his recent conversations with Eleanor and how she was "still possessed by the same morbid forces of grief and anger which, at the villa, had broken down all her natural reticence and self-control," she is suspicious of his motives. The mere bare notion of being "managed" by this kindly old priest was enough to rouse all her young spirit and defiance" (511). Her feelings are reminiscent of Laura Fountain's at the manipulations of the Catholic priests and nuns who tried to convince her to convert. Unlike Laura,

Lucy has a firm religious foundation that supports her convictions, although she is also intelligent enough to understand finally that "the kindly old priest" means her no harm at all, and is, in fact, respectful of their differences.

It amazes Father Benecke to discover in his new conversations with Manisty that the man's entire point of view regarding Italy's political status has changed because of his lengthy travel around the countryside and away from the cities. Manisty insists his quarrel was never with the country but with the rulers and his interest was in presenting them as a bad example to his enemies in the English Parliament:

> "My point was that Piedmont and the North had been too greedy, had laid hands too rapidly on the South and had risked this damnable quarrel with the Church, without knowing what they were running their heads into. And in consequence they found themselves--in spite of rivers of corrupt expenditure--without men, or money, or credit to work their big new machine with; while the Church was always there, stronger than ever for the grievance they had presented her with, and turned into an enemy with whom it was no longer possible to parley. Well!--that struck me as a good object-lesson. I wanted to say to the secularizing folk everywhere--England included--just come here, and look what your policy comes to, when it's carried out to the bitter end, and not in the gingerly, tinkering fashion you affect at home! Just understand what it means to separate Church from State, to dig a gulf between the religious and the civil life.--Here's a country where nobody can be at once a patriot and a good Christian--where the Catholics don't vote for Parliament, and the State schools teach no religion--where the nation is divided into two vast camps, hating and thrusting at each other

> with every weapon they can tear from life . . . . In your own small degree, are you going to drive England that way too?" (512-514)

Father Benecke understands his intention but offers that in the past he seemed "a little irresponsible," which Manisty admits is a reasonable reaction. He had, after all, no true stake in the outcome for Italy. "But being a Romantic and an artist," he offers that he "sided with the Church," because the government seemed inchoate in comparison to the hierarcy of the Church. In the wake of his travels he sees the arguments as new versions of the ancient disagreements between various tribes, and he sees a modern State emerging in spite of the efforts to thwart it, either by the Church in order to retain control or by the rulers who have not displayed effective leadership.

"The truth of the matter seems to be that Italy is Catholic, because she hasn't faith enough to make a heresy; and anti-clerical, because it is her destiny to be a nation!" (517).

This is a "great recantation" for Manisty, and he admits that it has come about because of his searching about the area for Lucy Foster. He had not come to the Torre Amiata area earlier because he had had no suggestion from the priest that she was there. When he finds her he will know if she returns his feelings, he tells the priest, who is dismayed that Manisty has no word or thought for his cousin except that he knows the two women are together and

no expression of sympathy about her failing health.

The priest, always forgiving Manisty for his overbearing attitude, often felt himself "the shipwrecked sailor sinking in the waves, while Manisty as the cool spectator was hobnobbing with the wreckers on the shore," (602), but their friendship was genuine nevertheless. Father Benecke never doubted Manisty's honor or his talents. "Compared with him, the priest realized profoundly his own meaner, obscurer destiny. The humble servant of a heavenly patria, of an unfathomable truth, is no match for these intellectual soldiers of fortune" (603). At any rate, he makes no judgment, he is accepting, and he has no interest in being in their place.

Father Benecke comes to Eleanor with the news that he has been invited to join a congregation in Germany that has split off from the main Catholic body and also to reveal that Manisty has been staying with him. She realizes that he has not told Manisty of their presence but has brought him there because of her own admonition that he had their three lives in his grasp. Eleanor feels that she must confront Manisty and enlists the priest's assistance. During their ensuing conversation in which he describes the injury to himself and their relatives that her flight caused, he, finally in a flash of perception, understands her true feeling for him. He never realized it, for "he had never taken Eleanor seriously. On the one hand he had thought of

her as intellect, and therefore hardly woman; on the other he had conceived her as too gentle, too sweet, too sensitive to push any thing to extremes"; then Lucy had come, stirring in him "the deepest waters of the soul." From his point of view, Eleanor, having noticed his feeling for Lucy, "had determined that he should still recognize her power and influence upon his life" (551). Once again his ambivalent reaction to life's exigencies rules his response, while remorse and shame overcome him, so does anger that he should be deprived of Lucy because Eleanor misunderstood his attention to her as intention for their own relationship. Eleanor also understands that Lucy has refused him and suggests that he is not worthy of Lucy, that he is "absorbing--despotic--fastidious--a taker, not a giver--and would break her heart in many ways before he knew he had done it." Manisty replies that if he indeed is incapable of love and unworthy, then he knows that Eleanor will give that judgment to Lucy, neutralizing any effort of his to capture her. Eleanor, now sensing at last a spark of sensitivity within him, asks him to stay on while she attempts to repair the damage (559).

