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Obeying God Rather than Men: Protestant Individualism and the Empowerment of Victorian Women

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ABSTRACT

Obeying God Rather than Men: Protestant Individualism and the Empowerment of Victorian Women

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This dissertation looks at Protestant individualism and the degree to which it was potentially empowering to Victorian women. By Protestant individualism, I mean a way of thinking about and speaking about the self that arises from and is closely associated with Protestant theology. As I argue, this newfound emphasis on Protestant individualism placed Victorian women in a promising position. Unlike philosophy and political theory, which have traditionally based a person’s claim to be an individual on his or her reason—something that women have often been believed to lack, Protestantism has generally made a person’s individual status the product of a far more universal condition: each person’s ultimate accountability to God. People are all primarily individuals, Protestant individualism asserts, because each of them—whether male or female—must stand individually before God on Judgment Day. Since Western political thought has generally predicated a person’s claim to rights on his status as an individual, Victorian women’s improved claims to individual status gave them, in turn, improved cases for arguing for their personal and political rights. Included among these rights would have been their right to consent (to marriage, sex, etc.) and their right to follow their own consciences (in moral, religious, and political matters).
The first two chapters of this dissertation focus on Protestant individualism as it appears in Evangelical Anglican and Broad Church Anglican religious writings, chapter one examining the individualistic and anti-individualistic currents within such theological texts and chapter two exploring the degree to which such works make Protestant available to women. Chapters three and four turn to Victorian women novelists Charlotte Brontë and Mary Augusta Ward and how their novels dramatize the promises and perils of female Protestant individualism. Brontë, who, as I argue, depicts a fairly religiously orthodox Protestant individualism, presents such orthodox Protestant individualism as generally available and empowering to women. In contrast, Ward, who portrays a much less orthodox Protestant individualism, presents such heterodox Protestant individualism as difficult, if not impossible, for women to realize.
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Introduction

“If the great and wise must answer before God for their opinions, we, however stupid and ignorant, must equally answer for ours” (“The First Step Towards Puseyism.” The Christian Lady’s Magazine, 1843)

“It is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal as we are!” (Charlotte Brontë. Jane Eyre, 1847).

Appearing in very different publications, the fairly conservative Evangelical periodical, The Christian Lady’s Magazine and Charlotte Brontë’s openly proto-feminist novel Jane Eyre, the two quotes listed above unsurprisingly read quite differently. Addressing its predominately female readership, The Lady’s Christian Magazine presents its readers as, at least potentially, “ignorant and stupid” (141); writing of its heroine, Jane Eyre imagines her as transcending all fleshly limitations and moving into the realm of pure spirit. Beneath such differences in tone, striking parallels, however, exist between these two passages. Both Brontë and The Christian Lady’s Magazine contributor offer powerful statements of women’s fundamental spiritual equality with men. Moreover, both writers base these claims for spiritual equality upon the same criterion: each and every person’s individual accountability to God.
Despite the very different nature of the two publications, such parallels between 
Jane Eyre and The Lady's Christian Magazine are hardly surprising; as this dissertation 
will show, such statements regarding spiritual equality, divine accountability, and the 
intimate linking of the two abound in Victorian texts. This sense that individual 
accountability conferred certain individual rights formed the fundamental basis of 
Victorian Protestant individualism, the phenomenon that I will be looking at in this 
dissertation. By Protestant individualism, I mean a way of thinking about and speaking 
about the self that emphasizes how each person is first and foremost an individual before 
God. Of course, the idea that all people are individuals before God is not an exclusively 
Protestant doctrine. I am still, however, labeling such teachings "Protestant" for at least 
three reasons. First, such ideas about individual judgment and its resulting privileges 
appear with particular frequency in Victorian Protestant writings. Secondly, as should 
become clearer as this dissertation progresses, Victorian Protestants tended to regard such 
a focus on God's judgment and its accompanying privileges as distinctly Protestant. 
Thirdly, as this dissertation will also explore at length, Victorian Protestant fears of the 
advance of Catholicism and how it might threaten such individual liberties led Victorian 
Protestants to become unprecedently adamantly about this and other individualistic 
aspects of their faith.

The focus of this dissertation is not just Victorian Protestant individualism, 
though, but the degree to which such Protestant individualism could be available to and 
empowering to Victorian women. At the heart of this project is my conviction that it is of 
paramount importance to women that they be able to act as independent beings and have 
such actions respected. By acting as independent beings, I do not mean that women, past
or present, must, or even should, see themselves as radically disconnected from the world around them, but rather that women should be regarded as ends in themselves—as individuals and not just wives, mothers, daughters, or community members.

The attainment of such “individual” status gains greater urgency when considering the degree to which women have been historically treated as less than complete individuals. Carole Pateman makes this claim at great length in her 1988 book *The Sexual Contract*. As Pateman argues, liberal democratic individualism, the individualism underlying most Western ideas of justice and rights, has historically excluded women from full “individual” status. As Pateman writes, “Women [have] not been incorporated [into civil society] as “individuals but as women,” (181). What Pateman means by this is that women have been treated as subordinate beings who primarily exist in the “natural” state of the domestic sphere; the “free and equal” individuals who interact with each other in the public sphere are, as liberal democratic theory treats them, necessarily male (52). In short, the social contract of liberal democratic theory, Pateman maintains, is predicated upon an underlying “sexual contract,” the subordination of women and their exclusion from independent individual status. As Carole Pateman has pointed out, such an exclusion of women from individual status is expressed perhaps most clearly through the legal principle of coverture, the assertion that a married woman ceases to be a legal entity in herself but instead becomes a part of her husband (*Sexual Contract* 90-100). This principle of coverture was, of course, used in England to justify married women’s exclusion from owning property and to keep them from initiating their own court proceedings or entering into their own contracts (*Perkin* 13-15). Notably, such policies continued well into the Victorian period,
the focus of this dissertation. Englishwomen had to wait until 1882, in fact, to obtain a full legal claim to marital property (305-306). The connection between the doctrine of coverture and such political inequities points to a major reason why women’s historical exclusion from “individual” status has been such a grave matter: “individual” status is the precondition on which liberal democratic theory builds a person’s claims to rights, such as the right to consent. If a person does not qualify as a full “free and independent” individual, then that person does not hold a full claim to basic rights (Pateman. “Women and Consent” 71-72).

Women’s problematic relationship to full individuality extends, though, far beyond the realms of political theory and law. Traditional femininity has made it historically difficult for women themselves to act as full individuals. As Mary Wollstonecraft decried, women of her day were encouraged above all else to make sure that they were “pleasing” to men” (104). Similar injunctions appear throughout Victorian writings. Conduct book writer Sarah Stickney Ellis insists, for example, that women have a “duty to be agreeable” (Women of England 44) and that they should “seek [their] own happiness only in the happiness of others” (29). In other words, as Ellis insists, women “are . . . from their own constitution and from the station that they occupy in the world, strictly speaking, relative creatures (48). Victorian notions of proper femininity and how it should be other focused largely continue the same people-pleasing theme that Wollstonecraft associated with her time with the one main change that they give such other-pleasing a more moralistic valence: Rather than merely make other people happy,

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1 As Joan Perkin explains, married women were actually granted greater and greater control over their property through a series of successive acts. The first was passed in 1870, the second in 1873, and the final one, the one that granted women equal rights of property ownership, was passed in 1882 (305-306).
Victorian women are encouraged to care for them and inspire them to moral and spiritual improvement. As Ellis insists, "mak[ing] others happy" will help "win them over to a full perception of the loveliness of Christian virtues" (62).²

As numerous late twentieth and early twenty-first century feminist scholars have pointed out, women today still continue to grapple with models of proper femininity that encourage them to put other people’s needs and desires above their own. Carol Gilligan is perhaps the most well-known scholar who has discussed such other-focused femininity and its perils. Although Gilligan’s famous In a Different Voice is, of course, devoted to identifying and celebrating women’s distinctive ethic of care, the book notably begins with a clear articulation of the particular challenges that feminine norms tend to pose for women. Gilligan writes:

Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus males tend to have difficulties with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation. (8).

Reared to value connectedness above all, women, Gilligan argues, typically have trouble individuating themselves from the people around them.

Of particular relevance to this study, which of course focuses on women and religion, feminist theologians have also devoted considerable attention to discussing the

² Although I have relied exclusively on Ellis here, similar statements recur in many Victorian writings. See, for example, John Ruskin’s “Of Queen’s Gardens” 124, 133, 138. As I will discuss further in chapter two, Broad Church writers, such as F.D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley, also tend to exalt women’s qualities of sacrificing themselves and of positively influencing others.
precariousness of women’s independent selfhood. Most commonly, feminist theological arguments about women’s problematic subjectivity take one of two forms. First, feminist theologians frequently argue that traditional notions of sin, which understand it as an inflated focus on self, are potentially dangerous for women, who are typically reared to be self-abnegating. Serene Jones, one of these later critics of the application of a sin-as-self-will model to women, has expressed women’s tenuous claim to selfhood quite poignantly. Jones writes,

Woman suffers from an illness different from Luther’s classical sinner. Her sin is not one of overly rigid self-containment: her brokenness lies in her lack of containment. . .the source of her alienation from God is her lack of self-development. . .[A woman’s] lack of self is her prison. (62-63).  

