The Nineteenth-Century British and American Novel and the Reputation of Calvinism

by

Rachel Bodnariuc

Master of Arts, Simon Fraser University, 2020
Bachelor of Arts, University of the Fraser Valley, 2018

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the
Department of English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

© Rachel Bodnariuc 2024
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2024

Copyright in this work is held by the author. Please ensure that any reproduction
or re-use is done in accordance with the relevant national copyright legislation.

Declaration of Committee

Name:	**Rachel Bodnariuc**
Degree:	**Doctor of Philosophy**
Title:	**The Nineteenth-Century British and American Novel and the Reputation of Calvinism**
Committee:	**Chair: Matthew Hussey** Associate Professor, English
	Michael Everton Supervisor Associate Professor, English
	Margaret Linley Committee Member Associate Professor, English
	Mark Knight Committee Member Associate Professor, English Lancaster University
	Luke Clossey Examiner Professor, History
	Charles LaPorte External Examiner Professor, English University of Washington

Abstract

This dissertation examines the representation of Calvinism in nineteenth-century British and American fiction, specifically novels by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charlotte Brontë, George MacDonald, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. These novelists often perpetuate the nineteenth-century popular characterization of Calvinism and Calvinists as severe and oppressive. Criticism largely replicates this language, so that the perception of Calvinism as a negative phenomenon is a critical commonplace. This dissertation challenges the critical tendency to pay inadequate attention to how the works of these novelists express ambivalence toward rather than wholesale condemnation of Calvinism. Through theologically attuned readings, it resists deprioritizing and simplifying literary engagements with religion and theology and demonstrates that fiction is a unique medium for the exploration and formation of religious and theological ideas. The opening chapter suggests that criticism aligns Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* (1859) with what it sees as the theological sympathies of sentimental fiction while overlooking how the novel simultaneously resists such categorization, namely by not taking the tone of dismissal toward Calvinism that defines much sentimental fiction. Chapter Two analyzes the representation of the Calvinist St. John Rivers in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), with special attention to Jane's discursive privilege as first-person narrator. It presents the possibility that a critical assent to the secularization narrative would have readers see *Jane Eyre* as more sophisticated – i.e., less naïve about religion – the more we read it as moving away from Calvinism. Chapter Three decenters the narratorial polemical preaching with which George MacDonald's realist novels condemn Calvinism. It argues not only that MacDonald's realist fiction, especially *Robert Falconer* (1868), accomplishes a theological fulsomeness more characteristic of MacDonald's religious vision and methodology as represented in his broader theological and literary corpus but that realism is able and suited to representing the complexity of theology and religious experience. The final chapter argues that Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) lacks aesthetic coherence as a Gothic text partly because it holds the trademark religious terror of Gothic fiction in abeyance with a sense of hopefulness. While this hopefulness conflicts with the Gothic, it does not conflict, as some criticism assumes, with Calvinism.

Keywords: Novel; religion; postsecular; sentimentalism; realism; Gothic

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and for the various fellowships and grants provided by Simon Fraser University.

My deep and heartfelt thanks to my committee: to my supervisor, Michael Everton, whose outpouring of insight was an enormous encouragement; to Margaret Linley, whose sharp readings pushed me outside my comfort zone; and to Mark Knight, whose expertise was invaluable. I thank all three committee members for their support and care. Thank you also to my examiners, Luke Clossey and Charles LaPorte, for your enthusiasm and thoughtfulness.

I owe thanks to a number of friends and colleagues, especially to Jaron and Dana, for rooting for me and being wonderful parent-friends; Dylan, for talking theology with me; and Rebekah, for understanding the fraught-ness. A big thanks to my UFV community for supporting me from my undergraduate years onward.

I could not have completed this dissertation without my family. Thank you, Alex, for your strength, and for all those weekends. Thank you, mom, for your generous childcare and for sustaining me (literally) with your ciorbă de perişoare and schnitzel. Thank you, Isaac, for being the joy of my heart.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee ii
Abstract iii
Acknowledgements v
Table of Contents vi

Introduction 1
A Postsecular Approach to the Nineteenth Century 3
Censures of Calvinism: The Perpetuation of a Literary Commonplace 11
Varieties of Calvinism 20
Project Overview 25

Chapter 1. Calvinism and Sentimentalism in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*: A Reassessment 29
Calvinism and Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America 32
Sentimental Piety and *The Minister's Wooing* 45
The Minister's Wooing and Critical (Mis)representations of Calvinism 59
Conclusion 64

Chapter 2. Calvinism and Discursive Privilege in *Jane Eyre* 66
Calvinism, Romanticism, and the Brontës 68
Jane Eyre's Narrative Voice 72
St. John in his Own Words 78
Jane Eyre's Religious Vision 82
Conclusion 89

Chapter 3. The Theological Work of George MacDonald's Realist Novels 91
Growing up Calvinist 93
MacDonald as Preacher-Novelist 100
The Sermon and the Realist Novel 105
Disjunctions: Polemical Preaching, MacDonald's Religious Vision, and Realism 115

Chapter 4. The Gothic, *The Marble Faun*, and *Felix Culpa* 124
Hawthorne's Calvinism: Sympathies and Antipathies 125
Hawthorne, the Gothic, and Theology 129
Felix Culpa and *The Marble Faun* 139
Conclusion: A Word on Tragedy 149

Works Cited 153

Introduction

Nineteenth-century British and American novels often vilify Calvinists. They also often condemn what we consider trademark Calvinist doctrines, like particularly schematized views of personal election and predestination. Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822) is one such novel. A Calvinist turned Unitarian, Sedgwick wrote *A New-England Tale* in the wake of her denominational shift. The narrative centers on Jane Elton, an orphaned merchant's daughter, whose spiritual journey is marked by trials instigated mostly by her stern and intimidating Calvinist Aunt Wilson. Mrs. Wilson's Calvinism functions as one of the primary sources of conflict within the narrative, partly because Jane continually resists subscribing to Calvinism's tenets. A secondary plot line sees Mrs. Wilson's son, David, blame his extensive wrongdoings on being brought up Calvinist. The narrator repeatedly criticizes Mrs. Wilson for being a self-righteous, deluded hypocrite, and for morally harming her son by instilling in him too rigorously the doctrine of total depravity. Ultimately, the narrative, through Jane and the narrator, insinuates that there is a causal relationship between Calvinism and David's immoral behavior. Calvinism, thus represented, is not simply an erroneous theological system; its influence can cause harm to one's self and to others.

Other novels similarly represent Calvinism and Calvinists. In Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* (1862), protagonist Cassandra Morgeson characterizes her Puritan grandfather Warren as lacking "gentleness [and] tenderness" (28) and describes her visits to him as punishment. In Anthony Trollope's *Linda Tressel* (1865), the heroine Linda grows increasingly troubled and more convinced that she is "one of the non-elect" and struggles to believe that God loves her, especially since her strict and harsh Calvinist aunt pronounces her a "castaway" (168). In Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), a social novel set in 1811-12, Calvinism is a source of religious melancholy for the heroine Caroline Helstone: "At moments she was a Calvinist, and, sinking into the gulf of religious despair, she saw darkening over her the doom of reprobation" (263). In E. T. Disosway's *South Meadows* (1874), set in seventeenth-century New England, Ida the protagonist reflects of Puritanism: "no flowers and blossoms dare to spring up under its

gloomy shadow" (100). Emerging from many nineteenth-century novels is a representation of Calvinists as hypocritical and severe, and a representation of Calvinism as a psychologically, spiritually, and morally harmful and oppressive theological system.

Yet, while many novels condemn Calvinism, some represent Calvinism and Calvinists with less censure and greater dimensionality, often by treating Calvinists with both sympathy and antipathy. This dissertation close reads four fictional engagements with Calvinism: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* (1859), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), George MacDonald's realist fiction, particularly *Robert Falconer* (1868), and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860). It interrogates what these novels are specifically criticizing about Calvinism, and how and why, as well as what they are not criticizing about Calvinism. Criticism recognizes that Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's novels represent Calvinism negatively. My dissertation challenges the critical tendency to pay inadequate attention to these novels' ambivalent and at times even positive depictions of Calvinism. This is not to minimize the pervasive anti-Calvinist elements in these works, but to suggest that we only have half the story if we do not see the ways anti-Calvinist elements mesh, often paradoxically, with the positive encoded Calvinist discourse within these same texts. The one-sided approach to Calvinism in critical scholarship is in part symptomatic of criticism's tendency to deprioritize and simplify literary engagements with theology. Even allowing for the fact that, as discussed below, this tendency is less common than it once was, Calvinism too often remains underexplored territory, in part because scholarship still tends to assume that it is a negative phenomenon.

By analyzing and theologically contextualizing fictional representations of Calvinism, this dissertation demonstrates that to understand the specifics of Calvinism is to better understand the tone and tenor of the theological questions, themes, and discourses within the works of Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne. It also argues that the conventions of the novel form affect Calvinism's representation. In other words, through explicit consideration of the formal features of Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's novels, this dissertation makes the case that certain literary modes uniquely represent Calvinism. The specific novels this dissertation engages with allow for the

exploration of various literary modes: sentimentalism in the case of *The Minister's Wooing*, fictional autobiography in *Jane Eyre*, realism in *Robert Falconer*, and the Gothic tradition in *The Marble Faun*.

A Postsecular Approach to the Nineteenth Century

The postsecular literary framework with which this dissertation understands nineteenth-century literary Calvinism articulates, in part, the growing academic unease and dissatisfaction with the secularization thesis. The secularization thesis holds that "religious institutions, beliefs, and practices decline with modernity" (Branch, "Postsecular" 93) and describes an older attitude toward and an older story about the secular – what Talal Asad labels a triumphalist narrative, as in "the triumphalist history of the secular" (25), which sees religion as a power from which "human life gradually emancipates itself" (191). Michael Kaufmann expands on this story of secularization, suggesting that it "narrates a triumph of empiricism over superstition, reason over faith, and the emancipation of all spheres – science, knowledge, the market, the state – from the oppressive and authoritarian 'yoke' of religion'" (607). In Tracy Fessenden's words: "In its various iterations and emphases, the secularization narrative moves always in the direction of freedom, experimentation, and progress, with each step forward an implicit moral, political, and intellectual advance over the corresponding limitations ascribed to religion" (155). Asad, Kaufmann, Fessenden, and a growing number of scholars interrogate this account of secularization, noting that we cannot assume the decline of religion, and offering correctives which question secularism's claim to "epistemic, affective, and moral-political supremacy" (Ni 51). In casting what Lori Branch calls a "critical gaze" ("Postsecular" 94) upon secularism, scholars resist the naturalization of secularism, meaning the belief that "the secular is simply the real world seen aright in its self-evident factuality" (613) or a "neutral view from nowhere" (Kaufmann 622). Religion does not "fall away to reveal a secular substrate" (Coleman, *Preaching* 22), and secularism does not escape "ideology" (Branch 95). We can no longer conceive the secular as "a default position, a modus operandi, or a reliable account of the way things simply are" (Fessenden 155). The secular is not just the way things are. Rather, it is a construct and a narrative.

Secularization, argues Charles Taylor, in what is one of its best-known iterations among postsecular scholars, is not a subtraction story. It too is a take on the world. A subtraction story would have us understand modernity as a story in which humans have "sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge" to reveal the "underlying features of human nature which were there all along" (22). Instead, Taylor understands modernity as "the fruit of new inventions [and] newly constructed self-understandings and related practices" (22).[1] "For Taylor," writes Charles LaPorte, "the components of modernity sometimes do erode faith and also provide anchors for alternative points of view, yet these new views then exist in tension with more traditional ones and evolve together with them" (281). The religious and the secular cannot be disentangled. Indeed, one of the central claims of postsecular studies is that the religious/secular binary is too simplistic to capture the spectrum of religious and secular meanings and formations.

The religious turn, beginning roughly in the 1990s, saw a mass of scholarship reacting against the secularization thesis and the critical de-prioritization of the study of religious subject matter, forms, and themes in literature. This scholarship resists what Branch describes as the "reflex secularism that plagues post-1960s critical theory" ("Postcritical" 162). Jenny Franchot, writing in 1995 and referring to the humanities more broadly, states that there is widespread uninterest in "taking religious questions of the topic at hand as religious questions" ("Invisible" 839). In the twenty-first century, the influence of the secularization thesis lingers, prompting scholars to articulate the ways in which scholarly indifference and/or hostility toward religion manifests. Luke Clossey et al. write of "Dogmatic Secularism," historiography's tacit or stated denial of the supernatural and/or supernatural beings. Mark Knight suggests that "literary scholars often end up marginalizing the importance of religion, failing to see its complexity and/or

[1] The terms "secular," "secularization," and "secularity" have a range of definitions in criticism. For Taylor, living in our secular age means that we have moved away from a state wherein not believing in God is nearly impossible, to a state wherein believing in God is one option among many. See also Michael Warner's entry for "Secularism" in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (2007) for a comprehensive history of the term.

translating theology into a critical language (gender, race, economics, etc.) with which they are more familiar" (*Good* 4). Dawn Coleman observes "the implicit secularism of the humanities" (*Preaching* 4) and "the general academic perception of religion as naïve" (5).[2] Fessenden shares Coleman's perspective: "The sense that the 'religious turn,' for those who do pursue it, marks the bold trespass of a tacit ban speaks to the enduring hold of the secularization narrative on American literary studies" (154) and its hold on literary studies more generally. To take one more example, LaPorte observes that literary criticism tends to represent nineteenth-century "churchgoing" (280) women novelists as representative of an outdated piety, suggesting further that the more subversive and radical we deem novelists and their texts, the more likely we are to consider them and their work as undergoing a sophisticated and "modern" exploration of religion. "A freethinking male novelist like Thomas Hardy becomes representative of his age," notes LaPorte, "while a churchgoing female one like Charlotte Yonge becomes a throwback" (280). Criticism, in other words, pays more attention to a writer, usually but not always male, with a "doubt-filled" (280) literary corpus. The religious turn sees scholars resist reading religion as a solely negative or increasingly obsolete phenomenon, or as compelling insofar as opportunities arise to highlight what is typically understood as religion's unorthodox or progressive elements. It also sees scholars examine criticism's unreflexivity regarding the religious and the secular and the adverse influence of this unreflexivity on the discipline of English.

The nineteenth century holds a unique position in narratives of secularization. Charles Taylor and others argue that since around the time of the Reformation people have become increasingly less religious or less traditionally religious, with

---

[2] For more on academic skepticism of and condescension toward religion, see also historian Lucy Cory Allen, who provides an assessment of the recent calls to improve methodologies as they pertain to the study of religion and belief.

disenchantment and skepticism accelerating in the nineteenth century.[3] One thinks of the misnomer for the Victorian period as an "age of doubt."[4] The nineteenth century was indeed characterized by a number of intellectual shifts that threw doubt on certain religious institutions, beliefs, and forms of faith. "By the middle of the nineteenth century," as Norman Vance notes, "Enlightenment and rationalist scepticism, particularly about miracle-narratives, was reinforced by a more rigorously critical historiography and a more confidently materialist understanding of nature and human physiology" (30). But these shifts are not some sort of harbinger for the now well-worn and arguably threadbare declaration of the death of God. They are part of a larger story that reimagines rather than does away with religion. To see the evolution of religion in this more nuanced way is to resist situating the nineteenth century in a trajectory that plays into the secularization narrative.

Twentieth-century criticism often understood the nineteenth century as seeing the decline of religion in relation to an increase in literature's authority and to the rise of English as a discipline. Recall Terry Eagleton's seminal *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), which argues that "the failure of religion" in the nineteenth century explains the establishment and growth of English studies. Eagleton suggests that the grip religion had on society was weakening, and that English stepped in to carry the "ideological burden" (21).[5] William R. McKelvy describes this theory as a "declinist" account of religion,

---

[3] Taylor makes this argument without endorsing the secularization thesis. Others such as Owen Chadwick, in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (1975), do not challenge the secularization thesis. Still others, such as Callum G. Brown, in *The Death of Christian Britian: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000* (2001), locate the (sudden) shift to secularization in the 1960s.

[4] "We Victorianists," writes Laporte, "have enjoyed privileging the Victorian era as the sociological tipping point after which religion becomes incompatible, at least in some part, with modern culture. The weight that this assumption lends to our particular area of expertise helps to account for the longevity of this narrative with us, despite our widespread skepticism about other kinds of grand narratives" (279). See Timothy Larsen's *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (2006) for a consideration of the flaws that mark the traditional "Victorian crisis of faith" narrative.

[5] "Eagleton has since shifted his position," write Naomi Hetherington and Rebecca Styler, "but [*Literary Theory*] continues to be widely set on undergraduate course on literary theory" (7).

arguing that the prevailing critical account of the rise of literary authority does not recognize the shifting and newfound expressions of religious faith and relies instead on the false assumption that religion was declining in the nineteenth century. The critical perpetuation of the "declinist" account of religion in the nineteenth century is at times represented as a continuation of Matthew Arnold's reflections on religion, particularly Arnold's "Study of Poetry" (1888), initially "The English Poets" (1880), wherein Arnold states that "most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry" (9: 161-162). Scholars such as Joshua King and Sebastian Lecourt argue that to position Arnold as one of the instigators of this declinist narrative is to misread him. Resisting the assumption that Arnold saw literature and religion as binary opposites, King and Lecourt read Arnold as assuming not that poetry is a secular substitute for religion but that the poets grasp what Arnold considered the essentially poetic and literary (rather than literal and scientific) nature of the Bible and that the poets "offer sources of emotional energy that more truly deserve the name of religion" (Lecourt 70). McKelvy and others complicate the religion/literature binary that according to some critics has been traced back to Arnold.[6] Scholars such as Suzy Anger convincingly observe that "methods developed for biblical exegesis" (4) are among the many influences informing literary studies. Krista Lysack reminds us of the "flood" (20) of Victorian devotional literature, arguing further that a shift in reading practice, from intensive reading to extensive reading ("browsing and sampling" [20]), has been erroneously linked to secularization.

This dissertation revisits literary engagements with religion and resists positioning religion as a handmaid to other critical discourses. It joins scholars of both the British and American traditions who read literature with greater attention to its religious subjects, subjects like "epiphany, conversion, liturgy, heresy" (Branch, "Postsecular" 92), who

[6] Dayton Haskin notes that it is curious that this religion/literature binary "should have proved durable long after similarly influential binaries were deconstructed in gender and race studies" and reiterates Kaufmann's call "for a thoroughgoing re-examination of the origins of literary study in the Academy, one that does not presuppose that the categories of the religious and the secular are stable and the demarcation between them clear" (28).

focus on explicitly religious works or religious ways of reading, and who unsettle the religious/secular binary specifically as it relates to literary texts and their modes and histories, as when Knight recasts the *bildungsroman* "as a theological story rather than unambiguous evidence of secularization" (*Good* 21), or when Sharon Kim situates Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* in the categories of Puritan literature and realism rather than solely sentimentalism. The critical neglect of Calvinism's nuanced representation in nineteenth-century novels is in part a product of the secularization thesis, particularly because this thesis made way for the tendency of some criticism to oversimplify religion and/or to dismiss it as a negative, obsolete, or irrelevant phenomenon. Literary criticism has not yet considered fully nineteenth-century fictional treatments of Calvinism, or the scholarship on them, in light of the recent emphasis on paying closer attention to religion.

By addressing the critical tendency to simplify Calvinism and to naturalize it as a negative phenomenon, this dissertation takes up the call of scholars working at the intersection of religion and literature to learn about and take into account theological concepts, doctrinal distinctions, and other religious particularities as they pertain to our objects of study. As Timothy Larsen puts it, "It is time for scholars to know what they don't know when it comes to biblical, theological, ecclesial, and religious content" ("Biblical" 406). This does not mean that we need to necessarily become experts in theology or religion but that scholars should attempt to better understand religion and why it matters.[7] One way of doing so is to put into practice Abram Van Engen's proposal that "in doing religion and literature we as a whole might need to treat this interdisciplinary work as requiring much more of us – perhaps the mastery of two disciplines, or at least a closer familiarity with religious studies and longer conversations

[7] Knight, in his study of evangelicalism and the Victorian novel, reflects: "We are not simply trying to define some unfamiliar theological terms for their own sake, but thinking about how Victorian novels contain a concatenation of religious sounds, voices, and reverberations" (6).

with historians of religion" ("Three" 215-16).[8] If we lose sight of the interdisciplinary nature of this work, we risk missing or misrepresenting the religious nuances of the texts we study. This dissertation sees the neglect and oversimplification of religion and theology, in this case specifically Calvinism in nineteenth-century novels, not only as a product of the secularization thesis but also as symptomatic of the lack of "closer familiarity with religious studies" (216) Van Engen underscores.

In re-reading for Calvinism in nineteenth-century British and American novels, I presuppose that fiction is a legitimate and unique medium for the exploration and formation of religious and theological ideas. In other words, the imaginative representation of Calvinism, its doctrines, practices, and adherents, supplies nineteenth-century novelists with the means to express, question, criticize, and construct religious and theological ideas. (This is especially true of women novelists who had limited access to public forums, platforms, or other mediums from which to discuss religion and theology.) Studies in religion and literature often successfully demonstrate how religion speaks to literature. Indeed, literary scholarship, including this dissertation, often considers the broader religious culture within which a writer is situated and the writer's personal involvement with religion when interpreting the writer's text. Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's religious upbringings and contexts, and their fraught relationships with Calvinism, undoubtedly influence their fictional representations of Calvinism. However, as Van Engen suggests, demonstrating the inverse, that literature speaks to religion, has proven more difficult. Van Engen points to Claudia Stokes's study on sentimental literature and Methodism, *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (2014), as an example of a critical text that accomplishes this work. Stokes demonstrates that literature shapes religion by discussing how Methodist women writers played a role in establishing hymns as a core part of

---

[8] Van Engen's work informs this dissertation not only in its aims to encourage further discussion on religion and literature, but also in its focus on American Puritanism. In *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England* (2014), Van Engen challenges the stereotype of the stern and iron-made New England Calvinist, demonstrating that the Puritans cared deeply about embodying and promoting (albeit imperfectly) sympathy and fellow feeling.

worship and how the poems of Mormon writer Eliza P. Snow influenced elements of official Mormon doctrine. Stokes, then, prompts us "to reimagine the relationship between religion and literature not as *causal* (*from* religion *to* literature), but as *mutually constitutive*" (Van Engen, "Three" 218).[9] To see literature and religion as mutually constitutive is to recognize that literature is capable of reshaping and reimagining religion.

Stokes's work demonstrates that literature informs religion in practical and formal ways: Methodist women writers influenced official doctrine and the structure of corporate worship. Literature also can be brought to bear on religion in less obvious but nevertheless significant ways. Consider Dawn Coleman's suggestion that literature is able "to reveal the inadequacy of creeds or theories, whether religious or secular, to represent the complexities of subjectivity" ("Spiritual" 523).[10] Literature, perhaps better than creeds or theories, penetrates the contours and contradictions of lived religious experience. Terry R. Wright makes a similar argument, suggesting that literature "helps us understand different ways of thinking and feeling" (157) and that literary form can be crucial to a novel's "theological insight" (153). He is particularly interested in how the representation of a character's psychological interiority can provide "a depth of realism in the treatment of religious experience" (156).[11] Consider also Rebecca Styler, who notes that literature can be thought of "as a theological method" (*Literary* 3), or James K.A.

---

[9] See also Hilary Fraser, who articulates one manifestation of this mutual constitution: Religion "profoundly affected the novel at the level of organization – its tropological form, the ordering of narrative[.] . . . Narrative form itself offered modes of interpretation, explanation, and understanding that articulated and confirmed, or modified, or, in some cases, radically challenged religious orthodoxies. In such ways, novels actively participated in religious debate" (103).

[10] One of Coleman's examples is Augusta Jane Evans's *Beulah* (1859). She argues that by in part "staying close to the weft and warp of experience" (528), *Beulah* demonstrates that the mechanism of conversion is far more complicated than some critical understandings of faith and rationality allow.

[11] Wright considers Oliver Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and its depiction of Waldo's psychological interiority, specifically Waldo's wrestling with theological concepts like soteriology and eschatology. The literary and theological power of the novel, Wright concludes, lie partly in its exploration of Waldo's "imaginative world" (155).

Smith, who sees the potential of fiction to function better as theology than formal theology itself. Invoking a school of thought called aesthetic cognitivism, which resists reducing cognitive understanding to only certain modes of knowledge, such as empirical or propositional knowledge, Smith emphasizes fiction's ability to express complex religious experience and phenomena.[12] Interestingly, Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* – discussed above – began as an anti-Calvinist tract. Sedgwick switched from tract to novel, possibly drawn to the advantages of an imaginative form, and perhaps intuiting that a novel represents religion and religious experience in a way that a tract cannot. Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's novels offer the felt quality of reckoning with Calvinism and other Christian traditions. They offer the experience of religious faith, doubt, guilt, suffering, ecstasy, peace, and community. They offer thick descriptions of lived religion, the practices and thought patterns that shape people's lives. Of course, Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's literary work has the potential to contribute not only to our understanding of religion and theology, but also to shape the *reputation* of certain theologies and traditions. Indeed, to varying degrees, all four novelists contributed to shaping a reputation for Calvinism in the popular and critical imaginary.

Censures of Calvinism: The Perpetuation of a Literary Commonplace

Calvinism is a Protestant tradition rooted in the theological thought of John Calvin, especially Calvin's emphasis on God's sovereignty.[13] The term Calvinism is at

---

[12] Writing specifically about how Marilynne Robinson's fiction "is better theology than her theology" (246), Smith suggests that Robinson's nonfiction cannot get "at something like the experience of Calvinism" (252) in the way her fiction can. For more on how literature shapes religion, see, for example, Daniel Boscaljon, who analyzes how the novel form can disrupt and reimagine understandings of redemption as a theological concept.

[13] John Calvin would have balked at an "-ism" being affixed to his name. David C. Steinmetz notes that "When Calvin died in 1564, he instructed his friends to see to it that he was buried in an unmarked grave. It was partly an act of humility and partly an attempt to discourage an unwanted veneration of his grave" (129).

times used interchangeably with the Reformed tradition, but the Reformed tradition is a more capacious term, associated broadly with covenant theology, in which covenant is an organizing principle with which to interpret the Bible, and Reformed confessions, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith. Scholarship on the Reformed tradition illustrates that contemporaries of Calvin such as Huldrych Zwingli and Martin Bucer, and later Theodore Beza and William Perkins, were just as formative in constructing the landscape (or rather landscapes) of Reformed theology, not to mention New Englanders like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards. One can think of Calvinism as having to do primarily with soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), particularly after the 1610 Remonstrance, wherein followers of Jacob Arminius compiled in written form their rejection of Calvin's teachings.[14] The Remonstrants' *Five Articles of Remonstrance* was opposed in 1618-19 at the Synod of Dort. This rebuttal, known as the Canons of Dort, later became the basis of what is now popularly known as the five points of Calvinism, often formed into the acrostic TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. Calvinism is also often interchanged with Puritanism, but Puritanism derives its meaning from a specifically English and American context. The label Puritan was first used pejoratively, directed toward the English Protestants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who sought to "purify" the Church of England of what they perceived as its lingering Roman Catholic practices in the wake of the English Reformation. Between the 1620s and 1640s, after experiencing varying degrees of persecution, toleration, and power, some Puritans (most of whom were non-separatists, remaining attached to the Church of England), migrated to New England.

---

[14] "Calvinism" is not necessarily the most accurate term for this emphasis on soteriology, even though it is the most common. Peter Toon observes that Calvin in fact "warned against" (13) speculating about the mechanisms (predestination and election) of salvation, and Bruce Gordon and Carl R. Trueman argue that to make predestination Calvin's trademark doctrine is to ignore how many Protestants (and Catholics) "shared the assumption that God elects only some to blessedness and that the divine decree is beyond human understanding" (10). See also Willem J. van Asselt on the reductive nature of equating Calvin with Calvinism and for a discussion on the usefulness (or lack thereof) of the term "Calvinism" in historiography.

Eventually, the Puritans and the separatists, otherwise known as the Pilgrims, formed congregational churches, unaffiliated with the Church of England, and advanced, and arguably innovated, Calvin's teachings.[15]

Calvinism, as a cross-denominational tradition, experienced varying levels of popularity in nineteenth century England and America. In England, both the state Church and the evangelical movement had ties to Calvinism, but neither were exclusively Calvinist. As the century progressed, some of those who identified as Calvinist, especially evangelical dissenters, began subduing and moderating Calvinism's theological features. This moderate Calvinism saw Calvinists resist "over-systematization" (Carter 49) and speculations about concepts such as free will. Of course, Calvinism in its less moderate forms did not disappear entirely, and definitions of moderation were not fixed, meaning that what constituted "extreme" forms of Calvinism was a topic of debate, with Calvinists drawing the "moderate" line in various places depending on their theological convictions.[16] In early nineteenth-century New England, Calvinism held more of a religious monopoly than in England, but, as the century progressed, competed for cultural influence with those who identified with other Christian sects and branches, such as Episcopalians, Catholics, Unitarians, and non-Calvinist Baptists.

Both nineteenth-century England and America saw the proliferation of Christian denominations and movements, many of which underwent further internal divisions, shifts, and transformations. Contributing to these shifting religious landscapes was the

---

[15] For accessible work on Calvinism from a historical and/or theological perspective, see, for example, Jon Balserak's *Calvinism: A Very Short Introduction* (2016) or David D. Hall's "International Calvinism and the Making of Puritan New England" (2013). For longer works, see John T. McNeill's *The History and Character of Calvinism* (1967) or Oliver Crisp's more recent *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology* (2014) and Gordon and Trueman's *The Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism* (2021).

[16] See Ian J. Shaw, Bebbington ("Congregationalists"), Elisabeth Jay (*Religion*), and Michael R. Watts for more on moderate Calvinism, especially Watts, who illustrates that moderate Calvinism was not without its own controversies. See also Bebbington (*Evangelicalism*) for a record of when Calvinism experienced minor upswings.

rise of liberal Christianity, which, like Calvinism, was not exclusive to one denomination. It challenged (and continues to challenge) more traditional forms of Protestantism "by its tendency to assert the authority of conscience over any ethical system emanating from an outside source . . . and by subjecting to increasing pressure a number of received doctrines, including election, atonement, justification, and future punishment" (Hopkins 3).[17] Liberal theologians adamantly rejected Calvinism, and contributed to the spread of an anti-Calvinist sentiment. On the American side, they criticized Calvinism for what they saw as its depiction of God as a tyrannical, wrathful, and arbitrary deity. Integral to this narrative was the claim that Calvinists often embodied the attributes of this deity, themselves emphasizing human sin, depravity, and eternal damnation. Calvinism, so it went, was elitist and anti-democratic, while theologians such as Congregationalist Horace Bushnell and Congregationalist-turned-Unitarian William Ellery Channing "aligned the ideals of democracy with a revised and more all-embracing Protestant doctrine in which everyone had the potential to achieve grace and attain salvation" (Barnstone et al. xviii). British liberal theologians rejected Calvinism on similar grounds. This rejection was rooted in part in the British Romantic trend of foregrounding God as a loving, merciful, paternal figure and minimizing God as judge or ruler, what David Bebbington describes as the Romantic theological "shift toward conceptualizing the Almighty as a benevolent Father" ("Calvin" 285).[18] Ministers like the Congregationalist James Baldwin Brown attacked Calvinism by arguing that Calvinist doctrines, such as the doctrine of the

---

[17] See also Gary Dorrien, who suggests that "The essential idea of liberal theology is that all claims to truth, in theology as in other disciplines, must be made on the basis of reason and experience, not by appeal to external authority" (1). In Britain, some trends within liberal theology, like the rejection of or at the least a wavering and hesitant commitment to the doctrine of an eternal hell were in part concentrated among followers of the Broad Church movement. Characterized by their open religious posture, they held the "conviction that the Church of England should be an ideologically 'broad church' in which its members were allowed to freely express conflicting opinions" (Bartels 36). However, the Broad Church's association with liberal theology requires nuancing, in part because some of the figures associated with it, such as F.D. Maurice and George MacDonald, were not liberal in all aspects of their theology.

[18] Bebbington argues that Calvin himself was viewed with suspicion in nineteenth-century Britain for being a foreigner, noting that members of the Church of England and dissenters "preferred to appeal to the authority of English reformers of the sixteenth century who were unequivocally their own" (283).

sinner's justification by faith, "rests upon the conception of the character of God as a ruler, who represents the interests of the universe, instead of as a Father who cherishes its life" (111).[19] Historian James Anthony Froude, an Anglican turned apostate and brother to Oxford Movement pioneer Richard Hurrell Froude, asks: "How are we to call the Ruler who laid us under this iron code by the name of Wise, or Just, or Merciful, when we ascribe principles of action to Him which in a human father we should call preposterous and monstrous?" (5).[20] Van Engen, referring specifically to American nineteenth-century anti-Calvinists, provides a description of Calvinism's reputation that applies transnationally: "To defeat predestination and original sin, a wide variety of born-again preachers and liberal Protestants began to caricature Calvinism as rigorous, gloomy, heady, and heartless" (*Sympathetic* 7).[21] In sum, Calvinism's detractors often asserted that the God of Calvinism is too wrathful, the mechanism by which Calvinists preach that the elect will be saved is too limiting to human liberty, the exclusivity of the elect suggests an injustice within God's nature and plan for humanity, and the Calvinist emphasis on God as judge rather than God as father over all his created beings is a misrepresentative and outdated understanding of God's character. Calvinists themselves

[19] See Josef L. Altholz for a discussion of what Altholz describes as the Victorian "conflict between humane ethics and rigorous dogma" (65), with Calvinism lump-summed in the latter.

[20] The vision for the High Church iteration of the Church of England was formed in the 1830s by the Oxford Movement. Its members, most notably John Henry Newman, John Keble, Richard Hurrell Froude, and Edward Pusey, set out to "defend the Anglican Church as the true heir of the Universal Catholic Church" (Jay, *Faith* 24). Through tracts, the production of which would inspire the label "Tractarians" in describing supporters of the movement, Newman and others promoted High Church traditions, teachings, and rituals that resembled those within the Catholic Church, while also insisting against their opposers that they were not in fact practicing Catholicism in disguise. Richard William Church, an ally of the Tractarian movement, would go on in 1891 to write a volume of essays titled *The Oxford Movement*, within which he briefly captures what religious historian Owen Chadwick summarizes as the High Church's "anti-Calvinism" (148).

[21] See Chapters One and Two for more on how Calvinism is situated in its British and American nineteenth-century religio-historical contexts.

were accused of being as cold, controlling, unfeeling, and morally bankrupt as the God they worship.

Some historical and literary criticism recognizes the role of nineteenth-century American and British novels in influentially suggesting Calvinism's unpalatability. Van Engen observes that not only Hawthorne, but female sentimentalist novelists with large readerships, helped solidify a cultural perception of Calvinism as a theological tradition deserving censure. Douglas Walrath likewise suggests that through the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, and others, seventeenth- and eighteenth- century Calvinists came to be retrospectively viewed as "bigoted and harsh believers" so that by the mid-nineteenth century, "the re-imaging of Calvinists is complete; 'Calvinist' and 'bigot' and 'fanatic' are contained within the same cultural image" (29). Thomas J. Davis argues that Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale*, Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok* (1824), and Sylvester Judd's *Margaret* (1851) demonstrate an anti-Calvinist bias through their inclusion of "characters whose actions showed forth all that was wrong with Calvinism, and all that was right with the tenets of liberal religion" ("Rhetorical" 445). Elisabeth Jay similarly observes that Calvinism provided fictional fodder for English novelists. An English novelist could portray, for example, the "villainous [Calvinist] parson bent upon dividing families into the sheep, who might be fleeced, and the goats, anxious to afford 'worldly' protection to the flock upon whom he preyed" (*Religion* 52).

In Britain, literary condemnations of Calvinism at times were subsumed in representations of Evangelicalism, in part because doctrines which nineteenth-century novelists played up for grotesque or comedic effect, such as original sin, were integral not only to Calvinism but to Evangelicalism as a whole. One thinks of Charles Dickens's representation of the Murdstones, with their emphasis on (and ironic enactment of) human wickedness in *David Copperfield*.[22] But while criticism acknowledges that nineteenth-century British novelists see the "comic potential" (Jay, *Religion* 10) of Evangelicalism, it has emphasized less that satirized Evangelicals often are specified as

---

[22] See Kelsey L. Bennett's *Principle and Propensity: Experience and Religion in the Nineteenth-Century British and American Bildungsroman* (2014) for an extended treatment of Dickens's treatment of Evangelicalism in his fiction.

Calvinists, and that more vitriol is directed toward them as such. These critiques or putdowns of Calvinism occur with varying degrees of subtlety and narrative importance. At times, remarks are made in passing so as to give readers a sense of the unpleasantness of a person, object, or phenomenon. In Anthony Trollope's *Linda Tressel*, for example, the narrator describes the vilified Madame Stauback as having "the manners and gait of a Calvinist" (27), inviting the reader – indeed relying on the reader – to imagine her with the rigidity already assumed to belong to the Calvinist. John Henry Newman's novel, *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert* (1848), a conversion narrative centered around a man named Charles Reding, likewise assumes Calvinism's unpleasantness when it takes as a given that "Calvinistic" meetings are "cold and . . . dry" (39).[23] Calvinism's unpleasantness is wrapped up in descriptions – "cold and dry" – which suggest lifelessness and formalism.

Other nineteenth-century novelists, such as Emily Brontë and George Eliot, blur the line between Calvinists as objects of ridicule and Calvinists as sinister villains. Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) depicts the Calvinist Joseph, servant to the Earnshaws and Heathcliff, as a religious fanatic and hypocrite. Nelly, the novel's primary narrator, describes him as "the wearisomest self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours" (69). Joseph speaks boldly about how "All warks togither for gooid to them as is chozzen" (106) while overwhelming others with his self-righteousness and unkindness. Joseph is an object of

[23] Largely made up of theological dialogues, *Loss and Gain* is about a young Charles who enters Oxford as an undergraduate and encounters a multitude of theological discussions and debates. Charles is invested in these discussions more than his fellow students, especially those about the Anglican Church and its authority. As time passes, he grows more doubtful about the tenets of the Church of England and has difficulty assenting to the Thirty-Nine Articles. He eventually converts to Roman Catholicism to the great distress of his friends, colleagues, and family. Newman himself, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), which details his journey from Anglicanism to Catholicism, recounts adopting Calvinist principles in his early life and later rejecting them. At the age of fifteen, he was reading works which were "of the school of Calvin," resulting in his becoming assured of "the doctrine of final perseverance" and of his "elect[ion] to eternal glory" (4). By the age of twenty-one, these beliefs "gradually faded away" (4) and he eventually "learned to give up [his] remaining Calvinism" (9).

mockery as well as a force of oppressive power to those around him.[24] His Calvinist theology "poisons the relationship between the Earnshaw children and their father" (S. Marsden, "Strange" 203) and contributes to the gloom which overshadows Catherine and Heathcliff. In Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), the narrator depicts the moral bankruptcy of the banker Nicholas Bulstrode as partly a result of his Calvinist upbringing. In this narrative, Calvinism is pictured a potential breeding ground for the development of unethical and hypocritical behavior.[25] Having had a "striking experience in conviction of sin and sense of pardon" while a "member of a Calvinistic dissenting church," Bulstrode feels (in part subconsciously) that the "peculiar work of grace within him" (450) gives him license to accomplish his ends, mainly the attainment of wealth and power in whatever manner and with whatever means he deems necessary.[26] Calvinism, in other words, is pictured as a steppingstone to antinomianism, which takes the Calvinist doctrine of justification by faith alone to imply that those elected by God, and thus those considered righteous because of the imputation of Jesus Christ's blood upon them, can act without regard to the moral law.[27] The narrative suggests that Bulstrode's exposure to Calvinism provides him with a convenient theological framework by which he can deceive himself. Trollope's Madame Stauback, Brontë's Joseph, and Eliot's Bulstrode demonstrate that expressions of Calvinist dislike are communicated effectively,

---

[24] Joseph refrains from helping the mistreated Hareton because he believes that Hareton is already "abandoned to perdition" (199), what Miriam Burstein describes as "a line of reasoning that lets him off the proverbial hook" ("Religion[s]" 444).

[25] See chapter sixty-one of *Middlemarch* for the narrator's description of the complexity of Bulstrode's hypocrisy. See also Martin J. Svaglic, as well as Gordon S. Haight's introduction to the Riverside edition of *Middlemarch* (1956) for early, thoughtful treatments of this theme.

[26] As a result, Bulstrode participates in blackmail, in the selling of stolen goods, and neglects the moral duty of trying to save the dying John Raffles, who threatens to reveal one of Bulstrode's wrongdoings to which he is privy.

[27] Calvinism and antinomianism, considered a heretical hyper-Calvinism, are at times conflated in fiction, such as in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, wherein Michael Hartley, a man characterized by drunkenness and violence, is described both as "that mad Calvinist and Jacobin weaver" and an "Antinomian" (177).

provokingly, and entertainingly through the construction of characters who are in one way or another vilified for their Calvinism.

To accomplish this vilification, novelists often amalgamate the negative features with which they associate Calvinism – coldness, mercilessness, despotism, and moral dubiousness – and concentrate them within characters who are menaces to those around them. These representations of Calvinism and Calvinists function in part as a form of religious critique, often through the means of caricature. Caricature (graphic and literary) has at times been popularly and critically understood as a representational mode which misleads and misrepresents. Deidre Lynch and Jane Stabler complicate this definition by suggesting that the act of distortion on which caricature relies can expose rather than mislead. In Stabler's words, "caricature plays a more subtle and revealing role than previously assumed – one that has to do with recognition rather than distortion" (2), while Lynch notes the possibility of understanding caricature not as "the antithesis of character" but "as its extension" (69).[28] With Stabler and Lynch in mind, we can read caricature as exposure and thus as a means of providing serious objections to the target of criticism. It is worth remembering, however, that nineteenth-century novelists likely drew their critiques of Calvinism from an already oversimplified understanding and impression of its followers and doctrines, partly due to personal biases, various non-Calvinist religious identifications, and exposure to Calvinism through Calvinism's detractors rather than through Calvinists themselves. Thus, some nineteenth-century caricatures of Calvinism were based on already preconceived and typified notions of Calvinism, and thus twice removed from Calvinism as a complex, multi-faceted theological system, to which a number of people, varying in temperament, sensitivity, and morality, subscribe. Brontë associates Joseph's judgement-centered theology with Calvinism not because it necessarily best captures a Calvinist identity but because it captures an already typified

---

[28] See also Henry B. Wonham who challenges the idea that caricature is incompatible with literary realism. Focusing on ethnic caricature, Wonham sees caricature and realism as "intimately related" (9) because he understands both as aesthetically concerned with the art and act of exposing.

version of Calvinism. It is in this way, rather than due to the nature of caricature itself, that nineteenth-century literary depictions of Calvinism are often misrepresentative.

Varieties of Calvinism

The image of Calvinism as a cruel and psychologically damaging theological system, believed and worshipped by austere and cold Calvinists, who worship an equally austere, cold, and tyrannical God persisted into the twentieth century. The American critic H.L. Mencken famously characterized Puritanism as "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy" (624). Some of this censure was directed at John Calvin himself. Edmund Wilson claimed that "To read Calvin's *Institutes* today is to be struck by the brutal audacity of [Calvin's] efforts to eliminate [the] spirit [of Jesus] from the Gospels" (40). To make the argument that Hawthorne owes his literary vision in large part to Calvinism, Agnes McNeill Donohue relies on a particular rendering of Calvin: "The damnatory voice of that terrifying Geneva reformer, declaiming his vision of a vengeful, angry, and jealous God ruthlessly judging pitiful and depraved humanity, penetrated the recesses of [Hawthorne's] heart and ordered ironic stories and novels of brutality, obsessive guilt, and secret sin" (2). Donohue describes Calvin as a "terrifying" bogey who preaches only hellfire and damnation and is driven by his "bowel-shattering, awesome vision of depraved mankind, hounded incessantly by an immanent, jealous, and angry God" (4). This critical commonplace, what Thomas J. Davis describes as Calvinism's negative image becoming "a matter of reflex rather than contestation" ("Rhetorical" 443) in the twentieth century, also manifests in subtler ways, such as in what criticism has assumed about the religious sympathies of Elizabeth Branwell, Charlotte Brontë's aunt. Starting with Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte, Aunt Branwell gained a reputation as a stern and oppressive proclaimer of sin and damnation. Biographer Winifred Gérin inferred from Gaskell's description that Aunt Branwell was a Calvinist. For Gérin, and for most readers, the inference was intuitive.[29] Other criticism

[29] Biographers such as Tom Winnifrith have since questioned Gérin's assumption that Aunt Branwell was a Calvinist. Winnifrith acknowledges that while Aunt Branwell believed in the existence of hell and original sin, a belief in these doctrines does not a Calvinist make (*New* 20).

enacts this critical commonplace by replicating the language of Calvinist censure, such as when Christpher P. Wilson writes that Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* "is replete with editorial dismissals of the cold Calvinist doctrine" (556) rather than affixing the word "cold" to what the novel is enacting, as in the novel "is replete with cold editorial dismissals of the Calvinist doctrine."