> A new and humbled Manisty!--shaken with a supreme longing and fear which seemed to have driven out for the moment all the other elements in his character--those baser, vainer, weaker elements that she knew so well. The change in him was a measure of the smallness of her own past influence upon him; of the infinitude of her own

> self-deception. Her sharp intelligence drew the inference at once, and bade pride accept it. (560-561)

Eleanor, having given up her hold on Manisty, then attempts to intercede on his behalf with Lucy, but Lucy is adamant about continuing to reject him. She is indignant at what she feels has been the priest's meddling, in spite of Eleanor's assurance that perhaps he was afraid she "should die in my sins . . . . He is an apostle--he took the license of one" (565).

The "apostle" now comes to Eleanor to give her comfort, and she tells him of her vision of Christianity, once a forbidding one because of a frightening experience in the church of her childhood relating to the procession of the Cross. "I remember hating Christianity that day; and its influence in the world," she says, but recently the vision came to her again and was no longer fearsome. "And my own soul seemed to be rapt into the procession--the dim and endless procession of all times and nations--and to pass away with it--I knew not where . . . " (607). The priest feels that she has experienced an omen of peace, while she only feels soothed and knows no certainties. They are still opposites, whose reconciliation is through friendship rather than philosophy. He feels that she has the composure and maturity to face "the great uncertainties, the least flattering possibilities of existence," which for him may never exist. However she has come to feel within herself

that she can accept Christ, on her terms, and the priest is inclined to feel that he has been successful in aiding her to do so, in spite of his own doubts about the dogma of the Church. When he had expressed them some years earlier to an eminent theologian, he had been urged, to think less, to seek less after truth, and perhaps to feel more. He was to make the sacrifice of his intellect willingly, and, indeed he had tried to do that.

> What was it which had undone him--which was now strangling the mental and moral life of half Christendom?
>
> Was it the <u>certainty</u> of the Roman Church; that conception of life which stakes the all of life upon the carnal and outward; upon a date, an authorship, a miracle, an event?
>
> Perhaps his own certainty, at bottom, had not been so very different. (611)

He had found in Eleanor, one who did not believe as he did, but who was seeking solace, seeking rest for her soul, an answer to his own doubt and confusion. "But here . . . another certainty; erect amid all confusion; a certainty of the spirit." The strength of her spirit gives strength to him to examine his convictions. He knows that the future will bring a "battle of the certainties, traditional, scientific, moral, ever more defined." For him the victory will be that reason will prevail without loss of faith.Mary Ward included a note in her Notebooks for <u>Eleanor</u> that reveals the ambivalence of thought experienced by Manisty, Eleanor, Lucy, and even Father Benecke.

> What has the independence of our thought to do

> with it? Faith is outside reason, outside experience. (What nonsense: Faith, in the Catholic sense, is a review of historical propositions, all within reason, and within experience). (Box XV)

The latter thought illustrates Manisty's point of view and justifies his position on the side of the Church. It also recognizes that he understands the impact of faith even if he is not influenced by it. The former characterization of faith is Mary Ward's view carried out by Eleanor and by Lucy and by Father Benecke in thought and action. Manisty is not asked to change, but he is ultimately softened by Eleanor's charity toward him. Lucy is affected by Eleanor's sacrifice for her. What is termed "the only selfish action of her life"--her flight to the Italian village with Lucy had become in fact her final sacrifice, with the unlikely result of reconciliation. The end result is that all of them have sacrificed something to achieve reconciliation, albeit, compromise.

In A Writer's Recollections, Mary Ward notes that Henry James wrote to her that he could say nothing about the "deeper things" in her novel, "except that I feel their truth, and am grateful for them." James felt that her creation of "Lucy . . . his countrywoman" was an accomplishment that would "endear" her "to the whole world" (226-227). James had given her a great deal of advice about Eleanor, and in a letter written in 1899 and reproduced in Theory of Fiction: Henry James, he confides a note on presentation that they held in common: "I hold the artist

must (infinitely!) know how he is doing it, or he is not doing it at all. I hold he must have a perception of the interests of his subject that grasps him as in a vise . . . " (157). As Eleanor illustrates, Mary Ward was able to hold her perceptions--especially those concerning the place of religion in the mind and the effect of belief on the soul, as "in a vise" and give them meaning through her novels.