Feminist critiques of agape, the Christian ideal of selfless love, have also focused on women’s already shaky claim to independent selfhood. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen has articulated particularly clearly why agape is dangerous for women. “Women, Andolsen writes, “are often prone to destructive self-abnegation. Many women live for others to a damaging degree. Largely focused upon others, such women are unable to establish a healthy self-definition” (74). Already excessively focused on others, women do not need to have Christian teaching put additional emphasis on the selflessness of love.  

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4 For additional critique of agape and its potential effects on women, see Mary Daly. Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973; Daphne Hampson. “On
Despite such interest in cultivating some sort of independent selfhood for women, feminist scholars have shown a general aversion to the term “individualism.” In one of the most dramatic examples, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has written a book-length critique of what she sees as the excesses of individualism within liberal feminism. More commonly, though, feminist scholars critique individualism in passing. Political theorist Iris Marion Young, for example, states it as almost a self-evident truism that we “must maintain a view outside of liberal individualism” (718). In a similar vein, religious scholar Dorothy C. Bass stops a discussion of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to decry “our culture of rampant individualism” (6). Daphne Hampson’s passing lambasting of individualism is particularly notable. Hampson interestingly critiques individualism on the very same page where she has written, “Women are not typically self-enclosed and in need of finding connectedness. The problem has rather been a lack of centredness in self; their need to come to themselves” (221). In other words, Hampson critiques individualism with almost the same breath that she announces women’s need for a more individuated sense of self.

Hampson’s odd juxtaposition of calls to individuation and condemnations of individualism points to something potentially problematic about the common feminist practice of condemning individualism. In dismissing what they call “individualism,” feminist scholars run the risk of undermining their key claims regarding the urgency of

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5 Another example of a sustained feminist attack on individualism is Nancy Armstrong’s *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1800*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.
women's individuated self-hood. Feminist scholars, such as Hampson, who make such claims, would probably not see them as contradictory. In critiquing individualism, such scholars most likely have extreme atomistic individualism in mind, a Robinson Crusoe-like disconnection from the world. Developing an individuated sense of self does not, of course, demand such radical separation from others. Still, condemning individualism outright strikes me as precarious. The individuation/individualism distinction may be easy for scholars, who are accustomed to the fine distinctions of meaning often made in academic discourse, to keep clear, but my concern is for all the other women of the world—young women in the classes of feminist scholars, students who may come across feminist condemnations of individualism when researching for a paper, women who may hear condemnations of individualism from the pulpit. By unilaterally decrying "individualism," feminists, I believe, risk making it even more difficult for the women who need to do so most to come to a sense of individual self-hood.

It is largely for this reason that this dissertation intentionally recuperates the term "individualism." In using the term "Protestant individualism," I additionally hope to garner two more benefits. First, I hope to encourage a rethinking of common academic conceptions of Protestant individualism. Perhaps because of Max Weber's famous study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, scholars have typically associated Protestant individualism with an asocial fixation on one's individual soul which, as Weber argues, led to the emergence of capitalism. In his books *The Rise of the Novel* and *Myths of Modern Individualism*, Ian Watt has similarly associated Protestant individualism with atomistic, asocial disconnection from others. Watt has done this most powerfully perhaps by setting up *Robinson Crusoe* as the literary exemplar of Protestant
individualism (*The Rise of the Novel* 85, *Myths of Modern Individualism* 165). Other literary texts could, just as easily, however, stand in for Protestant individualism and, in doing so, present it in a different light, one that is less easy to immediately and unilaterally condemn. Scholars could, for example, turn to *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Focusing on Christian’s individual spiritual journey to make his way to heaven and depicting Christian as leaving his family behind to go on this journey, *Pilgrim’s Progress* certainly shows a powerful sense of Protestant individualism. Christian, though, notably makes numerous friends along his journey and both gives and receives spiritual help. In the second part one *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bunyan only heightens this sense of Christian community by having a whole band of Christians travel beside each other the entire way as they make their journey to save their individual souls. A conception of Protestant individualism that took *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as its model would look very different from Watt’s model. *Jane Eyre*, one of the novels that I will be looking at in this dissertation, could also potentially be held up as an exemplar of Protestant individualism. As in the case of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Jane Eyre* endorses a concept of Protestant individualism that is far from atomistic. *Jane Eyre*, as I will argue in my third chapter, has its heroine repeatedly use her ultimate responsibility to God as a rationale for asserting herself as an individual, but this does not keep her from falling in love with Rochester or developing close ties with other people, such as Helen Burns, Miss Temple, and her cousins Diana and Mary.

My reference to *Jane Eyre* points to another key advantage I see in recuperating the term Protestant individualism. Protestant individualism, as I am using it in this study, opens up a new way of talking about the power Victorian women may have garnered
from contemporary religion. Victorian religion’s potential empowerment of women is a subject that has received incredible scholarly attention in recent decades. Such studies have typically centered around two main understandings of how religion could be empowering to Victorian women: 1) on how religion allowed Victorian women to cross into the public sphere in ways that they otherwise would have been unable to or 2) at how it would have opened up new possibilities for women’s professionalization. Frank Prochaska and Sean Gill’s studies of women and philanthropy and Barbara Caine’s and Katherine Gleadle’s studies of the connection between religion and the rise of the early feminist movement fall into this first category of texts that understand Victorian women’s empowerment in terms of their crossing into the public sphere. Olive Anderson’s study of Victorian women preachers, Susan Thorne and T.O. Beidelman’s investigations of Victorian women’s mission work, and Christine Krueger’s study of women writers and their indebtedness to the tradition of the female preaching tradition fall under the second group of texts: those that understand women’s religious empowerment in terms of the opening of new opportunities for professionalism.7

As significant and far reaching as such texts are, their associations of female empowerment with the public sphere and professionalism make it difficult, though, to discuss female religious power that might have never crossed outside of the domestic or ventured into the professional realm. The limitations of the predominant existing understandings of Victorian women’s empowerment became particularly clear to me when reading Christine Krueger’s chapter on Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna in The Reader’s

7 For an excellent, thorough account of the many studies that have been published in recent years on Victorian women and religion, see Frederick S. Roden. “Gender and Religion in Recent Victorian Studies Publications.” Victorian Literature and Culture (2003): 393-403.
**Repentance.** In this chapter, Krueger powerfully explains how Tonna’s sense of a calling to preach gave her the strength and confidence to serve as long-time editor to *The Christian Lady’s Magazine.* Working from a model that understands empowerment in terms of professionalization, Krueger stops short, however, of exploring how *The Christian Lady’s Magazine* may have also proved empowering to its readers, middle-to-upper class women who would, for the most part, have been confined to their homes.

Tonna, as I will discuss further in my second chapter, advances a religious rhetoric that not only empowers her, allowing her to assume her public role; but also extends power and authority to her female readership, most of whom would have spent most of their lives within the domestic sphere. This capacity to extend the discussions of women’s religious power to areas that have largely been unexplored is one of the main advantages I see of my focus of Protestant individualism and, more specifically, of my understanding of Protestant individualism as a way of thinking about and talking about the self.

Conceiving of power in terms of rhetoric rather than location, Protestant individualism, as I understand it, can take feminist inquiry seamlessly across the boundaries between the public and private spheres.

As my references to *Pilgrim’s Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe* have shown, Protestant individualism was and is, of course, much more than a Victorian phenomenon. As its name suggests, “Protestant individualism” goes back at least to the Reformation. It may, as political scientist Barry Shain has recently argued, date back even further to the scholasticism of the late middle ages.⁸ Still, the Victorian period is a particularly fruitful

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⁸ Barry Shain has recently argued that Protestant individualism actually goes back to the thought of late medieval scholastics within the Roman Catholic Church. As Shain stresses, in fact, sixteenth-century
period during which to study Protestant individualism. Although far from absolute or uncontested, individualism was powerful force in the Victorian period.

Individualism figured prominently, for example, in Victorian economics. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, Ron Harris argues, Britain “had been transformed into a laissez-faire state” (206). Harris cautions, though, that even during the early-to-mid Victorian period, Britain’s laissez-faire policy was not absolute. The early-to-mid Victorian state, Harris argues, followed laissez-faire policies in that it allowed free trade, made the Poor Laws more stringent, and left manufacturing almost entirely unregulated, but during these same years the state deviated from pure laissez-faire in that it regulated utilities and infrastructure items, such as the water supply and railroad (213-214).