The twentieth century also saw Ann Douglas reaffirm an association between Calvinism and austerity so effectively that our critical discourses struggle to imagine one without the other. Douglas expresses regret about, not necessarily the downfall of Calvinism, but the lack of an adequate replacement in the face of Calvinism's downfall. "Calvinism," she writes in *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), "was largely defeated by an anti-intellectual sentimentalism . . . without gaining a comprehensive feminism" (13).[30] Douglas preserves the image of Calvinism's "toughness" and "sternness" (18) but with less condemnation, prompting critics to sense within her work a nostalgia for Calvinism, all the while preserving "Douglas's backdrop of a rigid, unfeeling early American Puritanism" (Van Engen, *Sympathetic* 8).[31] Douglas shares with Perry Miller, at one point her teacher, an appreciation for the Puritans and their Calvinism, and especially their theological rigor. Miller seminally legitimized the

---

[30] See Claudia Stokes, who argues that Douglas incorrectly characterizes the relationship between Calvinism and sentimentalism "as causal rather than as correlative" when, instead, "the respective rise and fall of both movements were enabled by the Second Great Awakening" (22).

[31] I address critical responses to Douglas more thoroughly in chapter one, with a brief summary here: More concerning than Douglas's nostalgia for Calvinism was Douglas writing off sentimentalism as anti-intellectual. In response, Jane Tompkins and others preserved the idea of "feminization" but inverted its value, arguing for the significant social and political impact of sentimentalist women writers. Joanne Dobson, for example, registers in Douglas a "modernist critical antipathy to the feminine and the common" (273). In David Schuyler's words, Tompkins and others altered "'feminization' from a negative into a positive term" (4). Schuyler maintains, however, that the "flaw in this project" is that scholars "reproduce the gender categories of the earlier masculinist tradition of scholarship" (4).

Puritans as an object of study in *The New England Mind* (1939).[32] Unlike Douglas and others, Miller emphasized not just the intellect of the Puritans but their emotions, prompting other historians and literary critics to note “the power and presence of feeling in seventeenth-century New England” (*Sympathetic* 7). These scholars, however, as Van Engen notes, “remain a rather lonely crowd” (7). Despite Miller’s influence, the narrative we associate with Douglas and others, namely the narrative of Calvinism’s coldness and austerity, prevails.

Although Calvinism is a diverse and diffuse tradition, it is best known and maligned for its doctrine of salvation. The Calvinist soteriological narrative in its basic form is that humans after Adam and Eve are born in a state of sin and deserve eternal condemnation. This is the fate of many, while some are predestined to experience conversion and receive a salvation that is dependent on God’s irresistible grace and immutable will. Rather than accuse God of capriciousness, Calvinists understand that God would be acting justly if he let everyone receive damnation, and they perceive God electing some to be saved as “a source of hope and a basis of thanks” (Bremer 21). The condemnation of the non-elect glorifies God in that it reveals and manifests God’s justice. Humans, after the Fall, are not innocent beings. And it is right – it is in line with God’s righteousness – for the guilty to be punished, especially if they are sinning against an infinite being. But, according to his plan for humanity, God upholds his righteousness while yet offering mercy to those on whom he chooses to have mercy. This mercy is a free and undeserved gift. If humans had any claim to it, if they were deserving of it, it would no longer be mercy but justice. In response, anti- or non-Calvinists commonly express dissatisfaction with, and at times moral outrage toward, the exclusivity and arbitrariness they perceive as inherent to this scheme of salvation. Calvinism is often

---

[32] Miller, however, is not immune to misrepresenting Calvinism. See, for example, George M. Marsden’s “Perry Miller’s Rehabilitation of the Puritans: A Critique.” Somewhat related is Marsden’s suggestion that Miller “simultaneously did the most to promote [Jonathan] Edwards studies over the past half century and the most to confuse the issues of biography.” Marsden observes: “Miller’s portrait is to Edwards what Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is to the actual Danish prince – a triumph of the imagination” (“Quest” 6).

reduced to its doctrine of salvation. The formation of its negative image is in large part a reaction to this doctrine.

One way to think about the staying power of Calvinism's negative image is to consider historian Robert Orsi's distinction between "good" and "bad" religion. Orsi observes that the study of religion almost always includes "value-laden dichotomies," wherein expressions of religion are classified as either good or bad depending on where they are perceived to fit in a "normative hierarchy . . . ascending from negative to positive, 'primitive' to high, local to universal, infantile to mature" (188). Tracy Fessenden expands on Orsi by describing, but not naturalizing, "bad" religion as a category in which "all purportedly constraining, undemocratic, backward forms of faith are consigned" (165). Calvinism falls under "bad" religion, while, as Orsi and Fessenden observe, "good" religion is most often rendered spirituality: To see spirituality as "good" religion is to develop a "progressive history of religion" wherein we begin "in Calvinist or clerical strictures" and progress to "the blossoming of spiritual freedoms" (Fessenden 165). Fessenden cautions against employing the terms of this narrative uncritically.

Some criticism challenges the assumptions from which an expression of religion is assigned as either good or bad, such as Rachel B. Griffis's analysis of the prodigal son narrative in Marilynne Robinson's novels *Gilead* (2004) and *Home* (2008). Griffis argues that criticism on the prodigal son narrative insists on making the narrative fit and promote what we might think of as a "good" expression of religion, primarily by refusing to see the Reverend Robert Boughton, who is stern and chastises his son Jack, as a character embodying God's grace. "This interpretation," argues Griffis, "demonstrates twenty-first century biases against certain aspects of Christianity, such as the notion of God's wrath or anger. Contemporary believers and non-believers alike are resistant to embracing the paradox of God's wrath and love" (142). Similarly, Kevin Pelletier, in his study of American antebellum literature, sentimentalism, and antislavery reform, challenges the binary between wrath and love, arguing that it cannot adequately explain the "interaction between calls for love and threats of divine retribution" (8) within nineteenth-century religious and sentimental discourses. Maria LaMonaca, by way of William James, also puts pressure on modern sensibilities which balk at certain expressions of Christianity. In

Varieties of Religious Experience (1901-02), James describes religious liberalism as "a victory of healthy-mindedness . . . over the morbidness [of] . . . old hell-fire theology" (91).[33] "Thus," writes LaMonaca, "the 'healthy-minded' modern reader (whether or not a believer) might find it difficult to comprehend the mindset of those James labeled as 'sick-souled': beliefs which lead individuals to court suffering, accept sacrifice, or make decisions seemingly contrary to personal desire and inclination" (258). Ultimately, LaMonaca uses James's distinction between those who are "healthy-minded" and "sick-souled" to suggest that Jane's marriage to Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, although seemingly the result of a "healthy-minded" Jane, might actually suggest "a more traditional, 'sick-souled' worldview" (258) if one reads the marriage not as "a happy *ending*, but rather as an arduous process, leading – like St. John's missionary work – to some yet-deferred state of bliss" (258-259).

In many ways, Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne perpetuated Calvinism's negative image. They did so by constructing Calvinism. I borrow this language of construction from Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner, who suggest that to think of religion as "constructed" is to resist viewing it as "an intuitive and simple abstraction" (1). Applying this language to Calvinism involves recognizing that nineteenth-century novelists are not simply engaging with pre-established definitions and understandings of Calvinism. They are forming an image for Calvinism. Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne do not write about Calvinism "objectively from a distance." Rather, their "personal and lived investments" (2), as King and Werner put it about those who critically engage with religion, inform both their understandings and assessments of it. These acts of construction at times conceal the varieties of Calvinism. For example, in his writings, MacDonald sometimes recognizes that the Scottish Calvinism of his upbringing had a distinct and, in his view, more oppressive flavor than other manifestations of Calvinism, but he often wrote about Calvinism without differentiating

---

[33] James continues, commenting on what he perceives as the state of Christianity in his day: "We have now whole congregations whose preachers, far from magnifying our consciousness of sin, seem devoted rather to making little of it. . . . They look at the continual preoccupation of the old-fashioned Christian with the salvation of his soul as something sickly and reprehensible rather than admirable" (91).

between its branches and iterations. Calvinism is thus rendered a monolith, meaning that the distinctions between, for example, Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, are erased, even though Edwards's theology was not a replica of Calvin's. In both scholarly and popular discourse, Hawthorne's works are not often thought of as constructing or generating for Calvinism a new meaning or definition. Criticism at times reads *The Scarlet Letter*'s description of the guilt-plagued and somber Puritan minister Arthur Dimmesdale as capturing and communicating a truth about Calvinism rather than as giving Calvinists a certain shape. More generally, the critical assumption is that Hawthorne does not selectively frame Calvinism as gloomy and oppressive, but that Calvinism *is* in fact gloomy and oppressive. Calvinism is a varied tradition. A greater awareness of its internal variances allows us to better contextualize, understand, and interpret texts which engage with it. Calvinism is also a live tradition rather than a phenomenon of the past.[34] It is part of our historical and contemporary religious landscapes, warranting critical inquiry unimpeded by simplified narratives of secularization.

Project Overview

This dissertation argues that Stowe, Brontë, MacDonald, and Hawthorne's novels do not reject Calvinism out of hand, even though they present an anti-Calvinist bias. While *The Minister's Wooing* enacts the sentimental tendency to assign Calvinism connotations such as coldness and cruelty, it also resists seeing Calvinism as a false

---

[34] Jon Balserak observes, specifically about the United States, that "The appearance in the 20th century of serious Reformed philosophers like Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, and the recent rise of the New Calvinists in the 21st century, suggest the continued influence of Calvinism in American life and thought" (8-9). To recognize Calvinism's presence is to acknowledge the diverse ways in which one can understand and identify as a Calvinist or as belonging to the Reformed tradition in the twenty-first century. The capaciousness of the Reformed tradition is a matter of debate, as indicated, for example, by the discussions in Matthew C. Bingham et al.'s *On Being Reformed: Debates over a Theological Identity* (2018). Contemporary engagements with Reformed theology and identifications with the tradition range from writers and theologians such as Marilynne Robinson and Oliver D. Crisp, to the widely successful, controversial, and culturally conservative ministries of pastors such as John Piper, John MacArthur, and the late R.C. Sproul, to various global manifestations in Korea, Ghana, and Brazil.

theological system and does not fully or easily embrace sentimentalism over Calvinism. *Jane Eyre*'s critiques of Calvinism occur primarily through Jane criticizing St. John's Calvinist faith and Calvinist-coded temperament, but these critiques are challenged by St. John, and even by Jane herself in her final description of St. John at the narrative's end. Although MacDonald rejected Calvinist iterations of predestination and election, his works uphold understandings of doctrines like divine providence informed by his Calvinist upbringing and education. Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* gestures toward a sense of hopefulness motivated by *felix culpa*, a theological concept integral to many Christian traditions, including Calvinism. All four novelists also tend to treat Calvinists with a mixture of sympathy and antipathy. By attending to the formal features of their novels, this dissertation demonstrates that fiction uniquely represents Calvinism and, more generally, religious experience and debate. This dissertation's attempt to understand the complexity of Calvinism's representation in these nineteenth-century novels is a corrective to scholarship which deprioritizes and simplifies literary engagements with religion and theology.

The first chapter examines Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*, which I situate within critical debates about sentimental fiction. It traces Calvinism's presence, influence, and cultural reputation in nineteenth-century America, showing how Calvinism and sentimentalism emerge in this period as antagonists. Criticism largely places *The Minister's Wooing* on the sentimentalist side of this antagonism. It recognizes how the novel aligns with the theological sympathies of sentimental fiction but overlooks how it simultaneously resists such categorization. This chapter argues, first, that the novel does not take the tone of dismissal toward Calvinism that defines much sentimental fiction. Second, it argues that while the novel tends to preserve the typified binary of sentimentalism/spiritual intuition and Calvinism/abstract reasoning in discerning God's character and plan for salvation, it subverts the sentimentalist position by envisioning a spiritual ideal that moves beyond both logic and intuition. The novel illustrates that when abstract reasoning leads to spiritual anxieties, and when trusting one's spiritual intuition is not viable, as for Mrs. Marvyn, authentic faith is characterized by a disposition of trust in the goodness and love of God in the face of what is mysterious and unknowable about him. By reassessing the novel's representation of Calvinism, this chapter rethinks the

criteria with which scholarship understands *The Minister's Wooing* as a sentimental text and exposes the critical propensity to understand Calvinism negatively. Criticism's condemnation of Calvinism starts not with a study of Calvinists themselves but with Calvinism's nineteenth-century skeptics. It does not interrogate nineteenth-century anti-Calvinist assessments of Calvinism as much as it assumes that these assessments are fact.

My second chapter turns to *Jane Eyre*. It analyzes the representation of St. John Rivers by considering the novel's structure as a fictional autobiography. While critical analyses of St. John's religious identity largely focus on describing his temperament and rhetoric, this chapter foregrounds the narrative structure of *Jane Eyre* to demonstrate that St. John's self-descriptions, which challenge Jane's assessments of St. John's Calvinist faith and Calvinist-coded temperament, are overwhelmed and crowded out by Jane's narrative voice. Yet it is the very primacy of Jane's narratorial voice, particularly at the narrative's end wherein Jane gives St. John the last word but not in his own voice, that results in the perplexing quality of the ending. Instead of continuing to use her discursive privilege to subtly question and undermine St. John and his Calvinist character, Jane commends him. This chapter insists that if we are not going to take Jane at her word that she thinks St. John a faithful follower of God, or if we are hesitant to do so, or if we are disappointed with Jane if in fact her estimation of St. John is unironically full of admiration, we must ask why. I suggest the possibility that we see *Jane Eyre* as more sophisticated, meaning less naïve about religion, the more we see it as moving away from Calvinism. This assumption is not neutral, but rather symptomatic of a critical assent to the secularization narrative.

Chapter three considers the fiction of George MacDonald. It first argues that if we understand Calvinism as a capacious category, rather than shorthand for a particular version of predestination and election, we may recognize that MacDonald's theological views, methodologies, and rhetorical style are shaped by his exposure to Calvinism even as he rejects particular Calvinist doctrines. Next, this chapter examines the relationship between Calvinism and realism in light of the rhetorical and theological modes pervading MacDonald's fiction. It differentiates between the types and tones of sermonic discourse within MacDonald's novels to show that it is specifically the narratorial polemical

preaching with which the novels condemn Calvinism that encumbers them as realist works. By isolating the use of narratorial polemical preaching as a rhetorical mode which generates a theological and aesthetic flatness, I resist the assumption that the sermon and the realist novel are fundamentally incompatible, and the assumption that theology and the realist novel are incompatible. MacDonald's realist novels handle theology with imaginative force when they embrace polyvocality, dialogic discourse, ambiguity, and polysemeity, as *Robert Falconer* does in its treatment of Eric Ericson's religious doubts. By decentering the narratorial polemical preaching with which the realist novels condemn Calvinism, I argue that MacDonald's realist fiction accomplishes not only a theological fulsomeness more characteristic of MacDonald's religious vision and methodology as represented in his broader theological and literary corpus, but that realism, its thematic concerns, narrative strategies, and ideals, is able and suited to representing the complexity of theology and religious experience.

My fourth chapter argues that Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* is more, not less, theologically Calvinist than Hawthorne's previous works. Some criticism assumes the opposite, interpreting the novel's flirtation with *felix culpa*, and its attendant sense of hopefulness, as evidence of its moving away from Calvinism. I also suggest that the novel lacks aesthetic success as a Gothic text partly because it holds the trademark religious terror and religious malignity of Gothic fiction in abeyance with a sense of hopefulness. Specifically, *The Marble Faun* suggests to a uniquely high degree that the Fall of humankind, allegorized by Donatello's fall, catalyzes an incommensurable good, unmatched even by a prelapsarian state. While Donatello's murdering Miriam's oppressor, the Model, results in worldly suffering, despair is not the last word. The narrative orients readers toward an eternal blessedness built into the concept of *felix culpa*, specifically through its mention of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, its acknowledgement of post-Fall beauty, and its depiction of Donatello's despair as real and painful, but not final. While this hopefulness conflicts with the Gothic, it does not conflict with Calvinism. Hawthorne's fiction is prone to pigeonholing Calvinism, perpetuating its distorted image for generations of readers. With *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne unsettles the assumption that Calvinism is inherently a doom-and-gloom theology.

Chapter 1.

Calvinism and Sentimentalism in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*: A Reassessment

In 1859, almost a year before Harriet Beecher Stowe completed *The Minister's Wooing* as a serial in *The Atlantic Monthly*, editor James Russell Lowell expressed to Stowe his confidence that "There is not, and never was, anybody so competent to write a true New England poem as yourself" (336).[35] *The Atlantic Monthly*, whose contributors included the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes, aimed to platform prominent American thinkers and writers. As a medium through which intellectuals could dialogue about cultural issues and writers could showcase their literary skill, it was well-poised to publish a novel as theologically rich and potentially contentious as Stowe's. Stowe was aware that the novel's ambivalent sentiments toward New England Calvinism might be received by some with disapprobation. Attempting to assuage her fear that the novel is not sufficiently "orthodox" (335), Lowell writes to her: "If, with your heart and brain, *you* are not orthodox, in Heaven's name who is? If you mean 'Calvinistic,' no woman could ever be such, for Calvinism is logic, and no woman worth the name could ever live by syllogisms." Lowell encouraged Stowe to not censor herself, urging that she quiet her uncertainty. But Stowe's fear was justified: as reviews came in following the publication of *The Minister's Wooing*, the novel, and by extension Stowe herself, was repeatedly reproved for leveling a literary attack against Calvinism. Stowe's contemporaries were the first of many critics to simplify the novel's ambivalent sentiments toward New England Calvinism.

In this chapter, I make two arguments that at first seem to run at cross-purposes. First, I suggest that *The Minister's Wooing* treats Calvinism with ambivalence rather than wholesale condemnation to a degree that we have not allowed for in our understanding of sentimental nineteenth-century American fiction. This is not to minimize the novel's

---

[35] See Charles Edward Stowe's *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (1889) for Lowell's letter to Stowe in full, for which we do not have Stowe's corresponding letters.

pervasive and forceful critiques of Calvinism, but to suggest that in amplifying these critiques, scholars have undervalued the ambivalence with which the novel treats Calvinism. Criticism has used the fact that *The Minister's Wooing* is critical of Calvinism to align the novel with what it sees as the theological sympathies of sentimental fiction while overlooking the ways the novel simultaneously resists such categorization. As I will show, two features of sentimental fiction are its dismissal of Calvinism and its prioritization of spiritual intuition over reason in discerning God's character, understanding theology, and evidencing authentic faith. I argue, however, that the novel does not take up this tone of dismissal but rather resists seeing Calvinism as a false theological system. Although it ultimately advocates a religious posture that prioritizes spiritual intuition over reason, it also undermines this sentimentalist emphasis by showing that following one's spiritual intuition is not, in fact, always possible. To miss these aspects of *The Minister's Wooing* is to risk oversimplifying the novel's engagement with theology.

My second argument begins with the assumption that although *The Minister's Wooing* is more nuanced in its representation of Calvinism than most sentimental fiction, it nevertheless depicts Calvinism as what Thomas J. Davis calls "a rhetorical negative," wherein Calvinism garners "negative connotations" ("Rhetorical" 443) such as coldness and cruelty. Calvinism so represented becomes a theological worldview which Calvinists themselves would not recognize or desire to identify with. As Abram Van Engen suggests of seventeenth-century Puritans, most "would be surprised to hear that they were made from iron" (*Sympathetic* 2), just as nineteenth-century Calvinists would find fault with the increasingly popular characterization of Calvinism as cruel. Building on Davis and Van Engen, my second purpose is to illustrate how our contemporary readings sometimes adopt the negative language and assumptions about Calvinism within *The Minister's Wooing* so that our disapproval becomes "a matter of reflex rather than contestation" (Davis 443). I understand this critical commonplace, which starts with "nineteenth-

century anti-Calvinists" (Van Engen 7), as the naturalization of Calvinism as a negative phenomenon.[36]

These two arguments rely on one another. Criticism does not put enough weight on the ways in which *The Minister's Wooing* expresses ambivalence toward rather than outright rejection of Calvinism because our critical reflex is to assume that Calvinists and their theological worldview warrant rejection. By challenging this reflex, I join literary critics invested in dismantling the hold that the secularization thesis has over scholarship. Because of preconceived notions about Calvinism, attention is more easily drawn to instances in which it is critiqued rather than to instances which subvert this critique. If we challenge this confirmation bias by resisting having our attention drawn only to where Calvinism is undermined in *The Minister's Wooing*, we will have to rearticulate and define with more precision on what grounds we have understood the novel as a sentimental text.

In what follows, I situate *The Minister's Wooing* in relation to our historical understanding of Calvinism's presence, influence, and cultural reputation in nineteenth-century America, particularly the way its decreasing popularity relates to the rise of liberal Protestantism. I outline how Calvinism and sentimentalism emerge in this period as antagonists as well as how critics situate both Stowe and *The Minister's Wooing* within this antagonism. Next, I analyze in detail the theological architecture of *The Minister's Wooing* to demonstrate the nuance with which the novel depicts Calvinism, and more specifically to show how, through characters like Mrs. Marvyn, the novel subverts both the dismissive tone with which sentimental fiction treats Calvinism and the prioritization of spiritual intuition over reason. Last, I enter into dialogue with scholars who acknowledge that criticism tends to naturalize Calvinism as an inherently negative phenomenon and illustrate how this naturalization functions specifically in relation to *The Minister's Wooing*. Overall, this chapter argues that the naturalization of Calvinism as a

---

[36] Throughout this chapter, when describing Calvinism as negative, I mean an understanding of Calvinism as connoting hardness, coldness, rigidity, lack of sympathy, and other descriptors, figurative or otherwise, we generally ascribe to persons, systems, and traditions as a means of critique.

negative phenomenon in our criticism has resulted in our attention being drawn to the way *The Minister's Wooing* criticizes Calvinism rather than the way it expresses ambivalence and at times even sympathy toward it and its followers. Thus, while the novel is in many ways a sentimental text, its approach to Calvinism belies some sentimentalist conventions. A reconsideration of the novel's representation of Calvinism allows us to rethink our rationale for understanding *The Minister's Wooing* as a sentimental text and to expose our propensity to understand Calvinism in negative terms.

Calvinism and Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America

To suggest that nineteenth-century America saw Calvinism dislodged from its position of religious ascendancy is to accept what some literary and historical criticism calls the declension thesis of Calvinism, wherein Calvinism's decreasing popularity is supposed, as Ann Douglas puts it, "inevitable" (13).[37] In his tone-setting three-volume history of American literature, *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927), Vernon Parrington furnished readers with a narrative of "the New England decline" (3: 62-64), which included descriptions of Puritan repressiveness and Calvinism's overall theological unsuitability for nineteenth-century America. Following Parrington, Douglas and others reaffirmed Calvinism's declension. Critics and historians see a number of interrelated reasons for Calvinism's decline. For one, America's democratic impulse did not mesh well with Calvinism's emphasis on divine sovereignty. "If the people could choose their government," writes Nancy Koester, "couldn't they also shape their destiny in religious matters?" (11). Peter J. Thuesen elaborates: "The birth of the American republic brought with it a backlash against Calvinism, whose emphasis on original sin and absolute

---

[37] See Douglas A. Sweeney for a list of sources that perpetuate this declension thesis, in which Sweeney lists, among others, Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* and William G. McLoughlin's *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (1978). Ann Douglas's description of this thesis includes her statement that "Calvinism was a great faith, with great limitations: it was repressive, authoritarian, dogmatic, patriarchal to an extreme. Its demise was inevitable, and in some real sense, welcome" (12-13). I use phrases like "decreasing popularity" instead of words like "demise" because the latter implies too strongly a disappearance and/or eradication of Calvinism.

predestination seemed to violate the new nation's spirit of self-determination" (220).[38] Furthermore, as Claudia Stokes indicates, the Second Great Awakening, which saw religious revivals inspired in part by circuit rider preachers, exploded religion in America by generating "the formation of innumerable new denominations and sects" (25). The first Great Awakening, taking place in the mid-eighteenth century and featuring Jonathan Edwards, "was firmly rooted in New England orthodoxy" while "the Second Great Awakening was diffuse, denominationally heterogeneous, and geographically expansive" (25). These factors, as Stokes recognizes, contributed to the statistical decline in membership among American Calvinist denominations from the early to late nineteenth-century. Calvinism's decline was not due to a decline in religion itself. In fact, "church membership rose in this era" (22), with the Methodists becoming the dominant Protestant denomination by mid-century.

There are two ways of framing Calvinism's loss of cultural approval. One is to suggest that Calvinism became easily dismissed, a non-issue in the American cultural imagination, or at the very least a minimal one. Stokes argues that by the time Stowe was writing *The Minister's Wooing* "Calvinism was already a shadow of its former self, reduced by the upstart religious movements of the Second Great Awakening to a vestigial, regional relic of an earlier time" (22). Decades earlier, in the early 1980s, historian William H. Shurr observed that his colleagues "declared calvinism to be long dead" (30) in nineteenth-century America, moving on, however, to put forth an opposing perspective by suggesting Calvinism's "vitality long after its supposed demise" (19). Shurr anticipated critics who suggest a second way of framing Calvinism's loss of

[38] Stephen E. Berk similarly writes that "At a time of increasing democracy and self-reliant enterprise, Consistent Calvinism was beginning to appear a theology of anti-human, monarchic despotism" (71). Claudia Stokes writes: "In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the orthodox belief in predestination became irreconcilable with the era's preoccupation with liberty and self-determination, and the inexplicable salvation of the elect disconcertingly evoked an aristocratic caste whose superior status was the product of the felicitous accidents of birth rather than merit" (25). See also Gayle Kimball, Edward Tang, and Alice C. Crozier for reiterations of this point but specifically in relation to Stowe and the declaration she makes in *The Minister's Wooing* about Samuel Hopkins's Calvinist theology being suited for a more monarchical style of government.

cultural approval, namely by accentuating, as does Douglas A. Sweeney more recently, that "there was a *contest* over Calvinism in the nineteenth-century United States – and this was a sign not of dissolution but vitality" (112). This contest, as Nathan O. Hatch explains in his monograph *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989), was lively. Many nineteenth-century Calvinists attempted to bolster and solidify Calvinism's place in American culture, and non-Calvinists – "Methodists, Baptists, Christians, Universalists, and Disciples" (170) – resisted these attempts.[39] Disagreements over Calvinism "yielded clear and abundant signs of life" (Sweeney 113), resulting in Calvinism surviving the nineteenth century as Calvinists settled among a variety of denominations and congregations. This is not to say that Calvinism held a religious monopoly in nineteenth-century America, only that it is inaccurate to suggest that it disappeared. That Calvinism, although it "did not roll over and die," ultimately "lost a fiercely contested struggle for the heart of American culture" (Davis, "Rhetorical" 456), is likely why critics have at times instinctively assumed its "deadness" in nineteenth-century America as opposed to its vitality.

As Calvinism began competing for influence with other religious worldviews and denominations, liberal Protestantism emerged as one among many of its rivals. Characterized in part by its skepticism toward Calvinism's understanding of and emphasis on God's sovereignty, liberal Protestantism invoked what it saw as a different and more loving depiction of God.[40] Carrie Tirado Bramen writes that "The story of the change from an understanding of God as a wrathful, authoritarian Calvinist God – full of fire and brimstone – to a perception of the gentle benevolence of a liberal Christian God is a familiar one" (40). Despite our acquaintance with what Bramen calls this

---

[39] See Hatch on how Calvinists like Lyman Beecher were maintaining their Calvinist position, against which non-Calvinists fought what they saw as Calvinism's "ordered and predictable form of religious experience, its rigid theological systems, its high-toned clericalism[,] . . . its penchant for cultural domination[,] . . . and its attempt to legislate morality" (170).

[40] For context on the formation of American liberal Christianity, specifically regarding how liberal Protestants set themselves in opposition to Calvinism, see David D. Hall's "Calvin and Calvinism within Congregational and Unitarian Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America" (2010).

“historiographic cliché” (40), it bears repeating that liberal Protestantism saw Calvinism as a “formidable opponent” (Davis, “Rhetorical” 455) and succeeded in marring its reputation in two significant ways. First, liberal Protestantism was reluctant to describe God, specifically in relation to soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), as both loving and wrathful. It accused Calvinism of emphasizing God’s wrath too strongly and held that “Not God’s judicial anger and love but love above all else characterized God” (T. Jenkins 26). The influential American Unitarian preacher William Ellery Channing, for example, wrote that to view the atonement as Jesus dying “to appease God’s wrath” is to uphold “very degrading views of God’s character” (27).[41] Second, what liberal Protestantism accomplished was not just a reimagining of God’s character, but also a reimagining of the character and reputation of past and present Calvinists themselves. As Douglas Walrath suggests, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Calvinists came to be retrospectively viewed as “bigoted and harsh believers” so that by the mid-nineteenth century, “the re-imaging of Calvinists is complete; ‘Calvinist’ and ‘bigot’ and ‘fanatic’ are contained within the same cultural image” (29). Examining the trope of the Calvinist minister, Walrath writes that “The bigoted orthodox Calvinist pastor who appears in fiction by James Paulding, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, James Fenimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, and others is not a historical recollection; he is a seventeenth-century character constructed intentionally to embody a nineteenth-century cultural image” (24). Liberal Protestantism, then, succeeded in shifting Calvinism’s reputation: Calvinism became associated with what liberal Protestantism saw as an unsympathetic God whose followers should be dismissed and even disdained as unsympathetic themselves.

The effectiveness of liberal Protestants’ use of fiction as a platform from which to bring about this shift in Calvinism’s reputation cannot be overstated. We most associate Nathaniel Hawthorne with solidifying a perception of Calvinism as a negative phenomenon. Claims like “the Puritans compressed whatever mirth and public joy they

[41] As Ann Douglas points out, liberal ministers frequently, but not exclusively, disavowed this characteristic of God in relation to their understanding of the nature of Jesus’s atonement (121). In his sermon “The Moral Argument against Calvinism,” Channing extends his critique of Calvinism and denounces more generally what he sees as the logical flaws within a Calvinist theological system.

deemed allowable to human infirmity" (146) abound in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and indeed in most of Hawthorne's work. But Hawthorne's representation of Calvinism would not have been so long lasting if it was not reinforced by "that damned mob of scribbling women" ("January" 304), the female sentimental novelists who regularly outsold him and whom he famously dismissed in a letter. Novels like Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Gates Ajar* (1868), both of which critique Calvinism and are thematically domestic and sentimental, demonstrate that while sentimental fiction is not the only genre within which Calvinism is criticized, it is where critiques of Calvinism find one of their most explicit and influential homes.[42] Hawthorne, then, was only one among many novelists who amplified and strengthened the message that Calvinism should be viewed as an object of condemnation rather than commendation.

In suggesting that sentimentalism functions as one of Calvinism's antagonists, I begin with the presupposition that although it is not first and foremost a religious doctrine, sentimentalism, like Calvinism, has its own theological principles. It emerges as a phenomenon that is diametrically opposed to Calvinist theology. Kevin Pelletier observes that because sentimentalism is grounded in the Scottish enlightenment, whose thinkers took more seriously the view that human feelings are not so corrupt that they cannot inform our moral sentiments, it "exists in opposition to the more severe and pessimistic dimensions of Calvinist theology" (7). Sentimentalism, then, does not uphold Calvinism's view of humanity as depraved and inherently sinful. Instead, rooted in the Scottish Common Sense tradition, it legitimizes the role of feelings stimulated by the

[42] Referencing both novels, Gregg Camfield writes that "women in particular used novels to attack Calvinism in favor of liberal, sentimental religion based substantially on the works of the Scottish moralists" (327).

senses in informing one's morality.[43] As Rachel B. Griffis acknowledges, referencing Herbert Ross Brown, sentimentalism affirms "the 'benevolence of man's original instincts'" (134).[44]

Nineteenth-century American sentimentalism builds off the theological disparities between eighteenth-century sentimentalism and Calvinism. In other words, Calvinism and sentimentalism have incompatible theological trajectories and this incompatibility is sustained, solidified, and further defined in American sentimental fiction which, as Sharon Kim writes, "originate[s] among liberal and Unitarian writers who used it to undermine Calvinism and to promote their views" (785-786). Channing, for instance, rejected Calvinist soteriology, pronouncing: "We cannot bow before a being, however great and powerful, who governs tyrannically" (22). Attacking both what they saw as a Calvinist understanding of God as "a tyrannical God of wrath" or "an abstract, distant, 'monarchical' God of inflexible order" (T. Jenkins 59), sentimentalists presented "an intimate, familial God who, they claimed, resonated with their 'experience'" (59).[45] A Calvinist God does not manifest the sentimentalist's conception of divine benevolence and must therefore be discredited as the representation of divine perfection. Thus, by

---

[43] This is not to say that moral philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment always shared similar philosophical and theological views, or that Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Calvinism are antithetical in *every* way. For example, historians like Andrew R. Holmes, by tracing the synthesis of Common Sense Philosophy and Calvinism in the thought and practice of Scottish and Irish Presbyterians, show that the two schools of thought (especially if one considers the work of philosopher Thomas Reid) may on some points be reconciled.

[44] See Deidre Dawson's "Literature and Sentimentalism" (2019) for more on how the Common Sense tradition influences eighteenth-century sentimental literature. See also June Howard who argues that Common Sense philosophy provides the "transatlantic and philosophical antecedents" (69) that inform nineteenth-century American sentimentalism and who more broadly "traces sensibility to Enlightenment moral theory, particularly that of the 'Common Sense' philosophers, and the role of sensibility in the development of 'modern subjectivities'" (quoted in Mary G. De Jong, 9).

[45] See Thomas E. Jenkins for a detailed analysis of the evolution and contours of liberalism's manifestation in the fiction of the period, and see Davis's "Rhetorical War and Reflex: Calvinism in Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction and Twentieth-Century Criticism" (1998) for more explicit connections between liberal Protestantism and sentimentalism.

virtue of the way sentimentalism depicts a Calvinist God, Calvinism becomes something which sentimentalism fundamentally rejects.

In literary criticism and historiography, the framing of Calvinism and sentimentalism as antagonists became further reinforced when Ann Douglas formatively suggested that Calvinism's "demise" (13) was wrought in large part by sentimentalism. Douglas reaffirmed in *The Feminization of American Culture* an association between Calvinism and "toughness" (18) so effectively that in our critical discourse we struggle to imagine one without the other. Of course, in contrasting Calvinism with sentimentalism and attaching to sentimental fiction that notorious adjective "anti-intellectual" (13), Douglas also incited an invaluable critical reconsideration of sentimental fiction by critics like Jane Tompkins who resisted equating "popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality" (132) and who saw instead in sentimentalism "intellectual complexity, ambition, and resourcefulness" (133). Bearing witness to the force and influence of Douglas's work, scholarship on nineteenth-century American sentimental fiction continues to return to *Feminization*'s representation of sentimentalism while complicating and at times disavowing the notion of sentimentalism's anti-intellectualism.

I have suggested above that Calvinism and sentimentalism have little theological common ground.[46] And, while this chapter does not take up every specific incompatible doctrinal and theological principle between Calvinism and sentimentalism, there is a degree to which theological principles interrelate and build upon one another and deserve mention as such. In summary, the theology espoused in sentimental literature questions to varying degrees the doctrines of original sin and human depravity, emphasizes human liberty, struggles to hold God's love and God's wrath in abeyance, and broadens the standards by which one can consider themselves converted and saved. Calvinism, in contrast, makes God's wrath and judgement upon original sin present to a degree that sentimentalism finds morally off-putting and misrepresentative of God, and the "elect" in Calvinism is a relatively exclusive group whose membership requires a process of conversion that is more rigorous than that which characterizes sentimentalism.

Critics and historians situate Stowe in sentimental discourse by emphasizing that she gradually moves away from Calvinism and seeks "a kinder, gentler form of

[46] See Pelletier, Kim, and Susanna Compton Underland for thoughtful reconsiderations of how the relationship between sentimentalism and religion can be complicated in the context of nineteenth-century fiction. Pelletier, for example, although acknowledging that Calvinism and sentimentalism have disparate ideological roots, somewhat breaks with the scholarly assumption that they are antagonists. He suggests that Ann Douglas's work work created a precedent for scholarship to create a "*false* opposition between nineteenth-century sentimentality and Calvinist theology" (7, italics mine). In accepting Douglas's "premise that Calvinism and the sentimental are opposed rather than often working in close concert" (7), Pelletier argues that scholars have neglected to see that a "prominent strand of sentimentalism actually included much of the same Puritanical authoritativeness that Douglas lauds in a writer like Herman Melville" (7). Speaking specifically about the authoritativeness connected to the pervasive apocalyptic theology within sentimental fiction, he demonstrates the interconnectedness of God's love and God's wrath, the intermixing of "calls for love and threats of divine retribution" (8) in sentimental fiction. Pelletier, then, sees Calvinism and sentimentalism as interrelated insofar as sentimental fiction, particularly in relation to anti-slavery discourse, maintains a sense of apocalypticism and "vengeance" (7) present within Calvinism itself.

Christianity" (Koester 311) embodied by a sentimental theological vision.[47] Raised a Calvinist, and belonging to a preeminent Calvinist family, she was uniquely situated to receive and later to question the Calvinist tradition with which she was intimately acquainted:

> As the daughter of Lyman Beecher, the era's most dynamic moderating Calvinist, a youth with firsthand experience of Calvinist ministry in rural New England (Litchfield, Connecticut), urban New England (Boston), and the opening West (Cincinnati), the wife of a Congregationalist professor of biblical literature, a constant participant in a ceaseless round of intense theological conversation, and a careful reader of learned and popular theology, Stowe was as well situated as any person in her age to take the measure of America's mainstream Reformed theology. (Noll 325)

By the time of the publication of her novel *Oldtown Folks* in 1869, Stowe was explicitly more critical of Calvinism. She and many of her family members, including her famous-preacher brother Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), distanced and eventually estranged themselves from the Calvinism instilled in them by their father.[48] The trajectory of Stowe's religious life starts with her Calvinist upbringing and ends with her affiliation with the Episcopal church. In fact, as Koester details, Stowe's increasingly pronounced skepticism of Calvinism was one of the catalysts that spurred her interest in the Episcopal tradition and its Anglican counterpart. At every turn, Stowe's life and fiction is

---

[47] On this point see for example Nina Baym, Dorothy Berkson, Gregg Camfield, Crozier, Kimball, and Koester. See also Kristin Wilkes, who, although not focusing on sentimentalism, emphasizes that Stowe's moving away from Calvinism does not equate to her becoming "antireligious" (450), as criticism at times assumes when framing *The Minister's Wooing* without adequate definitional specificity as a "secularizing force" (437).

[48] See Gary Dorrien's *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progress Religion, 1805-1900* (2001) for an excellent account of Henry Ward Beecher's liberal theology, as well as that of Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Bushnell, and others.

characterized by an openness to different forms of religion (Catholicism, spiritualism) regardless of whether she would move on to fully embrace them.[49]

Critics and historians see not only the trajectory of Stowe's religious life as symptomatic of the theological trends of nineteenth-century America, but likewise her fiction, which indeed advocates for many of the theological features which characterize sentimentalism. This fiction, in this case specifically *The Minister's Wooing*, also more generally fulfills sentimental conventions. However, these conventions are themselves subject to critical negotiations and re-negotiations. Sentimentalism is not a monolith, and its criteria are in a constant and productive state of flux.[50] Joanne Dobson, for example, caveats that sentimentalism "is not a discrete literary category, as the term genre might imply, but rather an imaginative orientation characterized by certain themes, stylistic features, and figurative conventions" (266). Despite the capaciousness and porousness of sentimentalism, Dobson suggests a useful overarching description with which to understand it when she emphasizes that nineteenth-century American sentimentalism contains "an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and acknowledges the shared devastation of affectional loss" (266).

[49] See Koester for an account about how a number of Stowe's family members "preceded her into the Episcopal fold" (255) and of how the Episcopal church attempted to "restore older Christian practices rejected by the Reformation" (255). For a critical emphasis not on how Stowe ultimately rejects Calvinism, but on how she simultaneously affirms it, see Thuesen, especially his incorporation of Stowe's recollections on John Calvin after her visit to Geneva in 1853.

[50] Of course, this instability, although neither unique to sentimentalism nor extreme enough to undermine it as a category, can be a point of frustration. Mary G. De Jong, for example, acknowledges that "sentimentalism takes a multitude of forms, accommodating multiple internal contradictions and inconsistent manifestations that can reduce a scholar to tears" (9). See De Jong for an overview of eighteenth-century iterations of sentimentalism, connected with the European enlightenment, the cult of sensibility, and the "man of feeling." See Davis ("Rhetorical") and Sweeney for arguments against seeing Calvinism as a monolith.

The Minister's Wooing fits the bill. Its themes are the rupture and eventual reunification of loved and loving friends and family members, the healing and strength emerging from communal bonds, and the power of sympathy.[51] Indeed, the novel turns on the supposed death of the protagonist's love interest. Lost at sea, James, or rather his absence, prompts Mary to hear "the far-off dashing of sea-green waves" and to feel "a yearning impulse towards that dear soul gone out into the infinite unknown" (231).[52] James is not only alive and well by the novel's end, but also converted, a fact which fulfills an eternal reunification between him and his loved ones on top of a temporal reunification.[53]

Nevertheless, as I earlier suggested and as I will further develop, *The Minister's Wooing*, in terms of its theological disposition, does not participate in sentimental

---

[51] See Marianne Noble's *Rethinking Sympathy and Human Contact in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Hawthorne, Douglass, Stowe, Dickinson* (2019) for a thoughtful analysis of Stowe's vision of sympathy in *The Minister's Wooing*.

[52] While Mary is reflecting on her love and longing for James, the narrator interjects: "Mary even, for a moment, fancied that a voice called her name, and started, shivering. Then the habits of her positive and sensible education returned at once, and she came out of her reverie as one breaks from a dream" (232). In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Jane, whose imagination is more romantic than Mary's due to her not being raised a New England Calvinist, does not merely suppose she hears Rochester's voice calling her name – "Jane! Jane! Jane!" (357) – but confirms the occurrence as the novel progresses. There is no narratorial commentary to emphasize the skepticism with which we are furnished in *The Minister's Wooing*.

[53] This chapter does not take up every specific incompatible doctrinal point of theology between Calvinism and sentimentalism, but the discourse within *The Minister's Wooing* on conversion deserves mention in relation to how sentimentalism understands conversion. Stokes suggest that "in contrast with the teachings of Calvinism salvation in sentimental literature seems to be available to anyone with faith, with neither ritual nor conversion required" (1) and later that "the only criterion of conversion in sentimental literature was sincere, deep feeling" (43). Through Mrs. Marvyn's reluctance to see herself as converted, through Hopkins's anxieties over whether he has authentic faith, and through the details we are given about James Marvyn's eventual conversion, *The Minister's Wooing* debates rather than assumes that conversion and faith require only deep feeling and so in this way also compels us to reconsider on what grounds we have understood the novel as a sentimental text.

fiction's propensity to dismiss Calvinism. In making this argument, I probe Claudia Stokes's characterization of what she calls a sentimental "worldview." She suggests "that the doctrines of predestination and election are nowhere taken seriously in the sentimentalist worldview, although they are the subject of some mockery in texts like Sedgwick's *New-England Tale*, Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* and *My Wife and I*, and [Susan] Warner's *The Old Helmet*" (49).[54] To be sure, most sentimental fiction does not take predestination and election seriously. These doctrines, which are directly related to what sentimental fiction sees as the wrathful Calvinist God and the overall spirit of Calvinism, are regularly dismissed with mockery. But I argue that in *The Minister's Wooing*, Calvinism is taken seriously – its doctrines are weighed for their truth claims despite their perceived unpalatability – and that the very seriousness with which it is taken drives the novel. The novel does not attempt to deny that Calvinism is a formidable opponent, and by appreciating its formidableness, it puts pressure on a sentimental (and liberal Protestant) theological vision. That is, while the novel is critical of Calvinism, it tempers its criticisms with ambivalence and even appreciation of it, and rather than dismiss it, it resists characterizing it as untrue, regardless of what it sees as its unpalatability.