Chapter VII. The Religious and Social Novel: Religion as a Backdrop--Lady Rose's Daughter, The Marriage of William Ashe, The Testing of Diana Mallory

Mary Arnold Ward's religious point of view dominates her most important novels: Robert Elsmere, The History of David Grieve, and Helbeck of Bannisdale, is expressed forcefully, if subtly, in The Story of Bessie Costrell, and is a significant factor in Eleanor. In spite of the suggestion of various critics that she eventually cast off her religious concerns in favor of political and social interests, her continued devotion to compromise in matters of religion is more than evident in her later novels. Study of several shows that her interest never really wavers and, in fact, gives her later work an underlayer of moral principle as substantial as that in her earlier works.

Three novels written after 1900 and before her 1911 sequel to Robert Elsmere, The Case of Richard Meynell, reveal her continuing preoccupation with religious matters and her need to probe the influence of religion on every aspect of life. The novels, Lady Rose's Daughter (1903), The Marriage of William Ashe (1905), and The Testing of Diana Mallory (1908), admirably illustrate this continuing interest in its less dominant role, combined with an intense

preoccupation with English political and social life. In addition, these novels, coming after The Story of Bessie Costrell and Eleanor, give further credence to Mary Ward as an underappreciated moral and psychological novelist.

All three novels involve people who operate at the highest levels of the government. Prime Ministers, Home Secretaries, and other important members of Parliament inhabit the pages, and they are usually titled. In these novels the young women protagonists have come from veiled backgrounds. In each case some kind of scandal, generally handled with discretion, has affected each life.

Julie Le Breton in Lady Rose's Daughter is the child of a woman of highly placed family who left her husband for another man, an atheist writer and scholar. Both parents died when Julie was a child, and she was raised in a convent in Belgium where the family had lived. She was taken in by a family retainer, Madame Le Breton, and used her name when she returned to England to conceal her identity. She is the companion to Lady Henry, a wealthy and self-centered dowager, who insists that Julie remain incognito from her prominent London relatives, especially from her grandfather, Lord Lackington, who has provided some financial support for her for years without ever knowing her identity. But Lady Henry is consumed with jealousy over Julie's popularity in the salon that she runs for her, and she forces her to leave. Julie eventually reunites with her grandfather, who

is astounded to discover that the charming young woman so dynamic and articulate at Lady Henry's soirees is the child of his beloved but disgraced daughter.

Lady Kitty Bristol in The Marriage of William Ashe is the daughter of a woman of cloudy origins, a great beauty of Irish ancestry who was raised in Paris. Her father, the late Lord Blackwater, was also from Ireland. Lady Kitty's mother, still strikingly handsome, is known in the novel as Madame or Comtesse d'Estrées, widow of a French count whom she married after Lord Blackwater's death and resided with in Rome until his death. Lord Blackwater, Kitty's father, had left a pile of debts that caused enough scandal in Paris to require his widow to leave the city. Several times married and a woman of dubious character and relationships, she is a somewhat sinister force in the novel. Lady Kitty is a spirited beauty of enormous charm, although willful and impulsive. As if to coax the reader into comparisons with Eleanor, Mary Ward has included a half-sister for Lady Kitty, the doleful Lady Alice Wensleydale.

This novel achieved a great popular success for Mary Ward because of its insight into the dazzling social life of great politicians and very likely because of its source in the ill-fated marriage of Lord Melbourne and Lady Caroline Lamb, who had a famous romance with Lord Byron. In her notebooks Mary Ward wrote about the "gains and losses" of fictionalizing a well-known story, although she insisted

that Ashe and Lady Kitty "owe only the initial" incident to the real life situation.

> There are dark shadows in the real picture, which romance cannot reproduce. For romance must have charm, must leave room for pity. And if one knew the whole truth about Lady Caroline Lamb, probably disgust would overpower charm...But luckily no one will ever know the whole truth, and in presenting this little whimsical figure [Lady Kitty] to a later generation even the historian may give it the touch of pity which redeems it. (Box 14, Folder C, incomplete ms.)

Despite the genteel objections of his mother, Lady Tranmore, William Ashe, a rising young member of Parliament, marries Kitty. Their life together is not happy, for Kitty who has thoroughly enchanted her husband, allows her impulses to govern her behavior and brings him much turmoil, after he has become Home Secretary in the government. Their son, sickly from birth, dies in early childhood, more or less dooming Kitty's hold on life. In addition, she, inconstant in all her feelings, allows herself to be seduced by the Byronic Geoffrey Cliffe. With her intemperate ways, Kitty is something of a high-class Bessie Costrell, wanton and impulsive but never cruel. William Ashe, however, is no Isaac Costrell, although he will face a similar challenge because of Kitty's indiscretions. He is formally religious as his birthright requires but immensely tolerant of Kitty's excesses.