Moving to the later part of the Victorian period, George Boyer argues that these years saw the Victorian government become increasingly willing to intervene in many economic affairs, especially those that impacted public health, housing, or workers. Even as the Victorian state seemed to be moving farther from laissez-faire, it notably, Boyer notes, made the Poor Laws more stringent during the 1870s (308). Thus, although never absolutely committed to laissez-faire, the Victorians remained fairly economically individualistic throughout the Victorian period.

As well as through laissez-faire state policies, the Victorian period was individualistic in that it saw the publication of several classic individualistic texts, all of which were notably published in 1859. One such text was John Stuart Mill’s On Liberty, which argues that society (and not just the state) should interfere with the liberty of

Roman Catholics, such as Erasmus and Suarez, held views closer to what we think of as “Protestant individualism” than did their contemporaries Luther and Calvin.
individuals as little as possible. In Mill’s words, “In the part which merely concerns himself, [the individual’s] independence is, of right absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign” (11). That same year also saw the publication of Samuel Smiles’ self-help, the first “self-help” book. Recounting the tales of how various prominent artists, businessmen, and inventors have raised themselves up through sheer hard work, Smiles calls all Englishmen to provide themselves with similar “self-help.” Darwin’s On the Origin of Species was also published in 1859. Although lacking the overtly individualistic social message of On Liberty and Self-Help, Darwin’s book was individualistic in the sense that it advanced a theory of “survival of the fittest,” which pitted individuals against one another in a constant struggle to survive and reproduce. Darwin showed little interest into turning his scientific theory into social theory, but later Victorians, most notably, Herbert Spencer would soon come in and transform Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” into individualistic economic policies now know as “Social Darwinism.”

The Victorian period was also a time when religious individualism was strong. Part of this power of religious individualism had to do with religion’s prominence in the Victorian period. In Josef Altholz’s words, “the most important thing to remember about religion in Victorian England is that there was an awful lot of it.” This “awful lot” of Victorian religion comes across particularly clearly through Patrick Scott’s study of the sheer quantity of Victorian religious publications. Religious publications, Scott concluded, reached an all-time high between the years of 1836 and 1863. During that

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period, 33.5% of the books published annually were religious in nature (224). As Elisabeth Jay has cautioned, many of these religious texts may have been bought as gifts and then never read, but still, she herself, calls these statistics “remarkable” (8).

The Victorian period was not merely a time when religion was prominent but when some particularly individualistic forms of religion were popular. The individualism of one group of Victorian Christians, the Dissenters, has already received considerable scholarly attention. Although Victorian Dissent has often been associated with individualism, such individualism received a new degree of attention in the wake of Richard Helmstadter’s 1979 article “The Nonconformist Conscience.” In this article, Helmstadter turned traditional associations between Victorian Dissent and individualism into a forty page argument: The 1830s to mid-1880s were a time of unprecedented individualism amongst English Nonconformists, Helmstadter maintained, and such individualism was integral, Helmstadter argued, to the numerical and political success that Dissenters enjoyed during this period. The Victorian Dissenters of this period were, as Helmstadter posits, individualistic in almost every possible sense: theologically, socially, politically, and economically, and these various individualisms were mutually reinforcing. According to Helmstadter, the individualism within Dissent began to wane in the 1880s, and, with it, Dissent itself.

Helmstadter’s article has prompted at least two additional, fairly sustained evaluations of the individualism (and limits thereof) within Victorian Nonconformity. The first such answer came from Gerald Parsons in 1988. Although Parsons calls Helmstadter’s argument “constructive and illuminating” (90), Parsons asserts that Helmstadter overstates his case both in terms of the tremendous individualism that he
associates with the mid-Victorian period and the almost complete waning of such individualism during the later Victorian years. Instead, Parsons insists, Victorian Nonconformity always had its individualistic and anti-individualistic sides. A third scholar, David Bebbington, entered the debate regarding Dissent’s individualism and anti-individualism in 1992 with the publication of his book *Victorian Nonconformity*. Over the course of this section, Bebbington largely agrees with Helmstadter’s argument but insists that a few important caveats are necessary. As a starting point, Bebbington explains some particularly anti-individualistic sides of Dissent that he feels that Helmstadter overlooks. Although individualistic in many respects, Victorian Nonconformists’ emphasis on family and on chapel life gave them a strong sense of community. Moreover, rather than absolute defenders of *laissez-faire*, many Dissenters, Bebbington posits, were heavily involved with trade unionism. As a final, important caveat, Bebbington insists that Wesleyan Methodist, the largest single Dissenting group, were less individualistic than “Old Dissenters” and, therefore, should not be included in Helmstadter’s general hypothesis.

The Victorian period was also a time when Anglican Evangelicalism and Broad Church Anglicanism, two other potentially individualistic religious groups, were also strong. Unlike in the case of Victorian Dissent, the individualistic nature of the Evangelical and Broad Church parties has received little scholarly attention, however. Rather than attempting to cover Anglican Evangelical and Broad Church individualism here, I will, therefore, be waiting until my first chapter, which I will devote to providing an overview of the individualistic and anti-individualistic currents within Evangelical Anglican and Broad Church theology. As an important part of this first chapter, I will
also identify the Protestant individualist key terms that figure prominently in these Anglican works.

In my remaining three chapters, I will be turning more specifically to my central question of Victorian women and Protestant individualism. Returning to the same Anglican sermons, theological treatises, and other religious works that I examined in chapter one, chapter two will consider the degree to which these works present Protestant individualism as available to women. In chapters three and four, I will shift my exploration of Victorian Protestant individualism to a new genre: the novel. Although not the most obvious places to look for theological commentary, Victorian novels, especially those by women writers, provide an additional, invaluable perspective on women’s Protestant individualism. Employing the same Protestant individualist rhetoric that appears in the sermons and other religious texts of the day, novelists, I argue, often imagine how such rhetoric might translate into lived action. Chapter three specifically focuses on Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*. In these novels, Brontë, I maintain, paints a picture of what a classic individual-accountability based female Protestant individualism might have looked like, presenting it as reasonably accessible to women, although not totally unproblematic. Chapter four turns to the late Victorian free-thinking novelist and Arnold family member Mary Augusta Ward. Through her novel *Robert Elsemere*, Ward, I argue, depicts unorthodox Protestant individualism in action. Although Ward seems to endorse such liberal Protestant individualism and depicts it as raising her hero Robert Elsemere to tremendous religious power and authority, Ward, I assert, raises disturbing questions concerning the degree to which such unorthodox Protestant individualism was available or, even fully applicable, to women.
Chapter One- Protestant Individualism in Anglican Sermons and Other Religious Writings

Through the extended discussion sparked by Helmstadter’s evocative thesis, Helmstadter, David Bebbington, and others have, in recent years, provided a fairly comprehensive look at the extent and limits of Protestant individualism with Victorian Dissent. This first chapter essentially aims to do the same for Victorian Anglicanism. In this chapter, I will specifically be looking at the two major Anglican parties that were significantly impacted by Protestant individualism: the Evangelical party and the Broad Church party. Like Victorian Dissenters, the Anglican Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen were, in many respects, profoundly individualistic, but as with the Dissenters—perhaps even more so than with the Dissenters—such Anglican Protestant individualism had definite limits.

Although I will be asking many of the same questions of Anglicanism that Helmstadter and his respondents have asked of Dissent, I will be departing dramatically from such religious historians in terms of the attention that I will be giving to rhetoric: to the Protestant individualist key terms and rhetorical strategies that circulate throughout Victorian Evangelical and Broad Church writings. Such close attention to rhetoric is integrally tied to my understanding of Protestant individualism, which as I stated in my introduction, I see first and foremost as a way of thinking and speaking about the self. My rhetorical focus will also prove particularly vital as I move to the second half of this dissertation, where I will be examining novels as opposed to sermons and other more
traditional religious writings. Unlike more traditional religious writings, novels rarely trace theological debates in great detail. They do, however, frequently evoke theological controversies by using terms and rhetorical strategies that Victorians would have closely associated with particular theological debates. In other words, Victorian novels might be said to employ a sort of theological “short hand” that only fully makes sense if one is familiar with the key arguments and favorite rhetorical practices of contemporary sermons and religious writings. Identifying and explaining such theological “short hand” is a major goal of this chapter.