Some critics acknowledge that Stowe sees in Calvinism something admirable. For example, Peter J. Thuesen writes that "For all the echoes of liberal anti-Calvinism in Stowe's work, her novels are more intriguing for their simultaneous affirmation of Calvinism as the refining fire that purified and strengthened the Yankee soul" (225). Mark Noll writes that Stowe's work, although rejecting "certain Calvinist particulars," reflects "her loving admiration for the theology and the theologians she was leaving behind" (325). He suggests that in *The Minister's Wooing* Stowe treats Samuel Hopkins, who historically and in the novel is known for both his Calvinism and his abolitionism, with "surpassing tenderness" (325). Henry F. May writes that Stowe finds "New England

---

[54] For example, in Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale*, Sedgwick makes Mrs. Wilson, a person marked by villainy, whose son David places all blame of his extensive wrongdoings on being brought up a Calvinist by her, the voice of Calvinism. Mrs. Wilson is wryly and repeatedly criticized for being a self-righteous hypocrite and a "Pharisee" (23).

Calvinism more than half admirable, and its view of the world more than half true" (42) in part because she is "too deeply convinced about the faithfulness of Calvinist pessimism to actual life" (20). Nevertheless, this criticism places more weight on Stowe's skepticism of Calvinism than on what she finds attractive, compelling, or true in it. By doing so, it undervalues Calvinism in a way that Stowe and *The Minister's Wooing* do not.[55]

To understand *The Minister's Wooing*'s approach to Calvinism, we must reanimate the novel's theological framework. Through a close examination of the novel's characters and their theological attitudes, doubts, and dispositions, I showcase in the next section Stowe's deeply ambivalent portrayal and treatment of Calvinism. I then analyze more specifically the concept of spiritual intuition and its deployment in the novel. By spiritual intuition, I mean sentimental fiction's depiction of an epistemology grounded not in abstract reasoning but in an affective way of knowing. *The Minister's Wooing* itself uses the phrase to suggest something beyond "the intellect" (190), namely an emotional insight or strong feeling that may at times conflict with conclusions wrought only through logic and abstraction. Susan K. Harris describes spiritual intuition as a form of faith that prioritizes "experiential piety" over "textual rationalism" (xii).[56] By framing logic and emotion as antagonists, I join Harris and others in emphasizing the understanding with which Stowe and those in her period conceptualized the difference between a cognitive and affective epistemology, namely that logic, rationality, and abstract reasoning is neutral and objective, and emotion is subjective and at times

---

[55] Leah Marie Becker has also recently observed and challenged the emphasis on reading *The Minister's Wooing* "as a critique of Calvinism and Stowe herself as an anti-Calvinist" (151).

[56] While Calvinism does not necessarily suggest that spiritual intuition is always misguided, it does require that one reject their spiritual intuition if it contradicts doctrines about God inferred through logic. (Mary Scudder is taught through "every prayer, hymn, and sermon from her childhood" that feelings are more often than not "traitors" [289].) If one can through logical reason infer the doctrines of predestination and election in their Calvinist iteration, but one's spiritual intuition recoils at these doctrines, this intuition should not be trusted as the arbiter of correct doctrine.

untrustworthy.[57] By acknowledging that trusting one's spiritual intuition is not a one-size-fits-all solution to spiritual doubts, *The Minister's Wooing* complicates the way sentimental fiction legitimizes and validates the role of spiritual intuition in discerning the nature, character, and workings of God.

Sentimental Piety and *The Minister's Wooing*

It is one thing to speak of what religious worldview a novel promotes, and another to interpret from what worldview its characters view God, themselves, and others. The presence of characters who think, feel, and act according to their Methodist, Calvinist, or Unitarian beliefs does not mean that these same characters are by necessity spokespeople for a novel's implicit or explicit religious vision or ideal. Set in Newport, Rhode Island near the end of the eighteenth century, *The Minister's Wooing* is a historical reconstruction of New England life and has as one of its expressly stated purposes the study of the "psychological" (15) effects of a Calvinist worldview on New Englanders. The basic plot of the novel is that Mary Scudder is in love (mostly unawares) with the rebellious youth James Marvyn. After he supposedly dies at sea, Mary is persuaded by her mother to betroth herself to Samuel Hopkins, the eponymous minister, modeled after the historical Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) whose Calvinism "was said to 'out-Edwards Edwards'" (Kazin 12). When James returns alive and converted, Mary is spiritually convicted that it is her duty to keep her engagement with Hopkins but is eventually freed from the agreement by the minister himself.

At every major turn, the narrator contextualizes this plot – each action, circumstance, and behavior – in relation to how Calvinism has influenced each character to think and act the way that they do. These characters are subject to what Ann Douglas calls "Calvinist thought patterns" (246). Douglas uses this phrase in reference to the character Aaron Burr, loosely based on the historical Vice President of the United States (1801-05) who shot Alexander Hamilton in a duel and who was the grandson of Jonathan

---

[57] Of course, these associations were gendered: women were more susceptible to erroneous thinking due to their inability, as James Russell Lowell puts it, to "live by syllogisms."

Edwards. But the phrase is equally if not more applicable to and useful in describing characters like Samuel Hopkins, Mrs. Marvyn, and to an extent Mary, for whom the narrator provides more interiority in terms of their psychological theological wrestling. Mary's disposition is described as a direct result of Calvinism's formative effect on it: Her "religious faculties" are formed by the "clear, keen, cold New England clime, and nurtured in its abstract and positive theologies" (13). Take also Mary's mother, Mrs. Scudder, who attempts to prevent any blossoming love between James and Mary because in viewing James an "unbeliever" who has not experienced the "saving change" brought about only "by sovereign grace" (46), she is full of dread that her daughter, rather than being "elected to walk in white" (47), should be led astray by marrying an unbeliever. Mrs. Scudder's rationale is grounded in her belief that "The way of life was narrow, the chances in favour of any child of Adam infinitely small; the best, the most seemingly pure and fair, was by nature a child of wrath, and could be saved only by a sovereign decree" (47). The narrator's description of the theological context from which Mrs. Scudder sees the unfolding of her and her daughter's life leaves no question about the extent to which these characters think and live through a Calvinist lens.

For Calvinist New Englanders, theology was neither privatized nor hypothetical. "No man or woman," explains the narrator, "accepted any theory or speculation simply *as* theory or speculation; all was profoundly real and vital – a foundation on which actual life was based with intensest earnestness" (188). Marked by "their intensity, their depth, [and] their unworldly gravity and earnestness" (46), the members of this community, we are told, are unmatched in the passion and concentration with which they "grappled around things sublime and eternal" (187). The narrator insists that "In no other country were the soul and spiritual life ever such intense realities and everything contemplated so much (to use a current New England phrase), 'in reference to eternity'" (47). Naturally after all of these qualifications, the novel does not leave us in suspense as to the predominant Calvinist doctrines about things sublime and eternal with which New Englanders were consumed. Stowe acknowledges that one of the most pressing theological issues, taken up with unmatched intensity by Jonathan Edwards and his theological progeny (including Samuel Hopkins), was the task of delineating how God's sovereignty and benevolence works in relation to human freedom, agency, and

responsibility.[58] This sort of theological inquiry is not exclusive to Calvinism, but as Stowe recognized, it is parsed by Calvinists in exceptionally minute detail.

The Calvinist narrative in its basic form, and especially its eighteenth-century New England iteration, is that humans after Adam and Eve are born in a state of sin and deserve eternal condemnation. This is the fate of many, while a few are predestined to experience conversion and receive a salvation that is dependent on God's irresistible grace and immutable will. Rather than accuse God of capriciousness, New Englanders understood that God would be acting justly if he let everyone receive damnation, and the fact "That God went beyond the dictates of strict justice to elect some men to be saved was a source of hope and a basis of thanks" (Bremer 21), at least in theory. We have difficulty today identifying with the positive inflections of this narrative if we are not aware of with what reverence Calvinist New Englanders perceived God's righteousness. For them, the condemnation of the non-elect glorifies God in that it reveals and manifests God's justice. The understanding went that humans, after the Fall, are not innocent beings. And it is right – it is in line with God's righteousness – for the guilty to be punished, especially if they are sinning against an infinite being. But, according to his plan for humanity, God upholds his righteousness while yet offering mercy to those on whom he chooses to have mercy. This mercy is a free and underserved gift. If humans had any claim to it, if they were deserving of it, it would no longer be mercy but justice. Thus, the unworthiness of sinners is a perquisite for God's unnecessary but bestowed mercy.

---

[58] Edwards explicated each one of these words – sovereignty, benevolence, freedom, agency, and responsibility – in detail. It is not the intent of this chapter to analyze these terms, but a summary of Edwards's conception of human freedom is appropriate. Responding to Arminian and Pelagian formulation of the human will, Edwards concludes in *Freedom of the Will* (1754) that the will is not free in that it cannot choose against its strongest desire. In reverse: the will is free to act according to its strongest inclination, and only in this sense is it free. Crucially, humans lack a desire for salvation and righteousness until God transforms a person so that they are positively inclined toward these things. The doctrine is not a standalone; it is logically inferred from Edwards's understanding of original sin, God's grace, and other elements of theology proper.

The narrator of *The Minister's Wooing*, herself seeming to sympathize with New Englanders who struggle to view the positive inflections of Calvinism, accentuates the fear and apprehension Calvinism can inspire.[59] She glosses the Calvinist iteration of God's design for the world as follows:

> The human race, without exception, coming into existence "under God's wrath and curse," with a nature so fatally disordered, that, although perfect free agents, men were infallibly certain to do nothing to Divine acceptance until regenerated by the supernatural aid of God's Spirit, this aid being given to a certain decreed number of the human race only; the rest, with enough free agency to make them responsible, but without this indispensable assistance exposed to the malignant assaults of evil spirits versed in every art of temptation, were sure to fall hopelessly into perdition. (188-189)

Laying out the soteriological implications of these doctrines, the narrator, whose voice is often understood as the voice of Stowe due in part to the many biographical elements within the novel, writes that what she sees as the gloominess of New England theology will break any spirit that does not either rise above it by "triumphant faith" (188) or numb itself to the implications of its doctrines.[60] It bears repeating that Stowe has in mind Edwards's interpretation of Calvinism and regeneration, about which Thuesen writes: "Not only did Edwards and his disciples oppress the New England psyche with the notion that only an 'infinitesimal' portion of humanity constituted the elect, but they also set an unrealistically high standard of regeneration, which Stowe likened to trying to reach heaven by a rungless ladder" (224).[61] It is in Edwards's sermons on this subject, for

---

[59] See Christiane E. Farnan's "The 'Least Drop of Oil': Locating Narrative Authority in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*" (2011) for a discussion on narrative authority in the novel. Farnan suggests that the narrator's voice is communal: it "speaks for the entire Newport community" (96) and "meld[s] with the identity and ideologies" (97) of that community.

[60] See especially Koester and Charles H. Foster for accounts of the biographical elements in *The Minister's Wooing*.

[61] Despite the adjustments (more in degree than in kind) that Edwards and other Calvinists bring to Calvinism, this chapter uses the terms Calvinist, Puritan, Edwardsean, Hopkinsian, and New England theology interchangeably when they do not require further distinction.

example, that the narrator locates a "refined poetry of torture" (189) from which readers and listeners were made to fear God's justice and wrath.[62]

It is from this theological foundation that Mary Scudder, Samuel Hopkins, and Mrs. Marvyn interpret and practice their faith. All three are immersed in Calvinism but are affected by it in unique ways. Mary's ability to experientially feel and believe in the love and goodness of God allows her to submit whatever theological doubts she has about Calvinism to the fundamental principle that God is by definition benevolent. Her theological guidance comes primarily from Hopkins, a firmly committed Calvinist. Taking Calvinism's teachings to what he understands as their logical conclusion, Hopkins propagates the doctrine of disinterested benevolence, which ultimately holds that one has to rejoice at the thought of their own damnation if it means contributing to the glory of God, and makes it the "test of true regeneration" (Kazin 12). Like Hopkins, Mrs. Marvyn is deeply enmeshed within a Calvinist worldview, but Calvinism does not resonate with her sense of morality and thus becomes for her a source of tremendous spiritual anxiety.[63] In depicting the interior spiritual life of each character, the novel neither valorizes nor villainizes Calvinism as much as it represents the equally possible responses one may have toward it.

Mary's relationship with Calvinism is not stagnant in *The Minister's Wooing*. She is elevated to the status of "sainthood" (*Woman's* 234) as Nina Baym suggests, but is

---

[62] The narrator recounts, for instance, how a "brother minister once laid hold of [Edwards's] skirts, exclaiming, in an involuntary agony, "Oh! Mr. Edwards! Mr. Edwards! is God not a God of mercy?" (190). It is worth noting, however, that Stowe, in depicting Edwards harshly, paints an incomplete picture. Foster writes that Stowe was "far less than just to Edwards' subtle and beautiful, and, as she could not know, very modern psychological insights in *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746)" (183). Furthermore, critics are increasingly acknowledging that for all of Edwards's "fire and brimstone" preaching, Edwards also preached on what he considered the unsurpassable beauty, compassion, and love of God through Jesus Christ.

[63] Mrs. Marvyn's son James, a relatively minor character in the novel, is skeptical about Calvinism, but by virtue of not taking it or religion too seriously at the outset of the novel, he is unmotivated to parse its doctrines.

Mary a Calvinist or a sentimental heroine? That she is represented in the novel as embodying a spiritual temperament that is more "intuitional/experiential" and less "rational/speculative" (Buell, "Calvinism" 266) places her disposition in the sentimentalist camp. The intimacy she experiences with God is to such a degree that the narrator tells us that if Mary were not born in New England, she would have been a mystic who sees "beatific visions in the sunset skies" (13).[64] Mary possesses the desire "of utter self-abnegation for the glory of the invisible" (15) and the artistry of the "hard old New England divines [who] were the poets of metaphysical philosophy" (15), but, "womanlike" (13), she does not possess their hardness. "Where theorists and philosophers tread with sublime assurance," the narrator reflects, "woman often follows with bleeding footsteps; women are always turning from the abstract to the individual, and feeling where the philosopher only thinks" (15), as Mary does. For example, when she thinks of her friends and neighbours and the possibility that they may end up in "an abyss of horrors without end" (15), she feels "the walls of her faith closing round her as an iron shroud" (15). We know that Mary's theological education is Calvinist through and through: she grows up reading "treatises on the Will" and listening to Hopkins explain "Edwards on the nature of true virtue" (13). That she feels the wall of her faith closing around her suggests that she finds Calvinism confining and limiting. The iron shroud suggests the hardness with which the narrator has already described New England theologians, as well as the deadness, the unlivable and unviable nature of Calvinism, for someone like Mary who feels and imagines with deep sensitivity the reality of hell.[65]

---

[64] This is one of the multiple instances in the novel wherein Mary is associated with Catholicism. In this case the narrator likens Mary to a Catholic saint: "Had she been born in Italy, under the dissolving influences of that sunny dreamy clime, beneath the shadow of cathedrals, and where pictured saints and angels smiled in clouds of painting from every arch and altar, she might, like fair St. Catherine of Siena, have seen beatific visions in the sunset skies, and a silver dove descending upon her as she prayed" (13). See Joseph Helminski for the Catholic overtones of Mary, and Neil Meyer for the incorporation of Catholic themes in Stowe's fiction more generally.

[65] The image of an "iron shroud" is not unique to Stowe. See, for example, J.M.S. Tompkins's "Jane Eyre's 'Iron Shroud'" for a discussion of Charlotte Brontë's allusion to William Mudford's gothic short story *The Iron Shroud* (1830).

Stowe attributes to Mary a degree of piety which nineteenth-century sentimental fiction resists attributing to Calvinists. True to sentimental form, Mary does not remain a consistent Calvinist. As much as she is a "daughter of Puritanism" (181), she seems to revise her Calvinist beliefs upon hearing about the death of James. What follows for Mary upon hearing this news is two consecutive moments of unresponsiveness, a period of questioning, and finally a declaration in the form of a prayer. The first absence of response takes place when Mary hears Mrs. Marvyn lamenting the death of her son and expressing doubts about God and Calvinism. She is clearly affected and troubled by the indignation Mrs. Marvyn expresses, so much so that she feels "as if the point of a wedge were being driven between her life and her life's life – between her and her God" (194), but she neither confirms nor disavows Mrs. Marvyn's critiques. The second omission occurs after Candace, the formerly enslaved African servant in the Marvyn household and one of the novel's spokeswomen for sentimentalism, consoles Mrs. Marvyn and proceeds to privately address Mary: Candace affirms that James must be one of the elect (196), to which Mary voices neither her agreement nor disagreement. Afterward, Mary spends months wrestling with Calvinist soteriology, wondering among other things if she can be happy in heaven if James is in hell. She poses concerns, but supplies no answers, and neither does the narrator. Finally, after months of turbulent questioning, and through the catalyst of sorrow, Mary receives "a celestial inner clearness" followed by "the fullness of mysterious communion given to the pure in heart – that advent of the Comforter in the soul, teaching all things and bringing all things in remembrance" (204). Revealing the theological revelations birthed from her trial of sorrow, she prays in the presence of her prayer circle and describes God's love as "a love passing knowledge – passing all love of lovers or of mothers" (206). It is no accident that in the preceding chapter we are given Mrs. Marvyn's expression of the love she has for her son (as well as her belief in the love she understands all mothers having toward their children) or that in the following chapter she claims that if a parent were to treat their child the way Calvinists describe God as treating his created beings, the parent would be regarded "as a monster" (200). Mary indirectly and belatedly responds to Mrs. Marvyn by suggesting that God's love surpasses the love of mothers. Elaborating on the power of God's love to bring about redemption, she depicts divine love the victor: "conquering, victorious love,

rejoicing to endure, panting to give, and offering its whole self with an infinite joyfulness for our salvation" (206). She does not outright declare her rejection of Calvinism and her alignment with Candace's belief that "dar's consid'able more o' de 'lect dan people tink," (196), but she arguably implies it, if not also by her omitting any mention of God sovereignly allowing, as Mrs. Marvyn puts it, all but "the merest fragment" (193) of humankind to experience regeneration.[66]

Samuel Hopkins, unlike Mary, remains a committed Calvinist. He shares with Mary a belief that God is wholly benevolent but insists through consistent and vigorous theological study to comprehend as much of the deity as he can while also upholding a rigorous routine of self-examination of the state of his faith. He exemplifies the reputation, solidified by critics like Perry Miller, that Calvinists have of experiencing anxiety over the state of their souls. Lawrence Buell writes that Hopkins's insecurity "is designed to illustrate Puritanism's potential, *as the nineteenth century saw it*, for pushing its devotees to the extremes of morbidity and despair" ("Rival" 79, italics mine). Hopkins asks Mary if she ever has doubts about the authenticity of her faith and she expresses that instead of doubts she has joy and assurance: "I cannot have any fears – I never could; I try sometimes, but the thought of God's goodness comes all around me, and I am so happy before I think of it!"[67] He responds that he too has similar experiences but before he enjoys them, he interrogates them to discover whether they are grounded in

[66]Leah Marie Becker argues that in *The Minister's Wooing*, Stowe "redeems Calvinism for her nineteenth-century readers" (152). Attempting to correct readings of Stowe that implicitly assume the validity of the secularization thesis, she resists reading Stowe's novel as an example of how "dogma-heavy religion gave way to sympathetic secularity over the course of the nineteenth century" (151). Becker agrees with this essay's claim that *The Minister's Wooing*'s engagement with Calvinism has been critically simplified, but whereas she sees the female characters in the novel having their faith in Calvinism "reconfirm[ed]," (169), this essay argues that they question and move away from what the novel depicts as the narrowness of Calvinism and resists reading this moving away from Calvinism as evidence of the secularization thesis.

[67] The letter Mary writes to Dr. Hopkins reaffirming these sentiments is almost a word-for-word replica of the letter that Roxana, Stowe's mother, wrote to her future husband Lyman in 1798.

selfishness.[68] He asks himself whether he loves God because God has done him good or whether he loves God because God himself is good, regardless of whatever way humans may benefit from this goodness. Thus, because of the suspicion with which he views the human heart and its tendency toward deceit, he is anxious about whether his regeneration is authentic, with whether the "evidences" (162) of his faith are ultimately rooted in "selfish love" (163) rather than disinterested love.[69]

That *The Minister's Wooing* teases Hopkins for being a theological bookworm does not mean that it mocks or dismisses Hopkins's Calvinism. Hopkins's faith is treated as no less authentic than Mary's; he is by all accounts a virtuous Christian. Even the Calvinist-skeptic James, writing to Mary about his desire to be as virtuous as her and Hopkins, says of the two: "he and you have something in you that I call religion, – something that makes you good" (41). While Hopkins's theological propensity is to dwell too much on "metaphysical subtleties" (51), he nevertheless manifests the gospel by, among other things, "his visitations to homes of poverty" and his protest against the "system of slavery and the slave-trade" (51). Stowe praises Hopkins for rejecting slavery on account of its being "a clear violation of the great law which commands us to love our

---

[68] Hopkins's anxieties are situated within the New England Calvinist understanding of regeneration. (See Francis Bremer for a delineation of the five steps of salvation to which New England Puritans adhered.) In summary, the experience of regeneration was supposed to evoke a sense of tremendous relief in the person who had realized that they had received the free gift of salvation. But this respite came only after many fits and starts. The process of conversion went something like this: first the unregenerate person experiences a false conversion and falls into legalism and pride. This results in them feeling disgruntled, restless, and guilty at their inability to progress in sanctification. Their guilty conscience produces a feeling of pain within them. This pain, alerting the sinner to their spiritual wound, is a good thing. For some, a conscience seared with guilt has a numbing effect, just like a portion of skin becomes numb to pain if one continuously sears it. For others, for the elect, the conscience refuses to harden. Then, at some point, God enables the sinner to genuinely realize their inability to save themselves through their own righteousness. This conviction leads them into a spiritual battle that eventually culminates in their acknowledgement of their previous false assurance. Whatever true assurance the convert now feels does bring them relief, but they view it with a certain suspicion and pair it with a consistent testing of their faith.

[69] The historical Hopkins himself "continually recorded his failure to attain a lasting, experimental sense of God" (Berk, *Calvinism* 55).

neighbor as ourselves, – and a dishonor upon the Christian religion" (90). Indeed, it is on account of Hopkins's insistence that the Marvyn household renounce slavery that the Marvyns free Candace. Gayle Kimball overstates the case when she interprets Stowe's portrayal of Hopkins as "ludicrous" (5). He embodies to a fault the emphasis on rationalism with which *The Minister's Wooing* depicts New England Calvinists, and yet he is an exemplary Christian for all that.[70] More than that, as Buell observes, it is not in spite but because of Hopkins's commitment to logic that he does two admirable things: he renounces Mary upon the return of James, thus providing evidence of his "unconditional submission to the 'disinterested love' he has been preaching" ("Calvinism" 268), and he recognizes the sinfulness and immorality of slavery and preaches against it despite knowing he will lose the support of affluent members in his congregation.[71] On this latter point, the narrator explains Hopkins's conviction to denounce slavery in these terms: "With [Hopkins] logic was everything, and to perceive a truth and not act in logical sequence from it a thing so incredibly that he had not yet enlarged his capacity to take it in as a possibility" (86). The historical Hopkins likewise was persistent in his opposition to slavery, his church being one of the first to explicitly and consistently preach against it.

Whereas Hopkins's being bound and ruled by logic leads to his performing good deeds, Mrs. Marvyn is pictured a prisoner trapped by her intellectual beliefs: "Hers was a nature more reasoning than creative and poetic; and whatever she believed bound her

---

[70] It should be noted that Hopkins is also not closed off to different theological traditions. Hearing that one of his parishioners observed that he interpreted portions of Paul's Epistles with an Arminian rather than Calvinistic understanding, Hopkins responds: "Supposing I do interpret some texts like the Arminians. Can't Arminians have anything right about them? Who wouldn't rather go with the Arminians when they are *right*, than with the Calvinists when they are wrong?" (36) The historical Hopkins likewise stated: "who would not much rather join with the grossest Arminians, so far as they are right, than with the most orthodox Calvinists, where they are wrong?" (*Works* 177).

[71] Walrath writes that "Dr. Hopkins shows a heroic lack of self-concern throughout his life and his ministry. When he becomes convinced that owning slaves is against God's will, for example, he preaches against slavery openly and repeatedly, despite the protests of prominent members of his congregation who are slave owners" (56).

mind in strictest chains to its logical results" (192). Both doubt the authenticity of their faith, but in different ways. Hopkins is largely concerned with whether his love for God is rooted in selfishness and deceit, while Mrs. Marvyn wonders if she loves God at all. Like Hopkins and other New Englanders, she receives the teachings of Calvinism as "absolute truth" (191), but instead of loving God for them, they have only "the effect of a slow poison" (191) on her, a poison which, like Mary's iron shroud, suggests the harm to one's spiritual life that Calvinism may engender. Mrs. Marvyn's predicament is that the entire Calvinist "scheme of the universe" (59), which she is convicted is true, does not produce in her "exultant joy" nor "submission" (59). The narrator explains: "Everything to her seemed shrouded in gloom and mystery; and that darkness she received as a token of unregeneracy, as a sign that she was one of those who are destined, by a mysterious decree, never to receive the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" (59). What Mrs. Marvyn understands she lacks is the correct affective response to the understanding of God she takes to be true. She believes on a cognitive level in the God described by Hopkins, but she is not emotionally moved to embrace him. She understands her lack of joy and pleasure at Calvinist doctrines as proof of her unregenerate state. That is, she considers herself non-elect because she cannot substitute her dislike of Calvinist doctrines for joy and delight at the same.

Mrs. Marvyn's spiritual anxieties and doubts about Calvinism reach crisis when she is informed that her son James has died at sea an unconverted man. She thinks of the eternal condemnation he is destined to suffer if he has indeed died an unconverted sinner and accuses God of cruelty. She resents Hopkins's teaching that God creates some people "as vessels of wrath and fits them for destruction . . . without violating their free agency" (194). Thinking of more than just her son, she cannot accept that the "infinite happiness" (194) the elect will experience in heaven can make up for the perdition of "the greater part of the human race" (194). Hopkins's Calvinism and what those in his theological camp take to be a faithful interpretation of Biblical scripture rings unjust: "I can never think it right – never!" (194). She does not see how Calvinism is supposed to produce affection, admiration, and love for God, exclaiming "I can never love God! I can never praise Him!" (194).

At this point, Mrs. Marvyn's words become incoherent and Candace, seeing that no one can calm her down or "talk gospel to her" (195), intervenes. First, Candace confirms Mrs. Marvyn's sentiments that "dar's a drefful mistake somewhar" (195) in her understanding of God. She proclaims that God is not how Mrs. Marvyn imagines him to be, insists that God loves her and that Jesus died for James, and encourages her to reflect on the crucifixion by vividly picturing Jesus's physical suffering: his "crown o' thorns," his sweating "great drops o' blood" and the "print o' de nails in his hands" (195). She tells Mrs. Marvyn that she has no scruples with Hopkins's parishioners listening to his theology, but that in times of spiritual sickness and despair, the only remedy is to reflect on Jesus:

> "He knows all about mothers' hearts; He won't break yours. It was jes' 'cause He know'd we'd come into straits like dis yer, dat He went through all dese tings – Him, de Lord o' Glory! Is did Him you was a-talkin' about? – Him you can't love? Look at Him, an' see ef you can't. Look an' see what He is! – don't ask no questions, and don't go to no reasonin's – jes' look at Him, hangin' dar, so sweet and patient, on de cross!" (196)

By redirecting Mrs. Marvyn's focus to the love of Jesus manifested through his suffering and crucifixion, and by providing comfort through her own maternal-like presence, Candace effects a release of emotion in Mrs. Marvyn. Her own love and the love of Jesus to which she draws Mrs. Marvyn's attention evoke in Mrs. Marvyn "healing sobs and tears" rendered only "beneath the shadow of that suffering cross" (196).

Critics have suggested that Candace, in the vein of Mary, functions as Stowe's theological "spokeswoman" (Kimball 39). In doing so, they argue that Stowe advocates for a theology that elevates spiritual intuition over abstract reasoning in discerning the character of God and the doctrine of salvation, what Gregg Camfield characterizes as "an

intuitive rather than a rational approach to religion" (342).[72] This criticism sees what Mrs. Marvyn calls "Candace's way" (201) as fulfilling Stowe's sentimental theological vision. Koester writes that Candace's "power is spiritual, not cerebral; her faith lives in her heart" (217). Neil Meyer writes that Candace cuts "through the theological hesitancies of Calvinism to the very heart of evangelical Christianity" (480). Amy R. Howe writes that Candace "is represented as intuitively refusing the rigid, exclusive interpretation of doctrine for a more capacious and confident certitude of divine election based on the natural moral authority of a mother's heart" (194). By using the word "heart" to connote what it sees as a more authentic, liberating, and emotionally intuitive faith, this criticism implicitly aligns *The Minister's Wooing* with the Second Great Awakening's appreciation of religious enthusiasm in contrast to the "long-standing Calvinist skepticism about emotion" (Stokes 41). According to these critiques, in valuing the role of emotion, *The Minister's Wooing* suggests that discerning God's character and the doctrine of salvation does not have much to do with one's "cerebral" faculties and has everything to do with one's affective faculties.

But "Candace's way" is in fact only possible in part for Mrs. Marvyn. Although Candace succeeds in comforting her, Mrs. Marvyn's theological difficulties are not

---

[72] Critics associate this intuitive/rational binary with many other important binaries. Although this chapter does not explore them all in detail, a quick summary is pertinent: Critics see Stowe as advocating for a theology that elevates matriarchy, femininity, the New Testament (especially the figure of Jesus Christ), and spiritual intuition, and in turn rejecting Calvinism, whom they see Stowe as associating with patriarchy, masculinity, the Old Testament, and logic. Baym writes that scholars see Stowe supporting "a maternal deity in opposition to the patriarchal systems she perceived as dominant" (*Woman's* 232); Kimball writes that Stowe's "mistrust of masculine reason and 'dry theology' and her praise of woman's self-sacrificing Christ-like love was the major theme of her writings" (31); Marianne Noble, accepting Mrs. Marvyn's portrayal of a Calvinist God, describes that "Mrs. Marvyn nearly goes insane trying to love the wrathful, masculine God who appears to have damned her son for all time, but she is able to love God when her black servant, Candace, compares him to her own maternal self" (*Masochistic* 67); and Alison O'Harae writes that Hopkins's Calvinist "view of the Deity is shown to be the product of authoritarian male hierarchies and definitive theological systems, and is countered by a presentation of Jesus as the essence of the gospel, through the medium of suppressed figures like the black slave, Candace, and other powerless women" (76).

resolved. In the aftermath of her spiritual crisis, she is unable to "extricate" (200) herself from Hopkins's interpretation of the Bible and the Calvinist theological design he infers from it. In other words, despite reiterating that her moral intuition tells her that "there must be dreadful mistakes somewhere" (200) in Calvinism, Mrs. Marvyn can neither work them out nor "say that the facts are not so" (200). Mrs. Marvyn's spiritual intuition tells her that Calvinism is wrong, but she is compelled by what she sees as the propositional truth (the truth-value) of Calvinism. Through Mrs. Marvyn, *The Minister's Wooing* recognizes that it is not always possible to trust what one believes through spiritual intuition over what one discerns through abstract reasoning.

It is the truth of Calvinism – the idea that Calvinism "might still be the only acceptable faith in terms of scripture, logic, and even the appearance of nature" (114) – that compels Mrs. Marvyn. And *The Minister's Wooing* does not impose a value judgement on her for not being able to pronounce Calvinism as false.[73] Instead, in a chapter titled "Mysteries," the novel envisions a spiritual ideal that moves beyond both logic and intuition. Rather than continue to attempt to sort out her views on soteriology, Mrs. Marvyn tells Mary that "it is not best to stretch our minds with reasonings where we are so limited, where we can know so little" (200). Later, the narrator reflects that when abstract theology must inevitably reckon with the sorrows of human life, it does not

---

[73] Charles Foster suggests that Mrs. Marvyn is in fact an outworking of Stowe's own personal struggles with Calvinism. He attributes Stowe's hesitancies about Calvinism in large part to three deaths in her family, one being the death of her nineteen-year-old son Henry, who drowned in the Connecticut River in 1857. Henry's death was tragic not only because Stowe was now temporally separated from him but because Henry's family was unsure of whether he had died with or without attaining saving faith. Unwilling to accept that her son was in hell, Stowe was faced with a dilemma: to adhere to the Calvinist doctrines of salvation instilled into her since childhood meant accepting that there was no guarantee Henry was saved. Alternatively, to allow that God had made an exception for her son so that she could be reunited with him in heaven meant that she would commit herself to what New England theology would consider an extrabiblical notion: that God makes exceptions if mothers desire them badly enough. In Foster's words, Stowe creates "a homemade doctrine of cosmic special privilege" (98), but that despite it, Stowe "must have known . . . that such a doctrine was homemade and that it was ultimately inconsistent with the logic she herself had accepted in the intense inner struggle which culminated in her own conversion of 1845" (104-105).

resolve the doubts of religious faith nearly as well as the comfort God provides: "The All-Father treats us as the mother does her 'infant crying in the dark;' He does not reason with our fears, or demonstrate their fallacy, but draws us silently to His bosom, and we are at peace" (240). Candace not only represents the prioritization of spiritual intuition over abstract reasoning, but, by encouraging Mrs. Marvyn to focus on Jesus, she also advocates for a theology that focuses on what is most immanent and knowable about God: Jesus Christ, his humanity, suffering, and love.[74] It is this second component of Candace's theology rather than Candace's spiritual intuition that Mrs. Marvyn is able to adopt. This is why she concludes that it is best to focus on verses from the Bible that speak about God and Christ's love, and why she concludes with finality: "If there is a fathomless mystery of sin and sorrow, there is a deeper mystery of God's love" (201). The seamstress Miss Prissy likewise concludes about God's goodness that "if we can't trust that, it's all over with us all" (320). Stowe illustrates that when abstract reasoning leads to spiritual anxieties, and when trusting one's spiritual intuition is not possible, authentic faith is characterized by a disposition of trust in the goodness and love of God in the face of that which is mysterious and unknowable about him. *The Minister's Wooing* showcases that neither abstract reasoning nor spiritual intuition will make God fully comprehensible to the human mind. Instead, the novel envisions as its ultimate theological priority the willingness to reason and intuit from the fact of Jesus's love that God is benevolent regardless of his inexplicability.

***The Minister's Wooing* and Critical (Mis)representations of Calvinism**

The Minister's Wooing takes Calvinism and its doctrines seriously. By refusing to mock them or wholly dismiss them, the novel treats Calvinism with more respect and ambivalence than does most sentimental fiction. Nevertheless, Stowe's nuanced treatment of Calvinism in *The Minister's Wooing*, her ability to resist villainizing Calvinists and her ability to both admire and criticize Calvinist doctrines, does not

[74] Although not explicitly using this language, Stowe alludes here to one understanding of what theologians and philosophers call the transcendence (unknowability) and immanence (knowability) of God.

necessarily mean that the novel presents Calvinism in neutral terms (or that it is obligated to do so). The novel is indeed critical of Calvinism and understands it as a worldview which is in fact harsh and potentially cruel. However, some criticism, especially that which deals with American sentimentalism and/or with Stowe's biography, perpetuates these negative evaluations of Calvinism not by primarily studying the Puritans and Calvinists themselves but by accepting and adopting the assumptions of Calvinism's nineteenth-century critics as though they were neutral, fair, and accurate.

Stowe joins liberal Protestantism and sentimental fiction in questioning Calvinist doctrines and understandings of God. Her fiction is in part symptomatic of the nineteenth-century American "developing ethos" (Davis, "Images" 243) that offered non-Calvinistic ways of understanding God. And yet, there remained a vocal group which resisted this liberal ethos and was hostile to those who presented alternatives to Calvinism. Thus, Stowe was subject to journals like *The American Theological Review* and *The Independent* publishing scathing analyses of *The Minister's Wooing*'s representation of New England theology and theologians. These reviews conclude that Stowe's depiction of Calvinism is the result of her inadequate understanding of theology. She attacks Hopkins's theology, they suggest, because she fails "to grasp a system so severely logical." One review continues: "she has aimed to represent the theological phase of New England society as she understands it; but (begging pardon of the *lady* for what we must say of the *author*) she does not *quite* understand it" ("Theology" 4). If Stowe would only "understand and accept the Theodicy of Dr. [Nathaniel] Taylor, she might frame a logical answer to her difficulties," but because she is "not a reasoner in theology," she presents through Mrs. Marvyn an indignation toward God that is "not Christian and scriptural" ("Art. IX" 709). By doing so, she "dishonor[s] the word of God, and place[s] Christianity at a disadvantage before the reader" and so helps the cause of

"liberalism" (709). What emerges from these reviews is an image of Stowe as unscriptural, unintellectual, and on the side of liberal Protestantism over Calvinism.[75]

These reviews suggest that *The Minister's Wooing* in fact represents Calvinism and its sympathizers fairly and accurately in at least one way. By perpetuating the insistence that what is missing from the novel is a logical response to its critiques of Calvinism (especially through the voice of Mrs. Marvyn), these reviews showcase the novel's very critiques of New England theologians, namely their need to "figure everything out" (Noll 326). Stowe's novel, on top of questioning the doctrines of Calvinism themselves, pictures the "clear logic" (192) of New England theology as a trap, allowing those who primarily think abstractly to be "enchained by glacial reasonings" (192) and ultimately condemns those who would treat questions about conversion and salvation as "a problem of theological algebra" (33). The common thread in these statements is a condemnation of those who insist on explaining the mechanisms by which God orders the world as though God were totally comprehendible to the human mind. As Stowe writes in "New England Ministers," a sketch that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1858, for Calvinists "predestination *must* be made to harmonize with free will; the Divine entire efficiency with human freedom; the existence of sin with the Divine benevolence" (223).[76] These are the theological feats Stowe sees Calvinists, including the reviewers criticizing her work, consumed with overcoming.

---

[75] There were even amongst these reviews disagreements about the extent to which *The Minister's Wooing* is "unchristian." *The Independent*, for example, sees *The American Theological Review* as going too far in dismissing the consolatory phrases of Candace as "cold and meager," suggesting instead that they provide "Gospel consolation" (4).

[76] In this sketch, written "to take a glance at the New England clergy and pulpit" (218), Stowe praises New England ministers for their "honest effort" (233), "strong mental discipline," (223) and "profound reverence for God and his word" (223), while also driving home the degree to which "speculative questions" (222) engrossed them, writing of "the Edwardses, the Hopkinses, the Emmonses, with all their various schools and followers, who, leviathan-like, have made the theological deep of New England to boil like a pot, and the agitation of whose course remains to this day" (223).

However, Stowe also acknowledges that although New England theologians were adamant in their discussions of "the most insoluble of mysteries" (188), they understood them as just that: mysteries. For example, she acknowledges that for Calvinists the way in which God chooses people for salvation happens through divine decrees that are "mysterious" (59). Paradoxically, it is in light of her meticulous knowledge of Calvinism, regardless of her assessment of it, that Stowe most indirectly but crucially reveals that *The Minister's Wooing* is ultimately more in line with a sentimental understanding of God and theology. The novel acknowledges that God is mysterious in that his ways are not wholly explicable, but it looks with disapproval at Calvinism because, in admitting to the mystery of God, Calvinism sustains that an aspect of this mystery is how God's loving nature interweaves with a type of wrath that preserves the exclusivity of the elect and the eternal condemnation of the rest. The novel is not content to accept the Calvinist iteration of the mystery of grace if it does not mesh with what Stowe's mother Roxana described as "the evidence of her own feelings" (Douglas 133). As *Old-Town Folks* similarly states: "we must trust the intuition of our hearts above reason" (457). Thus, *The Minister's Wooing* ultimately resists viewing the Calvinist God as benevolent, as Calvinists themselves do.

Extant criticism on Stowe and on American sentimentalism shifts the condemnatory tone of nineteenth-century reactions to *The Minister's Wooing* offered by what the *American Theological Review* called in 1859 the "orthodox portion of New England" ("ART. IX" 7). This criticism imposes upon Calvinism the descriptions and connotations given to it by its nineteenth-century sentimental and liberal Protestant critics. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with studying Calvinism and deciding that Calvinists were and are wrong to understand God as benevolent rather than cruel. But as Thomas J. Davis points out, we do not interrogate these nineteenth-century assessments of Calvinism as much as we assume that they are a matter of fact. "Calvinism has no voice in its own definition" ("Rhetorical" 456), and garners negative associations and connotations in our criticism as a matter of reflex rather than by a process of study. Criticism of Calvinism, then, builds upon itself: it does not disavow but rather reproduces and takes "for granted" (Van Engen, *Sympathetic* 8), for example, Ann Douglas's description of the "sternness" (18) and "repressive" (13) quality of Calvinism. More

recently, Marianne Noble uses the word “cruel” (“Courage” 693) to describe the eschatology of Puritan theology and suggests that Calvinism provides not representations but “misrepresentations” (693) of God. Camfield sees what might otherwise be understood as the significant and thorough distinctions within Calvinism as “theological hairsplitting” (341). Kimball, versed in the distinctions between New England Calvinism pre- and post-Edwards, nevertheless writes overall of “the melancholy dogma” (30) of Calvinism. Edward Tang writes that “if Edwards’s theology is pushed to its fullest extent, it is, ultimately a cruel system” (83); Meyer writes of “Calvinism’s austerity” (481); and Christiane E. Farnan writes of “the dark determinist core of Calvinism” (96). There is an extent to which critics add qualifiers that suggests that these descriptions are insinuated by Stowe and not their own, but frequently these qualifiers are missing or misplaced. Christopher P. Wilson, for example, writes that *The Minister’s Wooing* “is replete with editorial dismissals of the cold Calvinist doctrine” (556) rather than affixing the word “cold” to what the novel is enacting, as in the novel “is replete with cold editorial dismissals of the Calvinist doctrine.”

Critics’ hasty condemnation of Calvinism starts not with a study of Calvinists themselves but with Calvinism’s nineteenth-century skeptics. It starts in part with our accepting the way writers like Stowe represent Calvinism as an “unreasonable brand of Christianity” (Griffis 142), one that “cast[s] the concept of irresistible grace as cruel” and “the mystery of God’s ways as unacceptable” (Griffis 142). “This interpretation,” Griffis writes, “is not only misguided but also demonstrates twenty-first century biases against certain aspects of Christianity, such as the notion of God’s wrath or anger” (142). For Stowe, by giving substantial weight to the concept of God’s wrath, Calvinism fails to emphasize the all-encompassing love of God as manifested through Jesus. It fails because it attempts to hold God’s love and wrath in abeyance in a way that leaves too much wrath and too little love. As we have seen, the twenty-first century biases of which critics like Griffis write are in fact not novel to the twenty-first century. They pick up traction in the liberal Protestantism of nineteenth-century America. Stowe imposes this liberal ethos onto the late eighteenth-century setting of *The Minister’s Wooing* and we view its depiction of Calvinism as fact.

Conclusion

In arguing that Calvinism does not necessarily have to be framed as a negative theological and cultural phenomenon, especially in the context of nineteenth-century America, one runs the risk, as Ann Douglas famously did, of being described as nostalgic for Calvinism, of defending an ethos that runs counter to what we understand as the tolerance of religious liberalism. But as Kevin Pelletier and others have shown, tone has as much to do with how Douglas was perceived as her arguments themselves.[77] This is perhaps why we generally do not criticize a writer like Marilynne Robinson for seeing in Calvinism something less cruel than Stowe does. "For Calvinism," Robinson writes, "we are all absolutely, that is equally, unworthy of, and dependent upon, the free intervention of grace" (156). She continues:

> This is a harsh doctrine, but no harsher than others, since Christian tradition has always assumed that rather few would be saved, and has differed only in describing the form election would take. It might be said in defense of Christianity that it is unusual in a religion to agonize much over these issues of ultimate justice, though in one form or another every religion seems to have an elect. The Calvinist model at least allows for the mysteriousness of life. (156)

Robinson recasts Calvinism so that instead of its being a rhetorical negative, it embodies what Griffis calls "a full, humanistic" vision "animated by the mystery of divine grace" (132).