The protagonist of <u>The Testing of Diana Mallory</u> is the child of another rather odd marriage. Her mother seems to have been a combination of Lady Kitty and Julie Le Breton's

mother: flighty, intemperate, and inconstant. Juliet Sparling falls in with the notorious Sir Francis and Lady Wing, who influence her to gamble away all the money her husband, an archeologist, has left with her while he goes away on a dig. Sir Francis tries to seduce Juliet, who, in a frenzied confrontation with his wife, fatally stabs the woman. This was an infamous case in which Juliet was tried and found guilty. She was defended--with a claim of acting in self-defense--by the eminent Sir James Chide, who later on becomes Diana's champion. Her father changed his name and raised her away from England. Diana, perhaps as a result of the years spent with her father, is a woman of great seriousness. Her companion, Mrs. Colwood, had expected someone she might mother, but instead found a "young Egeria," the Roman muse so significant a symbol in Eleanor, "talking politics with raised color and a throbbing voice, as other girls might talk of loves or chiffon" (13).

Her milieu includes the Secretary of State, John Ferrier, as well as Sir James, and her eventual husband Oliver Marsham, a member of Parliament. Diana has to endure much personal tribulation and grief before her life is resolved, but she is surrounded, as is Julie Le Breton, by a collection of gentlemen of high morality and goodness who insure her ultimate well-being. They bring to mind the great mentors of Mary Ward's youth: Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, Mandell Creighton.

Diana's friend Sir James Chide, is perceived to be modeled after Henry James. Adeline Tintner observes that in this novel Mary Ward reworked the basic plot of James's The Awkward Age--since James enjoyed rewriting and reworking her novels--and "we recognize in Sir James Chide the man who was always chiding her." He was also modeled on Mr. Longdon in the James novel, who "wishes to protect a young woman whom he cherishes because she is the daughter of the only woman he ever loved" (45). In fact, Sir James had known Juliet Wentworth as a young woman and had proposed marriage to her and been refused. Although Henry James and Sir James Chide have Irish lineage--"A face of feeling and of power; the face of a Celt, disciplined by the stress and conflict of a non-Celtic world" (63)--Sir James, however, is in reality quite a distance from Henry James. He is described as "innocent of books," in spite of his great success as a lawyer, and a "simple and devout Catholic" (Ward, Diana Mallory 365). What he has in common apparently is that he is "the best of gossips" (525) and a frequent visitor to country houses. Tintner points out that he is "the supreme witness of all that happens" (45) and suggests that perhaps to make amends for her "liberty" rewriting James's book, The Awkward Age, Mary Ward "makes him a figure of great kindness" as Sir James Chide (46). In addition, she provides him with a title that would clearly have been an honor to Henry James.

These three young woman count among those whom William Peterson labels Mary Ward's "restless" young women characters who evolve like her into "more subtle and intellectually sophisticated people." He feels that she could no longer maintain "that delicate balance between sympathy and condemnation of her aggressive heroines notable in her best novels." But he insists that her characters like Julie and Laura, and even the forceful Marcella, instead of being variations on the new woman of the Victorian period are throwbacks to Charlotte Yonge's heroines "who sinfully reject the customary submissive role of woman." If she punishes and tames them, Peterson asserts, it shows that she has only partially liberated herself because she was torn between a modern and mid-Victorian view (58).

Although much can be made of the punishment meted out to women of whom Mary Ward seems to disapprove, such as Lady Kitty Ashe, Louie Grieve, and Bessie Costrell, it may be relevant to this argument to suggest that Mary Ward would not endorse a submissive role for women. The only character in the three novels discussed in this chapter who might be described as "sinfully rejecting" a submissive role is Kitty Ashe, who takes many liberties with her position and heedlessly causes grief to others. Her successes are achieved by her great beauty and charm and not by her intelligence or advocacy of any higher goal or achievement.

Mary Ward's disapproval of her comes from a feeling that she is unworthy of her station in life. Indeed she is punished for her inconstancy. The other two women strive mightily to overcome adversity, rejection, and disgrace, and they succeed. Mary Ward appears to be proud of their modest achievements, which basically amount to marriage to a right and very successful man, the most respectable option available to women at the time.

Mary Ward was inspired in her depiction of Julie Le Breton from a study by the French critic Sainte Beauve to explore the dramatic possibilities of an eventually hostile situation between an older woman and her younger aide. In her notebook, she wrote that the book should end in tragedy by virtue of "the natural result of Julie's character and temperament . . . the book ought to have closed in storm and darkness."[9] Instead, the book has a happy ending. Julie look forward to a life as helpmate for her husband, Jacob Delafield, who has inherited a dukedom. He is a liberal thinker intent upon reforming labor and landowning policies. He counts upon her assistance, and she, believing in his integrity and goodness, wishes to be his partner. Indeed, Mary Ward presents these people as aspiring to a partnership that will do enormous good. Submission does not enter into this relationship except in the fact that Delafield has the

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[9]Box XIII, notes, introduction to 1911 edition of her writings).

title and the money, which Julie will share with him. Delafield has a "passionate sense of spiritual democracy" (458).