Protestant Individualism and Anglican Evangelicalism

Although no in-depth studies of the individualism and/or anti-individualism of Anglican Evangelical theology have been done, numerous scholars have offered some commentary of sorts concerning the degree to which Anglican Evangelicalism was potentially individualistic. Ian Bradley has pointed out the incredible focus on self-examination and soul-searching that figures prominently within Victorian Evangelicalism. Davidoff and Hall have made a similar observation about Evangelicalism, commenting more explicitly on the power that such self-examination might hold to help create the self. In Davidoff and Hall’s words, “in order to be in check on the state of one’s soul it was necessary to be perpetually vigilant for signs of falling away. Evangelicalism thus encouraged a powerful sense of self, but a self which was transformed and made anew” (88).
The most complete description of Evangelical individualism that I have run across comes from Elisabeth Jay, though. Summing up Evangelicalism’s individualistic leanings, Jay writes, Evangelicalism asserted the unique importance of the individual. Evangelicalism’s emphasis on a personal relationship with God, its rejection of the corporate authority of the Church, and the premium it placed upon the individual’s judgment assured a man of a significance frequently denied him in secular society” (7). Rather than self-examination, Jay focuses on other key individualistic aspects of Evangelicalism, ones that will repeatedly come up in this chapter: the directness of the individualism relationship and communion with God, the relative unimportance of the church in the individual’s journey of salvation, and finally the possibilities of social empowerment that potentially come with such a close, fully accountable relationship to God.

Together, Bradley, Jay, and Davidoff and Hall provide a good basic look at the main individualistic currents within Victorian Evangelical theology. There are a few important aspects to the individualism of Victorian Evangelicalism that need more investigation, however. Drawing upon my own reading of Victorian Evangelical sermons, theological treatises, and other religious texts, the remainder of this chapter section will work to fill in such holes.

Limits to Evangelical Individualism
As insightful as many of the existing comments on Evangelical individualism are, none of them devote much attention to the limits to such individualism. The limitation to Evangelical individualism started with its very premise. Evangelical Protestant individualism was founded, rather paradoxically upon a relationship between the individual Christian and God. The individual Evangelical Christian stood in relation to God in that, as I have already pointed out: 1) he/she was directly accountable to God and 2) that he/she was capable of ascertaining His supreme will (with divine help, of course). The need of divine help points, though, to something else about Evangelicals’ conception of this Christian/God relationship—something particularly discordant with what twenty-first century scholars tend to think of as individualism. As Victorian Evangelicals typically envisioned it, the Christian/God relationship placed individual Christians in total subjection to and reliance upon God. As a starting point, Evangelical audiences were often reminded of their “nothingness” without God, how, in Bishop Walter Shirley’s words, they “are nothing and can do nothing without Him” (159). In keeping with this “nothingness,” Evangelical Christians were urged to humble themselves before God. They were to do so to the point that, as Rev. Henry Melvill puts it, they would “have no will of their own” (96), that God’s will should become their will. In the face of their “nothingness” without God, Victorian Evangelicals were also frequently reminded of the necessity of spending time with their Lord. “Empty” and “desolate” as they are by themselves, Christians, low Church teachers commonly insisted, have a profound emotional need to “commune” with God—in Rev. Hugh Stowell’s words, to come into an ever “deeper and more intimate fellowship” with Him (305).  

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10 The specific quotations in this paragraph are, of course, only selected examples. For other Victorian
such Evangelical discussions of Christians’ “nothingness” sans God, independence from God comes up only as something to be condemned. One such condemnation appears in an 1847 article from The Lady’s Christian Magazine. As the anonymous author of this article warns, the worst possible mistake Christians can make was to “trust [themselves] to [their] own government. . . [to] stand independent alike of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and of the need of the blood of Christ” (“On Forgetfulness of God” 237).

Victorian Evangelicals were also discouraged from remaining overly aloof from other human beings. Evangelical writings of the period frequently express Christians’ interconnectedness with other people. As Evangelical commentators see it, such connection exists first and foremost amongst fellow Christians. One way Evangelical preachers/writers expressed such connectedness amongst believers was through references to the familiar Pauline metaphor of the Church as a body. In keeping with Paul’s teachings, Victorian Evangelicals frequently asserted that Christians are all part of a larger whole—the body of Christ. In some cases, such as that of the Rev. Henry Melvill’s, they also went on to cite the specific Pauline injunction—that “the eye cannot say unto the head I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you” (I Corinthians XII: 21; qtd. Melvill 16). As Melvill points out, this injunction of

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11 For another example of a Victorian Evangelical discussion of the Church as a body, see Shirley 159. For a fuller look at the Bible’s description of the Church as a body, see Romans 12:4-5 and the entirety of I Corinthians 12.
Paul’s specifically asserts Christians’ “mutual dependence,” one upon the other (17).\textsuperscript{12} As well as through their status as “one body,” Evangelical commentators also argue for the connectedness forged through Christians’ common worship of God. Sometimes such connectedness through worship is imagined as some future event that will transpire in heaven,\textsuperscript{13} but, in other cases, it is also presented as something already occurring in the here and now. A February 1847 Christian Lady’s Magazine article, entitled “On the Services of the Church, No. IV;,” expresses the uniting power of worship particularly clearly and vividly. As the article author presents it, the public singing of anthems of praise is an activity that draws all believers into a single chorus—one that unites the individual singer not just with the members of his or her local congregations but with all the Christians, past and present, Anglican or otherwise who have praised or who are now praising God in song (162-163).\textsuperscript{14}

On some occasions at least, Victorian Evangelical writings extend this sense of community beyond the boundaries of the saved. When describing the interconnectedness of all humans—saved or unsaved—Victorian Evangelicals often turn to another metaphor: that of the “family.” As preachers/writers ranging from Patrick Brontë to contributors to The Christian Lady’s Magazine insisted, human beings were/are all members of one family: the “family of earth.” This description of all humans as the “family of earth” suggests, of course, a certain connection between people based on the

\textsuperscript{12} At the same time that it declares such interdependence, this church as body imagery also, of course, preserves a certain degree of individuality for all church members: though part of one body, they are, as the metaphor presents them, still different body parts with differing functions. It is, in this sense, an excellent example of Victorian Evangelical’s sense of individualism tempered with an awareness of community.

\textsuperscript{13} For a description of worship as something that will unite all saved people in heaven, see, for example, Melvill 14.

\textsuperscript{14} For a description of how prayer, in particular, unites all Christians, see “On the Services of the Church, No. X.” Lady’s Christian Magazine (June 1847): 504.
simple fact of their common residence upon the same planet. Such "family of earth" discussions tend to place far more emphasis, however, on another commonality amongst human beings—their similar positions in relation to God. Though created by God and in His image, all human beings, such Evangelical discussions insist, are fallen creatures and, as such, stand in common need of God's redeeming grace. Further linking humans together, some of these discussions note, is the fact that each one of them will have to stand before God individually on Judgment Day. Many Evangelical writings thus embrace a view of human relations that might be described as either an unusually interconnected individualism or an unusually individualistic sense of connection. Human beings, as the Evangelical "family" model sees them, are all linked one to each other. Such connectedness is predicated less, however, on direct person-to-person ties and more on the similarity of position in which each and every person stands before God.

Even if their arguments for it are somewhat indirect, human connectedness is something that Evangelical preachers and writers frequently entreat their audiences to act on. The recommended response to such connection usually takes one of two forms. First and foremost, Evangelicals were urged to love their neighbors (a group that the Parable of the Good Samaritan would have taught Evangelicals included all of human beings). As Evangelical writers of the time imagined it, such love for their neighbors not only meant that Christians should fulfill their duties to all of the people around them, but also that they should show sympathy towards their fellow "men." In Rev. Henry Melvill's

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15 For descriptions of humanity as God's family, see Brontë, Patrick 216; "The Law of Love" vol. xviii (1842): 69 and "The Law of Love" vol. xviii (1842): 233, 235. (Despite the identical title, the third item is indeed a different article). All three of these discussions of God's family also include commentaries on human beings' common condition before God. Many other texts, which do not explicitly use "family of earth" imagery, nevertheless, express human beings' similar standing in the face of God; such examples include "The Protestant" The Lady's Christian Magazine Vol. XXVII (1847): 376 and Melvill 14.
(and the Bible’s) words, they were “to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Melvill 99; Romans 12:15). When it came to those who were less fortunate, loving one’s neighbor also meant providing him or her with charitable assistance. As Ian Bradley and others have pointed out, Evangelicals were, in fact, the main providers of charity in the mid-Victorian period. Much of this charity took place on a very localized level. Individual Evangelicals, especially Evangelical women, would often visit needy people who lived nearby, offering them food, healthcare, and, of course, Gospel instruction (Bradley 125). Evangelical women were also encouraged to look out for both the material and spiritual welfare of any and all people who worked in their homes—not just live-in servants but those such as charwomen and porters who had “only occasional services to perform at [their] house[s]” (“The Protestant” 384). As well as working on their own, Evangelicals also banded together through charitable organizations. Through such organizations, Evangelicals provided schools for poor children, asylums for orphans and the aged, and many other services. In all, Ian Bradley estimates, some three out of four mid-Victorian charitable societies were “Evangelical in character and control” (123). Though less of a point of Evangelical emphasis, Evangelicals were, as Bradley has also pointed out, willing, in extreme cases, to turn to Parliamentary legislation as a way of helping the poor and downtrodden. Such a tradition of Evangelical humanitarian legislation went back, of course, to the early nineteenth century when William Wilberforce’s Clapham Sect successfully fought first to outlaw the slave trade and then to abolish slavery itself. Now working under the guidance of a new leader, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Victorian Evangelicals of the 1840’s and beyond waged