The Minister's Wooing primes its readers to understand the gravity with which Calvinist New Englanders pose theological concerns. Its nineteenth-century readership felt the impact of Mrs. Marvyn's religious doubts. *The American Theological Review*, when critiquing Stowe's novel, refused to quote any passage wherein Mrs. Marvyn spoke these doubts, explaining that her words "cannot be read without a shudder" (709). Even if we in turn do not shudder, we may nevertheless appreciate the passion with which Mrs. Marvyn reflects on the nature of love (divine and otherwise), mystery, and morality. Faye

---

[77] See Pelletier et al.'s "The Last Cleric: Ann Douglas, Intellectual Authority and the Legacy of *Feminization*" (2019).

Halpern writes that *The Minister's Wooing* explores a "dead religious question" (53). This type of observation is not often made regarding Hawthorne's fiction, which is no less substantial than *The Minister's Wooing* in its concern with Calvinism, fate, determinism, guilt, and similar theological subject matter. We may benefit from appreciating that the explicitly theological language within Stowe's novel does not somehow equate to its irrelevancy.

Chapter 2.

Calvinism and Discursive Privilege in *Jane Eyre*

After William Makepeace Thackeray read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* upon its publication, he wrote in a letter to William Smith Williams, a member of *Jane Eyre*'s publishing firm, that "St. John the Missionary is a failure I think, but a good failure" (141). Ever since the publication of the novel in 1847, "Rivers has never had a good press" (C. Knight 28). He is a cold, controlling, and ascetic clergyman, who contrasts what the novel describes as Jane's intuitive, conscience-driven religious sensibility. If the majority of *Jane Eyre*'s readers struggle to feel any connection with St. John, it is not only because of his characteristics, doctrinal beliefs, or temperament, but because of *Jane Eyre*'s first-person autobiographical narrative structure, which by definition foregrounds Jane's perception and estimation of St. John. The reader is repeatedly confronted with Jane's descriptions of St. John's coldness, exaction, austerity, and overbearing will, followed by evocations of the frustration and torment Jane experiences at his hand. And yet, after repeatedly detailing St. John's tyrant-like manner, Jane allots the last two paragraphs of her autobiography to lauding him for his devotion to God.[78] This last homage appears to many readers out of place and uncalled for. Why, after centering his faults and shortcomings, does she ultimately insist that he is "a good and a great man" (354)?

Criticism recognizes that *Jane Eyre*'s treatment of St. John is laden with ambivalence. What Marianne Thormählen calls "The enigma of St. John Rivers" in a chapter by that title and what J. Jeffrey Franklin calls the potentially "unanswerable question" of whether he is a "'positive' figure within the discourse of Christianity" (466) signals the puzzlement he evokes in readers. While critical analyses of St. John's

[78] See Simon Marsden and Keith A. Jenkins for the ways in which *Jane Eyre*'s last two paragraphs are inflected with language from the Book of Revelation. Although making different arguments, Marsden and Jenkins both acknowledge that Jane recognizes but does not participate in St. John's apocalyptic and eschatological vision.

religious identity largely focus on describing St. John's temperament and rhetoric, this chapter considers him with greater attention to the narrative structure of *Jane Eyre* as a fictional autobiography, as well as the attendant primacy of Jane's narrative voice. I argue that when St. John is afforded self-description, particularly in his narrating his religious identity, he challenges Jane's perception of his Calvinist faith and Calvinist-coded temperament. Jane, as not only a protagonist who is afforded more narrative "space," to use Alex Woloch's term, but also as first-person narrator, has the narratorial privilege of filtering and mediating our perception of St. John. Her autobiographical voice also requires an implicit readerly trust which enlists our "sympathies" (Ablow 283). Because of this narrative framing, we tend to accept Jane's perception of St. John over his own testimony.

The ending of Jane's narrative, wherein Jane positions St. John as a faithful and devoted follower of God whom she admires, complicates the tension between St. John's self-understanding and Jane's perception of his religious identity. Jane gives St. John the last word, as critics have noted, but not in his own voice, thus preserving the dominance of her narrative voice. But, instead of continuing to use her discursive privilege to question St. John's religious character, she commends him. This commendation comes across as unwarranted, and thus aesthetically perplexing. Maria LaMonaca calls the close of Jane's narrative "the most perplexing ending of any Victorian novel" (245). Some criticism understands Jane's voice in the conclusion of her narrative as sincere. Other criticism interprets Jane's voice as ironic, resisting taking Jane's commendation of St. John at face value and registering instead a doubleness in her admiration of him. The rhetorical structure of Jane's final description leaves room for both interpretations.

I am not primarily interested in arguing which interpretation of *Jane Eyre*'s ending is more convincing. Rather, through a consideration of Jane's narrative voice, this chapter considers the potential motivations driving our understanding of St. John's Calvinist faith. If we are not going to take Jane at her word that she thinks St. John a faithful follower of God, or if we are hesitant to do so, or if we are disappointed with Jane if in fact her estimation of St. John is unironically full of admiration, we must ask why. Criticism, especially after Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the*

Attic (1979), has been especially interested in Charlotte Brontë to the extent that it perceives her as religiously rebellious or subversive in some way. Charles LaPorte argues that literary criticism tends to represent nineteenth-century "churchgoing" (280) women writers as representative of an outdated piety, suggesting further that the more subversive and radical we deem novelists and their texts, the more likely we are to consider them and their work as manifesting a sophisticated and "modern" exploration of religion. If St. John is more "traditional" and Calvinist in his beliefs, and if Jane praises him nonetheless, what does that say about the perceived subversiveness and radicalness of *Jane Eyre* and Brontë? It is possible that criticism tends to see *Jane Eyre* as more "modern" – meaning more intellectually mature, relevant, and less naïve – the more the novel is perceived as rejecting St. John's ostensibly antiquated religious identity. Thus, ironic Jane, the fictional champion of the subversive Brontë, who undermines St. John's expression of Christianity, is more sophisticated than sincere Jane, who is willing to see St. John's Calvinism as more than an impediment or antagonist to her religious vision. This assumption is not neutral but rather symptomatic of a critical assent to the secularization narrative.

Calvinism, Romanticism, and the Brontës

The Brontë family was theologically rooted in a non-Calvinist branch of Evangelicalism. Charlotte's father, Patrick Brontë, was an Irish-born Evangelical and a clergyman in the Church of England who opposed Calvinism, describing its soteriological doctrines as "the appalling doctrines of personal Election and Reprobation" (qtd. in Thormählen 22). Influenced in part by Wesleyan Methodism, Patrick emphasized grace as a free gift from God for all people rather than only the elect. Anne, Emily, and Charlotte joined their father in rejecting Calvinism. Within their literary works, they attack Calvinism as a theological system and tradition, as well as Calvinists themselves. In Emily's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the Calvinist Joseph, servant to the Earnshaws and Heathcliff, is depicted as a religious fanatic and hypocrite. Nelly, the novel's primary narrator, describes him as "the wearisomest self-righteous pharisee that ever ransacked a bible to rake the promises to himself and fling the curses on his neighbours" (69). Joseph speaks boldly about how "All warks togither for gooid to them as is chozzen" (106) while

overwhelming those around him with his self-righteousness and unkindness.[79] Anne also criticized Calvinism and Calvinists, both in her novels and poetry. Her poem "A Word to the Calvinists," eventually titled and published as "A Word to the 'Elect'" in the *Universalist Magazine*, confronts the Calvinist directly with its use of second-person perspective:[80]

> You may rejoice to think yourselves secure,
> You may be grateful for the gift divine
>
> . . . .
> But is it sweet to look around and view
> Thousands excluded from that happiness,
> Which they deserve at least as much as you,
> Their faults not greater nor their virtues less? (103)

Condemning what she views as the favoritism Calvinists enjoy, the speaker confronts the indifference of the Calvinist in the face of perceived injustice, asking whether the Calvinist can rejoice in their salvation if others, equally flawed and equally not flawed, are damned by virtue of not being chosen by God's mysterious decree.[81]

The doctrine of election was one of the Calvinist doctrines which evoked doubts and anxieties within Charlotte. For Charlotte, as was sometimes the case for those exposed to but not attracted to Calvinism, a rejection of Calvinist doctrines did not

---

[79] See S. Marsden who argues that, in *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë not only caricatures Calvinism, but depicts "a social environment shaped by its paradigms" (*Emily* 108).

[80] Critics have speculated about the motivation behind Anne Brontë's modifying her title. Christopher Lane suggests that she adds "ironic quotations marks to 'Elect'" (83) to indicate that Calvinists are self-deceived, while Adelle Hay suggests that the switch to the word "elect" was perhaps Anne's "attempt to be less overt" (159).

[81] Further on in "A Word to Calvinists," the speaker criticizes with equal disapprobation the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement, which holds that Jesus Christ died only for the elect and not for all humankind. The immensely popular nineteenth-century English preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon explained in detail what he saw as the Calvinist view of limited atonement, asserting in one of his sermons: "We do not believe that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are forever damned, we dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never could be saved" ("Particular" 5).

always come easily. Writing a letter to Ellen Nussey, Brontë expresses her torment: "if the doctrine of Calvin be true I am already an outcast'; '[I am] smitten at times to the heart with the conviction that [your?] Ghastly Calvinistic doctrines are true'" (*Letters* 164).[82] Troubled by Calvinism but unable to write it off completely as false, Brontë experiences "spiritual anguish" (Thormählen 16) over what she perceives and to an extent experiences as Calvinism's gloominess and its potential to evoke religious despair. This gloom and despair become minor themes in her novels. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane notes that St. John's preaching on Calvinist themes sound like declarations of "doom" (300). In *Shirley* (1849), a social novel set in 1811-12, Calvinism is a source of religious melancholy for the heroine Caroline Helstone: "At moments she was a Calvinist, and, sinking into the gulf of religious despair, she saw darkening over her the doom of reprobation" (263).[83]

The Brontë sisters' rejection of Calvinism is in part grounded in the British Romantic trend of foregrounding God as a loving, merciful paternal figure and minimizing God as judge or ruler.[84] Here I follow David Bebbington who traces the sisters' "moral revulsion" against Calvinism to the Romantic theological "shift toward conceptualizing the Almighty as a benevolent Father" ("Calvin" 285). This shift was in part solidified by Samuel Taylor Coleridge who balks at the idea that a Calvinist God,

---

[82] In another letter to Ellen Nussey, Charlotte Brontë writes: "I am in that state of horrid, gloomy uncertainty, that, at this moment I would submit to be old, grey-haired, to have passed all my youthful days of enjoyment and be tottering on the verge of the grave, if I could only thereby ensure the prospect of reconcilement to God and Redemption through His Son's merits" (171).

[83] Caroline's words are likely patterned on the life and poetry of the eighteenth-century hymnwriter and pre-Romantic William Cowper, with whom the Brontë sisters were well-acquainted. Cowper's fear and religious despair over the possibility that Calvinism's representation of God was accurate and that he was damned by God, communicated most deeply in his poem "The Castaway" (1799), was likely a source of literary inspiration for Charlotte. It was certainly a source of inspiration for Anne, who responded to Cowper's fears by writing a poem titled "To Cowper" (1842). The poem shows Anne resisting Calvinism, but as Elisabeth Jay writes, it also reveals that Anne's "central conviction in a God of love cannot entirely dismiss the possibility of eternal damnation" (*Faith* 5).

[84] Indeed, the Brontë sisters "cut their teeth" (Thormählen 68) on the Romantic, religion-filled poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and others.

"who mocks the Victims of his government with a semblance of Justice and predestines to Guilt whom he had doomed to Damnation," could ever go by the name of "all-loving Parent" (205), or what Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* names "universal Parent" (69). The nineteenth century saw various iterations of this critique. Ministers like the liberal Congregational minister James Baldwin Brown attacked Calvinism by arguing that Calvinist doctrines, such as the doctrine of the sinner's justification by faith, "rests upon the conception of the character of God as a ruler, who represents the interests of the universe, instead of as a Father who cherishes its life" (111).[85] Historian James Anthony Froude, an Anglican turned apostate and brother to Oxford Movement pioneer Richard Hurrell Froude, asks: "How are we to call the Ruler who laid us under this iron code by the name of Wise, or Just, or Merciful, when we ascribe principles of action to Him which in a human father we should call preposterous and monstrous?" (5). Recurrent in these critiques is the message that Calvinism is incompatible with the existence of a benevolent God.

Criticism at times reproduces what is for the most part Charlotte Brontë's representation of Calvinism as an unpalatable theological system. Elizabeth Imlay, to take just one example, refers to Calvinism's "negative qualities" (55) as though the descriptor "negative" is a given, suggesting further that Brocklehurst embodies negative Calvinistic traits rather than that Brocklehurst represents a distortion of Calvinism. On top of perpetuating stereotypes of Calvinism, this criticism at times assumes that Brontë's dislike of Calvinism and attraction to Romantic-inspired theology translates into a wholesale oversimplification or condemnation of Calvinism and Calvinists in *Jane Eyre*. Rebecca Styler suggests that while all three Brontë sisters oppose Calvinism in their novels, only "Anne Brontë gets beyond the caricatures which her sisters drew" (49).

---

[85] This Romantic de-emphasis of God as judge (or rather in some cases the accusation that the God of the Calvinists is no just judge at all), as well as the insistence that God's relationship to all humankind is first and foremost lovingly paternal, was rendered by some Calvinists as a watered down, weak, and effeminate expression of Christianity. For example, Spurgeon lamented in a sermon he preached in 1860 that there are many "who seek to teach now-a-days, that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of his dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error."

Statements such as this simplify *Jane Eyre*'s treatment of St. John's Calvinist faith. *Jane Eyre* indeed promotes a non-Calvinist theological vision, and it caricatures Mr. Brocklehurst and his Calvinism. But it also ascribes complexity and virtue to St. John's Calvinism. By taking into account *Jane Eyre*'s subgenre as fictional autobiography, we can better understand the mechanism by which the novel expresses its various representations of Calvinism.

Jane Eyre's Narrative Voice

The term "fictional autobiography," although regularly used in literary studies, has no widely agreed-upon definition. Nevertheless, many literary scholars understand the term as "a first-person, retrospective account of the imaginary narrating protagonist's life story" (Pennington 5). The primary disagreement around definition has to do with how to understand the fictional autobiography in relation to the nonfictional autobiography, sometimes referred to as the classic, traditional, or referential autobiography. Narrative theorists such as Dorrit Cohn understand the fictional autobiography "as a derivative genre" (15) which imitates the referential autobiography.[86] In contrast, Pennington understands the form as a "distinct subgenre" (13) that has its own history and phenomenology, emerging in conjunction with – alongside rather than after – the novel and the referential autobiography. Given that the fictional autobiography "operat[es] across the boundary between the actual and the fictional" (Pennington 7), scholars theorize how the form modulates our understanding of "actual" or non-fictional persons. Mark Hennelly, Anna Gibson, and Pennington, for example, ask how the fictional autobiography constructs the identity of its protagonist, and what this construction can teach us about identity and selfhood more generally. Hennelly sees *Jane Eyre* as presenting the "mystery of selfhood," which "we daily try to 'read' in the plots of our friends and acquaintances" (710). Gibson, through a reading of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* (1853), situates the narrative first person at the center of a broader nineteenth-century reconsideration of "the formation of personal identity" (204). And Pennington argues that

[86] Pennington observes that the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* has no entry for fictional autobiography, which is only mentioned in the entry for autobiography "as a copy of that form" (15).

Jane Eyre and other fictional autobiographies represent how readers get to know narrator-protagonists with “the same cognitive activities” (4) as getting to know a real person.

Critical considerations of *Jane Eyre*’s autobiographical narrative structure largely emphasize the dominance of Jane’s voice. James Buzard calls the novel a “me-narrative” which asks readers to “authenticate and justify” (202) the narrator’s life.[87] Susan Lanser observes that Jane’s voice is “self-authorizing and totalizing” (177) and notes the frequency with which criticism perceives her voice as “almost tyrannical in its power to impose a stance” (176).[88] Less studied is how the primacy of Jane’s voice affects the expression and identities of other characters. Rachel Ablow pursues this line of inquiry in asking how the intimacy of Jane’s autobiographical voice affects the reader’s orientation to others in Jane’s story. Ablow argues that Jane’s autobiographical voice engages the sympathy of readers in such a way that they become “align[ed]” (284) with Jane.[89] The autobiographical voice generates an intimacy between the narrating self and the reader. Readers become the sympathetic audience, likely to miss how the narrator might be blameworthy in one way or another, and made to feel as though such a question is out of place. “The problem with this [autobiographical] voice,” Ablow continues, “is that it deafens us to the claims of others” (283). The interiority of characters such as Rochester, Bertha, and St. John is inaccessible because *Jane Eyre* is structurally a first-person

---

[87] While James Buzard views “the phenomenon of voice in *Jane Eyre* as a much more paradoxical and ambivalence-generating issue than critics have been inclined to regard it” (196), he nevertheless sees in the novel the “driving impulse” of the me-narrative, namely “to assert and exercise the *right* to tell one’s own tale” (203). Janet Gezari also writes that “The central achievement of *Jane Eyre*’s style is its creation of a narrator and character who is defined primarily by how she expresses her own ideas and feelings” (131).

[88] Susan Lanser associates Jane’s voice with the Romantic hero and considers more broadly the gender politics of autobiography as a male-dominated genre to the mid-nineteenth century.

[89] See Amy Coté (“Handful”) for a reading of how Rochester’s “accounts of his own past life form an inset autobiography within Jane’s larger narrative” (477). Coté observes that “Just as Jane aligns her ‘dear reader’ with herself, Rochester conscripts Jane as a sympathetic audience for his own autobiography over a series of late-night conversations” (477-478). More generally, Coté considers the religious debts of the fictional autobiography. She reads *Villette* in terms of religion’s influence on its generic structure and formal features, specifically the fictional autobiography’s “generic debt to confessional life writing” (477).

autobiography rather than a multi-focal narrative. This is not to say that criticism has not explored how other voices in *Jane Eyre* offer different perspectives. But in some of these cases, the focus is still on Jane's narrative, such as in Kristen Pond's exploration of how other voices in *Jane Eyre* shape readerly sympathy. Pond is primarily concerned with how others narrate Jane's story back to her rather than how others narrate their *own* stories.

Using Ablow as a point of departure, we can ask not how Jane's act of narration constructs Jane's identity but how Jane's discursive privilege as narrator constructs the religious identities of those around her, particularly the two Calvinist clergymen Brocklehurst and St. John. This line of inquiry converges with Alex Woloch's analysis of the nineteenth-century realist novel's "asymmetric structure of characterization" (30), wherein only the protagonist is distinguished and privileged by their psychological interiority. Woloch is interested in the "distribution of attention" (15) between major and minor characters, asking how our limited access to a certain character's thoughts affects the overall narrative. He is in part interested in complicating the divide between the human and formal concept of character, suggesting that the distinction between humanist/mimetic and structural/formal positions (17) should be thought of as a dialectic rather than a contradiction. Woloch argues that there exists a fundamental character inequality within the novel form because of the narrative's uneven distribution of attention: minor characters recede so that there is space for fully rounded, major characters.[90] This inequality is exacerbated in narratives with an autobiographical voice and structure. In *Jane Eyre*, Jane is the primary receiver of readerly attention and sympathy, and only through her do readers have access to the less developed Brocklehurst and St. John.

Jane narrates her interactions with Brocklehurst in a way that evokes sympathy for the mistreated child Jane and encourages readers to disapprove of Brocklehurst's

---

[90] Woloch proceeds to unpack the political implications of asymmetric characterization: Regarding "their essential formal position (the subordinate beings who are delimited in themselves while performing a function for someone else), *minor characters are the proletariat of the novel*" (27).

religious identity. The "older, wiser, [narrating] Jane" (Da Sousa Correa 96) emphasizes the cruel treatment that young Jane receives at Brocklehurst's hand.[91] Brocklehurst's status as a minor character, which disallows him complexity, contributes to the reader's disapproval of him and sympathy for Jane. In fact, his "flatness" is the product of two interrelated causes: "minorness *and* caricature" (Woloch 129).[92] But while it is a critical commonplace that Brocklehurst is a textbook caricature, lacking in psychological complexity and easily identified as the sum of his negative features, it is less obvious that Jane's dislike of Brocklehurst is implicitly associated with his status as a Calvinist.[93] In making this argument, I draw on Thomas J. Davis's description of Calvinism as "a rhetorical negative" ("Rhetorical" 443), wherein some nineteenth-century American novels, to which I add British novels, attribute to Calvinism and Calvinists connotations like coldness and cruelty.[94] *Wuthering Heights* is illustrative: Joseph's Calvinism and bigotry are represented as interconnected and contribute to the gloom in which Catherine and Heathcliff are cloaked.

Jane Eyre most vividly affirms Calvinism's negative connotations (like coldness, harshness, and hypocrisy) by investing Brocklehurst with a flatness wherein these are his

---

[91] Delia Da Sousa Correa argues that, in fact, by the end of the Jane's narrative, a "third Jane emerges" (96). See also Lisa Sternlieb who argues against conflating Jane the narrator with Jane the character.

[92] Woloch alludes here to E.M. Forster, who in 1927 famously created a distinction between flat and round characters.

[93] Calvinism is not the only expression of Christianity *Jane Eyre* critiques. See Diana Peschier's *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses: The Case of Charlotte Brontë* (2005) for a discussion of *Jane Eyre*'s anti-Catholicism. On anti-Catholicism, see also Monika Mazurek for a compelling comparison of St. John and Eliza Reed. Mazurek argues that although Eliza and St. John are psychologically similar and at times described almost identically, the reason Eliza is "freely condemned by the author while St. John is well-nigh canonized in the final pages of the novel is that the latter is a Protestant while the former is not; while Jane deep in her heart may feel not much more sympathetic to St. John's Calvinistic creed than to Eliza's Catholic one, she still feels he is the member of her church, while Eliza became the easily vilified Other" (129).

[94] See the Introduction for a fuller treatment of how this rhetorical negative pervades both American and British novels.

only identifiable features, and by associating his Calvinist beliefs with oppressiveness and gloom. Brocklehurst's hardness is the first Calvinist-coded, identifiable feature with which Jane is confronted. It is hinted at in Jane's initial impression of him: "The handle turned, the door unclosed, and passing through and curtseying low I looked up at – a black pillar. Such, at least, appeared to me, at first sight, the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital" (26). The proliferation of terms like "narrow" and "grim" continue the more Jane becomes acquainted with Brocklehurst. He is a "black marble clergyman" (56), lacking affection for the children under his care at Lowood school. He is a "dread judge" (55), whose relationship to Jane and her fellow boarders is fear-based. His consistent association with hard materials (the housekeeper Mrs. Harden is described as "a woman after Mr. Brocklehurst's own heart" because she is "made up of equal parts of whalebone and iron" [61]) reveals the irony of his suggesting that Jane is the one with a "heart of stone" (27).

We are encouraged to be unsympathetic not just to Brocklehurst's Calvinist temperament but also to his Calvinist beliefs by being made to feel through Jane's narration that Calvinist doctrines are harmful, unjust, and joyless. In other words, Jane's autobiographical voice positions us on "Jane's side" wherein we are "made to feel invested in her and concerned for her" (Ablow 283), and consequently not on Brocklehurst's side. For example, Brocklehurst alludes to the Calvinist doctrine of election when suggesting to Jane the possibility that she is not chosen by God for salvation. From their first encounter onward, Jane is branded in Brocklehurst's eyes a "little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien" (56). By foregrounding Brocklehurst's suggestion of the possibility that Jane is going to hell, and that she deserves what he considers this just fate if she does not satisfy his definition of repentance, Jane as narrator arouses sympathy for the misunderstood and maligned child Jane, and frustration with the misguided Calvinist and the Calvinist doctrines that condemn her.

As with Brocklehurst, Jane disapproves of St. John's Calvinist temperament and Calvinist beliefs. The reader is consistently confronted with her descriptions of his

Calvinist-coded character.[95] These descriptions frequently flatten St. John's Calvinism by upholding a typified representation of his temperament and beliefs. Like Brocklehurst, St. John is hard and inflexible. He is an "austere-master" (310); he is one of those "hard characters" (341); he has a "hardness and despotism" (346) so intense that Jane can only briefly perceive his other qualities; his silences are at times like "iron" (349); he has a "despotic nature" and a "cool, inflexible judgement" (349). His hardness even marks his preaching style, which Jane describes as "compressed, condensed, controlled" and imbued with "a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness" (300). He makes "stern" references to Calvinist doctrines – "election predestination, reprobation" – and Jane feels as though his speech sounds like pronouncements of "doom" (300). Thus, Jane further strengthens and foregrounds her association of St. John with fear and judgement.

Jane's descriptions of her experiences with St. John teach us how to react to Calvinism, again through sympathetic alignment. We are "asked to share" (Ablow 283) her feelings, to be as put off as she is by St. John's Calvinist temperament and beliefs, or, in other words, to disapprove of that which evokes in her discomfort, dislike, pain, or fear. Her narration of her emotional response produces in readers similar feelings of aversion. When St. John, echoing Brocklehurst, suggests that Jane may be one of the un-elect if she rejects joining him as a wife on his missionary calling to India, we experience with Jane the injustice of such theological manhandling. This request to sympathize with Jane is implicitly directed toward us every time Jane recounts how she is disturbed by St. John's Calvinist temperament, and every time she describes her skepticism and doubts about his theology, especially if this theology potentially harms her.

---

[95] Unlike Brocklehurst, St. John moves to the foreground of Jane's narrative. After Jane and Rochester, he has the most instances of direct speech. This direct speech for the most part bolsters Jane's descriptions of his temperament and beliefs. See Tara Menon for a large-scale data analysis of the use of direct speech in *Jane Eyre* and for a broader comparison of the novel with 898 other novels published in Britain from 1789-1901.

St. John in his Own Words

St. John's self-analysis counters Jane's representation of him. In conversation with Jane, after discoursing about what he considers the unsuitability of Miss Rosamund Oliver as a potential match, St. John begins to explain his religious identity. Whereas Jane emphasizes St. John's Calvinist-coded austerity, St. John verbally opposes this description, not necessarily by rejecting it out of hand, but through qualification. He both accepts and undercuts his own profession of his hardness when he describes himself to Jane as a "cold, hard man" (219) but qualifies: "I am simply, in my original state – stripped of that blood-bleached robe with which Christianity covers human deformity – a cold, hard, ambitious man" (319). Professing to be a believer and a follower of Jesus, St. John is in fact refuting his own claim that he is merely a cold, hard man. He is not *merely* in his original state; he is not stripped of the redemptive work of Christ, signified in the metonymical "blood-bleached robe" with which Christ covers and forgives human flaws, weaknesses, and sin. The point St. John makes is that he is more than his coldness and more than his hardness. He is an adopter of Jesus's "merciful" and "benignant" (320) doctrines. Invoking the Calvinist understanding of sanctification, by which a Christian following conversion becomes more spiritually reformed and righteous but cannot be liberated from their sinful nature until after death, he admits that he can improve but not rid himself entirely of his temperament until he reaches the heavenly state of "immortality" (320).[96] St. John acknowledges his shortcomings while simultaneously placing his trust in the redemptive power of Christ. He both is and is not a cold, hard man. He is more than the sum of these negative qualities, but he is not without them either.

St. John elaborates on this tension between his human flaws and his spiritual conversion, noting that he is cognizant of the impulses within himself to pursue what he considers selfish and worldly interests. He acknowledges that he has a thirst for an active

[96] St. John's Calvinist formulation of the process of sanctification implicitly rejects the possibility of moral perfectionism, a prominent doctrine in the Methodist tradition by which the Christian can experience moments of sinlessness.

life and that he has characteristics that well-qualify him to be “soldier, statesman, and orator” (308). But whereas Jane interprets these admissions as St. John describing himself “as a mere pagan philosopher” (320), St. John objects, explaining that he transfers his desire for self-gain and laudation to what he sees as the Christian duty of working toward the glory of God. He accomplishes this act of servitude by becoming a missionary, a vocation which Elsie Browning Michie notes is fraught with its own set of assumptions regarding the contexts in which despotism and superiority are perceived as acceptable modes of relating to others.[97] “Of the ambition to win power and renown for my wretched self,” he tells Jane, religion “has formed the ambition to spread my Master’s kingdom; to achieve victories for the standard of the cross” (320). St. John swears allegiance to God, anticipating his “reward” and “crown” (385) but only as one who secondarily benefits from and shares in the glory of his master. St. John, then, is both self-serving and self-sacrificing.

St. John, when given voice to narrate his understanding of his religious identity, implicitly distinguishes himself as more than the stereotypical cold and self-serving Calvinist. But this self-description is overwhelmed and crowded out by Jane’s narrative voice, marked by a persistent skepticism of St. John’s religious character. This skepticism appears in direct response to St. John’s assertions, but it is more so a result of Jane’s status as autodiegetic narrator, which grants her, as the narrating protagonist, the discursive privilege of rhetorically framing her and the reader’s perception of St. John. Her skepticism is often subtle, such as when she observes that St. John, in serving his parish, is not “devoted” but only “appear[s] devoted” to Godliness and good works.

---

[97] Michie writes: “St. John Rivers in India perfectly embodies . . . that for the Victorians, forms of despotism or domination that are experienced as negative at home can be rewritten as desirable when they are projected onto scenarios conceived in terms of racial difference” (73-74). There is substantial criticism on the theme of missionary work in relation to *Jane Eyre*. See Angharad Eyre’s *Women’s Writing and Mission in the Nineteenth Century* (2022) on *Jane Eyre*’s use of the trope of the female missionary and Winter Jade Werner’s *Missionary Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (2020), which argues “that *Jane Eyre* foregrounds contradictions between the missionary ideal of a ‘universal kinship’ and the paradoxical insistence of missionary societies on strictly policing marriage according to ever sharper racial and cultural lines” (34).

Critics have noted Jane's narrative control, such as Susan Lanser: "As character Jane has squelched every attempt to take over her story; as narrator she has been equally aggressive in suppressing points of view that differ from her own" (185). This suppression in relation to St. John is accomplished through a narratorial flattening. Whereas St. John's self-understanding and self-description indicate the complexity of his religious identity, Jane's understanding and descriptions, of which we simply have more, are less layered.

At the close of Jane's autobiography, Jane's skepticism of St. John's religious sincerity and virtue is, at face value, strikingly absent. This conclusion is unique in its excessive expressions of praise for St. John. It sees Jane reflecting on the life and death of the man whom she calls "Firm, faithful, and devoted, full of energy, and zeal, and truth" (385). Some criticism suggests that we should take Jane at her word in her praise of St. John and in her confidence that he is destined for heaven. This interpretation often hinges on understanding Jane and St. John as manifesting different but, as Jerome Beaty puts it, "equally viable" (211) commitments to faith. "The difference between Jane and St. John," Charmian Knight writes, is "Not of unfaith and faith, but of different interpretations of the same faith" (29). Thus, the "pride of place" (Beaty 211) that St. John is given at the novel's end is bestowed in good faith. Marianne Thormählen similarly reflects that Jane and St. John are dissimilar in their approach to Christianity but that it is unnecessary to pronounce judgement on either (219). These critical interpretations enact Thormählen's suggestion to suspend negative value judgements regarding Jane's choice to admire St. John.

Other criticism suggests that we should not take Jane at her word. Judith Williams reads Jane's language in the final paragraphs as equivocal: Jane suggests that St. John perceives himself as one of the elect rather than confirming that she believes he is one of the elect. Valerie Grosvenor Myer likewise suggests that "St. John's placing at the end of the novel is a framing device" (72); St. John is a slightly more likeable version of Brocklehurst but, like Brocklehurst, not a true Christian. Much of this criticism registers varying tones of irony in Jane's words, some like Kelsey L. Bennett who suggest the irony is "delicate" ("Exile" 28), and others who see in Jane's words a more obvious and

liberal doubleness. Still other criticism accepts Jane's admiration of St. John but reads it as a regression. Lanser, for example, notes that Jane's voice, once bold, defers in the final paragraphs to the "voices of man and God" (185). Lanser's argument partly depends on the suggestion that Jane gives up narrative control. But while Jane gives St. John the last word, St. John does not in fact speak in his own voice. Instead, we are subject to Jane's oft-employed filter. It is Jane's attitude and descriptions of St. John that change rather than the recurrent narrative framing.

My reading of *Jane Eyre*'s ending acknowledges its puzzling quality but resists resolving it. To read Jane's voice as ironic at the conclusion of her narrative is to discount how "conscious ambiguity" and "verbal play" (Lanser 185) are not in keeping of either narrator or character Jane. Also, Jane emphasizes her earnestness when she notes that the last letter she receives from St. John brings "tears" to her eyes and fills her "heart with Divine joy" (385). To read Jane's "Divine joy" as a celebration of St. John's misguidedness at anticipating "his sure reward, his incorruptible crown" (385) is to attribute a meanness (regardless if justified) uncharacteristic of the Jane we have come to know. I locate the aesthetic perplexity of the narrative's end in the fact that Jane's final commendation of St. John includes no suggestion that he has changed, unlike Rochester, for example, whose own hard character is humbled and softened. St. John is still a "stern" and "exacting" (385) Calvinist. But Jane attempts to shift the negative overtones of these characteristics: "his is the sternness of the warrior Greatheart, who guards his pilgrim convoy from the onslaught of Apollyon. His is the exaction of the apostle, who speaks but for Christ, when he says – 'Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me'" (385). The elements of St. John's Calvinist temperament are here venerated as characteristics possessed by Christian heroes, icons, and figures. Instead of suggesting that St. John now aligns more with her theological sympathies, Jane accepts, seemingly with no judgement, his expression of Christianity.

At the novel's end, it can be difficult to side with Jane. We perhaps do not, as she does, feel sorrow over St. John's impending death or joy in anticipation of his being

rewarded in heaven.[98] Herein lies some of the so-named "good failure" that Thackeray registers in St. John. We cannot know for certain whether Thackeray was making an aesthetic or a moral judgement, but the dichotomy captures the ambiguity which shrouds both St. John's human and formal character. Jane's autobiographical narrative structure informs this ambiguity not just on the level of character interaction and experience but in the telling and filtering of these interactions and experiences through Jane's autobiographical lens. Jane ends her narrative without yielding her voice, but it is this very lack of concession which catalyzes the reader's puzzlement. Instead of sympathizing with Jane, we feel unable to and unsure of whether we can take what she says at face value. But more than that, we are also perhaps unwilling to believe her earnestness.

***Jane Eyre*'s Religious Vision**

When readers reviewed *Jane Eyre* upon its publication, they often debated whether the novel measured up to standards of Christian orthodoxy. In her oft-quoted review in the theologically conservative *Quarterly Review*, Elizabeth Rigby pronounced *Jane Eyre* an "anti-Christian composition" and Jane "the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit" (173). She took issue with what she saw as Jane's sin of pride, exemplified by Jane's willingness to bemoan the lot in life that she and those like herself suffer. Rigby reads Jane's lack of contentment with her circumstances as an affront to "God's appointment" (452) and providential ordering of her life. But allegations of religious meanness also considered the novel's representation of its clergymen, Brocklehurst and St. John. One review suggested that Brontë reveals her low estimation of Christianity by attributing to her religious authority figures "all that is mean, despicable, and uncharitable" ("The Last New Novel" 377). Denouncing her for "cast[ing] obloquy" upon clergymen as a "class," the review concluded that Brontë takes every opportunity to insult "true religion" (377) and promote immorality.

[98] See Rita Felski for an analysis of the critical skepticism toward identifying with characters. Felski argues that identification is a "varied . . . phenomenon" (178), compatible with a critical approach to literature.

Critical discourse on whether *Jane Eyre*'s depiction of clergymen signals the novel's rejection of Christianity was reinvigorated in the late twentieth century. In 1979, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar contributed a landmark feminist reading of the novel that frames Christianity and Brontë's (and Jane's) "rebellious feminism" (369) as mutually exclusive. To accomplish this reading, Gilbert and Gubar associate Christianity with St. John, that "pillar of patriarchy" (366) and argue that by rebuffing him, Jane also enacts her rejection of orthodox Christianity. In Maria LaMonaca's words, feminist readings like Gilbert and Gubar's see in Jane's rejection of St. John a rejection of "the Christian worldview he represents" (245). In 1999, these readings found an influential counterargument in Thormählen's *The Brontës and Religion*. Thormählen argues that it is a fallacy to suggest that Brontë's critical representation of clergymen bespeaks her "covert repudiation of the Christian faith" (7), contending instead that Brontë's choice to locate authentic expressions of Christianity outside external religious authority is not to attack "the foundations of faith" (7). To criticize certain opinions and practices of those who identify as Christian is not to do away with Christianity itself. Following Thormählen, critics like Miriam Elizabeth Burstein and Susan Gallagher resist framing Jane's feminism as anti-Christian, Burstein by interrogating the notion of reading religion in the novel "as an ideology merely blocking the feminist path" ("Religion[s]" 433) and Gallagher by arguing that *Jane Eyre* is in fact best synthesized and understood as "a Christian feminist bildungsroman" (67). These readings argue that *Jane Eyre* respects and embodies a Christian devoutness too earnest and sincere to warrant a critical understanding of Christianity in the novel as merely a vehicle of oppression or object of critique. Some criticism also offers similar interpretations about the Brontë sisters themselves, such as Emma Mason, who resists seeing religion "as purely a negative force for Charlotte and Emily" ("Clue" 69).

Rather than being anti- or irreligious, *Jane Eyre* puts forth a "world-redeeming" (1) religious vision, marked by Jane's intuitive, conscience-driven, religious sensibility. Brocklehurst and St. John repeatedly invoke the day of judgement and the possibility of judgement, and they not only prefer but embody the image of God as ruler in their insistence that Jane submit to their will. Jane, in contrast, foregrounds the image of God as merciful and rejects among other things the image of God as first and foremost a

sovereign judge. Her redemption-focused theology is evidenced in her theological certainty of God's "efficiency to save what He had made" (276). Her religious vision is ultimately affirmed by the reformed Rochester, who "acknowledge[s] that God ha[s] tempered judgement with mercy" (385) upon seeing his firstborn son. This binary between judgement and mercy is also present in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*, and it is no coincidence that in both cases it is gendered. Calvinism in each novel is represented as a patriarchal religion created and supported most vehemently by male figures, while a redemption-focused theology is tied to the capacity of women to manifest a degree of fellow feeling and spiritual intuition lacking in the likes of St. John or Stowe's Simeon Brown.[99] The most detailed account of Jane's redemption-focused rather than judgement-focused theology comes after her departure from Rochester. Upon finding a heath in which to sleep, Jane rises to her knees to pray. Moved by the vastness of the night-sky, she feels the grandeur of God's creation. But rather than see this grandeur as a sign of God's affective distance, or of his being unlike humanity, or of his having little concern with those like her whom she calls "little people," her reflections culminate in her describing God with the title by which he loves and redeems humanity: "Saviour" (276). Jane connects God's grandeur with his goodness manifested in his "efficiency" (276) to save, much like Helen, who, although embodying a passiveness and submissiveness of which Jane is arguably critical, relies "implicitly on [God's] power, and confide[s] wholly in his goodness" (69). Like Stowe's Mary and Candace, who in times of spiritual despair find truth and solace in reflecting on the love of Jesus manifested through his crucifixion, Jane in her despair finds solace in communion with God and forms an intuitive conviction of God's goodness, predicated on God's redemptive and salvific power. Her theological convictions are not prompted by what she characterizes as the lifeless dogma which St. John believes and preaches, but by a spiritual intuition which allows her to not only believe but experience the love God has for her, Rochester, and the created world. *Jane Eyre* shifts the locus of spiritual authority

[99] Stowe is more able (or more willing) than Brontë to render her Calvinist characters without stereotype. The Calvinist minister Samuel Hopkins is after all known for both his tenderness and integrity.

from what it pictures as the oppressiveness of a male-driven Calvinist theology and centers instead a liberating female, conscience-driven spirituality.

Jane's rejection of a masculine-coded Calvinist theology is further represented by her emphasis on feminized nature. Jane describes nature as her "mother" and herself as "child" (276), expressing a powerful feminine image of nature as nurturer – more nurturing than "man" from whom she can "anticipate only mistrust" (276). Similarly, Robert, in George MacDonald's *Robert Falconer*, finds peace in nature, which "wait[s] on him like a mother" (3.1). While nature is not typically feminized in the Reformed tradition, it would be an unwarranted leap to assume that Jane's feminization of nature places her outside of historical Christianity. There is a critical temptation, Alison Searle notes, to suggest that Jane embodies "an alternative feminine folk or pagan spirituality" (52), but feminized nature, for Jane, is created by God and a reflection of his divine power rather than a replacement for God. Searle agrees, offering an interpretation which hinges on viewing nature as "fulfill[ing] the role ascribed to it in the biblical text of testifying to God's power, the glory of his works and his character" (52). Likewise, Andrew J. Weiler is unconvinced that Brontë's representation of nature exchanges Christianity for paganism, arguing specifically that the scriptural parallels in the nature descriptions work to refute a pagan reading.[100]

Nineteenth-century literature did not commonly associate or represent God with feminine or maternal images. Yet, as Rebecca Styler has recently argued, a "maternal model of the sacred, while never mainstream, was far more widespread" (2) than has been critically acknowledged. Writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, George MacDonald, and Josephine Butler offered alternatives to established images of God which emphasized masculine-coded qualities such as "punitive authority" and minimized qualities such as compassion and other attributes "deemed feminine according to prevailing constructions of gender" (2). While some novelists explicitly re-gendered the godhead, *Jane Eyre* sees feminized nature complementing rather than replacing a masculine deity. Likewise with

[100] See also Sue Ann Betsinger, who argues that Jane's descriptions of nature do not allude to a "pagan mother-goddess" (111) but rather to Mother Wisdom as depicted in the Hebrew tradition.

MacDonald's *Robert Falconer*, wherein nature is "another side of God" (Hickock 117) rather than God's replacement.

Although Jane speaks of nature affectionately, it is a matter of debate whether her descriptions allow for an unproblematic ecological ethic. Jane characterizes herself as a "guest" and nature as housing her "without money and without price" (276), potentially signaling an exploitative relationship wherein nature is freely giving while Jane takes what she needs.[101] Furthermore, as Styler notes about the trope of Mother Nature, it is an open question whether descriptions of feminized nature, influenced by Romanticism, render nature "a passive entity" (19).[102] On the one hand, the Mother Nature trope can reinforce anthropocentrism, wherein nature is recognized for its instrumental value. On the other hand, "the maternal metaphor has in the past granted unity and personhood to the earth, engendering affection and respect in ways that could prevent excessive resource exploitation" (Styler 21).[103] In Jane's case, the affection and respect she has for (Mother) nature evokes within her the remembrance that God not only saves "souls" but also promises that the "earth should [not] perish" (276). Nature is thus part of a redemptive process.

Jane's rejection of a masculine-coded Calvinist theology, however, does not necessitate a reading of all aspects of her spirituality as inherently antagonistic to Calvinism. Indeed, to read Jane's overall descriptions of God and nature as a reaction against a masculine divine image informed by Calvinism is to hold a reductionistic view of Calvinism. While Calvinism maintains that God is wholly other, it does not reject divine immanence, the belief that God is present in the material or natural world. Thus, to

---

[101] "Without money and without price" is a quotation from Isaiah 55:1.

[102] See Gail Turley Houston for a treatment of Romanticism that complicates its endorsement of Mother Nature and the divine feminine. Houston argues that "for all the attention paid to Mother Nature as female deity, masculinity is still the natural denominator of creative energy in Romantic mythology and aesthetics" (11).

[103] Styler also discusses how "personified nature could act in solidarity with women and challenge masculine culture" (19).

create a divide between what Linda Woodhead describes as transcendent Christianity, wherein Calvinism is categorized, and liberal or alternative expressions of spirituality, is to potentially overstate Calvinism's emphasis on thinking of God as "apart form the world" (2). Styler also pits Calvinism/transcendence against liberal Christianity/immanence in order to align less orthodox expressions of Christianity with a greater degree of respect for nature. But John Calvin honored nature and argued that apart from the Bible, it was the most valuable means by which one could gain knowledge of God. As Mark Stoll elaborates, Calvin maintained that one "could find evidence of the being and attributes of God everywhere from the wide heavens to the smallest blade of grass" (24). Calvin went so far as to suggest that "nature is God," although he clarifies that it is more accurate to suggest that "nature is rather the order prescribed by God" (*Institutes* 1.5.5).