Religious preoccupations for these women can be seen as minor elements in lives that have other preoccupations and that Mary Ward wishes to present with a different emphasis. Janet Trevelyan observed in her biography that Lady Rose's Daughter won acclaim as the book in which "at last the writer showed the predominance of the artistic over the ethical instinct, the subordination of the didactic to the artistic impulse" (179), perhaps the laying aside of the "crutch" of religious controversy as Margaret L. Woods puts it (155). However, there is ample evidence in these novels that what is actually taking place is a transposition from one key to another, in reality a movement from a major to a minor key--still vital and important, but more subdued. In 1884, years before Mary Ward wrote most of her novels and was beginning work on Robert Elsmere, she contributed an essay, "Recent Fiction in England and France," in which she discussed what she saw as a corruption of literature through a disrespect for art and beauty and a failure by writers to understand the importance of the literary art in healing and inspiring and in bringing "the lower realities of the world into contact with the higher, to interfuse personality with fact, and spirit with matter" (258).

She theorized in 1884 that the influence of religion

had diminished for many people and that its place would be taken by the arts. "For many of us those needs which are fed by poetry, and art, and religion, will depend more and more for their satisfaction, as the direct influence of religion declines, upon poetry and the different arts of representation." Religion was for most of the past, she wrote, "the accepted interpreter" for all the needs that "once cheered and stirred the soul," and she hoped that the arts to which many now turned for hope and meaning in existence would strive to seek the highest level of expression that she felt had been achieved by way of religion (258).

That she went on to write novels imbued with religious interest and discussion is not a contradiction of her interest in art and beauty, which she always expressed in the descriptions of landscapes, art works, and music that fill the novels. Nor is her deemphasis on religion in some of her later novels a repudiation of its importance to her intellectually and emotionally. She was exploring new themes and using her considerable knowledge in making them valid.

Julie Le Breton, who has been raised Catholic, but has lapsed away from the Church, sees the world with less than a religious eye, but she is, nevertheless, a practiced observer of the Anglican world around her. She finds "Anglican pietism so well-fed, so narrowly sheltered" that it "measured the universe with its foot-rule," and "seemed

to her quasi-Catholic eye merely fatuous and hypercritical. It is not by such forces, she thought, that the true world of men and women is governed" (343). The "true world," she finds out, is governed by honor and steadfastness. These qualities are represented by Jacob Delafield, whom she marries after months of indecision and anxiety over another love affair. His own strong religious background powers his life in the most positive ways, but he is no "plaster saint" she realizes; he is often questioning his own actions, his own rebelliousness, his own occasional doubts at the efficacy of his religious faith when he sees the destruction of good people. The kind of life she is to have with him is new to her, and when she thinks what the course will be for her, she does not travel on any of the "religious paths so familiar to his." Neverthless, "her reverie was so far religious that her mind seemed to herself to be quivering under the onset of affections, emotions, awes, till now unknown, and that looking back, she was conscious of a groping sense of significance, of purpose, in all that had befallen her" (479-80).

The path her life will take is not influenced by obvious religious meditation, as it was for Eleanor Burgoyne, but it is an enormously redeeming path, and it seems possible to suggest that Mary Ward purposely infused this novel with a religious sense, just as she had done so often before.

Kitty Bristol, on the other hand, does not feel this sense of religion, but, like Eleanor Burgoyne, she is a seeker after something. She, too, has had a Catholic upbringing, although it apparently was a careless one. She is, at least superficially, an Anglican as William Ashe is, but she generally rejects introspective thought. Perhaps she could try to be a Catholic again, she thinks at one point, except that William Ashe's own religous connection is too strong for that association. She is not contemptuous of the Anglican hierarchy, but she occasionally pokes fun at the superior attitudes of some of the devoted church members, including the wife of the Prime Minister, Lord Parham. The Church Dean, Dr. Winston, who enjoys her company and tries to probe her thoughts, knows that he is ministering unsuccessfully to a troubled soul. They have a conversation in which he has asked if she ever is alone and reads a book, and she replies that she has just finished Renan's Vie de Jesus. Audacious as that seems to the Dean, she insists it is the truth, and the Dean urges her not to read "any more Renan!"

> Kitty looked at him curiously.
> "I prefer to see things as they are."
> The Dean sighed.
> "That none of us can do, my dear Lady Kitty. No one can satisfy his intelligence. But religion speaks to the will--and it is the only thing between us and the void. Don't tamper with it! It is soon gone."
> A satirical expression passed over the face of his companion.
> "Mine was gone before we had been a month married. William killed it."