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campaigns that led, for example, to the outlawing of women’s and children’s work in coal mines, the limiting of women’s and children’s work days to ten hours, the reforming of lunatic asylums, and to provisions for improving the housing of at least some of the poor (129).17

Victorian Evangelicals were taught to do more than just love and care for other people; they were also enjoined, as a general rule, to obey all earthly authorities. Such authorities included kings and other government officials, church leaders, parents, and in the case of wives, husbands. Of all such authorities to be obeyed, Church authorities receive especial attention in Victorian Evangelical sermons and writings. In the words of Evangelical works of the time, Christians must show “reverence [for God’s] delegates” (“Female Biography of Scripture: Miriam 240); they must “listen to” and not “despis[e] their appointed teachers” (“On the Conscience, Natural and Spiritual” Christian Observer July 1842: 394; Shirley 8). Failure to respect and obey such church authorities, these same sources warn, could lead an individual to being cast into the everlasting torment of Hell. Recognizing ministers as “delegates” of God whom congregants must obey on pain of damnation, Victorian Evangelical commentaries on church authority sounded, at moments at least, remarkably like those of their nemeses the Tractarians.

Anti-Oxford Movement Reaction

17 For the most part, my information on Evangelical charity comes from Ian Bradley’s chapter long treatment of the subject in his book The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians. I have, however, gleaned a few of the details from my own reading of Victorian Evangelical primary sources. My claim that Evangelical women were encouraged to provide charity to those who worked for them is based on comments in the following sources: “The Protestant” Lady’s Christian Magazine Vol. XXVII (1847): 384 and Tonna, A Peep Into Number Ninety, 43. My listing of “asylums for orphans and the aged” as examples of charity provided by Victorian charitable organizations is based on Henry Melvill’s references to these specific endeavors in his Sermons on Public Occasions 11, 78-79.
This fierce opposition to Roman and Anglo Catholicism is the other missing side to Evangelical Protestant individualism that needs to be addressed. Evangelical Protestant individualism was not merely Protestant in the sense that it came from a Protestant group; such Protestant individualism was also vehemently anti-Catholic. Evangelical Protestant individualism reached a new intensity in the wake of the Oxford Movement, a high church movement that emerged in Oxford in the 1830’s. Also known as the Tractarian movement because its leaders disseminated their ideas through a series of tracts called The Tracts for the Times, the Oxford Movement was surprisingly like Evangelicalism to have become its great adversary. The two groups agreed on most of Christianity’s core doctrines. Both believed, for example, in the divinity and literal resurrection of Jesus, in the divine inspiration of the Bible, and in the immortality and eternal accountability of the human soul.\(^{18}\)

Tractarianism even shared some of Evangelicalism’s most individualistic points. Like their lower church brethren, Tractarians believed that each human being was individually accountable—in other words, that each and every person would have to stand individually before God on Judgment Day.\(^{19}\) In keeping with this notion of personal accountability, both groups urged each and every one of their followers: 1) to

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\(^{18}\) This list of common Evangelical and Tractarian doctrines is based on one that Peter Toon offers on p. 203 of his *Evangelical Theology 1833-56*. In Toon’s words, the Evangelicals and Tractarians “were agreed on the Holy Trinity and the Person of Christ, the need to pursue holiness both in the visible Church and in the individual life, the blessed hope of the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting” (203). With my own reading of Oxford Movement and Evangelical texts in mind, I have both stream-lined this list of Toon’s and put it into a language that is more accessible to non-theologians.

\(^{19}\) For Tractarian commentary on the individual nature of God’s Judgment, see, in particular, tracts sixteen and eighty-three; the latter of these is particularly explicit, reminding readers to always keep in mind “that we individually shall be judged.” For similar comments from Evangelicals, see, for example: Goode, *The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice*. 2; Stowell, Hugh. *Tractarianism Tested by Holy Scripture and the Church of England in a Series of Sermons*. London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1846. 276. “Laicus.” “The Responsibility of Private Judgment.” *The Christian Observer* Feb. 1842: 76; and “The First Step Towards Puseyism.” *The Christian Lady’s Magazine* vol. XIX (1843): 144.
embrace and promote correct doctrine (i.e. “the Truth”) and 2) to live individual lives of holiness and devotion to God. Such similarities between Tractarianism and Evangelicalism are hardly surprising. Not only was Evangelicalism, as Ian Bradley and many others have argued, a strong general social influence at the time; it was something that many Oxford Movement converts had direct personal experience with. Many Tractarians, such as Henry Manning and Robert and Henry Wilberforce, grew up in evangelical homes. Others, such as John Henry Newman, went through some sort of evangelical phase in their youths (Herring 10).

Reflective of this common ground between Evangelicals and Tractarians, Evangelicals initially responded neutrally-to-positively to the burgeoning religious movement at Oxford. It was only with Edward Pusey’s late 1835 tract on baptism that the Evangelicals began to become disturbed, and only after the 1838 publication of the vociferously anti-Protestant Remains of the Late Reverend Richard Hurrell Froude that the Evangelicals became irate (Herring 56-59). Evangelical alarm and outrage only grew as John Henry Newman published the infamous 1841 Tract XC, which argued that the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles could be interpreted in a “Catholic sense,” as

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21 Bradley discusses these “many others” (who have remarked on Evangelicalism’s influence on the Victorians) on pp.14-15 of his book The Call to Seriousness.
Newman converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845, and as the Pope reestablished an archbishopric in England in 1850.\textsuperscript{22}

The result of this alarm and outrage was one of the great polemical attacks of the nineteenth-century. Between the late 1830’s and mid-1850’s, Evangelical periodicals, such as \textit{The Christian Observer}, \textit{The Record} and \textit{The Lady’s Christian Magazine} resounded with condemnations of Tractarian doctrine, and scores of anti-Tractarian pamphlets and books flew off of the Evangelical presses. Many an anti-Tractarian sermon must have also resounded from Evangelical pulpits. Only a few of these are, however, still extant.\textsuperscript{23}

So why were the Evangelicals so upset with their fellowy pious Tractarians? Why was it so awful to be Catholic (either Anglo-Catholic or Roman Catholic)? Anti-Catholicism, of course, has a long English heritage, but why was Catholicism so particularly disturbing at this historical moment and even when it came without the direct threat of “Popery”? The answer to this question is one which, I believe, is much more complicated than blind English anti-Catholic prejudice. Beneath all the rhetoric about Rome as anti-Christ or of Jesuit deviousness, the Evangelical polemical pieces of the period center around two coherent theological questions.\textsuperscript{24} The first of these questions is what constitutes Christians’ “rule of faith”? In other words, how do individual Christians know what to believe? Where can they find God’s Truth? The Evangelicals of this

\textsuperscript{22} For a fuller account of the growth of the Tractarian/Evangelical controversy, see “Part One: Historical” of Peter Toon’s book.

\textsuperscript{23} For a thorough list of both the Evangelical periodicals that include such controversial writing and of the 100+ anti-Oxford Movements books/pamphlets published by Anglican Evangelicals, see Toon pp.231-235.

\textsuperscript{24} Toon argues that this response centered around three questions: “the rule of faith,” “justification,” and “the church, ministry, and sacraments.” As my ensuing explanation of Tractarian doctrine I hope shows, this third issue is an inherent part of questions one and two.
period unanimously agree upon the answer: the Bible.\textsuperscript{25} The Bible, Evangelical controversialists insist, is the one infallible record of God’s truth and will. It is also, they maintain, something that ordinary people can understand, provided that they have God’s help. To access this help, Christians, the Evangelicals teach, merely have to approach the Bible prayerfully and reverently, and God’s Holy Spirit will lead them to a saving knowledge of the truth.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time that they trumpet the Bible as the “sole rule of faith,” Evangelicals of this period also condemn the Tractarians’ differing answer to this question. Like the Evangelicals, the Tractarians, as I already noted, believed the Bible to be inspired. They did not, however, believe the Bible to be something that individual Christians could adequately understand on their own.\textsuperscript{27} God, Tractarians insisted, was rather mysterious or “reserved” when it came to revealing His Truth.