Jane's descriptions of nature in fact provide a rendering of what Calvin calls the *sensus divinitatis*. Calvin, like Thomas Aquinas, theorized that humans have a general and suppressed knowledge of God: "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity" (1.3.1).[104] According to Calvin, the *sensus divinitatis* is often activated when one experiences nature. Philosopher Alvin Plantinga, basing his model of the *sensus divinitatis* partly on Calvin's declaration that "there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of [God's] glory" (1.5.1), describes this nature connection: "Calvin's idea is that the workings of the *sensus divinitatis* are triggered or occasioned by . . . the glories of nature: the marvelous, impressive beauty of the night sky; the timeless crash and soar of the surf that resonates deep within us; the majestic grandeur of the mountains" (*Knowledge* 34).[105] Calvin and others often discuss this divine sense in the context of someone coming to the knowledge

[104] There is much debate about Calvin's attitude to natural theology, which holds that truths about God can be known without appeal to divine revelation. See Paul Helm for an overview of this debate.

[105] Plantinga notes that Calvin would say the *sensus divinitatis* is triggered not only by "grandeur and majesty" but also by "the subtle play of sunlight on a field in spring, or the dainty, articulate beauty of a tiny flower, or aspen leaves shimmering and dancing in the breeze" (34). For engagements with Plantinga's work on the *sensus divinitatis*, see Georg Plasger, and Blake McAllister and Trent Dougherty.

that God exists, but it is also discussed in relation to the strengthening or reaffirmation of the believer's faith, or to the production of "true beliefs" (Helm 241) about God. Jane experiences the *sensus divinitatis* and describes how it arouses within her devotion toward and dependence on God. In the heath, her faith in God's goodness increases as a direct result of her communing with and reflecting on nature. Discouraged and consumed by her thoughts of Rochester, she looks upward to the sky and reflects:

> We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale spread before us: and it is in the unclouded night-sky, where His worlds wheel their silent course, that we read clearest His infinitude, His omnipotence, His omnipresence. I had risen to my knees to pray for Mr. Rochester. Looking up, I, with tear-dimmed eyes, saw the mighty Milky Way. Remembering what it was – what countless systems there swept space like a soft trace of light – I felt the might and strength of God. Sure was I of His efficiency to save what He had made . . . I turned my prayer to thanksgiving: the Source of Life was also the Savior of spirits. (276)

The night sky evokes within Jane an experiential understanding of God's nearness.[106] Yes, God is other – God is infinite, omnipotent, and omnipresent – but he can also be intimately known. In the heath, Jane, at least momentarily, heeds the warning she earlier gives to Rochester: "a wanderer's repose or a sinner's reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature" (186). Jane looks "higher," (186) literally and figuratively, for repose. Nature catalyzes for Jane the divine sense which in turn effects a firmer commitment, or recommitment, to God. It is in fact St. John the Calvinist who does not embody this aspect of Calvin's theology. Jane reflects that nature is not to him "a treasury of delight" (299). Barry Qualls suggests that nature for St. John "is a threat, something to crush much as he crushes the flowers under his foot" (46), as he does upon receiving a visit from Miss Oliver. For Rivers, nature holds no consolatory power, indicating how Rivers "denigrates the worth of this world" (Qualls 63). While Jane's nature-triggered

[106] Nature functioning as a revelatory medium is neither exclusive to any one Christian (or religious) tradition nor an uncommon trope in nineteenth-century British and American novels. See for instance chapter four of Constance Fenimore Woolson's *The Old Stone House* (1873), chapter three of Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822), chapter thirty-three of Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), and chapter 3.1 of George MacDonald's *Robert Falconer* (1868).

divine sense is most often read in the context of the Romantic tendency to see the divine in and through nature, it can also be read in the context of Calvin.

Conclusion

Brontë took issue with those who saw in *Jane Eyre*'s representation of religion an anti-Christianity and immorality, responding to these allegations by adding a preface to the second edition. In it, she argues that her novel critiques not Christianity but its false and harmful distortions: "Conventionality is not morality" (1). She positions herself the unliked but necessary exposer of "white-washed walls" (2) in whom vice masquerades as virtue. Far from besmirching anything Christ-like and virtuous, she argues that *Jane Eyre* condemns an exploitative Christianity practiced by those who are hypocritical and self-righteous, like Brocklehurst who preaches to the Lowood girls the mortification of "braided hair and costly apparel" and other "lusts of the flesh" (54) but whose own elaborately tressed daughters are bedecked in the finest velvets and furs. In part, Jane reacts against this social inequality by passionately naming and opposing the injustice of the neglect and violence with which she is treated by those around her, *contra* Helen, who tells Jane: "injustice never crushes me too low" (50). But there is a second type of inequality that Jane reacts against, and that is what Tom Winnifrith names St. John and Brocklehurst's insistence on "dividing people into sheep who are saved and goats who are damned" (*Brontës* 120). "Narrow human doctrines," writes Brontë in her preface, "that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world-redeeming creed of Christ" (1).[107] According to Brontë, redemption, whether earthly or heavenly, is the privilege that God through Christ desires for the whole "world" as opposed to an exclusive few.

Jane does not subvert religion as a whole; rather she expresses a different form of Christianity than the Calvinist clergymen in her novel. But she also praises St. John's Calvinist embodiment of Christianity at the end of her narrative. Again, if we are not

[107] Although some reviews acknowledged the preface, its addition did not do much to sway the opinions of those who considered *Jane Eyre* an immoral and unorthodox novel.

going to take Jane at her word, or if we are hesitant to do so, or if we are disappointed with Jane if in fact her estimation of St. John is unironically full of admiration, we must examine our reasoning. By foregrounding *Jane Eyre*'s treatment of St. John's Calvinist faith, this chapter speaks to our critical narratives about whether and how the novel embraces or rejects Christian orthodoxy, a category for which criticism has various definitions, but which is often united in attributing to it connotations of archaism and unsophistication. Miriam Burstein writes that the Brontë sisters are often misleadingly "ranked on a sliding scale of most to least religious" ("Religion[s]" 434). Charlotte, in the middle, ostensibly not as "traditional" as Anne but not as "radical" as Emily, is represented at times as subversive and at other times as conventional in her religious position. The ironic Jane, refusing to sincerely commend St. John's Calvinist Christianity, is implicitly read as the fictional champion of the subversive Brontë. It is possible that we see *Jane Eyre* as more sophisticated – meaning less naïve about religion – the more we see it as moving away from Calvinism. I suggest that we resist ascribing an extra relevancy, validity, or sophistication to ironic Jane and subversive Brontë. Sincere Jane and earnest Brontë are equally compelling.

Chapter 3.

The Theological Work of George MacDonald's Realist Novels

In his literary and theological corpus, George MacDonald uses various literary techniques and theological modes, ranging from parables, to paradoxes, to apophatic theology, to communicate what he considers spiritual truths. In MacDonald's realist works, these techniques and modes coexist with what criticism foregrounds and faults as the novels' "heavily homiletic" (Pridmore 620) tone, their "pulpit oratory" (Raeper 195), and their "long-winded sermonizing" (Reis 74). MacDonald's contemporaries similarly suggested that the novels are "marred by an excess of the theological element" (Wilson 271) and too concerned with the dissemination of "religious opinions" (McCrie 295). As these critical receptions imply, the realist works are often judged aesthetically unsuccessful on account of their sermonizing.

That the realist novels are singled out from MacDonald's fiction and faulted for their sermonizing suggests that sermons are absent from MacDonald's fantasy works.[108] But, as Martin Dubois argues, this is not the case. Observing that sermons are featured frequently, especially in the later non-realist works, Dubois suggests that the rift between the realist and fantasy works has been exaggerated and that we are misguided in measuring "the success of MacDonald's fairy tales and fantasies by their distance from his sermons" (583). And yet, despite both the fantasy and realist works containing sermonic content, the fantasy works are not critiqued for their sermonizing. To reconcile the presence of sermons and sermonizing in both the fantasy and realist works with the fact that the realist works are singled out as aesthetically unsuccessful largely on account

---

[108] MacDonald is best known today for his fairy tales like *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and his fantasy works like *Phantastes* (1858) and *Lilith* (1895). But at the time of his writing, his realist fiction was more popular and better received than the fantasy works.

of their sermonizing, criticism requires a treatment of sermonic discourse that is more attuned to its internal variances.

Criticism has yet to acknowledge that the sermonizing in MacDonald's realist works is not all of one kind. In contrast, this chapter resists viewing the sermonizing as one undifferentiated phenomenon. It argues that by differentiating between the types and tones of MacDonald's sermonizing, we are able to isolate narratorial polemical preaching as a rhetorical mode which encumbers the realist works. This mode is primarily used to condemn Calvinism. The realist novels employ various other narrative strategies to establish what MacDonald perceives as the harm – moral, spiritual, emotional, and at times physical – caused by one's exposure and/or adherence to Calvinism. But the narratorial polemical preaching is particularly resonant, imitating a Scottish Calvinist preaching style even as it attacks the tradition marked by it.

This chapter analyzes how MacDonald's use of narratorial polemical preaching generates a theological and aesthetic flatness. By specifying that this flatness is the result of a specific rhetorical mode, it rejects two assumptions. The first assumption is that the sermon and the realist novel are fundamentally incompatible. To assume this incompatibility is to rely on a limited definition and sample of sermonic discourse rather than to acknowledge the versatility of the sermon genre. The second assumption is that theology and the realist novel are incompatible, an assumption challenged by numerous critics who resist seeing realism as inherently secular.[109] This assumed incompatibility is at times implicit in criticism which suggests that MacDonald's works of fantasy and children's stories accomplish greater theological subtlety and sophistication than his realist novels and are "far more interesting" (Pridmore 62) as a result. Ultimately, this chapter resists allowing the narratorial polemical preaching to overshadow the other theological modes, sermonic or otherwise, pervading the novels. If we decenter the

---

[109] In a subsequent section, this chapter briefly sketches the work of two critics, Amy M. King and Susan E. Colon, who resist the association between realism and the secular. By more generally resisting the religious/secular binary, scholars working at the intersection of religion and literature have rethought critical assumptions about a number of nineteenth-century works, writers, and genres. See, among others, William R. McKelvy and Michael W. Kaufmann.

narratorial polemical preaching, we may observe that MacDonald's realist fiction accomplishes not only a theological fulsomeness more characteristic of MacDonald's religious vision and methodology as represented in his broader theological and literary corpus, but that realism, its thematic concerns, narrative strategies, and ideals, is capable of and suited to representing the complexity of theology and religious experience.

Growing up Calvinist

The mature MacDonald rejected many aspects of his Calvinist theological upbringing. In his youth, he attended a church called the Missionar Kirk in Huntly, Aberdeenshire. The theological tone and priorities of the Kirk were set by the Scottish Presbyterianism formed centuries earlier by John Knox and the Westminster Confession. Having studied Reformed theology with Calvin in Geneva, Knox brought many of the principles of Calvin's theology to Scotland and helped cement them in the Scots Confession of 1560. This confession was replaced by the more stringently vetted Westminster Confession of Faith in the mid-seventeenth century. To these confessions were added what came to be known as federal (or covenant) theology, wherein God's relationship to humanity is conceptualized in terms of covenants in distinctly contractual terms.[110]

The sermon was and is the central act of worship in Calvinist church services. Its centrality in Protestant churches can be traced to the Protestant Reformation, which saw, among other things, "a more prevalent, expansive, and central proclamation of Christian scripture" (McNutt 372) and an increased investment among ministers to harness homiletic skill. For Calvin, and for those who adopt his theology of preaching, preaching is one of "the ordinary means appointed by God for the salvation of the elect" (DeVries

[110] See Donald Macleod for a discussion on the continuity between Westminster theology and the broader Scottish Reformed tradition. More generally, the Westminster Confession replicated many doctrines which were "the common creed of all the churches of the Reformation" (2).

106). Preaching also often had and has an instructive function.[111] In other words, the sermon is the primary authoritative mode with which ministers set the theological tone, priorities, and doctrines of a given church. Its authority derives "in large part from the Christian belief that ordained ministers labored under a divine imperative to communicate God's truth to their fellow mortals" (Coleman, *Preaching* 7).[112] In the churches the young MacDonald attended, God's truth included the "truths of reformed religion" (Matheson 152).

As an adolescent, MacDonald likely encountered what he often describes in many of his realist novels as hellfire sermons. He frequently pairs this description with vivid imagery indicating the terror experienced by parishioners on account of these sermons. MacDonald could not commit himself to Calvinism, whether the localized Scottish brand to which he was directly exposed or other variations of Calvinism as informed by theologians like Calvin, Knox, and Jonathan Edwards. Among the theological teachings MacDonald rejected was the federal theology, which depicts the atonement in "forensic" (Dearborn 12) terms, wherein God's salvific love extends only to the elect, and is purchased by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. MacDonald resisted framing Christ's death as propitiation toward a wrathful God, describing instead an atonement grounded in inescapable divine love.[113]

---

[111] See William Gibson and Keith A. Francis's introductory chapters to *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon, 1689-1901* (2012) for more on the sermon genre.

[112] See Coleman for an in-depth discussion on the sermon "as a mode of embodied performance" (*Preaching* 11). While not the focus of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that Coleman and others who study nineteenth-century preaching practices raise questions about performativity, orality/aurality, and preaching and audience, especially in relation to the growing industry of printed sermons.

[113] MacDonald's view of the atonement is not easy to classify within established atonement theories. See Michael Phillips, who in *George MacDonald and the Atonement: Miracle or Example: A New Covenantal Perspective* (2013), recognizes that MacDonald simply "did not write about the mechanics of the atonement" and that when MacDonald *does* write about the atonement, he arguably "muddies the waters all the more" (1).

Fundamentally, MacDonald takes issue with what he sees as Calvinism's mis-hierarchization of God's attributes. To MacDonald, the Calvinist is first and foremost committed to the idea of God's sovereignty rather than God's love, especially God's love as manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ.[114] MacDonald perceives an irreconcilability between a Calvinist God and the life, personhood, and teachings of Jesus. In *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865), the narrator comments that the sternness and severity of Alec's schoolmaster Murdoch Malison are manifestations of "the God of a corrupt Calvinism . . . and not the God revealed in the man Christ Jesus" (ch. 9). *The Child in the Midst*, the first of his *Unspoken Sermons* (1867), sees MacDonald expanding this polemic:

> How terribly, then, have the theologians misrepresented God in the measures of the low and showy, not the lofty and simple humanities! Nearly all of them represent him as a great King on a grand throne, thinking how grand he is, and making it the business of his being and the end of his universe to keep up his glory, wielding the bolts of a Jupiter against them that take his name in vain. They would not allow this, but follow out what they say, and it comes much to this. Brothers, have you found our king? There he is, kissing little children and saying they are like God. There he is at table with the head of a fisherman lying on his bosom, and somewhat heavy at heart that even he, the beloved disciple, cannot yet understand him well. The simplest peasant who loves his children and his sheep were – no, not a truer, for the other is false, but – a true type of our God beside that monstrosity of a monarch. (22-23)

In Calvinism, MacDonald argues, conventional attributes of kingship – glory, authority, power, grandness – erroneously take pride of place over the benignity, humility, loving-kindness, and humanness of Jesus. Interestingly, MacDonald concedes that Calvinists "would not allow this," meaning that Calvinists would not agree with his characterization of Calvinism. He insists, however, that Calvinism is what he calls in *Robert Falconer* "logically absurd" (1.12) and that Calvinists simply do not perceive the illogicality of their theological belief system. For MacDonald, Calvinism's emphasis on hell, damnation, and the predestination and salvation of an exclusive few follows from its

[114] This is not to say that MacDonald wanted "to diminish the idea of God as Lawgiver" as much as he saw the isolation of this attribute as emptying God's Fatherhood "of true and eternal meaning" (Dearborn 103).

focus on divine sovereignty. By contrast, many of MacDonald's theological beliefs, such as his universalist beliefs, are what he saw as the fruit of his commitment to divine love.[115]

MacDonald's adherence to less mainstream theological beliefs like universalism has resulted in his being categorized as a theological liberal, despite universalism being "a quietly popular belief" (Plourde 235) by the mid-nineteenth century. It is true that some of MacDonald's convictions about doctrines having to do with salvation, eschatology, atonement, and Biblical authority put him at odds with Christian orthodoxy, by which I mean some of the predominant theologies (like a penal substitutionary view of the atonement) within the Western Christian tradition. Indeed, in 1853, MacDonald was forced to resign due to a reduction in wages from his first and only pastorate on account of his unorthodox (mainly universalist) theological views. Another reason some of his contemporaries viewed him with suspicion was because he challenged the authority of the Bible's orthodox interpretations. S. L. Wilson groups MacDonald's realist novels in the category of popular literature which "empties the Scriptures of their meaning, substitutes uninspired materials for inspired in the evolution of belief, sets up a defiant individualism against the historic consciousness of Christendom, [and] resolves the grace of God into a 'sweet reasonableness'" (8-9).[116] Other critics concurred. Reviewing *Robert Falconer*, *The Fortnightly Review* protests that a "third of the work is occupied with the religious expositions of the author, which are very wearisome," but its major concern is

---

[115] The underlying premise of MacDonald's objection to an eternal hell is that for God to be all-loving, all humans without exception must ultimately be saved. See Thomas Talbott's "The Just Mercy of God: Universal Salvation in George MacDonald" (2011) for a measured and detailed treatment of how MacDonald's views on the atonement, divine love, divine justice, and the nature of sin converge to produce his understanding and justification of universalism.

[116] Critics have challenged the pejorative tone of the accusation that MacDonald "resolves the grace of God into a 'sweet reasonableness.'" Ann Boaden, for example, uses *Robert Falconer* to argue that MacDonald's God is not an "indulgent parent" or a pushover characterized by "easy sentimentality" (12). Boaden and others, by analyzing *Robert Falconer*, *Lilith*, and MacDonald's other works more generally, reject the assumption that because MacDonald was a universalist, he did not take the ideas of holiness or divine punishment seriously.

moral rather than aesthetic: "Less damage is done to what is considered religion by open defection or hostility than by the examples set by men who still consider themselves orthodox." MacDonald's belief that he is propagating an authentic Christian message in his novels "is the real source of danger to the churches" (116).[117] MacDonald's realist novels, in other words, were seen as an affront to sacred authority and as having the potential to lead readers religiously astray.

But MacDonald's theology resists simple categorization. While to many he is a defender of an erroneous and dangerous kind of faith, his writings, as critics have noted, also contain distinguishably orthodox beliefs. For example, Rolland Hein argues that "MacDonald's theology stops appreciably short of nineteenth-century liberalism" (*Harmony* 27), registering orthodoxy in MacDonald's "strong vision of personal evil and the necessity of purgation from it" (28), or what Douglas Thorpe calls MacDonald's "vivid conception of the basic depravity of the human being" (12). We encounter similar difficulties of categorization when we consider MacDonald's relationship to Calvinism. Partly a symptom of little or cursory cross-disciplinary engagement, literary criticism at times lacks specific and historically informed definitions for religious movements, theologies, and traditions.[118] Religious historians have long observed the ubiquitousness with which John Calvin's name is invoked, both in academic and non-academic contexts, to represent certain theologies and theological emphases that Calvin himself would consider misrepresentative of his thought. These invocations assume a variety of misconceptions and are often grounded in the belief that Calvin represents all Reformed theology. Scholarship on the Reformed tradition has illustrated that contemporaries of

---

[117] Similarly, another review writes that MacDonald's novels progress on a downward trajectory, each novel growing duller because of the "long and troublesome sermons in every other chapter" (*Once a Week* 386). That the "sermons" are long is an aesthetic criticism but "troublesome" suggests a theological and moral concern.

[118] See Abram Van Engen's call, discussed in the Introduction, for literary critics to up their engagement with the disciplines of religious studies and history. See also Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner's *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion* (2019), which explicitly frames itself as a product of interdisciplinary dialogue.

Calvin such as Huldrych Zwingli and Martin Bucer, and later Theodore Beza and William Perkins, were just as formative in constructing the landscape (or rather landscapes) of Reformed theology, not to mention New Englanders like Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards.[119] Furthermore, contemporary engagements with Reformed theology, by writers like Marilynne Robinson and theologians such as Oliver D. Crisp demonstrate the diverse ways in which one can understand and identify as a Calvinist or as belonging to the Reformed tradition.

If we understand Calvinism as shorthand for a particular version of predestination and election, as we often do, then MacDonald was not a Calvinist. His hostility towards these doctrines permeates his realist novels, partly through the novels' depictions of characters moving along the following spiritual trajectory: As a child, the character in question is repelled by Calvinism and troubled by the possibility of it's being true. She nevertheless attempts to assent to it, is unable to do so, and after much spiritual struggle is finally given by God the revelation of his true, decidedly non-Calvinistic nature. For example, in *Alec Forbes*, Annie Anderson's exposure to Calvinism in childhood leads her to believe that "A spiritual terror [is] seated on the throne of the universe, and [is] called God" (ch. 26). The sermons and teachings of the Calvinist minister Thomas Crann frighten her and make her anxious over her eternal destination and that of her friends Alec and Curly. Eventually, Annie grows confident in her conviction that the God described by Calvinists is a misrepresentation, and she experiences a revelatory assurance that God is benevolent, merciful, and "love itself" (ch. 53). *Robert Falconer* also follows this trajectory. The titular character has a large and generous heart and a "simple and earnest nature" (2.2), whose sensitive soul is wreaked by Calvinist doctrines which

---

[119] Partly, religious historians are concerned with offering two correctives: first, about Calvin himself, and second, about Reformed theology as a whole. The first corrective emphasizes that Calvin himself did not foreground soteriology at the expense of other doctrinal or theological concerns. Indeed, Calvin warned against delving too deeply into what he considered matters above human understanding, such as the doctrines of election and predestination. (Whether he took his own advice is debatable.) The second corrective emphasizes that the use of the term "Calvinism" often removes from view the fact that Reformed theology is "pluriform in origin and development" (Gordon and Trueman 2).

attribute to God what Robert perceives as injustice and malevolence. Robert longs to feel intimacy with God but is prevented from doing so due to God being "made unlovely by the words without knowledge spoken in the religious assemblies of the land" (1.18). "The evil phantasms" of Calvinist theology make Robert wonder how God can condemn most people to perdition by withholding from them the aid necessary for them to undergo conversion, aid without which it is "utterly impossible" (1.12) for them to escape hell. Robert attempts to accept Calvinism, and to understand it as the best representation of "the will of God" (2.2), but Calvinist doctrines are "repulsive to him" (3.1). After much prayer, spiritual suffering, expectant waiting, and encounters with nature, literature, and music, Robert ultimately experiences clarity as to God's nature, forsaking Calvinist doctrines in exchange for unspecified credal "peace" (305) given to him by Jesus.

The explicit rejection of Calvinist doctrines by the protagonists of the realist novels aligns with MacDonald's own rejection of these doctrines. But if we understand Calvinism as a capacious category, encompassing a wide range of doctrines, characteristics, and theological foundations, we may observe that MacDonald's theological views, methodologies, and even rhetorical style, are shaped by his exposure to Calvinism even as he rejects particular Calvinist doctrines. In other words, MacDonald's relationship with Calvinism is not one of complete antagonism. Timothy Larsen and Mark Knight illustrate the complexity of MacDonald's theological imagination and influences by suggesting that while MacDonald rejects doctrines like double predestination and distances himself from "a transactional judicial language that follows from thinking so heavily about God's sovereignty" (Knight 163), his understanding of divine providence is formed largely by his Calvinist upbringing and education.[120] Ironically, the polemical tone with which MacDonald attacks Calvinism in his realist works is indebted to what Russell Newton describes as a characteristically Scottish Calvinist preaching style. MacDonald adopts the polemical orientation and "combative tone" (191) of the preaching style of his theological antagonists to condemn the very doctrines they were concerned with defending. While I disagree with David S.

[120] This is not to suggest that divine providence is a doctrine exclusive to Calvinism.

Robb that "MacDonald's spirit always had the combativeness, the stiff-neckedness, the absoluteness of the Covenanters whose distant heir he was" (*God's* 6), I suggest that this combative spirit is *sometimes* present, and no more so than in MacDonald's treatment of Calvinism.

MacDonald as Preacher-Novelist

MacDonald wrote realism, fantasy, poetry, and formal sermons, often blending the genres together.[121] MacDonald also did not limit himself to one theological mode.[122] Gisela Kreglinger notes that his final and darkest work of fantasy, *Lilith* (1895), reflects his "parabolic strategy" (205). Daniel Gabelman argues that MacDonald's children's stories, particularly *At the Back of the North Wind* (1868), extensively feature apophatic theology. Pervading his realist works is a third theological mode, what critics often pejoratively describe as their didactic and homiletic quality, or their incessant sermonizing. This is not to say that the realist novels include many scenes of formal preaching. Pulpit performances are only occasionally featured. In referring to the novels' inclusion of sermonizing, I mean what Dawn Coleman identifies as "'preachy'" [moments] that many readers today love to hate" (*Preaching* 19). Coleman defines novelistic sermonic voice as "speech that mimics the sound of the sermon" (18). This voice is typically "urgent and concentrated" and "seems to jump out from the surrounding text and claim authority" (18).

MacDonald justified the sermonizing within his novels by identifying himself as foremostly a preacher rather than a novelist. Consequently, he does not cease from preaching even when exchanging formal sermon-giving (or sermon-writing) with writing

---

[121] The realist works often feature poems and spoken sermons, and the "inanimate objects" within the novels, like the garret-room from which Robert perceives the night sky, retain what G.K. Chesterton describes as "the nameless glamour which they have in a literal fairy-tale" (*GMAW* 11).

[122] See Amanda Blair Vernon's dissertation *Reading with the Trinity: Theology and Literary Form in George MacDonald* (2021), which argues that MacDonald saw his works not only as vehicles for communicating theology, but mediums and forms which actively shape how religion is "imagined, understood, and expressed" (3).

fiction. MacDonald's narrators at times provide the same justification of being above all else preachers, such as when the clergyman-narrator of *The Seaboard Parish* (1868) addresses readers in these terms: "I am beginning a new book like an old sermon; but, as you know, I have been so accustomed to preach all my life that whatever I say or write will more or less take the shape of a sermon; and if you had not by this time learned at least to bear with my oddities, you would not have wanted any more of my teaching" (ch. 1).[123] From his pastorate resignation "until his death in 1905," writes Stephen Prickett, "MacDonald was a preacher without a pulpit" (*Romanticism* 224). Variations on this theme of MacDonald as preacher-novelist abound: MacDonald's "literary career was in one sense a stand-in for the pulpit" (Dubois 224); his "literary profession was in a sense only a secondary calling; primarily, he thought of himself as a preacher, a moralist, even a divine" (Reis 9); his novels are "written as though delivered straight from the pulpit" (Raeper 195).

But MacDonald had no scruples about incorporating sermonic content into his fiction. Aware of and unapologetic about the sermonizing in his novels, he writes: "People find this great fault with me – that I turn my stories into sermons. They forget that I have a Master to serve first before I can wait upon the public" (qtd. in Greville MacDonald 375). This explanation implies that MacDonald considers that one of the best ways to serve God in his capacity as a writer of realist fiction is to sermonize. MacDonald treated his fiction with great care, meticulously editing his novels (Raeper 95), meaning that he understood the sermonic passages and didactic tone as integral

---

[123] Likewise, in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* (1867), the first of the Parish trilogy of which *The Seaboard Parish* is the second installment, the narrator states after preaching a lengthy sermon titled "Sermon on the God and Mammon": "If any young people read my little chronicle, will they not be inclined to say, 'The vicar has already given us in this chapter hardly anything but a long sermon; and it is too bad of him to go on preaching in his study after we saw him safe out of the pulpit'? Ah, well! just one word, and I drop the preaching for a while" (213).

features of his work.[124] Philip Hickok argues that the recent redacted publications of MacDonald's novels which omit many of the sermonic passages within them, especially those characterized by heavy theological discourse, while well-intended so as to make MacDonald's work more accessible, reveal a failure to grasp MacDonald's understanding of his work (107).[125] For MacDonald, the sermonic passages are not digressions or asides as much as they are essential features which aid rather than derail his storylines, especially as these stories are always about the interior spiritual growth of at least one character as much as they are about external conflicts.

MacDonald grounded his role as a preacher-novelist in his belief that art serves a higher purpose.[126] While it is fair to suggest, as many critics do, that didacticism is a defining characteristic of the realist works, it is perhaps more accurate to qualify this characteristic as a distinctly pastoral didacticism. In other words, MacDonald's fiction communicates a pastoral concern: it is instructional in that it advocates for what MacDonald perceives as spiritual truths, but for the ultimate purpose of "point[ing] readers to God" (Ankeny 115).[127] The pastoral vocation included not just disseminating

---

[124] The publication history of *Robert Falconer* demonstrates that MacDonald was bothered by the idea that his literary merit should be judged by any shortened edition of his work. *Robert Falconer* was first serialized in the *Argosy* from December 1866 to November 1867. Length constraints meant that the *Argosy* version was not what MacDonald intended the novel to be. In 1868, the longer book edition was published. This was the version that represented MacDonald's vision for the novel. In a letter to *The Athenaeum*, MacDonald writes: "I altogether refuse to have the work judged by that adumbration of it which appeared in *the Argosy*" (qtd. in Robb, "George" 174).

[125] These redacted editions are published by Bethany House Publishers.

[126] Art for MacDonald is "not so much an end in itself as a means to divine ends" (Robb, "Realism" 278). In Kerry Dearborn's words, "MacDonald's priority was not that truth should serve art, but that art should serve the Truth" (2), or consider Hein's similar statement: "George MacDonald was first of all a Christian, secondly, an artist" (Hein, *Harmony* 113).

[127] Another way to think about MacDonald's realist works as something more than didactic fiction is to categorize them as Victorian sermon novels, which are "concerned primarily with religious communities" (Wagner 312). The sermon novel, writes Tamara S. Wagner, "refers to any fictional narrative, of a certain length, that contains or centrally features sermons, their composition, delivery, or reception; more specifically, it operates as a fictionalized sermon itself" (312).

theology or interpreting Biblical scriptures. Rather, the pastor was also tasked with guarding parishioners against spiritual threats that would point away from rather than to God.[128]

MacDonald's pastoral didacticism, of which the preaching of a Christian message is a major (but not sole) concern, converges with the nineteenth-century evangelical desire to preach the Gospel through fiction.[129] In some cases, however, evangelicals viewed the novel with suspicion, engaging in debates about whether novels could work toward, on one end, the Christian's spiritual edification, and on the other end, the Christian's spiritual harm. The hostility with which some evangelicals viewed fiction had many causes. Some thought fiction "a godless alternative to the sacred truth of divine Scripture" (Tate 416). Some dreaded the novel's "bewitching power," a description which Christopher Herbert situates within a wider discussion of how evangelicals viewed the novel "as the most lethal of all antagonists of Christian faith – far more lethal, it would seem, than such modern trends as scientific rationality or the 'higher criticism' of the Bible" (63).[130] Nevertheless, evangelical condemnations of fiction lessened as the nineteenth century proceeded, as more evangelicals writers saw the potential to "co-opt the novel for evangelistic purposes" (Knight, *Good* 78). Rather than undermine the gospel, novels could instruct, edify, and exhort, but only if they met evangelical standards of representing practical piety and an unambiguously orthodox gospel message.

MacDonald appears to have grown up surrounded by the anxiety over the potential spiritual and moral dangers of reading literature (the novel form or otherwise) that was not infused with explicit Christian terminology or did not relay an explicitly

---

[128] Dearborn, although not explicitly connecting MacDonald's pastoral concerns with his fiction, also speaks of MacDonald's "pastoral" (110) burden.

[129] See Mark Knight's *Good Words: Evangelicalism and the Victorian Novel* (2019) for a more extensive treatment of the nineteenth-century novel and evangelicalism. See Andrew Tate for a shorter treatment on this theme, specifically in relation to George Eliot.

[130] Andrew R. Holmes writes of Wilson that he was "concerned that the real enemy of religion was not science but popular literature" (295).

orthodox message. Robert's grandmother in *Robert Falconer* views *The Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and "The Lady of the Lake" as "seducing spirits" and "idol[s]" (1.18), while John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Richard Baxter's *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, two works she endorses, are on spiritually safe ground, in part because they are written by Calvinists and consistent with Calvinist theology. This anxiety over literature's potential harm extended to a suspicion about whether and to what extent other aesthetic forms like music and nature could have a spiritually revelatory and edifying function. In 1847, MacDonald wrote a letter to his father stating: "One of my greatest difficulties in consenting to think of religion was that I thought I should have to give up my beautiful thoughts & my love for the things God has made" (qtd. in Sadler 17-18). MacDonald personally resolved this difficulty and spent his literary career experimenting with how best to conjoin Christian faith with various literary genres. The tension is nevertheless dramatized in his fiction, most vividly in *Robert Falconer*, when Grannie Falconer burns the violin with which Robert has formed a strong attachment, a scene based on an event that Macdonald himself did not experience but that occurred in his family. Establishing a connection between Calvinism and suspicion of aesthetic form, MacDonald depicts Grannie Falconer as misguided in her attempts to restrict Robert's access to "secular" literature and music.[131]

For MacDonald, works of literature that lack a literal Gospel message and conventional Christian language, as well as other aesthetic forms such as music and nature, still have the potential to function as mediums pointing to the beauty, truth, and goodness of God. It is when Robert's imaginative faculty is vitalized by the *Arabian Nights*, or when he plays the violin, or when he is walking under the vast expanse of the

[131] Critics have reiterated this premise of Calvinism being anti-art. Davis S. Robb reads the violin-burning scene as a representation of the "destructive mistrust of art and imagination in the world of Scottish Calvinism in which MacDonald was brought up" ("Realism" 286), and Brian Atteberry writes that when Robert eventually challenges Grannie Falconer's disapproval of music, "he is also implicitly rejecting her Calvinist faith" (14). But Robb and Atteberry's claim that Calvinism is mistrustful of art requires some nuancing. See Robert Crawford who explains that "The idea that Scottish Presbyterianism has been simply anti-art is misleading" (193).

sky, among mountains, streams, valleys, and woods that he experiences intimations of God's presence. Surrounded by "All Nature," Robert feels as though the earth is nurturing him, its very existence a manifestation of worship to God: "The hum of insects arose from the heath around him; the odour of its flowers entered his dulled sense; the wind kissed him on the forehead; the sky domed up over his head; and the clouds veiled the distant mountain tops like the smoke of incense ascending from the altars of the worshipping earth" (3.1). This communion with nature catalyzes Robert's "inward revelations" about God's nature as well as his acceptance and experience of God's peace.

The Sermon and the Realist Novel

The essential features of realism are a matter of debate.[132] Novels we classify as "realist," writes Caroline Levine, "complicate the term in fascinating and maddening ways" (85). Many nineteenth-century realist texts contain features we typically understand as markers of realism, such as free indirect discourse and psychological interiority. But they also have a tendency to combine realist qualities with "elements that are typically considered anti-realist" (85), such as the sensational plot, gothic imagery, or the supernatural. For example, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), whose eponymous protagonist is often considered a paragon of realist character, includes the "strangely

---

[132] Realism is a slippery term. For every generalization about it "there is a disclaimer to be made and a contradiction to assert" (Kearns 25). Roland Barthes's argument that realist literature does not describe reality as much as it provides through language the "effect of the real" ("Reality" 16) formatively influenced how literary criticism thinks about realism's representational aims in relation to concepts like objectivity. Caroline Levine's primer on realism emphasizes the manifold ways critics have conceptualized realism as a category, and critical work steadily complicates and deepens our understanding of it. Two recent examples are Jesse Rosenthal's *Good Form: The Ethical Experience of the Victorian Novel* (2017), which sees realism as having not only moral concerns but a "moral structure (196), and S. Pearl Brilmyer's *The Science of Character: Human Objecthood and the Ends of Victorian Realism* (2022), which challenges how we think about the hallmarks of realist character, namely "individuality, and the capacity for intellectual and moral growth" (6).

supernatural" (Levine 85) event of Jane hearing Mr. Rochester call her name across space and time.[133]

MacDonald's realist novels elude tidy generic categories, as realism itself eludes narrow criteria. *Robert Falconer* includes a sensational side plot which sees the Baron of Rothie, an aristocratic villain, attempting to seduce and ruin Mysie Lindsay, the daughter of one of Robert's acquaintances. Also taking *Robert Falconer* as her example, Deirdre Hayward argues that the novel is "permeated with a sense of unreality and contains much in the way of the mysterious and the extra-mundane" (19) but acknowledges that critics celebrate it as "an outstanding example of MacDonald's realistic novels on account of its colourful portraits of actual characters, its awareness of social problems, the vividness of its childhood world, and its largely autobiographical nature" (19).[134] Many critics suggest that these well-executed features of MacDonald's realist novels are spoiled by their sermonizing, but without acknowledging that the sermonizing is not all of the same kind and does not belong to one rhetorical category.

The sermonizing in MacDonald's realist novels is not necessarily what hinders their success as works of realism. It is not even the inherent didacticism of the sermonizing. The appropriateness of didacticism within novels was a matter of nineteenth-century debate. It extended beyond a discussion of the "religious" novel, to, for example, the social problem novel. "The 'parsonic habit' of Charles Kingsley's novels was widely denounced," writes James Eli Adams, who observes that "Even critics sympathetic to this enlarged social engagement attacked the reduction of the novel to a pulpit" (65).[135] But, as J. Paul Hunter observes, eighteenth-century readers seem to have

---

[133] It is largely a critical given that realism is incompatible with the supernatural and supernatural causes or explanations. Levine characterizes the supernatural as not "credible" (84), problematically isolating naturalism and reinforcing its legitimacy as a belief system.

[134] See also David S. Robb, who writes that MacDonald could not help in his 'realist' works to give "expression to a conception of reality which far transcends what he often referred to as the commonplace world" (*God's* 19).

[135] See also Miriam Burstein ("Hybridious"), who cites a variety of nineteenth-century periodicals which bemoaned the tiresome didacticism in Christian fiction.

enjoyed didacticism within texts, an enjoyment which, as Dawn Coleman suggests, was also experienced by nineteenth-century readers, who "found didacticism desirable and valuable" (*Preaching* 19). It is not necessarily, then, didacticism which was thought undesirable in novels.

Objections to didacticism had more to do with its execution and whether the execution impeded the novel as an aesthetic composition. George Eliot, whose novels also contain heavily didactic moments, makes this type of objection. For Eliot, the crucial concept is that of pre-eminence: if a novel is "pre-eminently didactic," if it "insist[s] on a 'lesson'" ("Essays" 251), then it fails as realism, or more specifically, it fails to convey the sympathetic emotion integral to realism's success. MacDonald's claim that the primary goal of his fiction is to preach, rather than to meet aesthetic and generic standards or to entertain readers, stands in opposition to Eliot's view of the mechanism by which the novel is effective in its aim toward ethical instruction. For Eliot, the novel fails in its aim of teaching if it "lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram" ("George" IV.300). Art, in this understanding, is morally effective "only if it is aesthetically effective" (Levine and Henry 7). By frequently lapsing from the picture to the diagram in his realist works, MacDonald deprioritizes an aesthetic aim. According to Eliot's principle, this lapsing makes the novelist unsuccessful at ethical instruction. George McCrie, writing in 1875, registers this fault specifically in relation to MacDonald, noting that his novels are marred by "a constant aiming after philosophy" (295). S.L. Wilson, one of MacDonald's contemporaries, also faults the novels because they firstly attempt to disseminate a theological viewpoint (305). But we should not take this to mean that the explicitly theological content of the novels is what hinders their moral and aesthetic effectiveness. As J. Russell Perkin and others argue, theology – its concerns, language, and concepts – pervades realism and the novel form more broadly. Amy M. King, for example, traces "the persistence of a religious worldview" in the form of English provincial realism. Susan E. Colon argues that realism accommodates religious, and specifically parabolic, "ends" (31). Colon, like many scholars working at the intersection of religion and literature, is responding in part to the often-made contention that the novel is a secular genre. Georg Lukács calls the novel "the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* associates

the novel with the rise of a secular individualism. And for George Levine, the novel is "intrinsically secular," (212) while "Victorian fiction . . . is a secular form if ever there was one" (210). Scholars challenge accounts of the novel which presume or argue for its secularity on a number of grounds, most notably and frequently by questioning the division between transcendence and lived human experience and/or the division between theological and empirical epistemologies that these secular accounts often uphold.[136] Colon, for example, points out that Levine's understanding of Christianity relies on Gnostic principles and is thus based on a "misconception of the relationship between the material and the spiritual in Christianity" (35).

George Eliot and other writers demonstrate that the genre of realism is more than capable of conveying theological sophistication and subtlety. Indeed, many (though not all) of the sermonic passages within MacDonald's realist works resist theological flatness. It is not the presence of theology, or the sermonizing writ large, but the polemical and monologic nature of some of the sermonic passages which does not sit comfortably within works of realism.[137] This polemical and monologic mode is not representative of sermonic discourse as a whole. By singling out a particular type of sermonizing within MacDonald's realist works, I resist the assumption that the sermon and the novel are incompatible modes in every sense and manifestation. Nineteenth-century discourse on the sermon and the novel often frames the two forms as antagonists. Our critical narratives have upheld but also complicated this tension. Scholars of nineteenth-century American fiction like Coleman and Faye Halpern, and scholars of

[136] See, among many others, Mark Knight, Jan-Melissa Schramm, Emily Walker Heady, and Kevin Seidel.

[137] To be sure, there are other rhetorical styles within MacDonald's sermonizing that are aesthetically off-putting. Richard H. Reis observes in some of MacDonald's pulpit-style narration the inclusion of elevated language for the purpose of adding gravitas to the narration, but which only comes across as "unnatural pomposity" (55). McCrie calls this style a "miserable affectation" (295). My focus, however, is on the sermonizing that specifically takes theology as its object.

nineteenth-century British fiction like Christine L. Krueger and Mary Lenard, illustrate how novelists mobilize the rhetorical styles and homiletic authority of sermon oration.[138]

Other critics emphasize points of divergence rather than overlap. Linda Gill, for example, understands the sermon as monologic and the novel as dialogic. Gill argues that novels often criticize sermons as tools with which preachers "jam their ideological positions down the throats of their listeners," and as wielding "undeserved, unmerited, and unwarranted" (597) power. Arguments such as these rely on a narrow definition of the sermon and a denominationally specific practice of sermon-giving. Daniel Cook demonstrates that if we consider the sermon in relation to other traditions, specifically the Broad Church, then we can understand the form as inviting social exchanges and rival discourses.[139] By recognizing the versatility of the sermon genre, Cook rejects the critical assumption that sermons only and always invoke a top-down, sacred and unquestionable authority that antagonizes the "'liberal subject'" (491).[140]

Some of the sermons and the sermonic passages within MacDonald's realist fiction are monologic while some are dialogic. When these sermons and passages are framed dialogically, they are more in keeping with the conventions and ideals of realism.

---

[138] Krueger and Lenard see sentimentalist social reform discourse as informed by "preacher" rhetoric "which includes the use of biblical allusion, religious authority, and moral didacticism" (Lenard 8). Halpern also focuses on sentimentalism, demonstrating that sentimental novelists and preachers, due to sharing rhetorical styles, faced similar accusations of emotionally manipulating their audiences. Coleman's study of pulpit-novel borrowings considers various novelistic genres.

[139] Scholars working on Victorian poetry make similar arguments. See, for example, Karen Dieleman, whose reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning foregrounds the "social and dialogic" (46) elements of Browning's congregationalist homiletics.

[140] Amy Coté, in her dissertation, *Theology and the Narrative Form of the Realist Novel* (2020), uses Daniel Cook's analysis of Broad Church homiletics as a point of departure to illustrate how the realist novel's use of direct address represents the dialogic (rather than monologic) potential of fictionalized sermons. The sermon as dialogic becomes "a vehicle for exactly the kinds of self-interrogation, social reflection, and interpretive reasoning ostensibly cultivated by the realist novel" (121). While Coté foregrounds dialogic fictional sermons, I analyze both monologic and dialogic fictional sermonizing in MacDonald's works.