> The Dean exclaimed:
> "I hear always of his interest in religious matters!"
> "He cares for nothing so much--and he doesn't believe one single word of anything! I was brought up in a convent, you know--but William laughed it all out of me . . . . And now, of course, I know there's nothing in it." (335)

Later on, after she has gone to Italy with William to recover from her child's death, quite by accident Kitty meets her half-sister, Lady Alice Wensleydale, near a church in Venice. Alice is caring for two orphans at her lace-making school in Treviso nearby. She, who has hated Kitty's mother, has kindly feelings toward her half-sister and urges her to contact her if she is ever in trouble. Kitty asks, "Are you a Catholic?" When Alice answers that she is, Kitty responds with "Wish I was!" (389).

Her child had been born with a deformed foot, which she takes as evidence of God's punishment. ". . . I knew that he hated me still. He had burned his mark into my baby's flesh. And I was never to be quite happy again, but always in fear, fear of pain--and death--and grief" (195). When she tells her husband of her old fears coming back to haunt her, she feels that she is being punished by God:

> "That first year I had been so happy . . . . Everything was so perfect, so glorious. Life was like a great pageant, in a palace. All the old terrors went. I often had fears as a child--fears I couldn't put into words, but that overshadowed me . . . . I thought God was reconciled to me, and would always be kinder to me now." (195)

Her husband treats her with great tenderness. Mary Ward makes clear that he cannot be faulted for Kitty's own dark

feelings. Her depression and her misery are as real as those of Louie Grieve, whom she resembles in many ways. Although her path in life has been so much more fortunate than Louie's, she also makes unfortunate choices, publishing a silly book that reveals too much about the political and social lives of her husband's colleagues and offends everyone and running off to the Balkans with Cliffe and his romantic notions of fighting a war with beleagured people. She becomes very ill, and the Dean, reminiscent of Father Benecke in Eleanor, observes to William Ashe, "If ever there was a terrible case of the dealings of God with the human soul..." (519) and he reminds Ashe that he is obligated by his marriage vows to protect her still.

"That obligation--has been cancelled--by the laws of your own Christian faith, no less than by the ordinary laws of society," Ashe tells the Dean, who responds that he cannot see it that way, it is only men's hard hearts that say so. "But the divine pity which transformed men's idea of marriage could never have meant to lay it down that in marriage alone there was to be no forgiveness" (524). Here is the stark reminder of Isaac Costrell and his unforgiving nature.

Ashe is bewildered, for he has always done the right thing by everyone. "Why should we talk of forgiveness? It is not a word that I much understand, or that means much to men of my type and generation" (525). He has suffered much

embarrassment and hurt, especially because Kitty left him so abruptly, of "her own free will." The Dean has felt that Ashe, as a noble being "would not treat the wrong done him as other men might treat it...he would be able to handle it with an ethical originality, to separate himself in dealing with it from the mere weight of social tradition" (528). Ashe and his mother, Lady Tranmore, cannot see it the Dean's way. He is her old friend, and she tells him that he sees their situation differently because he is "the soul of goodness" (529), and, indeed, the "Dean's heart leaped up in the typical Christian challenge to the fatal and the irrevocable. While life lasts the lost sheep can always be sought and found . . ." (529). His words cannot move them, but he acts decisively by going to Venice to find Kitty, whose health is gone. Cliffe has been found murdered, and the news breaks Kitty completely.

Kitty asks the Dean if she had been forgiven by her husband and mother-in-law, and he cannot reply affirmatively, except to speak of William's kindness and generosity. The Dean assures her that "God forgives--and with Him there is always hope, and fresh beginning." But Kitty is not certain that the Dean can really know the depths of her anguish. The Dean, however, perseveres. "But he was a Christian, on his Master's business. He must obey orders, even though he could feel no satisfaction, or belief in himself--though he seem to himself such a shallow and

perfunctory person" (534-535). Eventually, his tender attempts to soothe Kitty have some calming effect upon her. Neither have the Dean's efforts for William Ashe been in vein, for he is moved to ponder his own beliefs:

> The Christian, no doubt, would say that his married life had failed because God had been absent from it, because there had been in it no consciousness of higher law, of compelling grace.
>
> Ashe pondered what such things might mean. "The Christian--in speculative belief--fails under the challenge of life as often as other men. Surely it depends on something infinitely more primitive and fundamental than Christianity?--something out of which Christianity itself springs? But this something--does it really exist--or am I only cheating myself by fancying it? Is it, as all the sages have said, the pursuit of some eternal good, the identification of the self with it--the 'dying to live'? And is this the real meaning at the heart of Christianity?--at the heart of all religion?--the everlasting meaning, let science play what havoc it please with outward forms and statements?"
>
> Had he, perhaps, <u>doubted the soul?</u> . . . And he trampled on his own thoughts--feeling them a mere hypocrisy and offence. (545-46)

Ashe in the end finds the forgiveness that was unavailable to Isaac Costrell.