According to Tractarian belief, God had shown the mere “shadow of things to come” in the Old Testament; He had made this revelation somewhat clearer in the New Testament, and, He had and was continuing to clarify his revelation through the Church past and present.\textsuperscript{28} This ever clearer revelation, Tractarians maintained, came via the clergy. As direct successors of Jesus’s Apostles, the clergy, Tractarians believed, held a special gift from the Holy Spirit that enabled them to understand God’s Truth and Will more clearly

\textsuperscript{25} One of the most famous anti-Tractarian works is, in fact, entitled The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice. In this, the most thorough Evangelical answer to Tractarianism, William Goode devotes over one thousand pages to defending the Bible’s status as Christians’ “sole rule of faith.” For additional (and more succinct) avowals of the Bible’s status as the “sole rule of faith,” see Shirley, Walter Augustus. 7, 25, 29, 65; Stowell, Hugh. 300-301; Ryle. Knots Untied. 34, 290; and “Divine Efficacy of the Sacraments?” Christian Lady’s Magazine Vol. XX (1843): 219.


\textsuperscript{27} For explanations of this Tractarian belief in the difficulty of individually interpreting Scripture, see, for example, Newman, John Henry. “Lecture Six: Private Judgment.” The Prophetic Office of the Church, as well as “Tract 73” 5 and “Tract 87” pp. 119-20.

\textsuperscript{28} Isaac Williams explains this doctrine of reserve at great length in tract 80 (“On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge”) and tract 87 (“On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge (Conclusion).”)
than the laity could. The Tractarians, thus, prescribed a “rule of faith” that the Evangelicals never tired of denouncing. To find the Truth, individual Christians, the Tractarians instructed, should look to the Church Fathers past and present and how they, in their special, collective wisdom, have interpreted God’s Word.

In addition to this question of the “rule of faith,” the anti-Oxford Movement literature also centers around a second theological question: the question of justification. In other words, what does an individual Christian need to do to be saved? As in the case of the “rule of faith”, the Evangelicals and Tractarians agreed upon the starting point for justification. Humankind, both groups believed, was hopelessly sinful and lost, and could only be saved through Jesus’s sacrifice and God’s grace. Beyond this point, though, the Evangelicals and Tractarians, parted ways. Throughout the controversial literature of the period, the Evangelicals proudly proclaim the classic Lutheran doctrine of salvation by faith only. An individual Christian, Evangelicals insisted, need only to have a sincere faith in God and His gospel in order to be saved. As well as proclaiming the Evangelical beliefs about justification, the anti-Oxford Movement literature also critiques the Tractarians’ answer to this question—their belief that both baptism and the sacraments

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29 For Tractarian accounts of the clergy’s “sacred gift(s),” see Newman’s “Tract One” 3-4; B. Harrison’s “Tract Sixteen,” and John Keble’s “Tract 52.”
31 For Evangelical commentary on man’s depravity and God’s grace, see, for example, Stowell, Hugh. 7, 36, 45, 51; Tonna, Charlotte Elizabeth A Peep Into Number Ninety 39-40; and “The First Step Towards Puseyism.” The Christian Lady’s Magazine 147-148. For similar comments from Tractarians, see Newman, John Henry. “Tract 73” 7-8; Wilberforce, Robert. 265-66; and Pusey, Edward. “The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent” 186.
were necessary for salvation. \(^{33}\) In Newman’s words, faith was “the inward instrument. . .of justification” and baptism the “outward instrument” (Lectures on Justification 189).

When viewing anti-Tractarian literature’s two main theological arguments alongside each other, a common thread emerges. In their explanations of both the “rule of faith” and of justification, the Evangelicals present Christianity as a matter directly between the individual Christian and his God. Though still emphasizing the individual Christian’s relationship to God, the Tractarians present this relationship as depending, however, upon the mediation of the Church, its priests, and its sacraments. In this respect, the Tractarians’ stances on the “rule of faith” and justification constituted an attack of sorts on the Evangelicals’ precious sense of Protestant individualism.

The Tractarians certainly saw themselves as doing something of the kind. Although this project focuses more on the Evangelicals’ critiques of the Tractarians, the Tractarians made plenty of attacks on the Evangelicals, whom they dubbed “peculiars” and whose beliefs they identified as “popular” as opposed “catholic” theology. \(^{34}\) In his second tract on “Reserve,” Isaac Williams, for example, accuses Evangelicals of “substituting. . [the] meritorious act, or opinion. . .of an individual” in the “place of the sacraments” (126). Pusey makes a similar claim in his tract on fasting when he argues that the Church needs the sacraments and other forms to counter “too individual feeling” (2) (emphasis mine) and “to consolidate [its] yet divided members” (2). Newman,

\(^{33}\) For more Tractarian teaching on baptism’s essential role in the salvation process, see, Newman’s tract one and Pusey’s sermon “The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent,” especially pages 189, 190, and 198. Although it stops short of explicitly declaring it, this sermon of Pusey’s also suggests that the sacrament of the Eucharist may be necessary for salvation. Baptism, Pusey teaches in this sermon, washes away original and pre-baptismal sin, but to cleanse himself of post-Baptismal sin, the Eucharist is the high Church Christian’s best hope.

\(^{34}\) Newman does this, for example, in Tract 73.
though, is the Oxford Movement’s biggest critic of religious individualism, Evangelical or otherwise. In “Tract 73” (“The Introduction of Rationalistic Principles into Religion”), Newman specifically condemns the Evangelicals on the grounds that they only consider the Atonement in terms of the “effects” that it has on their individual minds. To this specific critique of the Evangelicals, Newman also adds a blanket critique of all theology that “makes every thing subordinate to the individual” (11).

Coming at the time it did, when individualism was strong both inside and outside of Victorian religion, Tractarianism unsurprisingly caused a furor. Through its leaders’ anti-individualist comments and, even more importantly through their distinctly Catholic doctrine, Tractarianism was waging an assault the Protestant individualism that the Evangelicals and most other embraced. Peter Toon describes the ensuing controversy as leading Evangelicals to become even more vehement about the Protestant aspects of their faith (207). Another way of saying this might be that the Tractarian controversy prompted the Evangelicals to become more adamant about their Protestant individualism.

**Anti-Oxford Movement Key Terms and Rhetorical Strategies**

1. “Private Judgment”

   The favorite Evangelical key terms and rhetorical strategies from this polemical battle accord with this idea of a renewed and even strengthened commitment to Protestant individualism. The favorite Evangelical term of the 1840’s and 50’s was probably “private judgment,” a phrase that refers to an individual’s ability to understand or, judge,
Scripture for him or herself. Although dating back to at least the early 1700’s, the term “private judgment” exploded in popularity in the face of the Oxford Movement. Such an unprecedentedly widespread usage of this term is hardly surprising, since the term “private judgment” concisely references what I have already identified as one of the two major theological issues dividing the Tractarians and Evangelicals: the question of whether the Bible, as interpreted by an individual Christian, could adequately serve as a Christian’s “sole rule of faith.” Throughout their writings both inside and outside of The Tracts for the Times, the Tractarians repeatedly denounced what they saw as Evangelicals’ out-of-control “ultra-Protestant. . . private judgment.” In turn, almost every Evangelical text of the period offered one, if not more than one, plug for “the duty” (and sometimes “the right”) of “private judgment.” Such Evangelical texts generally concede that “private judgment” has potential pitfalls; fallen beings that they are, human beings are more than capable of “wrest[ing] the. . . Scriptures unto their own destruction.” Such hazards, these Evangelical writers insist, are, however, far outweighed by the peril that Christians, individually accountable beings that they are, might let other human beings and institutions lead them astray. Rev. Hugh Stowell expresses this common Evangelical argument particularly clearly and succinctly: “As

35 The Oxford English Dictionary lists T. Herne’s Defense of Private Judgment as its oldest entry for the usage of the term “private judgment.” In my own reading, I have, however, found an older usage of the word—in Charles Leslie’s 1711 The Truth of Christianity Demonstrated: With a Dissertation Concerning Private Judgment and Authority: to Which is Prefixed a Vindication of the Short Method With the Deists. (emphasis mine).
36 Condemnations of “private judgment” appear throughout The Tracts of the Times. See, for example, tracts 18, 51, 57, 61, 81, 87, and 90. Newman offered more extended attacks on “private judgment” in some of his extra-tract writings of the 1830’s and 40’s, most notably in his 1837 Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church, which devotes three chapters to a mostly critical discussion of “private judgment,” and in an 1841 British Critic article, entitled “Private Judgment.”
38 2 Peter 3:16
every individual must answer for himself to God, so ought every individual to examine, judge, and determine for himself” (277).\textsuperscript{39} As well as through its clear linking of individual accountability and the right and/or duty of “private judgment,” Stowell’s remark is also representative of the Evangelical writing of his time in that it omits the word “private” from what is a clear discussion of “private judgment.” Perhaps wearying of using the words “private judgment” one more time, many 1840’s and 1850’s Evangelical texts intersperse appeals to “private judgment” with appeals to “judgment” or “judg”(ing) minus the “private.”\textsuperscript{40} This truncating of the term “private judgment” is particularly noteworthy because it means that early-to-mid Victorians would likely have thought of the pervasive “private judgment” debate not only when hearing references to the full term “private judgment,” but also when encountering appeals to a person’s “judgment” or capacity to “judge.”