To think of sermons and realism as dialogic and polyphonic is to invoke terms associated with Mikhail Bakhtin, who, in his work on Fyodor Dostoevsky, particularly *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), distinguishes between the polyphonic/dialogical and the monological.[141] Quoting Bakhtin, who argues that the form and structure of realism creates a carnival of voices, Gill writes: "Even in the most didactic novels, various characters, their experiences and discourses continually puncture the dominant narrative and offer alternative possibilities; even if these possibilities are subsequently rejected, they are not erased" (596). MacDonald's realist works at times invite and enact this polyvocality, and its implicit egalitarianism, usually in instances wherein a character delivers a sermon which later becomes the topic of intradiegetic discussion. The clergyman Mr. Maccleary's visit to the ailing shoemaker Dooble Sanny in *Robert Falconer* is illustrative. Mr. Maccleary enters Dooble Sanny's room when Robert is also present, and dwells upon the shoemaker's sins, "magnifying them and making them hideous" while omitting any mention of "the special tenderness of God to the sinner" (2.3). Robert becomes "offended and oppressed with darkness" at the clergyman's treatment of Dooble Sanny. When Mr. Maccleary takes his leave, Robert and Dooble Sanny undermine his message by opening the New Testament and reading the parable of the prodigal son. Disregarding the interpretive authority of the clergyman, Robert and Dooble Sanny favor their understanding of scripture, an understanding that deprioritizes condemnation of sin and celebrates the homecoming of the sinner. While many in the nineteenth century thought it "dangerous to depend too much on the scriptures in isolation from authoritative teaching of the faith, or the right sort of ancient tradition" (N. Vance 51), MacDonald suggests that to do so is not dangerous but a wise and perhaps even necessary act if one desires spiritual returns. Indeed, Robert finds "the peace of Jesus" (3.1) and discerns "the will of God" for his life by "read[ing] the four gospels and ponder[ing] over them" night and day with disregard to their Calvinist interpretations. Dooble Sanny paraphrases about the prodigal son: "Not one word about the poor lad's sins! It was all a hurry and a scurry to get the new shoes upon him, and get on to the calf and the fiddling and the dancing." Convicted, Dooble Sanny begins to repent of his

[141] See Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963).

alcoholism and his mistreatment of his wife, pronouncing the parable "good" in comparison to the "hot air" preached by Mr. Maccleary. We are given Mr. Maccleary's sermon second-hand through the narrator and only after the narrator introduces him by warning readers to be suspicious of whether he is in fact "faithful towards God."

By emphasizing Dooble Sanny and Robert's reactions to the sermon rather than the sermon itself, and by filtering the sermon through the narrator's judgement, the novel creates distance between the sermon and its readers and minimizes its authority. The preaching scene near the beginning of George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) works toward the same end of undermining sermonic authority, although Eliot's preaching scenes are more fine-tuned than MacDonald's. Dinah's sermon is observed from a distance by a passing stranger, whose detachment works to provide a more ironic and subtle judgement than the overt skepticism of *Robert Falconer*'s narrator. Although we receive Dinah's sermon first-hand, Eliot also foregrounds the responses of various audience members. While they are moved on one level by Dinah's oration – Bess "wrench[es] her earrings from her ears . . . sobbing aloud" (90) – their convictions are temporary, indicating that "absent among all of the responses to Dinah's sermon is any depiction of an individual successfully understanding and accepting Dinah's message" (Coté 29).[142] Mr. Maccleary's audience members are skeptical from the start, and MacDonald uses them to invalidate, with less finesse and subtlety than Eliot, the sermon as an authoritative and unquestionable mode.

MacDonald's realist fiction emphasizes polyvocality and encourages the questioning of sermonic authority, except when the narrator sermonizes on the evils of

---

[142] See Coleman for a broader analysis of Eliot's representation of sermonic voice. Coleman argues that Eliot's final novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), sees Eliot more suspicious of voices of spiritual "conviction" ("*Daniel*" 422).

Calvinism.[143] The narratorial passages in MacDonald's realist works frequently function as sites of authorial intrusion. Indeed, the distinction between MacDonald-as-author and MacDonald-as-narrator is tenuous at best. While some of the "youthful characters at the centre of [MacDonald's] stories" offer MacDonald's points of view, "the overt viewpoint is that of a narrator who seems hardly to be distinguished from the author himself – so much so that, despite the theoretical problems, it is most convenient to refer to the narrator simply as 'MacDonald'" (Robb, *God's* 39). In often half-successful attempts, MacDonald attempts to write intradiegetic narrators, such as in *Robert Falconer* wherein the narrator eventually identifies himself as Archie Gordon, but the novel's attempt "to introduce one of Falconer's London disciples as narrator is so perfunctory that it can almost be ignored" (39).[144] MacDonald's prominent, moralizing narratorial voice is at times overbearing, and it contributes to the didactic and "preachy" quality of the realist works. While MacDonald's narrators by definition enjoy the privileges of narratorial authority, they do not always take up an authoritat*ive* or polemical tone.

It is when the narratorial sermonic passages embody a monologic and polemical quality that they discourage theological debate, prevent rebuttal, and limit theological nuance. One such instance of monologic sermonic address occurs shortly after Grannie

[143] While my primary focus is the monologic and polemical quality of these sermonic passages, it should be noted that these passages are provided by the narrator and that the concept of narratorial authority has a long critical history that often speaks to religious concerns. In particular, discussions of narratorial authority often center on what twentieth-century literary criticism labelled narratorial omniscience. From Wayne Booth and J. Hillis Miller onward, critics have used ideas of divine omniscience to understand narratorial omniscience and/or to give it different labels. Much of this work attempts to separate narratorial omniscience from its theological foundations to varying degrees. See Elaine Freedgood and Paul Dawson who trace the trajectory of critical treatments of narrative omniscience. There is also an interesting affinity between narratorial omniscience and what James Baldwin Brown recognized in the nineteenth century, not as divine omniscience, but as "a sort of omniscient tone in the pulpit method of handling intellectual questions which stirs fierce rebellion in cultivated minds and hearts (109-10)" (qtd. in Cook 491).

[144] Jan-Melissa Schramm writes that nineteenth-century novels "experimented with new forms of narrative organization and omniscience as nascent scientific methodologies placed old ideas of plot and providence under new pressure" ("Bible" 264). Arguably, MacDonald's lack of experimentation, or his clumsy experimentation, lends his realist novels an unsophisticated quality.

Falconer receives the (inaccurate) tiding that her son Andrew has died. Grannie Falconer weeps, prays, and asks Robert to read her a chapter from the New Testament. Robert reads from the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John, a chapter famous for indicating the fervency of Jesus's love for his disciples. After Robert recites verse nine, wherein Jesus specifies that he prays "not for the world," Grannie Falconer interrupts to say that she takes this to mean that Jesus did not pray for Andrew and therefore neither should she. The narrator interjects to explain that Grannie Falconer is expositing scripture incorrectly. He then conducts what he considers a correct scriptural exegesis and laments the existence and influence of Calvinist doctrine:

> O rebellious mother heart! dearer to God than that which beats laboriously solemn under Genevan gown or Lutheran surplice! if thou wouldst read by thine own large light, instead of the glimmer from the phosphorescent brains of theologians, thou mightst even be able to understand such a simple word as that of the Saviour, when, wishing his disciples to know that he had a nearer regard for them as his brethren in holier danger, than those who had not yet partaken of his light, and therefore praying for them not merely as human beings, but as the human beings they were, he said to his Father in their hearing: 'I pray not for the world, but for them,' – not for the world now, but for them – a meaningless utterance, if he never prayed for the world; a word of small meaning, if it was not his very wont and custom to pray for the world – for men as men. Lord Christ! not alone from the pains of hell, or of conscience – not alone from the outer darkness of self and all that is mean and poor and low, do we fly to thee; but from the anger that arises within us at the wretched words spoken in thy name, at the degradation of thee and of thy Father in the mouths of those that claim especially to have found thee, do we seek thy feet. Pray thou for them also, for they know not what they do. (1.13)

The narrator begins this address with an exclamation, sympathetic toward Grannie Falconer's motherly instinct to rebel against Calvinist doctrine in spite of her attempting to assent to Calvinism cognitively. If Grannie Falconer would rely on an individualized and intuitive approach to scripture – if she would read by her own "light" – rather than rely on Calvinistic interpretations, she would have a better chance of understanding

Jesus's message – his true meaning and his inclusive love.[145] The address continues with a collective voice, the editorial "we," wherein the reader is ascribed anger and a desire for solace over the way in which Calvinists malign God's character. Finally, the narrator concludes by co-opting Jesus's words spoken from the cross in reference to those calling for his crucifixion: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24). Playing on the question of whom the Christian should pray for, the narrator takes liberty with the verse, substituting forgiveness for prayer to increase the force of his protest.

Rhetorically, the above passage is, in one sense, effective. Priming his condemnation of Calvinism after describing Grannie Falconer's heart-brokenness, the narrator ensures that the reader is more likely to be emotionally sympathetic toward her and angry at the source of her spiritual trouble. Metonymically invoking John Calvin by way of "Genevan gown," the narrator preserves the stereotypical image of Calvinists as "laboriously solemn," suggesting the indifference of one who is unmoved by spiritual suffering. The address is polemical, decisive, and declarative, foreclosing the possibility of nuancing Calvinism's flaws or merits.

In another sense, the forcefulness of this polemical preaching is arguably not as efficacious as MacDonald may have presumed. Among pastors, polemical preaching was discouraged as a mode of pulpit oratory. And the majority of MacDonald's *Unspoken Sermons* are in fact not polemical in theme or tone. They are largely characterized by a Christological hermeneutic, engaging with Christian themes by foregrounding the life and teachings of Jesus. Lewis Orsmond Barstow, who was a professor of Practical Theology and later the dean of Yale Divinity School in the late 1800s, recognized the valid and widespread objections that polemical preaching was "likely to be shallow"

---

[145] MacDonald minimizes the fact that Calvin's exegesis of this chapter is more complicated than Grannie Falconer's interpretation suggests. In his commentary on the gospel of John, Calvin writes "for no better rule of prayer can be found than to follow Christ as our Guide and Teacher. Now, we are commanded to pray for all, (1 Timothy 2:8) and Christ himself afterwards prayed indiscriminately for all[.]" At the same time, he writes "the prayers which we offer for all are still limited to the elect of God." What matters foremostly to MacDonald is that Calvinism supplies Grannie Falconer with theological and Biblical blinders, preventing her from discerning what he considers the true nature of God and God's love.

(328) and “unjust” (185). Dawn Coleman observes that “mainstream [American] preachers,” regardless of denomination or affiliation, wanted to avoid “sounding polemical” (*Preaching* 42). Just as nineteenth-century reviewers of fiction observed that heavy didacticism provokes readers “into *resistant* reading,” wherein “even the most Christian reader reads against the grain” (Burstein, “Hybridous” 174), polemical preaching in fiction was too obviously a tool of theological propaganda, and represented what Wilson describes as “the spirit of a partisan” (271). Polemical preaching is too obviously manipulative, a medium ill-suited for both novels and sermons, as it makes listeners and readers suspicious of the preacher’s, or the novelist’s, or the narrator’s moral or theological message.

Disjunctions: Polemical Preaching, MacDonald’s Religious Vision, and Realism

The polemical preaching with which MacDonald’s realist works criticize Calvinism is in tension with many of MacDonald’s beliefs about and attitudes toward religious engagement. First, considering that MacDonald saw novels as having spiritual value even if they do not contain explicit religious terminology or doctrinal interpretation, it is curious that his realist novels frequently feature expositional theology. It is all the more curious considering that in his novels, abstract theology often functions as a barrier or impediment to belief and works toward the detriment of one’s character. Grannie Falconer possesses a “sternness” because she gives “heed to systematic theology” (1.3), while the “ruins of the ever falling temple of theology” (2.7) rest heavily over Robert, acting as an obstacle to his experiencing God. Second, the definitive pronouncements with which the narrator rejects the theological specifics of Calvinist theology, as well as the declarative tone with which he advocates his own theology, suggest an attitude of theological certainty that MacDonald often warned against. In a letter to his father, he writes: “We are far too anxious to be definite and to have finished,

well-polished, sharp-edged *systems*" (qtd. in Greville MacDonald 155).[146] Ironically, MacDonald is likely criticizing a systematization of theology written in a declarative and confident rhetorical style which he also adopts in his polemics against Calvinism. Third, the inflammatory language with which MacDonald describes Calvinism is shockingly hostile and partisan considering MacDonald collaborated and formed friendships with Calvinists (Knight, *Good* 96-97). In *Robert Falconer* alone, Calvinism is described in demonic and idol-worshipping terms as "a capricious demon" (1.12) and as "Moloch" (1.24).[147] Finally, the sheer amount of space the realist novels dedicate to unpacking and denouncing Calvinist theology sits uneasily with the frequency with which MacDonald preaches on the spiritual perils of focusing on theology over taking action. His written sermons and fictional works contain numerous calls to "action" (*Pulpit* 227), to "doing right" (120), and to the uselessness of "knowledge without action" (146). Robert Falconer holds "that to help a neighbour is the strongest antidote to unbelief" (3.5) and that the "only and the greatest thing man is capable of" is "Trust in God" who is "beyond our understanding" (3.8).[148]

The polemical preaching within MacDonald's realist works, its totalizing, authoritative voice, and its quality of epistemic certainty, is in tension with what MacDonald's larger literary and theological corpus advocates as an intuitive, individual,

---

[146] Dubois sees MacDonald as sharing with F.D. Maurice what Maurice calls a "'system phobia'" (580). Stephen Prickett suggests that no one saw clearer than Maurice that "no external system could now legislate for the depth and complexity of the interior life of an individual" ("Novel" 13). MacDonald's aversion to the systematization of theology is likely also based on this intuition.

[147] These descriptions of Calvinism connote heresy-hunting and anathematizing, which is also why they perhaps are so discordant in relation to the rest of MacDonald's thought and work. Heresy and anathema, under some definitions, imply damnable doctrine, which simply does not fit with MacDonald's universalist beliefs.

[148] MacDonald's focus on action coincides with evangelicalism activism, the "imperative to be up and doing" (Bebbington, *Evangelicalism* 12). See Rolland Hein and William Raeper, who address how MacDonald shares sympathies but does not wholly align with the Christian Socialist movement. See also Robert H. Ellison, who contextualizes MacDonald's emphasis on "Christian action" (96) in a wider discussion on nineteenth-century understandings of the purpose of preaching.

and experiential approach to religion. This latter approach develops in part from MacDonald's familiarity with British Romanticism.[149] I follow Martin Dubois in registering in MacDonald a Romantic privileging of "intuition and experience as modes of religious knowledge" (580), what S. L. Wilson disapprovingly called MacDonald's elevation of "the individual consciousness over any objective rule of faith" (316). In his writings, MacDonald frequently develops this prioritization of intuition and experience over reason by preaching on the spiritual significance of embodying childlikeness. John Pridmore traces MacDonald's image of childhood specifically to William Wordsworth and Henry Vaughan and traces the Romantic elevation of childhood to the dethronement of reason: "The prominence of the child in the work of the Romantic writers is an expression of their protest against the enthronement of reason as the sovereign human faculty" (64). "The Romantic movement," he continues, "repudiated this hegemony of reason, claiming that truth is to be discerned imaginatively, by the sensitive spirit and by heightened feeling. The child's perceptions – instinctive, immediate, intuitive – are alert to truth beyond the reach of adult rationalism" (64-65). MacDonald's adoption of this Romantic dethroning of reason and elevation of childhood dovetails with his interest in how Jesus, as recorded in the gospel writings, expounds on the theme of childhood. In *The Child in the Midst*, MacDonald states that "the childlike is the divine," emphasizing both the childlikeness of Jesus and Jesus's telling the disciples that they cannot enter the kingdom unless by humbling themselves they become like little children.[150] In his essay "The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture," first published in 1867, MacDonald sees "the true, childlike, humble imagination" as accessing "the very nature of things" (334) in a way that reason alone cannot.

---

[149] There are many ways in which MacDonald is a literary descendant of both British and German romanticism. Traces of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Novalis make their way into MacDonald's views on the feminine aspect of nature, the literary focus on childhood, the almost mystical quality of poetry, and the importance allotted to experience, intuition, and the imagination.

[150] See John R. De Jong's *The Theology of George MacDonald: The Child Against the Vampire of Fundamentalism* (2019) for a more comprehensive treatment of MacDonald's theology of childlikeness and how it speaks to MacDonald's depiction of the child in his realist works.

In *Robert Falconer*, Robert is able to ascertain and fulfill God's will for his life because of his childlikeness. His "childlike simplicity" (3.1) allows him to eventually learn that God is best described and experienced in an intuitive and individualized fashion. "[I]n vain" he struggles to remain loyal to Calvinism because "Ever a voice within him," what we are given to understand is the voice of "God," convicts him that Calvinism is "abhorrent" (2.2). What MacDonald depicts as Calvinism's reliance on external authority, and its mode of treating theology with an excess of logic, abstraction, and systematization, has no place in Robert's approach to religion. In juxtaposition with Robert, Grannie Falconer, to her detriment, is not willing to consider religion without a non-Calvinist framework. Her flaws and spiritual troubles are depicted as direct outcomes of her commitment to Calvinist theological teachings and methodologies. Viewing Calvinist interpretations of the Bible as authoritative, she tells Robert when he questions her Calvinist beliefs that "we're not to alloo oor ain fancies to cairry 's ayont the Scripter" (1.12). But her unwavering belief "in the teaching of Jonathan Edwards" is dangerous, leading her to attribute what the narrator describes as "deeds of darkness" to the God of "light" (1.12). Grannie Falconer is also severe and strict, her Calvinism amplifying these qualities while dampening and repressing her tenderness. By questioning the veracity of established theological traditions and by recognizing that there is little spiritual value in relying on one's rational faculties to understand God, Robert approaches religion with what MacDonald describes as a simplicity and childlikeness which evades the cognitive dissonance experienced by Grannie Falconer.

Robert Falconer most movingly critiques Calvinism when representing the human experience of this dissonance. Although MacDonald's character work is still on-the-nose with its theological agenda of maligning Calvinism, it simultaneously depicts the layers of religious experience which realism can so aptly express.[151] As fearsome as

[151] By religious experience, I mean in part the lived quality of religion. While my focus is on realism's ability to capture the complexity of personal belief, it is worth noting that religious experience is not merely "cognitive" (Hernandez 470), and that Protestantism is not necessarily "centered in personal belief" (Coleman, "Fathers" 485). Rather, religion includes lineages (485) as well as "practices, materialities, [and] affective attachments" (Hernandez 469).

Grannie Falconer appears to Robert, she is herself fearful on account of her Calvinist beliefs. When she discovers that Robert has been secretly playing his father's violin, she laments the precarious state of Robert's soul, perceiving the violin as an idol, a temptation from Satan. Bursting "into a violent fit of weeping," she is overwhelmed by the "depravity" (1.10) within Robert. She is afraid that her grandson, like her son, is destined for hell. She is also torn between what she sees as two conflicting desires: the first is her desire to submit joyfully to the will of God, the second is her desire that her potentially non-elect son would be saved. She cries: "O Lord! I canna say thy will be done. But dinna lay 't to my chairge; for gin ye was a mither yersel' ye wadna pit him there. O Lord! I'm verra ill-fashioned. I beg yer pardon. I'm near oot o' my min'. Forgie me, O Lord! for I hardly ken what I'm sayin'. He was my ain babe, my ain Andrew, and ye gae him to me yersel" (1.8).[152] Petitioning God to understand the brokenness of her heart as a mother, she first confesses that she cannot joyfully submit to God's will if his will involves Andrew's eternal damnation. But she promptly asks for forgiveness, almost ashamed of the love she has for her son. She measures her love for God by her devotion to the Calvinist doctrines of election and predestination as she understands them. The dramatization of her spiritual struggle, with its depiction of the potential detriments of exposure to Calvinism, lends itself to the specific, messy, human applications of theology.

MacDonald communicating his dislike of Calvinism through polemical preaching in his realist works contrasts the subtle, layered engagements with theology otherwise pervading his fiction, both the realist and non-realist works. While fantasy affords MacDonald conventions that lend themselves to the mystery and inexplicability of certain

---

[152] Grannie Falconer and Mrs. Marvyn from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* (1859) both have trouble reconciling, first, the love they feel for their children, with, second, the notion that God is by nature loving, with, third, the idea that God allows for the damnation of souls to an eternal hell. Generally, MacDonald and Stowe often discredit Calvinism through their depiction of Calvinist characters, but their Calvinist characters are often less villains and more victims, themselves enslaved to Calvinism. This is the case for Mrs. Marvyn, who cannot escape the "truth" of Calvinism throughout the majority of *The Minister's Wooing*, and for Grannie Falconer, who, through no fault of her own, feels "bound to go on believing as she had been taught" (1.12).

religious concepts, realism, particularly its narrative strategies, also lends itself to a representation of religious doctrines, phenomena, and experiences in a way that honors their complexity. For example, Jan-Melissa Schramm observes that the novel possesses "a distinctive claim to the most effective representation of temptation, sin, and repentance: its very length and its unfettered access to individual interiority afford[s] it an unparalleled ability to embody lived experience with compelling power" ("Bible" 264). Coleman, making a case for what she calls literature's spiritual authority, writes: "One of the primary sources of literature's spiritual authority is its ability to reveal the inadequacy of creeds or theories, whether religious or secular, to represent the complexities of subjectivity" ("Spiritual" 524).[153] When MacDonald's realist fiction abandons a polemical rhetorical style that lends itself to theological flatness, it accomplishes what critics see as fiction's ability to represent the paradoxes embedded within concepts such as belief. [154]

Realism's polyvocality is one means by which faith paradoxes are captured. If we decenter passages within MacDonald's realist works characterized by polemical preaching, we may better observe and appreciate the ways in which the novels utilize polyvocality to represent the complexities and anatomy of belief. This polyvocality is especially important for *Robert Falconer*'s treatment of Eric Ericson, the poet with whom Robert forms a close friendship. Ericson is troubled by his inability to discern whether

---

[153] Coleman suggests that we think of spirituality as a category capacious enough to include more than "a belief in spirits or essences or deities of any sort" (523), but that is not to say that spirituality does not include belief in a deity as well as the doctrinal propositions tied to that belief.

[154] "Perhaps the thorniest word lurking in the shadows for almost anyone who presumes to address the religious and the secular in literary studies," writes Vincent P. Pecora, is "'belief'" (202).

God exists and whether God is benevolent.[155] Upon his first encounter with Robert, Ericson is taken in from the cold by the charitable Miss Letty, who is moved to tears by his poverty and loneliness and proceeds to "tenderly" wash his blistered feet. Referring to Miss Letty, he confides to Robert: "If I only knew that God was good as – that woman, I should die content." Robert, baffled and aghast at Ericson's "blasphemy," responds that surely God is goodness perfected. "Oh yes. They *say* so," responds Ericson, "And then they tell you something about him that isn't good, and go on calling him good all the same. But calling anybody good doesn't make him good, you know" (1.15). Unable to reconcile God's benevolence with the way he has heard God described, presumably by Calvinists, he experiences seasons of depressions, interspersed with transitory hope. At times, the catalyst for this hope is his conversations with Robert, wherein he observes and finds encouragement in Robert's steadfast trust in the goodness of God. More often, as is frequently the case in MacDonald's writings, it is through the existence and presence of an "idealiz[ed]" (Hein, *Harmony* 11) woman that a spiritually troubled character begins to doubts their doubts. Mary St. John's angelic existence and presence, in this case, is for Ericson (and Robert) an intimation of the existence and goodness of God. Still, Ericson registers within himself a resistance to believing in God without reservation.

The presence or lack of personal belief becomes a topic of debate between Robert and Ericson. MacDonald's realist handling of this debate foregrounds that belief does not require a disentangling of faith and doubt. Destigmatizing doubt, *Robert Falconer* describes Ericson's doubt as a "sad holy doubt" (2.17) Likewise, for people like Robert, "the embryo faith . . . always takes the form of doubt" (1.14). Faith and doubt, for

[155] Ericson is likely modeled after one of MacDonald's brothers, whose "searchings and doubts" (Hein, *George* 185) mirror Ericson's philosophical and theological troubles. Upon reading George MacDonald's *Robert Falconer*, Mark Twain and his wife Olivia (Livy) Langdon Clemens reviewed the novel with enthusiasm to their friend Mary Mason Fairbanks, but called Ericson "tiresome" and his poetry "hogwash" (135). They thought Robert likeable for the first half of the novel, after which he degenerates into "a self-righteous humbug." The couple were divided on Grannie Falconer, Twain expressing: "I guess we hated his grandmother from the first." Olivia corrects: "I liked her all the time, her heart was all right, and what was wrong came of her education."

MacDonald, are not mutually exclusive. They paradoxically co-exist.[156] Robert, perceiving Ericson's sincere and honest desire to believe, exclaims: "'dinna say ony mair 'at ye dinna believe in God. Ye duv believe in 'im mair, I'm thinkin', nor onybody 'at I ken" (2.11). Ericson resists Robert's characterization, stating later "At best I only hope in God; I don't believe in him," to which Robert responds: "I'm thinking there can't be much difference between hope and faith" (2.15). In *Wilfrid Cumbermede* (1872), Charley Osborne, like Ericson, experiences what Philip Davis calls "the phenomenon of 'wanting to believe,'" wherein one is "stuck in between believing and not believing" (60). Ericson, even more explicitly than Charley, frames his doubt as a consequence of what he describes as inability. First, in conversation with Robert, he asks: "But why should a fellow that would give his life – that's not much, but it's all *I've* got – to believe in God, not be able?" (2.11). Second, on his deathbed, attempting to comfort Mary St. John who is anxious and troubled by his self-professed lack of faith, Ericson responds: "But, dear heart, if you're so sure of [God], do you think he would turn me away because I don't do what I can't do? I would if I could with all my heart" (2.24). Ericson wants to believe in God more than anything, but belief doesn't follow from his desire for belief, nor from others insisting that he believe.

But we are left with questions. What is the cause of this inability? Are people like Ericson genuinely unable to believe, or, like Robert, are we meant to not take them at their word? What MacDonald depicts as the mystery of belief through dialogic discourse requires no explicit doctrinal specification, no doctrinal condemnation, and no

---

[156] See John D. Caputo for a deconstructionist theological approach to moving beyond the faith/doubt binary. See Michael Hurley's *Faith in Poetry: Verse Style as a Mode of Religious Belief* (2017) for a discussion of this topic in relation to verse form as a mode of theology.

resolution.[157] When MacDonald's realist works maintain tension between concepts like faith and doubt, they replicate some of the imaginative force of MacDonald's mythopoeic fantasy, which Rebecca Styler describes as a "theological method" that "eschew[s] any attempts to pronounce 'the definite'" (7). But fantasy does not have a monopoly on indefiniteness and polysemeity. Realism can be ambiguous and open-ended; it "does not have to be straightforward or forthcoming . . . it can hint, imply, and leave matters vague" (Knight, *Guidance* 167).[158] Theology is suitably and likewise not fixed or univocal. Interestingly, Wilson was willing to look past what he saw as the degeneration of the realist novels into "polemical propaganda" (271). The flaw is "amply atoned" by the presence, among other things, of the "deep spiritual insight" (272) within them.

MacDonald's realist works penetrate spiritual insight most cogently when they commit to representing religious experience through the strategies, priorities, and possibilities of realism. These novels often engage with religious concepts, paradoxes, and themes in a measured, non-polemical, and thus non-caricatured manners. Other times, the novels flatten the theological complexity of concepts and traditions such as Calvinism, a flattening arising from MacDonald giving in to the "spirit of the partisan," as Wilson called it, rather than sustaining the unprejudicial quality of his broader theology.

---

[157] If anything, the way in which MacDonald's realist works describe faith in terms of ability alludes to Calvinist terminology about belief. For example, in Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* (1754), Edwards distinguishes between what he calls natural and moral ability. *Freedom of the Will* is Edwards's response to Arminian and Pelagian formulations of the will. Edwards concludes in this work that the will is not free in that it cannot choose against its strongest desire. In reverse: the will is free to act according to its strongest inclination, and only in this sense is it free. Humans lack a desire for salvation and righteousness until God transforms a person so that they are positively inclined toward these things.

[158] "The literary," writes Emma Mason, "with its embrace of the imagination, the senses, the aesthetic and the experiential, enables the study of religious consciousness where other (empirical) routes in threaten to lock it inside a scholarly environment that favours solutions and objective goals over the joy of asking questions without any answers" ("Rethinking" 8).

Chapter 4.

The Gothic, *The Marble Faun*, and *Felix Culpa*

In his last and longest novel, *The Marble Faun* (1859), Nathaniel Hawthorne's characteristic ambivalence toward Calvinism is on full display, even as the novel is set in Catholic Italy rather than New England. The novel follows the faun-like Donatello, an Italian nobleman; Miriam, an artist of mysterious origin; Kenyon, a sculptor; and Hilda, a painter from New England who identifies herself as the daughter of the Puritans. Donatello murders Miriam's oppressor, the Model, an act which prompts the narrative's overarching theological questions: Can sin be anything but disastrous? Can sin lead to a greater good? Hawthorne briefly entertains these questions elsewhere, nudging readers toward the possibility of sin's ambiguous status. Recall, for instance, Hester Prynne's suggestion in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) that her and Arthur Dimmesdale's adultery has a sanctioning and sacred quality: "What we did had a consecration of its own" (126). For the most part, however, Hawthorne's work is marked by a bleakness born of envisioning in detail the disastrous consequences of sin. This bleakness is often associated with the Gothic and with Calvinism.

Critics such as Monika M. Elbert and Dennis Berthold suggest that *The Marble Faun*'s lack of aesthetic coherence, in comparison to Hawthorne's other works, is due to the novel's inability to embody the Gothic in a meaningful way. This criticism perceives a superficiality and an inertness in Hawthorne's engagement with Gothic themes. Sidelined in criticism has been the question of whether or how *The Marble Faun*'s theological vision contributes to its success or lack of success as a Gothic novel. This omission is not necessarily surprising. Jonathan Greenaway has recently acknowledged and demonstrated that "contemporary Gothic criticism has marginalized the theological aspect" (1) of Gothic texts, effectively bypassing the theological discourses integral to the formation and conventions of the genre.

In this chapter, I argue that one of the thus-far underacknowledged reasons that *The Marble Faun* is not aesthetically successful as a Gothic text is that it holds the

trademark religious terror and religious malignity of Gothic fiction in abeyance with a sense of hopefulness. *The Marble Faun*, like Hawthorne's other works, is marked by pessimism. However, it suggests to a uniquely high degree that Donatello's fall, an allegory for the Fall of humanity, is what Miriam describes as "the destined means by which . . . we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness" (337). This idea is named *felix culpa*, or the fortunate Fall, the word "fortunate" suggesting that the Fall be understood as catalyzing an incommensurable good, unmatched even by a prelapsarian state. *Felix culpa*'s attendant hopefulness is muted and not fully realized in *The Marble Faun*, but the germ of it is present, manifesting in the novel's flirtation with seeing the Fall as fortunate.

I argue further that while this hopefulness conflicts with the Gothic, it does not conflict, as some criticism has assumed, with Calvinism. Agnes McNeill Donohue has read *The Marble Faun*'s willingness to entertain the possibility that sin has more than solely tragic effects as evidence of the novel losing its Calvinist flavor and thus the powerful aesthetic vision which marks Hawthorne's work. The assumption informing this reading of *The Marble Faun* is that Calvinism has upon it an indelible stamp, marking it as a doom-and-gloom theology. I see this doom and gloom as superimposed rather than inherent to the theological tradition. To make this argument, I make explicit the distinction between a stereotyped Calvinism and a theologically rigorous Calvinism in the context of the novel. This is not to suggest that there is one "correct" understanding of Calvinism, but to acknowledge the distance between the Calvinism of the popular imaginary and Calvinism as understood by its doctrinal specificities. *The Marble Faun* is no less theologically Calvinist than Hawthorne's other works. Rather, it reduces some of Calvinism's gloomy branding through its engagement with *felix culpa*, a theological concept not exclusive but integral to Reformed theology.

Hawthorne's Calvinism: Sympathies and Antipathies

Whether and to what extent Hawthorne can be thought of as a Calvinist is a matter of debate. He did not align himself explicitly with any one denomination or theological tradition and "found any situation calling for clear commitment in these

matters a little embarrassing" (Waggoner, *Presence* 41). Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and was acquainted, to varying degrees, with traditions and denominations such as Calvinism, Arminianism, Catholicism, and the Unitarianism of his family. Later in life, he became aware of the identities of his early Puritan ancestors, including his great-great-grandfather, John Hathorne, an active and vocal judge in the Salem Witch Trials.[159] Historians understand Judge Hathorne as siding with the accusers so voraciously that he "all but tied the rope" (Wineapple 15). In "The Custom-House," the semi-autobiographical introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne expresses his "shame" (12) for the "persecuting spirit" (11) saturating his family lineage. His fraught literary imaginings of Puritanism, as well as his family history, have contributed largely to debates about his Calvinist sympathies and antipathies.

In *The Province of Piety* (1984), Michael Colacurcio coined the term "the Hawthorne Problem" to reflect the controversy over how to view Hawthorne's relationship to Calvinism. Establishing an enduring interpretive framework, Colacurcio delineates two positions. The first follows Herman Melville's assessment of Hawthorne in his essay "Hawthorne and his Mosses" (1850), wherein Melville insists on Hawthorne's "great power of blackness" stemming from a "Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin" (240).[160] Colacurcio reads some critics as sharing Melville's assumption "that Hawthorne in some sense really believed in the ideas which order (or disrupt) the lives of his characters" (8). John T. Frederick writes that Hawthorne "believed in the reality of evil and the pervasive and permanent effect of sin" (30); Perry D. Westbrook calls Hawthorne "an unchurched Calvinist" (29), undogmatic in his

---

[159] See Margaret B. Moore's *The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1998) for more on John Hathorne, particularly Charles W. Upham's portrayal of Hathorne's cruelty, and for more on Hawthorne's theological influences.

[160] While Melville connects "blackness" to Calvinism rather than explicitly to race, his choice of language, like Hawthorne's, trades in racialized descriptions of darkness and its associations. See Christopher Freeburg, who holds "that for Melville blackness is not always racial but rather a figurative blackness to which racial difference is explicitly significant" (2). Freeburg traces the two modes with which critics have understood Melville's representation of blackness, one metaphysical, and one political and cultural, the latter recognizing and reckoning with the history of "racial conflict and imperial ideologies" (3).

Puritanism; and Margaret B. Moore states that his writings "exude an 'instinct of faith'" (122).

The second position, as influential as Melville's, follows Henry James's famous 1879 study of Hawthorne, wherein James conceptualizes Hawthorne's Calvinistic sense of sin as something external to him. First, James describes Hawthorne's sense of sin as a cloud, specifying: "This darkening cloud was no essential part of the nature of the individual . . . It projected from above, from outside, a black patch over his spirit, and it was for him to do what he could with the black patch" (*Hawthorne* 45-46). For James, Hawthorne is both influenced by and removed from Calvinism:

> Nothing is more curious and interesting than this almost exclusively *imported* character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of the Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological. He played with it and used it as a pigment; he treated it, as the metaphysicians say, objectively. He was not discomposed, disturbed, haunted by it, in the manner of its usual and regular victims, who had not the little postern door of fancy to slip through, to the other side of the wall. (46)

James sees Hawthorne putting Calvinism to artistic use – painting and playing with it as if it is "one of his toys" (47). Colacurcio observantly reads James as someone who "cannot quite take seventeenth-century theology seriously and who, as a consequence" (8), cannot see Hawthorne taking it seriously either. Like Colacurcio, Moore resists seeing Hawthorne as dismissive of religion: Although Hawthorne found little point in creating "precise formulations" out of the "great many doctrines" to which he was exposed, he nonetheless "absorbed the conviction that religion was significant" (122). There are many notable formulations of the Jamesian view. Nina Baym, whose readings of Hawthorne are among the most influential, writes: "Try as I might, I could not present Hawthorne convincingly as a Christian author; his concerns were too evidently secular, his distrust of all doctrines too obvious, his language too patently untheological" (*Shape* 9). Melvin Askew also suggests that Hawthorne is untheological, writing that he renders the Fall a "trope" in language that is "psychological and human rather than theological and spiritual" (336). Others participate in the widespread pathologizing of religion

through psychoanalytic terms. Frederick Crews, to take just one example, explicitly sets his approach in contrast to those who favor the "religious-didactic Hawthorne" (5). (Crews later repudiated the Freudian theory with which he interpreted Hawthorne, but nevertheless thought that his work saved "Hawthorne from a generation of goody-goody allegorical critics who had turned him into a crashing bore" ["American"]). Denis Donoghue reads Hawthorne as equivocating or translating theology to different registers, specifically sociology and psychology: If we do not recognize these equivocations, we allow Hawthorne to "invoke, without interruption, values and entities in which he doesn't believe – God, sin, justice, law" (134). For Donoghue, Hawthorne's literary engagement with religion is puzzling because of Hawthorne's use of "sacred" language: "[I]s he trying to imagine faith by miming its syllables?" (134). Hawthorne's faith, in this reading, is solely nominal.

Hawthorne's works present an intermixing of ambivalence, skepticism, and sympathy toward Calvinism.[161] Clearly, Calvinism stimulated Hawthorne's "artistic conscience" (Donohue 2). Colacurcio suggests that rather than try to figure out what Hawthorne "'believed' or what his theology 'taught,'" it is more helpful to consider "what his own special sort of religious vision enabled him to see" (14). In my view, it is also helpful to consider what Hawthorne's religious vision prevents him from seeing. Rather than read Hawthorne's works as ciphers through which we can uncover the author's religious and theological beliefs, I consider the way his works, specifically *The Marble Faun*, are modulated by theology. By foregrounding the novel's "theological content" (Greenaway 10) and the ways in which this theological content clashes with the Gothic, we might complicate a critical understanding of *The Marble Faun* as a Gothic text and elucidate criticism's tendency to associate Calvinism with bleakness.

[161] Hawthorne's layered treatment of Calvinism often prompts critical observations about his ambiguity regarding Calvinism and religion more generally. AnaMaria Seglie Clawson has recently resisted reading Hawthorne's work and specifically *The Marble Faun* as another example of this ambiguity. Quoting Charles Taylor, she writes: "Rather than locate *The Marble Faun* . . . as yet another instance of Hawthorne's chronic ambiguity, this essay locates it as a prime example of the spiritual tensions that mark our 'secular age'" (133).

Hawthorne, the Gothic, and Theology

Hawthorne's work was foundational to the formation of the American Gothic, which in turn was foundational to the formation of American fiction. Leslie Fiedler, in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), seminally states that the tradition of American fiction "is almost essentially a gothic one" (142), citing a number of Hawthorne's works as examples. Of course, Hawthorne was not the first American writer to turn to the Gothic. The tradition arguably begins with texts such as Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland, or, the Transformation* (1798). *The Scarlet Letter*, long thought *the* American Gothic novel, is replete with conventions of both the American and British Gothic: "the dark Romantic heroine, the villain plotting his revenge, family secrets, and considerable narrative and moral ambiguity" (Crow 49).[162] The novel's preoccupation with Puritan history and "individual psychology" (Roberts 28) also came to be understood as distinct markers of the American Gothic.[163]

Hawthorne introduces his longer narratives to readers as romances rather than novels, often suggesting that the romance offers an imaginative latitude for which the novel does not allow. Establishing *The House of the Seven Gables*'s (1851) distance from the novel form, Hawthorne writes in the preface that the novel demands a "very minute fidelity . . . to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (1). For Hawthorne, the romance was not necessarily a form which evades reality so much as a form with aesthetic flexibility. Richard Chase would later influentially suggest in *The American*

---

[162] Crow continues: "The villain, Chillingworth, embodying learning and authority used for destructive ends, is kin to the schoolteacher and judge figures we see throughout American Gothic" (49). Wendy C. Graham adds of Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*: "Like his Gothic predecessors who chose to center their novels around the sinful transgressions of Catholic priests, Hawthorne discloses the unfathomed immorality of the religious leaders of the Puritan society" (83).

[163] See Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, who explains that the distinction between the British and the American Gothic was an "outgrowth of a longstanding habit of reading texts through a national lens," (267) partly grounded in the struggle faced by American Studies departments in the mid-twentieth century to define American literature in distinction from English literature. Critics like Monnet, Dennis Berthold, and Siân Silyn Roberts complicate the exceptionalism put forth in the mid-twentieth century.

Novel and Its Tradition (1957) that the nineteenth-century American romance "veer[s] toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms" (15). The term romance, however, is "fuzzy" (Baym, "Concepts" 443). Baym observes that this fuzziness dates back to Hawthorne and is in part exacerbated by Hawthorne's idiosyncratic definition.[164] Today, what criticism typically designates American Gothic is what Hawthorne designates romance.

Hawthorne thought that *The Marble Faun*, whose full title is *The Marble Faun: Or, the Romance of Monte Beni*, had the potential to become one of his most successful works of romance (or Gothic fiction.) He writes in a letter: "If I have written anything well, it should be this Romance; for I have never thought or felt more deeply, or taken more pains" (*Letters* 262). It seems that the setting of the novel also had something to do with his conviction about the quality of his work, for he refers in the novel's often-discussed preface to the struggle of writing a romance set in America. Italy, on the other hand, "afford[s] a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon" (4).[165] In other words, Italy, particularly Rome, with its catacombs and its ties to the rites and symbols of Roman Catholicism, likely had "the attraction of the Other" (W. Vance 2.xx), or the attraction of the unknown.[166] Hawthorne saw Italy, then, with its supposed mysteriousness, as the ideal Gothic or romantic setting.

In practice, *The Marble Faun* does not execute the Gothic effectively. Dennis Berthold traces this ineffectiveness to Hawthorne's inability, when faced with "the resolutely foreign actuality of Italy," to combine "the charm of a 'fairy precinct' with the

---

[164] In the 1980s, Baym and other "New Americanists" would move away from Chase's larger suggestion that the American romance is a "freer, more daring, more brilliant fiction" (viii) than the English novel.

[165] Hawthorne prefaces his comment about Italy by suggesting that in America "there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong" (4). Emily Schiller observes the difficulty of reading Hawthorne's comment "unironically" (383), given the Salem-filled history with which Hawthorne was only too well acquainted. Crow, commenting on the remarkability of Hawthorne's statement in light of the injustices suffered by Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans and Black Americans, similarly asks: Is Hawthorne "possibly being ironic? No picturesque or gloomy wrong?" (11).

[166] See Dennis Berthold for a discussion of how *The Marble Faun* "Orientalize[s] Italy" (4).

gloom of the Gothic" (7). His observation that Hawthorne clutters his novel with what Hawthorne himself calls his many "descriptions of various Italian objects" (4) echoes Terence Martin's claim that *The Marble Faun* lacks the economy of novels like *The Scarlet Letter* (180).[167] Jenny Franchot, in *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (1994), similarly suggests that when confronted with an "Overpoweringly 'real' Rome" (354), Hawthorne cannot help but depict it as decadent and conventional, filling the novel with "touristic prose of pictorialized units" (357). Franchot ultimately reads *The Marble Faun* as an anti-Catholic aesthetic failure. Hawthorne cannot use Rome's materiality to his aesthetic advantage: "Rome, particularly the Rome of the catacombs and monastic burial grounds, verges beyond metaphor into the literal embodiment of decaying flesh and bones. It doesn't stand for, it is the region of creative mixture, of excessive materiality that Hawthornian romance must distill" (355). There is also what critics see as the superficiality of the novel's engagement with Gothic tropes. Berthold describes the depiction of the Model as "moral, monkish, and increasingly grotesque" which "undermines the uncanniness of his relation to Miriam" (19), and he suggests that Miriam herself is an unsuccessful Gothic heroine "whose past remains so vague and indeterminate that readers cannot tell what is being repressed and why" (16). Monika M. Elbert goes so far as to suggest that *The Marble Faun* "reads like a parody of the Gothic" (148).