Margaret Woods commented that "In drawing her sad inevitable end, Mrs. Ward sounded a deeper note of feeling than in any of her other books, except perhaps 'Helbeck of Bannisdale,' and she found <u>The Marriage of Willam Ashe</u> a work of stronger imagination, a more delicate and perfect work of art" (156). Perhaps more so than in <u>Helbeck of Bannisdale</u>, Mary Ward is able to probe deeply into a religious psyche, namely that of William Ashe, with the result that he is able to act on his feelings and behave in

what she believes to be a Christian spirit, the honest and tolerant spirit that she herself expressed in her essays.

This spirit is carried on in Diana Mallory, who has both a deep desire to be part of the England she never knew as a child and a longing for tradition. In her notes for the Introduction to the 1910 edition of The Testing of Diana Mallory, Mary Ward writes that the novel was suggested by a true story whose origins she no longer recognized. She describes Diana as the "instructive Conservative among women" as a contrast to her Marcella, "the instructive Liberal." The real contrast is within Diana herself, for Mary Ward's intention is to convey the contrast between her

> unconscious, unreasoned acceptance of the older tradition and standards of English life, of her . . . conception of the woman as the sheltered ministering being, loving without any thought of self, and gladly submitting to the protection of the man she loves and her real and tragic position are nakedly marked out from other women, by the inheritance of a criminal ancestry, and deserted by her lover because of a background for which she had no responsibility. (Box 14, Folder d)

Mary Ward, by presenting a character who is admirable in every aspect of her life, except that aspect she could not control--her ancestry--reveals once again, as she had in Eleanor, the haunting aspect of Greek drama. Janet Trevelyan comments in her biography that Mary and Humphry Ward read Greek literature together, especially drama. Humphry Ward was a scholar in the subject. Treveylan notes that the opening chapter of The Testing of Diana Mallory, with its invocation of Diana's noble regard for family and country

and her sense of responsibility, show the "influence which Greek tragedy had obtained upon her thought" (248). Another element Mary Ward suggests in this novel as she did so strongly in Eleanor, according to Patrica Meyer Spacks, is that there is always some aspect in a woman's life to hold her back. Spacks, in her Columbia lecture, pointed out that Eleanor "exemplifies the height of possibilities that were hinted at in Robert Elsmere and Helbeck of Bannisdale" and expresses Mary Ward's "fantasy about fulfilling nature through the world of ideas." But Eleanor, Spacks feels, makes a "bleak comment on the fantasy that women can have it both ways." She further noted that Mary Ward knew of the "conflict women face" and is "quite remarkably realistic in view of what is needed" under all her rhetoric and sentiment. Eleanor lost out to youth, but a man's lack of integrity was the culprit in that case. In The Testing of Diana Mallory, the culprit is the man's lack of loyalty when confronted with her past. Oliver Marsham breaks his engagement to Diana and soon becomes engaged to someone else. But that "compelling fate" so attractively used in some other novels surfaces in this novel when Marsham, a politician, is struck by a rock thrown by one of the rioters at a demonstration, and he becomes gravely injured. The new fiancee dumps him unceremoniously because his prognosis is grim, and the kindly Diana returns to him. With her help he begins to make a recovery.

Before she can offer assistance of this sort to anyone, Diana has to make peace with the conflicts in her life. She does so under the wing of her friend Sir James Chide. She travels to Assisi, and she is entranced by the place where "the noblest legend of Catholicism finds its loveliest expression" (340).

> For in Diana's heart this new language of the spirit which is the child of the old was already strong, speaking through the vague feelings and emotions which held her spellbound. What matter the garment of dogma and story?--the raiment of pleaded fact, which for the modern is no fact? In Diana, as in hundreds and thousands of her fellows, it had become--unconsciously--without the torment and struggle of an older generation--Poetry and Idea; and all the more invincible thereby. (340-41)

This is a variation, perhaps, of Mary Ward's idea of 1884 that poetry and the arts would take the religion and an echoing of her Uncle Matthew's view, expressed in Last Essays, as noted earlier, that religion, particularly Catholic religion, would "survive in poetry" (162).

Again in Italy, as in Eleanor, the survival and importance of the Catholic Church is debated. Sir James and the politician John Ferrier engage in a discussion with an Italian poet who marvels that the lack of faith that existed merely ten years before has been replaced by a new surge of interest.

> . . . a moribund organization, poisoned by a dead philosophy . . . negation, license, weariness--a dumb thirst for men knew not what. And now!--if St. Francis were here . . . he wuld hear preached again, in the language of a new day, his own

> religion of love, humility, and poverty. The new faith springs from the very heart of Catholicism, banned and persecuted as new faiths have always been; but every day it lives, it spreads! Knowledge and science walk hand and hand with it . . . . the future is before it. (357)

Ferrier and Diana, walking later on, discuss the poet's prophecy, and Ferrier describes his letter that day from another Italian writer saying that the nation's soul is dead and all its enthusiasms gone, including religion. He asks Diana which of these contradictory views she will believe, and she, echoing Mary Ward's humanistic outlook, responds, "The poet!" However, Mary Ward disclaims that this was "no cry of triumphant faith. It was the typical cry of our generation before the closed door that openeth not" (357).