2. “Conscience”

Almost as popular as “private judgment” was the word “conscience,” a term that Evangelicals (and many others) used to refer to the individual’s general capacity to tell right from wrong. At first glance, this somewhat lesser popularity of “conscience” (as opposed to “private judgment”) may seem a bit surprising; after all, “conscience” was and has been the more popular ethical appeal both prior to and since the 1840’s and 1850’s. “Conscience”’s lesser popularity in the 1840’s and 50’s probably reflects the

\textsuperscript{39} For similar defenses of “private judgment” on the grounds of each Christians’ individual accountability, see Goode. I 2; Ryle 35, 37, 41-42; and “The Responsibility of Private Judgment.” The Christian Observer Feb. 1842: 76. In the Stowell remark quoted above, the emphasis on “answer” appears in the original, but the emphasis on “judge” is mine.

\textsuperscript{40} For Evangelical appeals to “private judgment” in the truncated forms of “judgment” or “judging” see, for example, Fry 3, 125, 163-164; Goode 1 lvii, II 66, 72; Ryle 35-36,41; Shirley 34; “The Rending of the Vail of the Temple.” Christian Observer April 1842: 26; and “On Conscience, Natural and Spiritual.” Christian Observer July 1842: 393.
Oxford Movement writings themselves, which, unlike in the case of “private judgment,” did not blanketedly denounce “conscience.” Like the Evangelicals, the Tractarians believed and frequently insisted that Christians should, as a general practice, follow their consciences.\(^{41}\) The two camps also offered similar explanations as to what conscience was and why it was so imperative; at its best and purest, Tractarians and Evangelicals maintained, “conscience” was the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking within man.\(^{42}\) Its dictates potentially coming from God, “conscience,” the two groups agreed, should only be overruled by promptings and instructions coming even more clearly from God.\(^{43}\) As I have already pointed out, the Evangelicals and Tractarians disagreed, though, about where an individual Christian could find the clearest articulation of God’s Will and commands. In keeping with these differing views of where to find God’s Truth and Will,

\(^{41}\) For Tractarian admonishments about following conscience, see R. Wilberforce 11, Newman. “Private Judgment” British Critic July 1841: 125; “Tract XV 2, and “Tract LI 7.” Evangelicals are less prone to such direct declarations of conscience’s urgency (likely because the necessity of following conscience was so self-evident to them). The Evangelicals’ immense respect for “conscience” can be inferred, however, 1) from both their general tendency to appeal to “conscience” and 2) from their frequent assertions that the Bible and only the Bible should supersede conscience. For examples of Evangelicals’ general appeals to conscience, see, Goode I, xxv, II 66, 72; Ryle 46; Fry 173, Tonna. Personal Recollections 125, “The First Step Towards Puseyism” Christian Lady’s Magazine Feb. 1843: 146, 150; “On the Services of the Church.” Christian Lady’s Magazine Vol. XXVI (1846): 519-522; and “The Protestant.” Christian Lady’s Magazine (April 1847): 374, 382-383. For statements from Evangelicals about the Bible’s authority to trump conscience, see footnote #30.

\(^{42}\) Although most Tractarian and Evangelical writers laud conscience and urge their followers to follow it as a general rule, only a few writers actually tackle the subject of what conscience is. The chief Tractarian writer on this issue is William Sewell, who published a fifty-three page pamphlet on the subject of conscience. In this pamphlet on conscience, Sewell identifies conscience as “a light within us, the candle of the Lord...the voice of [the Spirit of] God” (xv, 5). He, however, also warns his readers that this voice of the Holy Spirit can sometimes be mistaken for some other voice within the human breast—a voice coming either out of the person’s own corrupt heart or from some pernicious spirit out of Hell (xvi, 5). Evangelicals, going back to John Wesley (and his sermon “On Conscience”) have held similar views regarding conscience. This concept of conscience appears in the Victorian Evangelical literature, for example, in The Christian Observer article “On Conscience, Natural and Spiritual.” This article hails “spiritual conscience” as “the special production of the Holy Spirit in the human breast. Like Sewell (and Wesley), the writer of this article warns that conscience is, nevertheless, not always reliable; in addition to his/her perfect “spiritual conscience,” a Christian, the writer of this article cautions, also possesses a “natural conscience”—something that has been unreliable ever since the Fall (389). When following conscience, the individual Christian, this writer warns, must, therefore, be careful lest he mistake the corrupt desires of his fallen heart for the voice of God and His Holy Spirit.

\(^{43}\) For explicit declarations about how only the voice of the divine can trump conscience, see on the Tractarian side, “Tract 15” 2; and, on the Evangelical side, Goode I, 1, 19, and II 57, 61, 67.
the Evangelicals and their High Church brethren parted ways concerning who and/or what should hold the power to trump an individual Christian's conscience. The Tractarians answered the Church and its "apostolic successors," the clergy; the Evangelicals insisted, no, that the Bible and the Bible alone should supersede Christians' individual consciences. Aghast at the Tractarians' differing answer, particularly how they, in Newman's own words made the clergy "the sovereign lords of conscience," the Evangelicals of the 1840's and 50's devoted considerable attention to asserting which authorities should and should not be allowed to overrule conscience.\(^{44}\)

3. "Mediator"/ "Mediation"

Also popular at the time was the term "mediator" and "mediation," which refer to any intercessor or intercession between individual Christians and God. As in the cases of "conscience" and "private judgment," the terms "mediator" and "mediation" were hardly new to the religious discourse of the 1840's and 50's. The word "mediator" and the concept of mediation appear, in fact, both in the Bible and in The Book of Common Prayer.\(^{45}\) Victorian Evangelicals differed from their predecessors, however, in the almost obsessive frequency in which they discussed "mediators" and "mediation." As with the Evangelicals' increased emphases on "private judgment" and "conscience," this newfound fixation on mediators and mediation came in response to the Oxford Movement.

\(^{44}\) For Tractarian declarations of the Church's (and its clergy's) supremacy over conscience, see "Tract 15" 2; Newman. "Lecture Five: On the Use of Private Judgment." The Prophetic Office of the Church. 4-6; and Newman. "Lecture Eight: Indefectibility of the Church Catholic." The Prophetic Office of the Church 2. For Evangelical statements about how the Bible and it alone (i.e. not the Church and her clergy) should supersede conscience, see: Goode I xxxi, xliii, i, 17, 19, II 57-58, 61, 67; Fry. Listener 85; and "On Conscience, Natural and Spiritual." The Christian Observer (July 1842): 391.

\(^{45}\) For Biblical references to mediators/mediation, see, for example, I Timothy 2:5; I John 2:1-2; as well as Isaiah 53:12; Romans 8:26, 34; Hebrews 7: 24-25; 8:1,6, 15; and 12:24. For mediator/mediation references in The Book of Common Prayer, see "The Communion" and article VII from the "Articles of Religion."
With their increased emphasis on the priesthood and the sacraments, Tractarians struck Evangelicals as letting both human beings and mere forms come between individual Christians and God. In response, Victorian Evangelicals devoted great time and space in their writings to decrying all the inappropriate intercessors that Catholics turned to to communicate with and/or obtain forgiveness from God. In the Evangelicals' estimation, these included, priests, the Church, and the sacraments, and, in the case of Roman Catholics, the saints and the Virgin Mary as well.\textsuperscript{46} The Evangelicals' obsessive discussions of mediators and mediation were not, however, all negative. As well as condemning all unsanctioned mediators, Victorian Evangelical writers regularly reminded readers of the one and only Mediator sanctioned by the New Testament. This one true Mediator (with a capital M) was, of course, Jesus Christ. The frequency with which Victorian Evangelical writers refer to Jesus as "the Mediator" is almost startling. Some Victorian Evangelical preachers, most notably Charlotte Brontë and John Ruskin's favorite, Henry Melvill, reached a point where they rarely referred to Jesus Christ in terms other than "the Mediator," with a capital M.\textsuperscript{47} One and only one other being

\textsuperscript{46} Evangelicals often wield their critiques of inappropriate mediation directly against the Tractarians. For such examples, see Stowell. 300; Fry, Caroline. "Listener." 130, 134; Shirley 197; Goode. I xxi, xxlii; "On Puseyism." Christian Lady's Magazine vol. XVIII (1842): 335; and "The First Step Towards Puseyism." Christian Lady's Magazine vol. XIX (1843): 148. Almost as common is a sort of indirect attack on Tractarian mediation. This second strategy consists of decrying Roman Catholic misuses of mediation and then leading readers to fear that this is where the Oxford Movement will lead next. For examples of this less direct criticism of Tractarian mediation, see, Melville 86; "Modern Apostates."; Christian Lady's Magazine vol. XIII (1840): 163; and "Luther on Papal Preaching." Christian Lady's Magazine vol. XXV (1841): 154.