The Marble Faun fares better at embodying the Gothic when it features Hawthorne's trademark Calvinist themes, rendered in such a way that they align with the Gothic's emphasis on religious ambiguity, uncertainty, and despair. At times, the novel exemplifies what Henry James describes as Hawthorne's "Puritan consciousness" ("Nathaniel" 20) and what Charles L. Crow defines as American Gothic's emphasis on "a

---

[167] Susan Manning writes: "Part of the oppressiveness of narrative in the Romance seems to emanate from a sense – carried over from Hawthorne's English and Italian Notebooks – of the simultaneous pointlessness and necessity of describing 'sights' of the Old World in other to establish any relation with them whatever" (xxix).

sceptical, ambiguous view of human nature and of history" (2).[168] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock extends this definition, suggesting that the American Gothic "goes beyond elaborating and redeploying a specific set of identifiable clichés (ghosts, castles, monsters, and so forth) as it gives shape to culturally specific anxieties and tabooed desires" (2), among which stand "anxieties and desires related to God, the devil, and the legacy of Puritanism" (6).[169] Short stories such as "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) and "Alice Doane's Appeal" (1835), and novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* develop these anxieties in detail through characters such as the maladjusted and spiritually troubled Young Goodman Brown and Arthur Dimmesdale. *The Marble Faun* also represents what Hawthorne interprets as the Calvinist psychology of New England Puritans and their progeny, but less extensively than in his other works. Miriam muses about free will: "As these busts in the block of marble . . . so does our individual date exist in the limestone of Time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action" (91). Kenyon and Donatello debate the existence of providence, Donatello responding to Kenyon's reveling in God's providence by observing "gloomily" that he "see[s] sunshine on one spot, and cloud in another, and no reason for it in either case" (201). Miriam expresses religious doubt and covets Hilda's steadfast faith in God. On the Piazza of the Campidoglio, shortly after begging her tormentor to leave her alone, she exclaims to Hilda: "I would give all I have or hope – my life, oh how freely – for one instant of your trust in God!" Hilda, in turn, is disturbed by Miriam's "doubt[ing] God's providence" (116), but Miriam does not advance the subject. Her closing words, "We will talk of that another time" (116), enact *The Marble Faun*'s minimal explicit treatment of some of Hawthorne's characteristic theological themes and their association with skepticism and

---

[168] Monika M. Elbert suggests that by the end of *The Marble Faun*, "we know much more about American guilt and transgression that we do about decaying and dead Rome" (153). More generally, critics and biographers note other distinctly American elements of *The Marble Faun*. Moncure Conway sees the novel as "more American than Italian," especially its characters, like Miriam who "is naturalized into American independence" and the Italian Donatello who "is more like Henry Thoreau of Concord" (165).

[169] Weinstock situates religion among three other "primary loci" (6) around which the American Gothic revolves, namely geography, racial and sexual otherness, and rationality.

ambiguity regarding human nature, according to Crow's definition of the American Gothic, as well as anxieties and desires related to God, according to Weinstock.[170]

It is perhaps because of *The Marble Faun*'s lack of extended treatment of concepts such as election and predestination that the novel is not often associated with a subset within the Gothic tradition called the Calvinist Gothic. The Calvinist Gothic, as Alison Milbank suggests in an essay on Calvinist and Covenanter Gothic, takes as its narrative patterns or themes the concepts of duality, doubleness, and self-division. Whereas Milbank explores the Calvinist Gothic in the context of Scottish fiction, Carol Margaret Davison considers both Scottish and American fiction and defines the Calvinist Gothic as Gothic fiction which takes "Calvinism as its subject" or "whose predominant characteristics and concerns are marked by a Calvinist sensibility" ("Calvinist" 166). Davison, like Milbank, focuses on "the uncanny figure of the double" (167) and its origins in John Calvin's theology, specifying elsewhere that the Calvinist Gothic "capitalizes on Calvinism's . . . promotion of a treacherous psychological bifurcation in its followers" (*Gothic* 213). The Calvinist questions his spiritual status and becomes riddled with insecurity and uncertainty. This obsessive self-doubt results in the splitting of the self into two: the regenerate saint and the reprobate sinner. Davison's work is in part an extension of Susan Manning's *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (1990) which sees Calvin's theology as one in which "Distance and disinheritance define the self" (8) and "Division becomes the structuring principle of life" (7), a principle which dominates the psychology of believers.

Milbank and Davison both see James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) as the urtext of the Calvinist Gothic. Set in late-seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Scotland, *Confessions* follows Robert Wringhim, a young man who grows up immersed in hyper-Calvinistic doctrine. Wringhim is tormented by Gil-Martin, who has been variously read as a demon, the

[170] Donohue concurs that Hawthorne's other works foreground Calvinist theological themes more extensively, writing that although "references to the Calvinist concept of Providence, predestination, and iron necessity exist in the novel, they occur less often than in Hawthorne's earlier works" (279). Note that Donohue preserves a typified notion of Calvinism, particularly with the descriptor "iron necessity."

devil, a hallucination, or Wringhim's conscience. Wringhim, supposedly the child of the Laird of Dalcastle and Rabina, but possibly the child of Reverend Wringhim and Rabina, is disowned by the Laird of Dalcastle and raised by Rabina and the Reverend. He grows up "inured to all the sternness and severity of his pastor's arbitrary and unyielding creed" (62) and is taught to pray only for the elect while dooming all who are "aliens from God to destruction" (62). He grows to feel "great indignation against all the wicked of this world" and desires a "means of ridding it of such a noxious burden" (119), coming to believe the antinomian heresy that he is one of God's elect no matter what he does. Religious terror, fanaticism, and anxiety, as well as the uncanny figure of the double and the representation of psychological fracturing, all contribute to what Milbank and Davison see as the narrative's Calvinist Gothic aesthetic.

Work on the *Confessions* often overlooks the novel's theological layers. Criticism which takes into account the novel's theological and religious themes and subject matter finds its inheritance in the works of scholars who advocated for an understanding of the Gothic in relation to theology and religion. Joel Porte argues that Gothic terror is "usually at bottom theological" (45). Victor Sage similarly makes the case that the "rhetoric of the horror novel is demonstrably theological in character" (xvi). Milbank, in her more recent work on theology and the English Gothic, sees the Gothic as "a mode of religious historiography" (*God* 305).[171] Her aim is to "theologize the Gothic" (4), to analyze works such as *Confessions* by acknowledging and engaging with their theological register. Critics such as Milbank consider theology *as* theology, wherein theological histories, concepts, and terms are not bypassed or translated.[172] Greenaway, regarding specifically the *Confessions*, criticizes readings of the novel which sidestep theology. He observes

[171] See *Horror and Religion: New Literary Approaches to Theology, Race and Sexuality* (2019), edited by Eleanor Beal and Jonathan Greenaway, for recent work at the intersection of the Gothic and theology.

[172] See Elisabeth Jay for a discussion on the difficulty of defining "theology." If we take theology to mean discourse about the nature of God and religious belief, we face questions about "what kind of 'God-talk' is permitted" and about which voices have been amplified or silenced. If we think of theology in relation to authoritative texts and voices, our field of study excludes "dissenting and non-dogmatic texts, and most women's voices" ("Now" 4).

particularly that psychoanalytic readings of *Confessions* do not acknowledge that the novel's engagement with concepts like "fractured subjectivity" are "a direct consequence of the theological discourses that shape the novel as a whole" (63).[173] "To focus on psychoanalysis to the detriment of theology," he continues, "is simultaneously to ignore the historical and cultural conditions of the text's production as well as the role theology plays in structuring the Gothic conception of the subject" (63). A similar observation applies to texts such as *The Scarlet Letter*, which depicts a community of people who interpret their life in theological terms and whose sense of self is informed by their religious beliefs and convictions. Echoing Greenaway, we can suggest, for example, that to explain Arthur Dimmesdale's self-knowledge, motivations, intentions, and psychological turmoil purely in psychoanalytic terms is to neglect how theology structures his psyche and self-perception.

When criticism engages with theology – when it takes into account, for instance, a novel's theological context, allusions, influences, structure, and meaning-making – it can still, nevertheless, enact erasure and lack specificity. Kenneth Marc Harris, in his study of hypocrisy in Hawthorne's fiction, begins by establishing that the psychological dilemmas of the characters within Hawthorne's fiction hinge on Puritan understandings of the complexity of authenticity, genuine faith, hypocrisy, self-deception, and the interplay between the emotions, the intellect, and the will. While Harris acknowledges Hawthorne's theological influence, he does not, according to Philip F. Gura, offer a "convincing" (102) portrayal of Puritan theology. Gura suggests that such a complex subject requires a more thorough treatment. In contrast, one thinks of Michael Colacurcio's work on Ann Hutchinson and *The Scarlet Letter*, which provides an excellent account of how Hawthorne's work calls upon the theology and history of Puritanism. Colacurcio resists disregarding the theological content within Gothic texts. Greenaway, referring to the Gothic genre as a whole, describes this critical disregard as the making of a "theo-drama" into a "psychodrama" (11), suggesting instead that

---

[173] For a critical account which bypasses theology and religion see, for example, David Punter's *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition* (1996), which understands *Confessions* solely as a "detailed and terrifying account of schizophrenia" (149).

"theological resources and readings can . . . provide readings and insights that psychoanalysis alone cannot fully articulate" (11).

This minimization of theology features widely in criticism on Hawthorne. The result is not just psychoanalytic readings which bypass theology but also broader and simplified descriptions of how religion and theology relate to Hawthorne's fiction. Roberta Weldon, for instance, acknowledges that *The Marble Faun* is replete with biblical references but suggests that "it is not a religious novel" because "It is more focused on the social than the theological implications of its story" (14). Besides invoking a misleading binary between the social and the theological, this reading projects a deemphasis of theology and religion onto a text that not only implicitly but explicitly and repeatedly addresses the "theological implications" of its narrative. Hogg's fiction is subject to similarly hasty engagements with theology.[174] Crawford Gribben argues that many critics who present the *Confessions*' "doctrinal scheme as 'Calvinist' . . . appear uncertain as to what exactly Calvinism is" (12). Citing numerous examples, Gribben illustrates that critics present various misreadings of Calvinism, such as conflating Calvinism with antinomianism, thereby neglecting to acknowledge that *Confessions* distances the theology it critiques from "orthodox Calvinism" (12).[175] Alternatively, Davison argues that while *Confessions* can and has been read as a representation of an extreme form of Calvinism, the novel's "anxieties . . . extend to Calvinism's moral foundations" (*Gothic* 215). That is, Calvinism itself, rather than its distortion, provides the theological framework for the *Confessions*.

Claims such as this, not uncommon in criticism on writers like Hogg and Hawthorne, at times rely on disputable readings of theology. To be sure, theological texts, like all texts, rely on interpretive methods and can always, in some aspect, be disputed, but this disputability is at times unrecognized or disregarded in literary criticism's engagement with theology. Consider the theological premises upon which the

[174] The fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charlotte Brontë, and George MacDonald is also subject to hasty engagements with theology, as my previous three chapters demonstrate.

[175] See also Adrian Hunter, who discusses how the *Confessions*'s Reverend Blanchard, a Scottish divine, is both a Calvinist and a person of faith with admirable qualities.

Calvinist Gothic is built. Milbank reads young Wringhim's uncertainty as to his personal election as an anxiety prompted by Calvin's understanding of salvation: "Indeed, if in Calvin's system salvation is purely by the imputed righteousness of Christ and not by the individual's good actions or by his faith, how can someone know he is of the Elect? Such dubiety opens a space of self-conscious inner examination whereby the subject potentially splits, divides and doubles itself" ("Calvinist" 93). However, Calvin does not teach that humans are saved apart from individual faith. God does not believe for the individual; rather it is the individual who believes. Calvin places more emphasis on God's role in salvation because he was wary of those who he saw as implicitly arguing that individual faith and good works "take the power of justifying away from Christ" (3.11).[176] To use this emphasis to create an opposition in Calvin's theology between, in Milbank's words, "the imputed righteousness of Christ" and the "individual's . . . faith" (93) is to misrepresent Calvin. When criticism misses Calvin's framing of how Christ's imputed righteousness and a person's individual faith work in concert, it risks misunderstanding Calvin's understanding of assurance of salvation. While Calvin acknowledges in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that believers will have periods of doubt as to whether they are saved, they can be assured by the inward evidence of their faith, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and by meditating on "Christ" whom believers can look to "without self-deception" as they "contemplate [their] own election" (3.24). Readings of Calvin which suggest that his theology plants the seeds for psychological phenomena like rupture and division solidify a reputation for Calvin which, if one considers his systematic or body of scholarship as a whole, requires challenging. Readings of Calvin also at times consider one theological concept in isolation rather than Calvin's body of scholarship, or even just the *Institutes*, as a unified work. Such isolation can result in criticism attributing to Calvin ideas that, although perhaps convincingly

[176] This debate over justification is more generally discussed as the opposition between synergism, a view which holds that the process of God's justification requires some sort of contribution from a human being, and monergism, a view which holds that justification (or regeneration) is not a cooperative act between humans and God, but rather is accomplished solely by the work of God through the Holy Spirit. This debate dates back explicitly to Martin Luther and his involvement in the "synergistic controversy." For more, see Ian A. McFarland.

inferred, are misrepresentative when considered in the context of a given body of theological scholarship.[177]

The typecasting of Calvinism's key figures as doctrinally "extreme" simplifies Calvinist theology.[178] This characterization of theologians such as Calvin and Jonathan Edwards has been linked to psychological bifurcation, as the Calvinist Gothic theorizes, but it is also situated in a longer history of Calvinism's association with mental illness. Michelle Faubert observes that "Since the Renaissance period, Calvinism has been linked to suicide in the popular imaginary" (79) even though it is inaccurate that Calvinists commit suicide more frequently in comparison to the rest of the population. Faubert interrogates the staying power of this false belief, arguing that "It may not reflect a factual truth, but it endures because it clearly serves an ideological purpose." Faubert argues that in the Romantic period "the common belief in Calvinist suicide reflects a broad cultural interest in regulating subjectivity" (79), but her observation about how Calvinism is perceived in the popular imaginary applies to more than Calvinist suicide, as the persistence of the idea of the Calvinist double indicates.[179] Hawthorne himself inflects into Calvinism, specifically the American Puritan variety, an association with mental unwellness. His Calvinists often experience chronic depression, anxiety, guilt, despair, and joylessness.[180] "No hopeful verse" marks Young Goodman Brown's tombstone, "for his dying hour was gloom" (256). Dimmesdale's obsession with guilt is illustrative, as are claims such as "the Puritans compressed whatever mirth and public joy they deemed

---

[177] See the Introduction for a lengthier discussion of the ways in which literary critics are suggesting we become more rigorous in our work on theology/religion.

[178] Regarding Jonathan Edwards specifically, critics increasingly acknowledge that for all of his "fire and brimstone" preaching, his sermons and works also express hope and joy and emphasize the compassion and love of God through Jesus Christ.

[179] Further perpetuating the link between Calvinism and mental illness, Davison writes that "the Calvinist Gothic . . . recognizes that the Calvinist world, dominated by election by faith, is neurosis-inducing" (*Gothic* 213).

[180] See David S. Reynolds for a reading of how guilt functions in *The Marble Faun* in relation to Roman Catholicism. Reynolds observes that Hawthorne is drawn to the confessional for its ability to provide "an outlet for repressed sin." "*The Marble Faun*," he continues, "allows [Hawthorne] the opportunity to enjoy vicariously the cleansing effect of Roman Catholicism" (273).

allowable to human infirmity" (146), claims which abound in *The Scarlet Letter* and indeed in most of Hawthorne's work.

Hawthorne's fiction repeatedly gives the impression that Calvinists are influenced and plagued by original sin. The Calvinist ideas that most captivate Hawthorne, writes Donohue, are "the Calvinist dogma that *man sins necessarily and yet bears full responsibility for his sin*" (2) and "that once man falls from Eden, there is no return" (283). Donohue calls this latter edict "the central, if unconscious, thesis of [Hawthorne's] art" (283). Donohue argues that in *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne doubts his thesis that the fall from Eden is irreparable and that this doubt has a grave result. In other words, *The Marble Faun* loses its Calvinist flavor to its aesthetic detriment: "the dramatic tension is gone from his art and [Hawthorne] himself is left a moral cripple, emasculated of his great theme" (283). Overshadowing Hawthorne's gloomy Calvinism, argues Donohue, is the idea of *felix culpa*, which, while not explicitly and unambiguously promoted by Hawthorne, is at least suggested, and the suggestion is "alluring" and "seductively healing" (282). But why assume that *felix culpa*, or its attendant hopefulness, is opposed to Calvinism? To make this argument, Donohue relies on a particular rendering of Calvin: "The damnatory voice of that terrifying Geneva reformer, declaiming his vision of a vengeful, angry, and jealous God ruthlessly judging pitiful and depraved humanity, penetrated the recesses of [Hawthorne's] heart and ordered ironic stories and novels of brutality, obsessive guilt, and secret sin" (2). In what follows, I suggest that *The Marble Faun*'s incorporation and treatment of *felix culpa* does not challenge Hawthorne's Calvinist vision but rather widens and enhances it.

Felix Culpa* and *The Marble Faun

In *The Marble Faun*, doctrines such as original sin are tested and evaluated specifically in relation to the theological concept *felix culpa*, largely through the character

Donatello.[181] The narrative begins with Miriam and Hilda, both painters, and Kenyon, a sculptor, contemplating Donatello's likeness to the Faun (the "resting satyr") by the Greek sculptor Praxiteles.[182] Establishing Donatello's prelapsarian quality, the narrative moves from innocence to experience: Donatello, in love with Miriam, flings her nameless oppressor, who has followed her to Rome, over a precipice, the Tarpeian Rock. Maintaining that he only did what Miriam's eyes requested of him, Donatello implicates her, or rather Miriam implicates herself, as co-actor in this crime. Hilda, whose identifiable features throughout the narrative are her innocence and purity, also feels that she is marked by guilt because, unbeknownst to Miriam and Donatello, she witnesses the murder. Donatello undergoes a "Transformation," the European title of *The Marble Faun*, after murdering the Model. This event incites an extended debate, pervading the entire narrative, on whether his transformation is for the better.

It would be a mistake, however, to read the novel as a perfect or coherent allegory of the Fall, whether its Genesis or Miltonic account. There is certainly "a nearly continuous play of allusions to the Eden story" (Crow 54) replete with striking parallels, such as Donatello and Miriam being confronted by the Model, a Satanic figure who is described as wielding an influence "such as beasts and *reptiles* of subtle and evil nature sometimes exercise upon their victims" (72, italics mine). Or Donatello as the Faun of Praxiteles, dancing with Miriam as though they are in the "Arcadia[n] . . . Golden Age, before mankind was burdened with sin and sorrow" (66). Foregrounding the novel's

---

[181] For readings which do not foreground religious/theological considerations, see, for example, Dorothy Waples and David B. Diamond, who read the fortunate fall and Donatello psychoanalytically. See David Kesterton for a political reading.

[182] Although an extensive discussion of Hawthorne's engagement with visual art is outside the scope of this chapter, it should be noted that *The Marble Faun* includes several meditations on the nature and function of the form. See Susan Manning's introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Marble Faun* for a treatment of what she calls one of *The Marble Faun*'s "troubling questions": "In what sense might the art in which Miriam, Hilda, and Kenyon are skilled, and of which Donatello seems a living embodiment, not merely reflect the emotional and spiritual progression of the characters, but prefigure or even predetermine it?" (xi). See also Graham Clarke for an example of criticism which foregrounds and takes as its subject *The Marble Faun*'s deep concern "with the nature of art and the art-making process" (132).

allegorical elements is not an unproductive task.[183] But, as James Michael Moore demonstrates, a plethora of character traits, events, and contextual details disallows an exact allegorical correspondence.[184] Using Richard Lanham's distinction between a "mixed" and a "pure" allegory, Moore argues that the "novel as an allegory is much more, and much less, than the Genesis narrative" (103). At the least, the narrative makes clear that a Fall has occurred, and proceeds by staging the potentialities and manifestations of both its tragic and fortunate consequences, asking ultimately, whether the Fall can be considered a *felix culpa*.

The term *felix culpa* can be traced back to the *Exultet*, or Easter proclamation. The use of the term is liturgical and celebratory: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem* ("O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer!"). Discussing this theme in his fifth-century *Enchiridion*, Augustine states that God "judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit any evil to exist" (VIII.27). Thomas Aquinas, quoting the *Exultet* and echoing Augustine, writes, "But there is no reason why human nature should not have been raised to something greater after sin. For God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom" (ST III q.1 a.3 ad 3). For Augustine and Aquinas, the existence of sin and evil is part of a providential plan. Calvin, echoing Augustine, draws out this emphasis when asserting that God not only foresaw but "at his own pleasure arranged" the Fall, and defers to these words from the *Enchiridion*: "Let us confess with the greatest benefit, what we believe with the greatest truth, that the God and Lord of all things who made all things very good, both foreknew that evil was to arise out of good, and knew that it belonged to his most omnipotent goodness to bring good out of evil, rather than not permit evil to be" (3.23). The Puritan John Owen, remarking on the *Exultet*, writes that we "are carried on towards a more exceeding weight of glory than formerly was revealed . . . for that grace lost in

---

[183] See, for example, Jason Courtmanche's typological reading of the novel, which assigns Miriam and Donatello as Adam and Eve and Kenyon and Hilda as the new Adam and Eve.

[184] See chapter three of Moore's dissertation *Crowding Out Evil with Good: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Paradoxical Vision of Sin and Redemption* (2013) for close readings of Miriam, Donatello, Kenyon, and Hilda.

Adam, better grace in Christ" (89). Finally, Jonathan Edwards affirms this superior trajectory and says of Adam and Eve: "their fall has been the occasion of their being advanced to much greater dignity than before, brought much nearer to God, far more nearly united to him, [and] are become his members, his spouse" (13:304).[185] As Calvin, Owen, and Edwards illustrate, the Calvinist tradition sees the Fall as resulting in a greater good.

Miriam is the first to explicitly present and consider the appeal and complexity of *felix culpa*. She and Kenyon note that Donatello, in the aftermath of his and Miriam's crime, is more beautiful and improved for the newfound intermixing of playfulness, sympathy, and seriousness within him. Miriam ventures: "Was the crime – in which he and I were wedded – was it a blessing, in strange disguise?" She further notes that this blessing could not have been obtained any other way. Kenyon finds Miriam's words too daring, too "unfathomable," yet Miriam enjoys reflecting on "this great mystery," continuing:

> The story of the fall of man! Is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy yet further? Was that very sin, – into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race, was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave? Will not this idea account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can? (337)

Miriam is not misrepresenting *felix culpa*. As Henry G. Fairbanks states, *The Marble Faun* never suggests that moral growth, education, or happiness "depends intrinsically upon sinning." "For Hawthorne," he continues, "sin is *neither a condition, nor a cause of*

---

[185] Kenneth P. Minkema paraphrases Edwards, explaining that he "espoused the concept of *felix culpa*, the 'happy fall,' which, in his view, provided God a greater way to show divine love, mercy, and . . . glory through salvation by Christ in the work of redemption and the reality of grace through abiding of the Holy Spirit" (252). Alvin Plantinga also paraphrases Edwards: "According to Jonathan Edwards, by virtue of our fall and subsequent redemption, we can achieve a level of intimacy with God that can't be achieved in any other way; by virtue of suffering we are invited to join the charmed circle of the Trinity itself" ("Supralapsarianism" 16). For more on Edward's understanding of the Fall, see Oliver D. Crisp's *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin* (2005).

good. It is the *occasion* of good through the operation of Divine Providence" (981). In other words, sin allows good to emerge, but God, rather than sin, is the source of the good. Kenyon once more expresses his hesitation to follow this line of thought, but Miriam reiterates the possibility "that sin – which man chose instead of good – has been so beneficently handled by omniscience and omnipotence, that, whereas our dark enemy sought to destroy us by it, it has really become an instrument most effective in the education of intellect and soul" (338). Miriam, perhaps more than Kenyon, recognizes the complexity of theodicy. First, she suggests that the Fall was not a surprise to God or a victory for Satan but rather a "destined" plan. Then, she suggests that sin, while burdensome, instigates a superior state of being, and wonders at the convincingness of this theodicy: "Will not this account for the permitted existence of sin[?]" Miriam's interrogative mode suggests that the matter is not yet closed.

Kenyon's shock turns into curiosity, but Hilda, when presented with Miriam's reflections through Kenyon, is strangely appalled. Kenyon's shock is not in response to Miriam's likening her and Donatello's murder to the Fall. Rather, he is shocked by Miriam's understanding of the Fall of Adam and Eve itself as a blessing. Kenyon provides no account for why he considers Miriam's words too bold and daring. At the narrative's end, he more seriously considers Miriam's explanation and presents it to Hilda:

> Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is sin, then, – which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the universe, – is it, like Sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his? (356-357)

It is Hilda's turn to be horrified, but unlike Kenyon with Miriam, Hilda explains her shock: "Do not you perceive what a mockery your creed makes, not only of all religious sentiments, but of moral law? And how it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us? You have shocked me beyond words!" (357). But we are left wondering, why is Hilda able to recognize that Donatello is changed for the better after his encounter with sin, yet she adamantly and simultaneously rejects this implication when Kenyon explicitly describes the *felix culpa* view? What precisely does

Hilda find appalling, so opposed to religious sentiment, moral law, and innate divine sense? If it is the idea that sin is the means by which God allows humans to attain a greater "paradise," then Hilda, who three times calls herself a "daughter of the Puritans" (44, 281, 361), should also be shocked by her theological ancestors, such as Edwards, who sees the Fall as attributing to humans a greater "dignity" and union with God.[186] Hilda resists the idea that good and evil can be intertwined. She tells Kenyon: "there is, I believe, only one right and one wrong . . . This is my faith" (298). Schiller writes that for Hilda, right and wrong must be "easily identified and must surely be kept separate in any intelligible universe" (387). It is likely, then, that Hilda, drawn as she is to unambiguously separate categories, is unsettled by Kenyon's suggestion that sin can work in service of a greater good. And yet, looming behind Hilda is a Christian tradition which holds that while sin is in and of itself condemnatory, its existence is also a vital means, a "fortunate" occurrence.

The question remains: Why do Hilda and Kenyon – for he backpedals his speculations on *felix culpa* after perceiving Hilda's aversion – balk at the idea of a fortunate fall? And why, implicitly following Kenyon and Hilda, does Donohue call the fortunate fall the "most perilous of human hopes for a Calvinist" (282)? Since Calvinist theology and *felix culpa* are not incompatible, as Calvin, Edwards, and others establish, characters such as Hilda and Kenyon embody Hawthorne's stereotyped Calvinism, which emphasizes the burdensome and sorrowful quality of the human condition, rather than the possibility of a greater hope or blessedness. Likewise, Donohue relies on this stereotyped Calvinism. Readings such as Donohue's, which are numerous, too easily trust Hawthorne's theological expertise, not recognizing a stereotype as a stereotype. Consequently, these readings pigeonhole Calvinism, perpetuating its distorted image for generations of readers.

The Marble Faun modulates the doom-and-gloom Calvinism of Hawthorne's previous works. Consider the narrator's description of Kenyon as he is strolling amidst vineyards and orchards: "The sculptor strayed . . . with somewhat the sensations of an

---

[186] For a reading of Hilda's statements about her Puritan heritage as "always displaced" (137), see Clawson.

adventurer who should find his way to the site of ancient Eden, and behold its loveliness through the transparency of that gloom which has been brooding over those haunts of innocence ever since the fall" (215). The gloom is not impenetrable. The narrator continues: "Adam saw [Eden] in a brighter sunshine, but never knew the shade of Pensive beauty which Eden won from his expulsion" (215). *The Marble Faun* dares to consider the potential benefits and "beauty" of the existence and reality of sin (not sin itself but what it makes way for), which renders the narrative equally if not more reminiscent of the theology of Calvinists such as Edwards, who after acknowledging the detriments of sin, nevertheless point to the ultimately greater state of blessedness catalyzed by the Fall. While the notes of hope in Hawthorne's narrative are in tension with the Gothic, especially its emphasis on religious terror and psychological oppression stimulated by religion, the same cannot be said regarding their relationship to Calvinism. *The Marble Faun* is more, not less, theologically Calvinist than Hawthorne's previous works.

Yet, there is a missing or rather understated element in *The Marble Faun*'s engagement with both *felix culpa* and Calvinism: there is little mention of Christ. This lack is stark, especially considering the emphasis on Christ in the theodicies of Augustine and Edwards and others. The "greater good" resulting from the Fall is not just, in Aquinas's words, the "rais[ing]" of human nature into "something greater after sin," but redemption through Christ. In fact, this is the centerpiece of many older and more recent theodicies, including analytic philosopher Alvin Plantinga's *Exultet*-inspired theodicy.[187] Plantinga argues that the best possible worlds contain "the towering and magnificent good of divine incarnation and atonement" ("Supralapsarianism" 9), elaborating: "I believe that the great goodness of this state of affairs . . . makes its value incommensurable with the value of states of affairs involving creaturely good and bad"

---

[187] Plantinga first began this work as a defense rather than a theodicy. See his *The Nature of Necessity* (1974) and René Van Woudenberg for a helpful summary, which ends by acknowledging that "Plantinga's defense is generally considered to be as successful as a philosophical argument can be" (187). For more on theodicy and *felix culpa*, see *Evil and the God of Love* (1966) by the philosopher and theologian John Hick and *The Providence of God* (1993) by Reformed philosopher and theologian Paul Helm.

(10).[188] Divine incarnation and atonement are of matchless value: “no matter how much evil, how much sin and suffering the world contains, the aggregated badness would be outweighed by the goodness of incarnation and atonement, outweighed in such a way that the world in question is very good” (10). Since incarnation and atonement require sin and evil, the best possible worlds, including our own, necessitate sin and evil.

In *The Marble Faun*, there is only one extended reflection on Jesus, approached by way of *ekphrasis*, namely a meditation on Sodoma’s painting of Christ. The narrator remarks about the painting:

> It is inexpressibly touching. So weary is the Saviour and utterly worn out with agony, that his lips have fallen apart from mere exhaustion; his eyes seem to be set; he tries to lean his head against the pillar, but is kept from sinking down upon the ground only by the cords that bind him. One of the most striking effects produced is the sense of loneliness. You behold Christ deserted both in heaven and earth; that despair is in him which wrung forth the saddest utterance man ever made, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” Even in this extremity, however, he is still divine. The great and reverent painter has not suffered the Son of God to be merely an object of pity, though depicting him in a state so profoundly pitiful. He is rescued from it, we know not how, – by nothing less than miracle, – by a celestial majesty and beauty, and some quality of which these are the outward garniture. He is as much, and as visibly, our Redeemer, there bound, there fainting, and bleeding from the scourge, with the cross in view, as if he sat on his throne of glory in the heavens! Sodoma, in this matchless picture, has done more towards reconciling the incongruity of Divine Omnipotence and outraged, suffering Humanity, combined in one person, than the theologians ever did. (205)

The mystery, the incongruity of the Godhead, reflects the narrator, is most clearly represented and harmonized in Christ’s divine suffering. And this suffering has not been compellingly represented through the rhetorical efforts of theologians. Reviewing *The Marble Faun*, James Russell Lowell writes in 1860 that if Hawthorne “had been born without the poetic imagination, he would have written treatises on the Origin of Evil” (509). But Hawthorne seems unconvinced of the effectiveness of doctrinal treatises to comprehend and schematize the divine. Hawthorne’s works do not emphasize the

[188] For opposing arguments to aspects of Plantinga’s theodicy, see among others, Marilyn McCord Adams, Gyuha Choi, Kevin Diller, and Eleonore Stump (*Wandering*).

potential redemptive quality of suffering as much as they reflect on the sorrowful consequences of sin. Yet, in this instance, Christ's suffering is depicted by Sodoma and the narrator as the most coherent and powerful manifestation of both the terrible and blessed state of humanity. Note that the narrator calls Christ "Redeemer," and not just redeemer, but "our Redeemer," implying an assent to a communal, inclusive, and actualized redemption on the part of Christ.

Still, given the possibility of *felix culpa*, why the lack of a more fully realized sense of happiness and hopefulness in *The Marble Faun*? Critics have noted that for all Donatello's ascension to a higher and more dignified state of being, the implication at the narrative's end is that Donatello will suffer the judicial consequences of his actions: "Though Donatello has been matured and humanized by his suffering, he must go to prison" (Waggoner, *Hawthorne* 214). Hyatt Waggoner influentially sees this narrative choice as Hawthorne's ultimately providing "no clear answer to the largest question explicitly posed by the novel" (214), namely whether the Fall is fortunate.[189] But this criticism has an issue of temporal scale. Yes, original sin may lead to temporary, worldly suffering, but the very concept of *felix culpa* looks ahead to an eternal blessedness.[190] Charles Swann argues that Hawthorne does not offer a "prediction or vision of a fully redeemed future" (211), noting especially "the entire absence of any reference to the figure or even the role of Christ" (216). But this reading neglects, among other things, the narrator's meditation on Sodoma's pictorial representation of Christ, specifically of Christ as "the Savior . . . utterly worn out with agony" (205) on behalf of humanity. Hawthorne's works do not dwell on that future blessed state – Hawthorne is indeed too bleak – but *The Marble Faun* represents the beginning of hope, and it sees the gloom of original sin dissipating into something more than impenetrable darkness.

---

[189] See Roy R. Male for a response to Waggoner. Male lingers on Hilda rejecting Kenyon's "line of reasoning" because of its nature as a line of reasoning, which takes "the narrative element out of the Christian story" (176).

[190] See Marilyn McCord Adams on the insufficiency with which some theodicies appreciate the suffering caused by what she describes as horrendous evils.

Why assume in the first place, however, that hope and celebration are the appropriate orientations to the Fall? Put inversely, why is lament not the proper response to the Fall? This is the question posed by philosopher Eleonore Stump in her work on the problem of evil. Before proposing a defense of *felix culpa*, Stump considers how curious it is that instead of responding to the Fall and the post-Fall world with lamentation and disappointment, the Christian tradition "has taken just the opposite view of the matter" (*Image* 10). Remarking on the celebratory tone of the *Exultet*, Stump defines "the *felix culpa* view" as perceiving "the story of creation this way: the creation with the Fall in it and all the suffering which the Fall brought into the world made God's creation more glorious than it would otherwise have been." In other words, "the world with the Fall in it is more of a success for God than the world would have been had there been no Fall and no subsequent evil" (10).[191] Ultimately, Stump's defense of *felix culpa* rests on a conception of selfhood wherein a human being's "perfected true self with wounds is more glorious than the self perfected but without wounds would have been" (25). A person's wounds, physical or otherwise, become "an image of the incarnate Christ in his suffering" (27), who himself in his perfected state retains his "wounds and is more glorious because of them" (28).[192]

Donatello is wounded. He is so shaken by his crime that, for a time, he indeed seems worse off for it, viewing God, the world, and himself antagonistically. Where Kenyon is in awe at the depiction of God and the saints on stained glass, because of their transmuting "tenderness and reverence," Donatello "tremble[s]," perceiving only condemnation. Where Kenyon sees God's love, Donatello sees only God's "wrath" (239). Donatello lives in sin and sorrow, but edification awaits, as an earlier passage foreshadows. As Kenyon and Donatello are taking in the "majestic landscape" (201)

---

[191] Stump provides evidence of Christian communities and writers who hold this *felix culpa* view. What Stump highlights is the ways in which this "view does not accept that the story of God's creation with the Fall and its subsequent suffering is a disappointment for God; rather, it holds that the creation with its history of sin and suffering is more worth celebrating than the creation would have been had there been no Fall" (15).

[192] Here, Stump has in mind particularly Jesus inviting Thomas to see and touch the wounds of his nail-pierced hands.

surrounding Donatello's country house (a castle in Tuscany), their attention turns to a small shrub, flourishing through stone pavement. Donatello observes that the shrub may teach Kenyon a "good lesson," but when Kenyon responds in turn that it likewise has a moral and "use and edification" for Donatello, Donatello retorts: "It teaches me nothing." And yet, when a worm approaches the shrub, a worm which if not intercepted "would have killed" the shrub, Donatello "fling[s]" (202) it away. Donatello does not see the end or the moral yet, but he does not cut himself off from it either. R.W.B. Lewis, remarking on Jonathan Edwards's tone when treating the subject of original sin, observes that he "gives us less the impression of gloomy satisfaction in reducing tentative sprightliness to renewed despair than of a bold expression of vision which insists upon despair as the way toward 'comfort and exceeding joy'" (64). Donatello experiences despair, but despair is not the final word.

Just like the pensive post-Fall beauty, Donatello himself is eventually made beautiful after his crime. "Is he not beautiful?" asks Miriam of Kenyon, as she notes how he "dwel[ls] admiringly on Donatello" (337). Donatello "emerge[s]" from his "heavy grief," with newfound "profound sympathy and serious thought" which transform his one-dimensionality. The implication is that post-Fall suffering results in greater, not less blessedness. As Kenyon tells Donatello and Miriam, the "severe and painful life" (251) inevitably lying before them will deprive them of a superficial "earthly bliss," but in exchange they will receive "at length a sombre and thoughtful happiness" (252). The idea of a greater good is not unique but integral to Calvinism. Although Hawthorne is reluctant to fully realize and depict a higher-order happiness, *The Marble Faun* moves closer toward contemplating and embracing that greater good, and thus closer to Calvinism.

Conclusion: A Word on Tragedy

It is a critical commonplace that Hawthorne's works present a bleak vision, focusing on the sins and sorrows of fallen humanity. Criticism has long used the word "tragic" to describe this bleakness, as seen, for example, in Roy R. Male's well-known 1957 monograph *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*, wherein Male equates tragedy with the Fall

and with original sin. Less often does criticism on Hawthorne invoke formal theories of tragedy to explain or contextualize this bleakness.[193] We might gain a richer understanding of Hawthorne's tragic vision if we consider the generic conventions of tragedy, specifically through the critical debates which consider the compatibility or lack thereof of tragedy with Christian theology.

There exists an ongoing discussion about whether Christian theology, with its narrative of resurrection and its promise of redemption, can accommodate tragedy. Does an attitude of hope, wherein one believes in future salvation, negate the possibility of true tragedy? This is the question Rowan Williams takes up in *The Tragic Imagination* (2016), acknowledging those such as I.A. Richards, who argues that "a compensating Heaven" (246) is inimical to tragedy, and Kathleen Sands, who argues that in a Christian worldview "tragedy is only apparent" (89).[194] Williams emphasizes that to suppose that Christian theology holds "that suffering is cancelled or even compensated by the hope of ultimate reconciliation" (124) is to caricaturize it. He argues that Christian theology and the tragic are not incompatible even if the Christian narrative does not end with disaster. To make this argument, Williams gestures to the history of tragic drama which does not in fact represent suffering and atrocities as "devoid of hope, value or future" (127). In other words, tragedy is not "a form of pessimism" (115).

Williams's argument is rooted in his understanding of the function of narration. That tragic drama reflects on suffering, that it narrates the existence and experience of suffering, means that a new space has opened up. That suffering is not left unnarrated implies that suffering is not absolute or total. Suffering is not the last word. Christianity "affirms the possibility of mourning – the articulation of loss, the 'telling' of pain, in a way that allows catastrophe and atrocity to become culturally thinkable: not explicable or

---

[193] A notable exception is F.O. Matthiessen, who discusses, albeit briefly, Hawthorne's "tragic view of life" (337) in relation to Greek drama.

[194] Williams engages extensively with fellow theologians John Milbank and Donald MacKinnon, specifically Milbank's analysis of and resistance toward MacKinnon's justifications for the tragic being intrinsic to Christian theology. For engagements with *The Tragic Imagination*, see *Modern Theology*'s 2018 book symposium.

justifiable but material for self-awareness and mutual recognition" (124). This act of telling does not take away from the seriousness of terror or pain. To conceive of loss and suffering as "non-ultimate" is not to lessen it: "It should be possible to say that loss is in an important sense irremediable, beyond compensation, without concluding that it is *the* unsurpassable category of human speech and experience" (127). Tragedy recognizes atrocity and loss while the narration of that atrocity and loss signals a different standpoint from which one can testify to the weight of suffering.

It is perhaps in this sense that we can think of Hawthorne as a tragic writer, and his works as representing a tragic vision. Hawthorne's works are not tragic because they depict disaster, but because they stand on the other side of disaster, regardless of how they end and whether or to what degree they gesture toward future blessedness. It is not just that Donatello is wounded, but that the story of his wounds is narrated. This is not to say the endings of Hawthorne's novels are insignificant. It is to say that Hawthorne's endings are not problems to be solved. The ending of Hawthorne's most esteemed work of tragedy, *The Scarlet Letter*, has been subject to some of this problem-solving. Hester's daughter, Pearl, is likely prospering abroad, while Hester returns to New England and "of her own free will" (165) re-dons the scarlet letter. The scarlet letter is looked upon with reverence by those who visit Hester to seek her counsel, indicating a degree of redemption. Hester herself is assured that some "brighter period" (166) awaits the world. One might read the ending as a contrivance or as a "failure of nerve" (Stern 158) if one considers that the hopeful quality of these final remarks clashes with the tragic occurrences preceding them. The gesture towards hope is thus explained away; perhaps Hawthorne is capitulating to marketplace demands. But this hopefulness does not negate what is essentially a sorrowful tale as much as it presents the ambivalence wherein Hawthorne is most at home. The endings of Hawthorne's novels typically include at least one open-ended element. At the close of *The Marble Faun*, we are left wondering with Hilda: "what was Miriam's life to be? And where was Donatello?" (314). As readers we join the narrator and/or other characters on the other side of disaster, and we continue reflecting and bearing witness. *The Marble Faun* is no less Calvinist for its incorporation of *felix culpa*, a looking ahead to a future blessedness. Likewise, the novel is no less generically tragic if we maintain with Williams that to narrate or reflect on suffering,

which by definition implies that suffering is not ultimate or final, constitutes rather than undermines tragedy.

Works Cited

Ablow, Rachel. "Addressing the Reader: The Autobiographical Voice." *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820-1880*, edited by John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor, pp. 274-288. *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, Vol. 3. Oxford UP, 2010.

Adams, James Eli. "A History of Criticism of the Victorian Novel." *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, edited by Deirdre David, Cambridge UP, 2nd, ed., 2012, pp. 62-83.

Adams, Marilyn McCord. "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa': Analysis and Critique." *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 25, 2008, pp. 123-139.

Allen, Lucy Cory. "Enchanting the Field: Where Should the History of Victorian and Edwardian Religion and Belief go from here?" *The Journal of the Social History Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2021, pp. 481-500.

Altholz, Josef L. "The Warfare of Conscience with Theology." *The Mind and Art of Victorian England*. U of Minnesota P, 1976, pp. 58-77.

"The American Literary Critic Frederick Crews Explains Why He Has Rejected Freud." *London Review of Books*, vol. 2, no. 23, 1980. https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v02/n23/frederick-crews/the-american-literary-critic-frederick-crews-explains-why-he-has-rejected-freud.

Anger, Suzy. *Victorian Interpretation*. Cornell UP, 2005.

Ankeny, Rebecca Thomas. *The Story, the Teller, and the Audience in George MacDonald's Fiction*. Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Benziger Bros, 1947, https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/TP/TP001.html#TPQ1OUTP1.

Arnold, Matthew. *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*. Edited by R.H. Super, 11 vols. U of Michigan P, 1960-1977.

"ART. IX. *The Minister's Wooing*." *The American Theological Review*. November 1859, pp. 709.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford UP, 2003.

Askew, Melvin. "Hawthorne, the Fall, and the Psychology of Maturity." *American Literature*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1962, pp. 335-343.

Atteberry, Brian. "High Church versus Broad Church: Christian Myth in George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis." *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, vol. 207, no. 3, 2005, pp. 14-17.

Augustine. *Enchiridion: On Faith, Hope, and Love*. Translated by Albert C. Outler. First published MCMLV, 1955, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/augustine_enchiridion_02_trans.htm#C8.

Baldwin Brown, James. *The Divine Life of Man*. Ward & Company, 1860.

Balserak, Jon. *Calvinism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2016.

Barnstone, Aliki, et al. *The Calvinist Roots of the Modern Era*. UPNE, 1997.

Barstow, Lewis Orsmond. *The Work of the Preacher: A Study of Homiletic Principles and Methods*. Pilgrim Press, 1914.

Bartels, Sarah. *The Devil and the Victorians: Supernatural Evil in Nineteenth-Century English Culture*. Routledge, 2021.

Barthes, Roland. "The Reality Effect." In *French Literary Theory Today*, translated by Tzvetan Todorov, Cambridge UP, 1982, pp. 11-16.

Bartlett, Irving H, editor. *Unitarian Christianity and Other Essays*, by William Ellery Channing. Liberal Arts Press, 1957.

Baym, Nina. "Concepts of the Romance in Hawthorne's America." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1984, pp. 426-443.

---. *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career*. Cornell UP, 1976.

---. *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. Cornell UP, 1978.

Beal, Eleanor, and Jonathan Greenaway. *Horror and Religion: New Literary Approaches to Theology, Race and Sexuality*. U of Wales P, 2019.

Beaty, Jerome. *Misreading* Jane Eyre*: A Postformalist Paradigm*. Ohio State UP, 1996.

Bebbington, David. "Calvin and British Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Calvin and His Influence, 1509-2009*, edited by Irena Backus and Philip Benedict, Oxford UP, 2011, pp. 282-305.

---. "Congregationalists." *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas, Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 39-55.

---. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. Taylor and Francis, 1989.

---. "The Growth of Voluntary Religion." *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 53-69.

Becker, Leah Marie. "*The Minister's Wooing*'s Calvinist Sentiment: The Secular Versus Secularization." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2021, pp. 151-174.