Diana gropes for some kind of faith. She is helped by Sir James's religion, "which was sincere" and "enabled him to understand her; his affection, his infinite delicacy of feeling" (545).

> During this time Sir James Chide watched the development of a situation he had not been able to change with a strange mixture of revolt and sympathy. Sometimes he looked beyond the tragedy which he thought inevitable to a recovered and normal life for Diana; sometimes he felt a dismal certainty that when Oliver had left her, that recovered life could only shape itself to ascetic and self-renouncing ends. Had she belonged to his own church, she would no doubt have become a "religious"; and he would have felt it the natural solution. Outside the Catholic Church, the same need takes shape--he thought--in forms less suited to a woman's weakness, less conducive to her dignity. (544)

Sir James all along has "resented the sacrifice of a

being so noble, true, and tender to a love, in his eyes, so unfitting and derogatory" (544). Yet he realizes, because he was the person who aided her mother, that her devotion has a connection to her mother's fate, some mysterious influence comes from that--"from the agony, the sin, the last tremulous hope, and piteous submission of Juliet Sparling" that the "tortured happiness" that Diana has obtained has in it "some sustaining or consoling element that nothing more normal or more earthly would have brought her." Observing her, Sir James "guessed at spiritual currents and forces linking the dead with the living, and at a soul heroically calm among them, sending forth rays into the darkness" (545). Diana is strengthened, and when she goes back to Marsham, after he has attempted to compensate for his earlier rejection of her, she is able to care for him and to give him strength.

Faith and hope--the sustaining religious elements in the background of these novels--emerge at the end to provide feeling and edification and a beautiful elaboration of Mary Ward's philosophy.

In several other novels, Mary Ward has incorporated small incidents in which sincere practitioners of religion either carry out good works by healing desperate situations or create disharmony through their actions. In The Coryston Family (1913), a novel about a family immersed in political life, a small but significant incident of religious bigotry

affects the careers of all the characters, and in Lady Connie (1916), a novel of manners somewhat suggestive of Jane Austen's work, a clash between good and evil motives finds the good motives ultimately winning out. A wastrel's life is redeemed after his casual misconduct has mortally injured another man. In this, as in her other novels, Mary Ward's situations are never drawn casually. All these situations link up in one way or another to the greater theme of ethics and spirituality that she found to be truly religious.

Conclusion

Mary Ward's works offer much in the way of insight into the Victorian spiritual mind. In her novels she argued that compromise was an answer to the late nineteenth century's great conflict: faith and doubt. She began her exploration of this conflict through her nonfiction writings of essays and pamphlets, moving on rather quickly into fiction. She continued to write essays, articles, and critical reviews throughout her career, and her expertise was confined not only to religion, although religion continued to be of vast interest to her and proved to be the source from which she drew many of her ideas. Her interest in, discussions of, and innovative explorations of religious subjects have been the focus of this study.

Mary Ward wrote her novels in order to come to grips with the crisis of faith and doubt that was a significant feature of Victorian religious life. A liberal religionist herself, she began to examine this crisis by way of lectures and essays and later moved on to the novel because of the freedom that literary form allows. She came to view Christianity as a "literary" problem to be analyzed in the manner of literary text, and her first efforts were through nonfiction. Thus, a fruitful discussion of her works on

religious themes gains much from a grounding in her nonfiction works, especially in the pamphlet "Unbelief and Sin." Ideas set forth in this essay are elaborated on in her first acclaimed novel, Robert Elsmere. After the success of that novel, she went on to write others and gained status as an authority on religious matters to such a degree that she was invited to give lectures and contribute essays to prominent publications. Her essays and her translations of and writings on Amiel's Journal Intime are significant because these works serve as a gateway to understanding her other religious and philosophical writings. They lead to better understanding of the ideas Mary Ward presented in the novels, especially her deeply felt view of Christianity as a literary problem.

Her works reflect the many significant influences on her life that motivated her views and led to this prodigious outpouring. Through the influence of many people, notably Bejamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, Walter Pater, her uncle, Matthew Arnold, and her father, Thomas Arnold, she was able to articulate her views, integrating all she had learned from these illustrious and learned people. She was endowed with an open mind that was nurtured by a liberal religious background. Her concerns were grave and serious, and her deep interest was in defining religion for herself and for her readers, generally as a positive force for human good.

This study has attempted to honor Mary Arnold Ward as a

significant novelist and thinker of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and one who has made a major contribution through her belief in compromise and her sincere presentation of liberal religious convictions faithfully articulated in a time of confusion and turmoil.

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