Bennett, Kelsey L. "Exile and the Reconciling Power of the Natural Affections in *Jane Eyre*." *Brontë Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2012, pp. 19-29.

---. *Principle and Propensity: Experience and Religion in the Nineteenth-Century British and American Bildungsroman*. U of South Carolina P, 2014.

Berk, Stephen E. *Calvinism versus Democracy: Timothy Dwight and the Origins of American Evangelical Orthodoxy*. Archon, 1974.

Berkson, Dorothy. "Millennial Politics and the Feminine Fiction of Harriet Beecher Stowe." *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Elizabeth Ammons, G.K. Hall, 1980, pp. 244-258.

Berthold, Dennis. "*The Marble Faun* and the Challenge of Transnational Gothic." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2012, pp. 1-26.

Betsinger, Sue Ann. "*Jane Eyre* and the Orphan's 'Mother.'" *Brontë Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2004, pp. 111-123.

Bingham, Matthew C. *On Being Reformed: Debates over a Theological Identity*. Palgrave-Pivot, 2018.

Boaden, Ann. "Falcons and Falconers: Visions in the Novels of George MacDonald." *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1981, pp. 7-17.

"Book Symposium: Rowan Williams, *The Tragic Imagination*." *Modern Theology*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2018, pp. 220-288.

Bramen, Carrie Tirado. "The Christology of Niceness: Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Jesus Novel, and Sacred Trivialities." *American Religious Liberalism*, edited by Leigh E. Schmidt and Sally M. Promey, Indiana UP, 2012, pp. 39-75.

Branch, Lori. "Postcritical and Postsecular: The Horizon of Belief." *Religion and Literature*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2016, pp. 160-167.

---. "Postsecular Studies." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Mark Knight, Routledge, 2016, pp. 91-101.

Bremer, Francis J. *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*. UP of New England, 2013.

Brilmyer, S. Pearl. *The Science of Character: Human Objecthood and the Ends of Victorian Realism*. U of Chicago P, 2022.

Brontë, Anne. "A Word to the 'Elect.'" *The Brontë Sisters: Selected Poems*. Edited by Stevie Davies, Routledge, 2002.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. Edited by Richard J. Dunn, 3rd ed., Norton, 2001.

---. *The Professor*. Wordsworth, 1994.

---. *Shirley*. Wordsworth, 1993.

---. "To Ellen Nussey, [5 and 6 December 1836]". *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: With a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends, vol. 1: 1829-1847*. Oxford UP, 1995, pp. 163-164.

---. "To Ellen Nussey, [c. 1836]". *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: With a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends, vol. 1: 1829-1847*. Oxford UP, 1995, pp. 171.

---. "To James Taylor, 15 November 1851." *Selected Letters of Charlotte Brontë*. Edited by Margaret Smith. Oxford UP, 2007.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Broadview, 2007.

Brown, Abner William, editor. *Recollections of the Conversation Parties of the Rev. Charles Simeon*. Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1863.

Buell, Lawrence. "Calvinism Romanticized: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Samuel Hopkins, and *The Minister's Wooing*." *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Elizabeth Ammons, G.K. Hall, 1980, pp. 259-278.

---. "Rival Romantic Interpretations of New England Puritanism: Hawthorne versus Stowe." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1983, pp. 77-99.

Burstein, Miriam Elizabeth. "Hybridous Monsters: Constructing 'Religion' and 'the Novel' in the Early Nineteenth Century." *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion: Literary, Historical, and Religious Studies in Dialogue*, edited by Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner, Ohio State UP, 2019, pp. 171-189.

---. "The Religion(s) of the Brontës." *A Companion to the Brontës*, edited by Diane Long Hoeveler and Deborah Denenholz Morse, John Wiley & Sons, 2016, pp. 433-451.

Buzard, James. *Disorienting Fiction: The Autoethnographic Work of Nineteenth-Century British Novels*. Princeton UP, 2005.

Calvin, John. *Calvin's Complete Commentary on the Bible*. Delmarva Publications, 2013.

---. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Westminster Press, 1960.

Camfield, Gregg. "The Moral Aesthetics of Sentimentality: A Missing Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1988, pp. 319-345.

Caputo, John D. *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps*. Indiana UP, 2013.

Carter, Grayson. *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850*. Oxford UP, 2001.

Chadwick, Owen. *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays*. Cambridge UP, 1992.

Chase, Richard. *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. John Hopkins UP, 1980.

Chesterton, G.K. "Introduction." *George MacDonald and His Wife*, by Greville MacDonald. George Allen and Unwin, 1924, pp. 9-15.

Choi, Gyuha. "A Critical Approach to Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Argument." *Catholic Theology and Thought in Asia*, vol. 83, 2019, pp. 160-198.

Church, Richard William. *The Oxford Movement, Twelve Years, 1833-1845*. MacMillan, 1891.

Clawson, AnaMaria Seglie. "*The Marble Faun* in a Secular Age." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2022, pp. 130-150.

Clemens, Samuel, and Olivia Clemens. [Buffalo, 2 September, 1870]. *Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks*. Edited by Dixon Wecter. Huntington Library, California: 1949, pp. 134-137.

Clossey, Luke, et al. "The Unbelieved and Historians, Part I: A Challenge." *History Compass*, vol. 14, no. 12, 2016, pp. 594-602.

Cohn, Dorrit. *The Distinction of Fiction*. John Hopkins UP, 1999.

Colacurcio, Michael J. "Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*." *ELH*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1972, pp. 459-494.

---. *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales*. Harvard UP, 1984.

Coleman, Dawn. "*Daniel Deronda* and the Limits of Sermonic Voice." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2008, pp. 407-425.

---. "Fathers, Mothers, Saints, Martyrs: Religion as a Lineage of Belief." *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2022, pp. 481-497.

---. *Preaching and the Rise of the American Novel*. Ohio State UP, 2013

---. "The Spiritual Authority of Literature in a Secular Age." *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2018, pp. 519-530.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Lecture Five: Lectures on Revealed Religion, Its Corruptions and Political Views." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume*

1: Lectures, 1795: On Politics and Religion. Edited by Peter Mann et al, Princeton UP, 2015, pp. 193-212.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*. Wordsworth Classics, 1997.

Colon, Susan E. *Victorian Parables*. Bloomsbury, 2012.

Conway, Moncure D. *Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Scriber & Welford, 1890.

Cook, Daniel. "Broad-Church Homiletics, Kingsley's *Hypatia*, and the Cultivated Reader in the Pew." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 44, 2016, pp. 491-509.

Coté, Amy. "'A Handful of Loose Beads': Catholicism and the Fictional Autobiography in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 75, no. 4, 2021, pp. 473-494.

---. *Theology and the Narrative Form of the Victorian Realist Novel*. 2020. University of Toronto, PhD dissertation.

Courtmanche, Jason Charles. *How Nathaniel Hawthorne's Narratives are Shaped by Sin: His Use of Biblical Typology in His Four Major Works*. Edwin Mellen, 2008.

Cratty, Flynn. "The New Calvinism." *The Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism*, edited by Bruce Gordon and Carl R. Trueman, Oxford UP, 2021, pp. 641-656.

Crawford, Robert. "Presbyterianism and Imagination in Modern Scotland." *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*, edited by T.M. Devine, Mainstream Publishing, 2000, pp. 187-196.

Crews, Frederick. *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*. U of California P, 1966.

Crisp, Oliver D. *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin*. Routledge, 2005.

"Critical Notice." *Fortnightly Review*, vol. 4, no. 19, London: 1868, pp. 115-116.

Crow, Charles L. *American Gothic*. U of Wales P, 2009.

Crozier, Alice C. *The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Oxford UP, 1969.

Da Sousa Correa, Delia. "*Jane Eyre* and Genre." *The Nineteenth-Century Novel: Realisms*, edited by Delia da Sousa Correa, Routledge, 2000, pp. 87-116.

Davis, Philip. "Isaiah and Ezekiel – But What about Charley? An Essay on 'Wanting to Believe.'" *Shaping Belief: Culture, Politics and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, edited by Victoria Morgan and Clare Williams, Liverpool UP, 2008, pp. 57-70.

Davis, Thomas J. "Images of Intolerance: John Calvin in Nineteenth-Century History Textbooks." *Church History*, vol. 65, no. 2, 1996, pp. 234-248.

---. "Rhetorical War and Reflex: Calvinism in Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction and Twentieth-Century Criticism." *Calvin Theological Journal*, no. 2, 1998, pp. 443-56.

Davison, Carol Margaret. "Calvinist Gothic: The Case of Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland, or the Transformation* and James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*." *Le Gothic, Influences and Appropriations in Europe and America*, edited by Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 166-184.

---. *Gothic Literature 1765-1824*. U of Wales P, 2009.

Dawson, Deidre. "Literature and Sentimentalism." *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by Alexander Broadie and Craig Smith, 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2019, pp. 289-312.

Dawson, Paul. *The Return of the Omniscient Narrator: Authorship and Authority in Twenty-first Century Fiction*. Ohio State UP, 2013.

De Jong, John R. *The Theology of George MacDonald: The Child Against the Vampire of Fundamentalism*. Pickwick, 2019.

De Jong, Mary G. *Sentimentalism in Nineteenth-Century America: Literary and Cultural Practices.* Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2013.

Dearborn, Kerry. *Baptized Imagination: The Theology of George MacDonald*. Ashgate, 2007.

DeVries, Dawn. "Calvin's Preaching." *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, edited by Donald K. McKim, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 106-124.

Diamond, David B. *Psychoanalytic Readings of Hawthorne's Romances: Narratives of Unconscious Crisis and Transformation*. Routledge, 2022.

Dieleman, Karen. *Religious Imaginaries: The Liturgical and Poetic Practices of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Adelaide Procter*. Ohio UP, 2012.

Diller, Kevin. "Are Sin and Evil Necessary for a Really Good World? Questions for Alvin Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Theodicy." *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2008, pp. 87-101.

Disosway, E.T. *South Meadows: A Tale of Long Ago*. Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1874.

Dobson, Joanne. "Reclaiming Sentimental Literature." *American Literature*, vol. 69, no. 2, 1997, pp. 263-288.

Donoghue, Denis. *The American Classics: A Personal Essay*. Yale UP, 2005.

Donohue, Agnes McNeill. *Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild*. Kent State UP, 1985.

Dorrien, Gary. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. Doubleday, 1977.

Dubois, Martin. "Sermon and Story in George MacDonald." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 43, 2015, pp. 577-87.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Edwards, Jonathan. "Miscellanies." *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*. Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, http://edwards.yale.edu.proxy.lib.sfu.ca.

Elbert, Monika M. "Is Rome's Moonlight Different from Salem's?: Hawthorne's Reconceptualization of the Gothic." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2012, pp. 143-167.

Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. 1859. Broadview, 2005.

---. "The Essays of 'George Eliot.'" Edited by Nathan Sheppard. Funk & Wagnalls, 1883.

---. "George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, August 15, 1866." *The George Eliot Letters*, 9 vols. Edited by Gordon S. Haight. Yale UP, 1954-78.

---. *Middlemarch*. Edited by Gordon S. Haight. Houghton Mifflin, 1956.

Ellison, Robert H. *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Susquehanna UP, 1998.

Eyre, Angharad. *Women's Writing and Mission in the Nineteenth Century: Jane Eyre's Missionary Sisters*. Routledge, 2022.

Fairbanks, Henry G. "Sin, Free Will, and 'Pessimism' in Hawthorne." *PMLA*, vol., 71, no. 5, 1956, pp. 975-989.

Farnan, Christiane E. "The 'Least Drop of Oil': Locating Narrative Authority in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*." *Beyond Uncle Tom's Cabin: Essays on the Writing of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Sylvia Mayer and Monika Mueller, Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2011, pp. 95-108.

Faubert, Michelle. “Calvinism, Enthusiasm, and Suicide: The Regulation of Subjectivity in the Romantic Period.” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2018, pp. 79–102.

Felski, Rita. “Identifying with Characters.” *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*, by Amanda Anderson et al., U of Chicago P, 2019, pp. 77-126.

Ferretti, Joan Varnum. “Discovering the Soul of the New Republic: The Early Fiction of Catharine Maria Sedgwick.” *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and Theologies of the Afterlife*, edited by Jennifer McFarlane-Harris and Emily Hamilton-Honey, Routledge, 2021, pp. 147-171.

Fessenden, Tracy. “The Problem of the Postsecular.” *American Literary History*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2014, pp. 154-167.

Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Revised edition, Delta, 1966.

Foster, Charles H. *The Rungless Ladder: Harriet Beecher Stowe and New England Puritanism*. Duke UP, 1954.

Franchot, Jenny. “Invisible Domain: Religion and American Literary Studies.” *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, vol. 67, no. 4, 1995, pp. 833-842.

---. *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*. U of California P, 1994.

Francis, Keith A. “Sermons: Themes and Developments.” *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*, edited by Keith A. Francis et al, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 31-44.

Franklin, J. Jeffrey. “The Merging of Spiritualities: Jane Eyre as Missionary of Love.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1995, pp. 456-482.

Fraser, Hilary. "The Victorian Novel and Religion." *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, edited by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing, Blackwell, 2002, pp. 101-118.

Frederick, John T. *The Darkened Sky: Nineteenth-Century American Novelists and Religion*. U of Notre Dame P, 1969.

Freeburg, Christopher. *Melville and the Idea of Blackness: Race and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century America*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

Freedgood, Elaine. *Worlds Enough: The Invention of Realism in the Victorian Novel*. Princeton UP, 2019.

Froude, James Anthony. *Calvinism: An Address Delivered 17th March, 1871, at the University of St. Andrews*. Adam, Stevenson & Co, 1871.

G. W. "Reply to the Criticism on *Jane Eyre*." *Christian Register*, vol. 27, no. 13, 1848, pp. 50.

Gabelman, Daniel. "Celestial Nonsense: George MacDonald's Apophatic Play." *Literature and Theology*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2022, pp. 273-297.

Gallagher, Susan VanZanten. "*Jane Eyre* and Christianity." *Approaches to Teaching Brontë's* Jane Eyre. MLA, 1993, pp. 62-68.

Gérin, Winifred. *Charlotte Brontë: The Evolution of Genius*. Clarendon Press, 1967.

Gezari, Janet. "*Jane Eyre*'s Style." *On Style in Victorian Fiction*, edited by Daniel Tyler, Cambridge UP, 2022, pp. 130-149.

Gibson, Anna. "Charlotte Brontë's First Person." *Narrative*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2017, pp. 203-226.

Gibson, William. "The British Sermon, 1689-1901: Quantities, Performance, and Culture." *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*, edited by Keith A. Francis et al, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 3-30.

Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale UP, 1979.

Gill, Linda. "The Sermon and the Novel." *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*, edited by Keith A. Francis et al, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 594-608.

Gordon, Bruce, and Carl R. Trueman, editors. *The Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism*. Oxford UP, 2021.

Graham, Wendy C. *Gothic Elements and Religion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Fiction*. Tectum Verlag, 1999.

Greenaway, Jonathan. *Theology, Horror and Fiction: A Reading of the Gothic Nineteenth Century*. Bloomsbury, 2021.

Gribben, Crawford. "James Hogg, Scottish Calvinism and Literary Theory." *Scottish Studies Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2004, pp. 9-26.

Griffis, Rachel B. "Sentimentality and Grace: Marilynne Robinson and Nineteenth-Century Prodigal Son Narratives." *This Life, This World: New Essays on Marilynne Robinson's* Housekeeping*,* Gilead *and* Home, edited by Jason W. Stevens, Brill, 2015, pp. 131-147.

Grosvenor Myer, Valerie. *Charlotte Brontë: Truculent Spirit*. Vision Press Limited, 1987.

Gura, Philip F. Review of *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, by Kenneth Marc Harris. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1989, pp. 101-104.

Hall, David D. "Calvin and Calvinism within Congregational and Unitarian Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America." *John Calvin's American Legacy*, edited by Thomas J. Davis, Oxford UP, 2010, pp. 147-164.

Halpern, Faye. *Sentimental Readers: The Rise, Fall, and Revival of a Disparaged Rhetoric*. U of Iowa P, 2013.

Harris, Kenneth Marc. *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*. UP of Virginia, 1988.

Harris, Susan K. "Introduction." *The Minister's Wooing*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Penguin, 1999, pp. vii-xxiii.

Haskin, Dayton. "Religion and the Rise of English Studies." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Mark Knight, Routledge, 2016, pp. 27-37.

Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. Yale UP, 1989.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*. Charles E. Merrill, 1969.

---. "January 19, 1855, letter to William D. Ticknor." *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*: vol. 17. Edited by William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, and Claude M. Simpson. Ohio State UP, 1962.

---. *The Letters, 1857-1864*. Centenary Edition of *The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, vol. 18, Ohio State UP, 1987.

---. *The Marble Faun*. Oxford UP, 2002.

---. "The Minister's Black Veil." *The Complete Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Doubleday & Company, 1959, pp. 31-40.

---. *The Scarlet Letter*. Edited by Leland S. Person, Norton, 2005.

---. "Young Goodman Brown." *The Complete Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Doubleday & Company, 1959, pp. 247-256.

Hay, Adelle. *Anne Brontë Reimagined: A View from the Twenty-First Century*. Saraband, 2020.

Hayward, Deirdre. "Truth and Appearances: Aspects of Illusion and Reality in Robert Falconer." *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, vol. 15, 1996, pp. 19-25.

Heady, Emily Walker. *Victorian Conversion Narratives and Reading Communities*. Ashgate, 2013.

Hein, Rolland. *The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald.* Christian UP, 1982.

---. *George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker*. Star Song Publishing, 1993.

Helm, Paul. *John Calvin's Ideas*. Oxford UP, 2004.

Helminski, Joseph. "Harriet Beecher Stowe's Marianettes: Reconstruction of Womanhood in *The Minister's Wooing* and *Agnes of Sorrento*." *Beyond Uncle Tom's Cabin: Essays on the Writing of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Sylvia Mayer and Monika Mueller, Farleigh Dickinson UP, 2011, pp. 169-188.

Hennelly, Mark M., Jr. "*Jane Eyre*'s Reading Lesson." *ELH*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1984, pp. 693-717.

Herbert, Christopher. *Evangelical Gothic: The English Novel and the Religious War on Virtue from Wesley to Dracula*. U of Virginia P, 2019.

Hernandez, Alex Eric. "In the Church of Saint Jane: Literature, Lived Religion, and the Descriptive Turn." *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2022, pp. 461-480.

Hetherington, Naomi, and Rebecca Styler. "General Introduction." *Nineteenth-Century Literature, Religion and Society*. Routledge, 2020, pp. 1-7.

Hickok, Philip. "God and Gender in *Robert Falconer*: Deifying the Feminine." *Rethinking George MacDonald: Contexts and Contemporaries*, edited by Christopher MacLachlan et al, ASLS, 2013, pp. 105-120.

Hogg, James. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Broadview, 2001.

Holmes, Andrew R. “Scottish Theology in Nineteenth-Century Ireland.” *The History of Scottish Theology, Volume II: From Early Enlightenment to the Late Victorian Era*, edited by David Fergusson and Mark Elliott, Oxford UP, 2019, pp. 284-300.

Hopkins, Mark. *Nonconformity's Romantic Generation: Evangelical and Liberal Theologies in Victorian England*. Paternoster Press, 2004.

Hopkins, Samuel. *The Works of Samuel Hopkins*. Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, 1854.

Houston, Gail Turley. *Victorian Women Writers, Radical Grandmothers, and the Gendering of God*. Ohio State UP, 2012.

Howard, June. “What Is Sentimentality?” *American Literary History*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1999, pp. 63-81.

Howe, Amy R. *Right Feelings: On Sentimentality, Philosophy, and Religion in Harriet Beecher Stowe.* 2018. Harvard University, doctoral dissertation.

Hunter, Adrian. “Introduction.” *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Broadview, 2001, pp. 7-39.

Hunter, J. Paul. *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. Norton, 1990.

Hurley, Michael. *Faith in Poetry: Verse Style as a Mode of Religious Belief*. Bloomsbury, 2017.

Imlay, Elizabeth. *Charlotte Brontë and the Mysteries of Love: Myth and Allegory in* Jane Eyre. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.

James, Henry. “Nathaniel Hawthorne.” *The American Essays*. Edited by Leon Edel, Princeton UP, 1989, pp. 11-23.

---. *Hawthorne*. Cornell UP, 1956.

James, William. *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Project Gutenberg, 1996. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/621/pg621-images.html

Jay, Elisabeth. *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain*. Macmillan, 1986.

---. "Now and in England." *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, edited by Andrew Hass et al, Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 3-14.

---. *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel*. Clarendon Press, 1979.

Jenkins, Keith A. "*Jane Eyre*: Charlotte Brontë's New Bible." *Approaches to Teaching Brontë's* Jane Eyre. The Modern Language Association of America, 1993, pp. 69-75.

Jenkins, Thomas E. *The Character of God: Recovering the Lost Literary Power of American Protestantism*, Oxford UP, 1997.

Kaufmann, Michael W. "The Religious, the Secular, and Literary Studies: Rethinking the Secularization Narrative in Histories of the Profession." *New Literary History*, vol. 38 no. 4, 2007, p. 607-628.

Kazin, Alfred. *God and the American Writer*. Knopf, 1997.

Kearns, Katherine. *Nineteenth-Century Literary Realism: Through the Looking Glass*. Cambridge UP, 1996.

Kesterton, David B. "*The Marble Faun* as Transformation of Author and Age." *Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal*, vol. 8, 1978, pp. 7-77.

Kim, Sharon. "Puritan Realism: *The Wide, Wide World* and Robinson Crusoe." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography*, vol. 75, no. 4, 2003, pp. 783-811.

Kimball, Gayle. *The Religious Ideas of Harriet Beecher Stowe: Her Gospel of Womanhood*. The Edwin Mellen, 1982.

King, Amy M. *The Divine in the Commonplace: Reverent Natural History and the Novel in Britain*. Cambridge UP, 2019.

King, Joshua. "The Inward Turn: The Role of Matthew Arnold." *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Mark Knight, Routledge, 2016, pp. 15-26.

King, Joshua, and Winter Jade Werner. *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion: Literary, Historical, and Religious Studies in Dialogue*. Ohio State UP, 2019.

Knight, Charmian. "Reader, What Next? - The Final Chapter of *Jane Eyre*." *Brontë Society Transactions*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1998, pp. 27-30.

Knight, Mark. *Good Words: Evangelicalism and the Victorian Novel*. Ohio State UP, 2019.

---. "Guidance: Understanding Providence in George MacDonald's Fiction." *Literature and Religious Experience Beyond Belief and Unbelief*, edited by Matthew J. Smith and Caleb D. Spencer, Bloomsbury, 2022, pp. 161-176.

Knight, Mark, and Emma Mason. *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2006.

Koester, Nancy. *A Spiritual Life: Harriet Beecher Stowe*. William B. Eerdmans, 2014.

Kreglinger, Gisela H. *Storied Revelations: Parables, Imagination and George MacDonald's Christian Fiction*. Lutterworth Press, 2013.

Krueger, Christine L. *The Reader's Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse*. U of Chicago P, 1992.

LaMonaca, Maria. "Jane's Crown of Thorns: Feminism and Christianity in *Jane Eyre*." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2002, pp. 245-263.

Lane, Christopher J. *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty*. Yale UP, 2011.

Lanser, Susan Sniader. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*. Cornell UP, 1992.

LaPorte, Charles. “Victorian Literature, Religion, and Secularization.” *Literature Compass*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2013, pp. 277-287.

Larsen, Timothy. “Biblical and Theological Literacy and Victorian Studies Today.” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 4, pp. 395-410.

---. *George MacDonald in the Age of Miracles*. InterVarsity Press, 2018.

---. *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians*. Oxford UP, 2012.

“The Last New Novel.” *The Mirror Monthly Magazine*, no. 17, 1847, pp. 376-380.

Lecourt, Sebastian. *Cultivating Belief: Victorian Anthropology, Liberal Aesthetics, and the Secular Imagination*. Oxford UP, 2018.

Lemon, Mark. “George MacDonald.” *Once a Week*, vol. 10, no. 253, London: 1872, pp. 385-386.

Lenard, Mary. *Preaching Pity: Dickens, Gaskell, and Sentimentalism in Victorian Culture*. Peter Lang, 1999.

Levine, Caroline. “Victorian Realism.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, edited by Deirdre David, 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 84-106.

Levine, George. *Realism, Ethics and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science*. Cambridge UP, 2008.

Levine, George, and Nancy Henry. “George Eliot and the Art of Realism.” *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, 2nd edition, Cambridge UP, 2019, pp. 1-20.

Lewis, R.W.B. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. U of Chicago P, 1955.

"The Literary Examiner." *The Examiner*, no. 2078, 1847, pp. 756-757.

Lowell, James Russell. "*The Marble Faun*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne." *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1860, pp. 509-510. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1860/04/the-marble-faun/627746/

Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Translated by Anna Bostock, Merlin, 1978.

Lynch, Deidre Shauna. *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*. U of Chicago P, 1998.

Lysack, Krista. *Chronometres: Devotional Literature, Duration, and Victorian Reading*. Oxford UP, 2019.

MacDonald, George. *Alec Forbes of Howglen*. 1865. Project Gutenberg, 2006. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18810

---. *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood*. Sunrise Books, 1992.

---. "The Imagination: Its Function and Its Culture." 1867. *The Princess and The Goblin and Other Fairy Tales*. Edited by Shelley King and John B. Pierce, Broadview, 2014, pp. 327-356.

---. *George MacDonald in the Pulpit: The 'Spoken' Sermons of George MacDonald*, compiled by J. Joseph Flynn and David Edwards. Johannesen Printing and Publishing, 1996.

---. *Robert Falconer*. Project Gutenberg, 2001. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2561

---. *The Seaboard Parish*. 1868. Project Gutenberg, 2005. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8562

---. *Unspoken Sermons*. Vol 1. London: A. Strahan, 1867.

MacDonald, Greville. *George MacDonald and His Wife*. L. Macveagh, 1924.

Macleod, Donald. "The Significance of the Westminster Confession." *The History of Scottish Theology: Volume II: The Early Enlightenment to the Late Victorian Era*, edited by David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott, Oxford UP, 2019, pp. 1-13.

Male, Roy R. *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*. U of Texas P, 1957.

Manning, Susan. "Introduction." *The Marble Faun*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Oxford UP, 2002, pp. ix-xlii.

---. *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge UP, 1990.

Marsden, George M. "Perry Miller's Rehabilitation of the Puritans: A Critique." *Church History*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1970, pp. 91-105.

---. "The Quest for the Historical Edwards: The Challenge of Biography." *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, edited by David William King and Douglas A. Sweeney, U of South Carolina P, 2003, pp. 3-15.

Marsden, Simon. "'The Earth no Longer a Void': Creation Theology in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë." *Literature and Theology*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2011, pp. 237-251.

---. *Emily Brontë and the Religious Imagination*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

---. "'A Strange Change Approaching': Ontology, Reconciliation, and Eschatology in *Wuthering Heights*." *The Brontës and the Idea of the Human: Science, Ethics, and the Victorian Imagination*, edited by Alexandra Lewis, Cambridge UP, 2019, pp. 189-206.

Martin, Terence. *Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Twayne, 1983.

Mason, Emma. "The Clue to the Brontës?: Methodism and *Wuthering Heights*." *Biblical Religion and the Novel, 1700-2000*, edited by Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 69-78.

---. “Rethinking Religion and Literature.” *Reading the Abrahamic Faiths: Rethinking Religion and Literature*, edited by Emma Mason, Bloomsbury, 2016, pp. 3-16.

Matheson, Ann. “Preaching in the Churches of Scotland.” *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901*, edited by Keith A. Francis et al, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 152-168.

Matthiessen, F.O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. Oxford UP, 1964.

Maurice, F.D. *The Kingdom of Christ*. 3rd ed., London: MacMillan, 1883.

May, Henry F. “Introduction.” *Oldtown Folks*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Belknap Press, 1966, pp. 3-43.

Mazurek, Monika. *The Unknown Relatives: The Catholic as the Other in the Victorian Novel*. Taylor & Francis, 2017.

McAllister, Blake, and Dougherty Trent. “Reforming Reformed Epistemology: A New Take on the *Sensus Divinitatis*.” *Religious Studies*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2019, pp. 537-557.

McCrie, George. *The Religion of Our Literature: Essays Upon Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, Etc., Including Criticisms Upon the Theology of George Eliot, George MacDonald, and Robertson of Brighton*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875.

McFarland, Ian A. “Synergism.” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Ian A. McFarland et al, Cambridge UP, 2011, p. 490.

McKelvy, William R. *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers, 1774-1880*. U of Virginia P, 2007.

McNutt, Jennifer Powell. “Reformed Preaching in the Age of Enlightenment: A Comparison of Jonathan Erskine’s ‘Enlightened Evangelicalism’ with Geneva’s

‘Reasonable Calvinism.’” *Intellectual History Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2016, pp. 371-389.

Melville, Herman. “Hawthorne and his Mosses.” *Herman Melville*. Edited by W.G. Branch, Routledge, 1997, pp. 238-247.

Mencken, H.L. *A Mencken Chrestomathy*. Knopf, 1949.

Menon, Tara. “Keeping Count: Direct Speech in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel.” *Narrative*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2019, pp. 160-181.

Meyer, Neil. “‘One Language in Prayer’: Evangelicalism, Anti-Catholicism, and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *The Minister’s Wooing*.” *New England Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 3, 2012, pp. 468-490.

Michie, Elsie Browning. *Outside the Pale: Cultural Exclusion, Gender Difference, and the Victorian Woman Writer*. Cornell UP, 1993.

Milbank, Alison. “Calvinist and Covenanter Gothic.” *Scottish Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Carol Margaret Davison and Monica Germanà, Edinburgh UP, 2017, pp. 89–101.

---. *God and the Gothic: Religion, Romance and Reality in the English Literary Tradition*. Oxford UP, 2018.

Milbank, John. *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1997.

Minkema, Kenneth P. “A ‘Dordtian Philosphe’: Jonathan Edwards, Calvin, and Reformed Orthodoxy.” *Church History and Religious Culture*, vol. 91, no. 1/2, 2011, pp. 241-253.

Monnet, Agnieszka Soltysik. “The Transatlantic Gothic.” *Handbook of Transatlantic North American Studies*, edited by Julia Straub, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 266-280.

Moore, James Michael. *Crowding Out Evil with Good: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Paradoxical Vision of Sin and Redemption*. 2013. University of Dallas, doctoral dissertation.

Moore, Margaret B. *The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. U of Missouri P, 1998.

Newman, John Henry. *Apologia Pro Vita Sua: Being a History of His Religious Opinions*. London: Longmans, Green, 1890.

---. *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert*. London: James Burns, 1848.

Newton, Russell. "Pulpit Polemics and 'Damnable Doctrine' in Early Modern Scotland." *Early Modern Scotland, Reformation & Renaissance Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2020, pp. 180-200.

Ni, Zhange. "Postsecular Reading." *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Susan M. Felch, Cambridge UP, 2016, pp. 51-68.

Noble, Marianne. "The Courage to Speak and Hear the Truth: Sympathy and Genuine Human Contact in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*." *New England Quarterly*, no. 81, vol. 4, 2008, pp. 676-702.

---. *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature*. Princeton UP, 2000.

---. *Rethinking Sympathy and Human Contact in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Hawthorne, Douglass, Stowe, Dickinson*. Cambridge UP, 2019.

Noll, Mark. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford UP, 2002.

O'Harae, Alison. "Theology, Genre and Romance in Richard Baxter and Harriet Beecher Stowe." *Religion and Literature*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2005, pp. 69-91.

Orsi, Robert A. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton UP, 2005.

Owen, John. “Of Communion with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.” *Christian Ethereal Library*, n.d.

Parrington, Vernon. *Main Currents in American Thought* 3 vols. Harcourt, Brace, 1927.

Pearson, Sara L. “Charlotte Brontë (1816-55): An Anglican Imagination.” *Anglican Women Novelists: Charlotte Brontë to P.D. James*, edited by Judith Maltby and Alison Shell, T&T Clark, 2019, pp. 14-27.

Pecora, Vincent P. “The Function of Criticism in a ‘Post-secular’ Age.” *Reframing Critical, Literary, and Cultural Theories: Thought on the Edge*, edited by Nicoletta Pireddu, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 183-209.

Pelletier, Kevin. *Apocalyptic Sentimentalism: Love and Fear in U.S. Antebellum Literature*. U of Georgia P, 2015.

Pelletier, Kevin, et al. “The Last Cleric: Ann Douglas, Intellectual Authority, and the Legacy of *Feminization*.” *J19*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2019, pp. 185-208.

Pennington, Heidi L. *Creating Identity in the Victorian Fictional Autobiography*. U of Missouri P, 2018.

Perkin, J. Russell. *Theology and the Victorian Novel*. McGill-Queen’s UP, 2009.

Peschier, Diana. *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses: The Case of Charlotte Brontë*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Phillips, Michael. *George MacDonald and the Atonement: Miracle or Example: A New Covenantal Perspective*. Sunrise Books, 2013.

Plantinga, Alvin. *Knowledge and Christian Belief*. Eerdmans, 2015.

---. *The Nature of Necessity*. Clarendon Press, 1974.

---. “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa.’” *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, edited by P. van Inwagen, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, pp. 1-25.

Plasger, Georg. "Does Calvin Teach a *Sensus Divinitatis*? Reflections on Alvin Plantinga's Interpretation of Calvin." *Plantinga's* Warranted Christian Belief*: Critical Essays with a Reply by Alvin Plantinga*, edited by Dieter Schönecker. Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 169-190.

Plourde, Aubrey. "George MacDonald's Doors: Suspended Telos and the Child Believer." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2021, pp. 231-258.

Pond, Kristen. "Becoming a Stranger to Oneself: Estrangement and Narrative Voice in *Jane Eyre*." *Brontë Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2016, pp. 205-215.

Porte, Joel. "In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction." *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism*, edited by G.R. Thompson, Washington State UP, 1974, pp. 42-64.

Prickett, Stephen. "From Novel to Bible: The Aestheticizing of Scripture." *Biblical Religion and the Novel, 1700-2000*, edited by Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 13-23.

---. *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church*. Cambridge UP, 1976.

Pridmore, John. "George MacDonald's Estimate of Childhood." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2007, pp. 61-74.

Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: The Gothic Tradition*. Volume 1. Routledge, 1996.

Qualls, Barry. *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The Novel as Book of Life*. Cambridge UP, 1982.

Raeper, William. *George MacDonald*. Lion Publishing, 1987.

Reis, Richard H. *George MacDonald's Fiction: A Twentieth-Century View*. Sunrise Books, revised edition, 1989.

Reynolds, David S. *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America*. Harvard UP, 1981.

Richards, I.A. *The Principles of Literary Criticism*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924.

Rigby, Elizabeth. "ART. V. –1. Vanity Fair; a Novel Without a Hero." *Quarterly Review*, vol. 84, no. 167, 1848, pp. 153-185.

Robb, David S. *God's Fiction: Symbolism and Allegory in the Works of George MacDonald*. Sunrise Books, 1987.

---. "Realism and Fantasy in the Fiction of George MacDonald." *The History of Scottish Literature: Volume III: Nineteenth Century*, edited by Douglas Gifford, Aberdeen UP, 1988, pp. 275-290.

---. "George MacDonald's Scottish Novels: Three Notes." *Notes and Queries*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1986, pp. 174-177.

Roberts, Siân Silyn. "A Transnational Perspective on American Gothic Criticism." *Transnational Gothic: Literary and Social Exchanges in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Monika Elbert and Bridget M. Marshall, Ashgate, 2013, pp. 19-33.

Robinson, Marilynne. *The Death of Adam*. Picador, 1998.

Rosenthal, Jesse. *Good Form: The Ethical Experience of the Victorian Novel*. Princeton UP, 2019.

Sadler, Glenn Edward, editor. *An Expression of Character: The Letters of George MacDonald*. William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

Sage, Victor. *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*. Macmillan, 1988.

Sands, Kathleen. "Tragedy, Theology, and Feminism in the Time After Time." *Rethinking Tragedy*, edited by Rita Felski, John Hopkins UP, 2008, pp. 82-103.

Schiller, Emily. “The Choice of Innocence: Hilda in *The Marble Faun*.” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1994, pp. 372-391.

Schramm, Jan-Melissa. *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

---. “The Bible and the Realist Novel.” *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, edited by Mark Knight, Routledge, 2016, pp. 263-273.

Schuyler, David. “Inventing a Feminine Past.” *New England Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 3, 1978, pp. 291-308.

Searle, Alison. “An Idolatrous Imagination? Biblical Theology and Romanticism in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.” *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2006, pp. 35-61.

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *A New-England Tale*. Penguin, 2003.

Seidel, Kevin. “Beyond the Religious and the Secular in the History of the Novel.” *New Literary History*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2007, pp. 637-647.

Shaw, Ian J. *High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City – Manchester and London, c. 1810-1860*. Oxford UP, 2003.

Shurr, William H. *Rappaccini’s Children: American Writers in a Calvinist World*. UP of Kentucky, 1981.

Smith, James K.A. “Making the Truth: Fiction as Theology in Marilynne Robinson’s *Jack*.” *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2022, pp. 244-256.

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon. “Christ – Our Substitute.” *The Complete Works of C.H. Spurgeon, Volume 6: Sermons 286-347*. Delmarva, 2015.

---. “Particular Redemption.” 1858, Chapel Library, 2014. http://www.chapellibrary.org/book/pred/particular-redemption

Stabler, Jane. “Jane Austen and Caricature.” *Nineteenth Century Studies*, vol. 21, 2007, pp. 1-18.

Steinmetz, David C. “The Theology of John Calvin.” *Reformation Theology*, edited by David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz, Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 113-129.

Stern, Milton R. *Contexts for Hawthorne:* The Marble Faun *and the Politics of Openness and Closure in American Literature*. U of Illinois P, 1991.

Sternlieb, Lisa. “*Jane Eyre*: ‘Hazarding Confidences.’” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1999, pp. 452-479.

Stoddard, Elizabeth. *The Morgesons*. Edited by Lawrence Buell and Sandra A. Zagarell, U of Pennsylvania P, 1984.

Stokes, Claudia. *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2014.

Stoll, Mark. *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism.* Oxford UP, 2015.

Stowe, Charles Edward. *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe: Compiled from her Letters and Journals*. Boston and New York, Houghton-Mifflin, 1911.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *The Minister's Wooing*. Ridgewood: Gregg Press, 1968.

---. “New England Ministers.” *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, vol. 14. AMS Press, 1967.

---. *Old-Town Folks*. Belknap Press, 1966.

Stump, Eleonore. *The Image of God: The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Mourning*. Oxford UP, 2022.

---. *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*. Oxford UP, 2010.

Styler, Rebecca. *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

---. *The Maternal Image of God in Victorian Literature*. Routledge, 2023.

Svaglic, Martin J. "Religion in the Novels of George Eliot." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 53, no. 2, 1954, pp. 145-159.

Swann, Charles. *Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Cambridge UP, 1991.

Sweeney, Douglas A. "'Falling Away from the General Faith of the Reformation?' The Contest over Calvinism in Nineteenth-Century America." *John Calvin's American Legacy*, edited by Thomas J. Davis, Oxford UP, 2010, pp. 111-146.

Talbott, Thomas. "The Just Mercy of God: Universal Salvation in George MacDonald (1824-1905)." *All Shall Be Well: Explorations in Universal Salvation and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann*, edited by Gregory MacDonald, James Clarke Company, 2011, pp. 219-246.

Tang, Edward. "Making Declarations of her Own: Harriet Beecher Stowe as New England Historian." *New England Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1998, pp. 77-96.

Tate, Andrew. "The Novel." *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*. Edited by Joel D.S. Rasmussen et al, Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 413-423.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Belknap Press, 2007.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Selected Letters of William Makepeace Thackeray*. Edited by Edgar F. Harden, Macmillan Press, 1996.

"Theology and Morality of *The Minister's Wooing*." *The Independent*. 9 February 1860, pp. 4.

Thormählen, Marianne. *The Brontës and Religion*. Cambridge UP, 1999.

Thorpe, Douglas. “Calvin, Darwin, and the Double: The Problem of Divided Nature in Hogg, MacDonald, and Stevenson.” *Newsletter of the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1985, pp. 6-22.

Thuesen, Peter J. “Geneva’s Crystalline Clarity: Harriet Beecher Stowe and Max Weber on Calvinism and the American Character.” *John Calvin’s American Legacy*, edited by Thomas J. Davis, Oxford UP, 2010, pp. 219-237.

Tompkins, J. M. S. “Jane Eyre’s ‘Iron Shroud.’” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1927, pp. 195–97.

Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. Oxford UP, 1985.

Toon, Peter. *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity, 1689-1765*. Burlington Press, 1967.

Trollope, Anthony. *Linda Tressel*. Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1868.

Underland, Susanna Compton. “Sentimentalism and Secularism in *Pierre*.” *Leviathan*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2019, pp. 59-78.

van Asselt, Willem J. “Calvinism as a Problematic Concept in Historiography.” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 74, no. 2, 2013, pp. 144-150.

Van Engen, Abram. *Sympathetic Puritans: Calvinist Fellow Feeling in Early New England*. Oxford UP, 2014.

---.“Three Questions for American Literature and Religion.” *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2017, pp. 214-220.

Van Woudenberg, René. “A Brief History of Theodicy.” *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, edited by Justin P. McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, John Wiley and Sons, 2013, pp. 171-191.

Vance, Norman. *Bible and Novel: Narrative Authority and the Death of God*. Oxford UP, 2013.

Vance, William L. *America's Rome*. 2 vols. Yale UP, 1989.

Vernon, Amana Blair. *Reading with the Trinity: Theology and Literary Form in George MacDonald.* 2021. Lancaster University, PhD dissertation.

Waggoner, Hyatt. *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*. Belknap Press, 1955.

---. *The Presence of Hawthorne*. Louisiana State UP, 1979.

Wagner, Tamara S. "The Victorian Sermon Novel: Domesticated Spirituality and the Sermon's Sensationalization." *A New History of the Sermon: The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Robert H. Ellison, Brill, 2010, pp. 309-338.

Walrath, Douglas. *Displacing the Divine: The Minister in the Mirror of American Fiction*. Columbia UP, 2010.

Waples, Dorothy. "Suggestions for Interpreting *The Marble Faun*." *American Literature*, vol. 13, no. 3, 941, pp. 224-239.

Warner, Michael. "Secularism" *Keywords in American Cultural Studies*, edited by Glenn Hendler and Bruce Burgett, New York UP, 2007, pp. 209-213.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. U of California P, 1957.

Watts, Michael R. *The Dissenters Volume III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*. Oxford UP, 2015.

Weiler, Andrew J. "An Orphan's Dissent: Charlotte Brontë's Spiritual Vision in *Jane Eyre*." *Brontë Studies*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2022, pp. 223-236.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. "Introduction: The American Gothic." *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*, edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, Cambridge UP, 2017, pp. 1-14.

Weldon, Roberta. *Hawthorne, Gender, and Death: Christianity and Its Discontents*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Werner, Winter Jade. *Missionary Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*. Ohio State UP, 2020.

Westbrook, Perry D. *Free Will and Determinism in American Literature*. Associated UP, 1979.

Wilkes, Kristin. "Repairing the Ladder to Heaven: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing* as a Secular Novel." *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2018, pp. 436-453.

Williams, Judith. *Perception and Expression in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*. UMI Research Press, 1988.

Williams, Rowan. *The Tragic Imagination*. Oxford UP, 2016.

Wilson, Christopher P. "Tempests and Teapots: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The Minister's Wooing*." *New England Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1985, pp. 554–77.

Wilson, Edmund. *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War*. Oxford UP, 1962.

Wilson, Samuel Law. *The Theology of Modern Literature*. Edinburgh, 1899. *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/theologyofmodern00wilsrich/page/284/mode/2up.

Wineapple, Brenda. *Hawthorne: A Life*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Winnifrith, Tom. *The Brontës*. Macmillan, 1977.

---. *A New Life of Charlotte Brontë.* Macmillan, 1988.

Woloch, Alex. *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*. Princeton UP, 2003.

Wonham, Henry B. *Playing the Races: Ethnic Caricature and American Literary Realism*. Oxford UP, 2004.

Woodhead, Linda. "Introduction." *Reinventing Christianity: Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, edited by Linda Woodhead, Routledge, 2019, pp. 1-21.

Wright, Terry R. "The Victorians." *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, edited by Andrew Hass et al, Oxford UP, 2009, pp. 148-63.