\textsuperscript{47} The most extreme example of an Evangelical writer obsessed with Jesus' role as the sole Mediator is, as I said above, Henry Melvill. In his fairly short book Sermons Preached on Public Occasions (118 pages), Melvill declares Jesus's sole Mediatorship some fifteen times (See pages 13, 33, 36, 38, 45, 50, 64, 66-67, 84, 86, 115-116). Jesus's role as Mediator also found its way into the title of a book reviewed by The Lady's Christian Magazine; rather than bearing Jesus’s name or calling Him Christ or Savior, this book is entitled Daily Remembrance of the Mediator. For other references to Jesus as "the Mediator," see Fry, Caroline. Listener 133; Goode I xxxi; "Female Biography: Rebekah" Christian Lady's Magazine 131; "On the Services of the Church." Christian Lady's Magazine 506; and "The Spiritual and Interior Nature of Christianity" Christian Observer (Sept 1842): 517.
besides Jesus is ever approved of by Victorian Evangelical sermons as an acceptable go-between between individual Christians and God, the Father. This being is the Holy Spirit, the third part of the Christian Godhead. Though an acceptable intercessor between God and humankind, the Holy Spirit is never, though, in Victorian Evangelical writings, labeled Mediator (with a capital M).  

4. “Idolatry”

Only slightly less popular than “mediator” was a final Victorian Evangelical key term, “idolatry,” a word that that was in wide enough circulation for an 1840 Lady’s Christian Magazine article to have identified as a “pet word” of its Evangelical readers. Idolatry, as Victorian Evangelicals typically defined it, was the worship of the creature or the creation rather than of the Creator itself.  

49 Denounced throughout the Old Testament, “idolatry” was, of course, a familiar concept to English Christians long before the Victorian period, but as with the other anti-Tractarian “pet words,” this old term, “idolatry,” found new prominence in the wake of the Oxford Movement. Going back to the Reformation, Protestants had regarded idolatry as a distinctly Roman Catholic failing, something that, in Henry Melvill’s words was and continued to be “the great plague spot of Romanism” (86). Identifying idolatry with Roman Catholicism and seeing the Tractarians as trying to move the Church of England towards Catholicism, Victorian

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48 The concept of the Holy Spirit as an intercessor has a powerful Biblical precedent. In Romans 8: 26, Paul writes, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for me know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (emphasis mine). Interestingly, however, none of the Victorian Evangelical writings that I have read refers to this particular scripture. One Victorian Evangelical writer, Walter Shirley, clearly associates the Holy Spirit with mediation, though. Having lamented how Roman Catholics “seek access to God through the mediation of the Virgin Mother, or the innumerable fellowship of angels,” Shirley insists “they will find free and immediate access to the Father by that one Spirit who dwells in them”(emphasis mine) (197).

49 The statement that idolatry had become a “pet word” appears specifically in “On Idolatry,” Lady’s Christian Magazine Vol. XIV. (1840): 244. For examples of Victorian Evangelical definitions of idolatry, see Melvill. 86; Shirley. 3; and Ryle. 315.
Evangelicals, not surprisingly, developed a new-found dread of idolatry. In keeping with this strong association between Roman Catholicism and idolatry, mid-Victorian attacks on idolatry often included a critique of those “Romish” practices and/or beliefs that struck Victorian Evangelicals as idolatrous. These included the Roman Catholic practices of confessing to priests and of bowing down to the Virgin Mary, to relics, or to pictures of saints, as well as the Catholic doctrines of the Real Presence of the Eucharist, of purgatory, and in the indispensability of the priests and the sacraments to the salvation practice.50 As seen by the inclusion of items such as auricular confession and the beliefs in purgatory, Victorian Evangelicals were quite expansive in what they considered to be “worshipping” the creature or the creation rather than Creator. Any belief or practice that struck Evangelicals as either 1) over-valuing persons or things other than God and/or 2) introducing too much of sensory appeal into worship was liable to be denounced, in practice, as idolatrous.51

Such expansive notions of idolatry led Victorian Evangelicals to equally capacious understandings of who was potentially susceptible to idolatry. In an 1847 warning quite typical of Victorian Evangelical writings, Rev. Henry Melvill cautioned his Evangelical listeners/readers against “fall[ing] into the error of supposing that it is only by turning Papists that [they could] imitate the conduct so sternly denounced in the Israelites” (81) (i.e. idolatry). As Melvill went on to insist, “There are many ways wherein the thing complained of in [the Old Testament] may be done, though men continue within the pale and profession of Protestantism” (81, 83). Notably, Melvill’s

50 This list is based on actual lists provided by Victorian Evangelical preachers. For such lists, see Melvill 84, 86; Ryle 322; and Fry. Listener. 130, 135
51 For examples of early-to-mid Victorian statements that associate idolatry with an over-reliance on one’s senses, see “Idolatry.” Christian Lady’s Magazine 414; Melvill. 83; Shirley 28-29; and Ryle. 316-317.
statement, does not lead into some sort of caution against high church practices that may border on idolatry (not that Victorian Evangelicals did not worry about such things).

Rather, in a move just as typical of his time, Melvill goes on to offer a broader admonition: All people Protestant or Catholic, high church or low, Melvill warns, stand in constant danger of falling into idolatry. Victorian Evangelicals saw everyone as potentially susceptible to idolatry because idolatry, as Victorian Evangelicals understood it, could occur in many forms—many of them having nothing to do with Roman or even Anglo-Catholicism. Whenever a person loved anything or anyone more than God, that person, Evangelicals taught, had become an idolater. Three such not necessarily Catholic forms of idol worship receive particular attention in Victorian sermons. The first of these was the excessive desire of wealth and worldly success. He or she who loved money or reputation more than God and who paid more heed to worldly success than to his or her spiritual walk had, Victorian sermons frequently warned, allowed himself to fall into a clear and egregious form of idolatry.\(^5\) Although most Victorian Evangelical warnings against idolatry mention the love of money, they, for the most part, devote much more time to discussing two other not necessarily Catholic forms of idolatry: excessive love of the self and excessive love of other human beings.

5. **“Human” vs. the “Divine”**

As well as through key terms, such as idolatry and judgment, anti-.Tractarian Evangelicals also expressed the Protestant individualist vision by appealing to certain core dichotomies. Foremost among these dichotomies, rivaling even the favorite key

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5 For warnings against the idolatry of loving money and worldly success more than God, see, for example, “The Spiritual and Interior Nature of Christianity.” *Christian Observer* (Sept. 1842): 516; Ryle. 315, and Melvill 83.
term private judgment in the pervasiveness of its usage, was the contrasting dyad of the human versus the divine. As with so much of their Protestant individualist language, anti-TRACTarian appeals to the human vs. the divine, were hardly, a Victorian invention; the tradition of using such dichotomies dates back at least to Biblical times. Despite the long precedent for such language, early-to-mid Victorians gave such human vs. divine language a new life—both in the obsessiveness in which they used it and in the distinctly anti-Catholic valence that they gave it. Thus, though hardly new, the specifically early-to-mid Victorian iteration of such rhetoric deserves considerable attention.

Such anti-1830’s and 40’s evangelical dichotomizations of the divine vs. the human usually follow one of two general patterns. The longer, more fully worked out version of this pattern begins with the Evangelical writer labeling something Anglo or Roman Catholics do or believe “human” (or “from man”) and delineating that which they themselves do or believe as “divine” (or “from God”). Then appealing to the Biblical principle that we should “obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29), the Evangelical writer asserts the supremacy and imperative nature of his or her viewpoint. In many cases, though, the Evangelical writer stream-lines this longer pattern. Assuming that the necessity of following God’s commands to be sufficiently apparent, the writer of the shorter pattern simply identifies a particular Anglo or Roman Catholic belief or practice

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53 Although they appear occasionally in the Old Testament, statements contrasting God vs. man and the divine vs. the human are much more common in the New Testament, appearing particularly pervasively in the words of Jesus and the writings of Paul. For Old Testament appeals to the divine vs. the human, see for example: Job 34:12, 36:22-26; Psalms 17:24, 31:19, 56:11; Isaiah2:22, 17:7-8; Ezekiel 28:2,9: and Hosea 11:9. For examples of the much more abundant New Testament contrasts of the divine vs. the human, see: Matthew 15:9, 16:23; 19:26; 21:25; Mark 7:7-8, 8:33, 10:27, 11:30; Luke 16:15, 18:27, 20:24, and John 12:43 (all words of Jesus); I Corinthians 1:25; Galatians 1:10, Ephesians 6:7; Colossians 2:8,23; I Thessalonians 2:4, 13, Titus 1:16, and Hebrews 7:28 (all writings of Paul), and Acts 5:29 and I Peter 2:4 (writings-recorded words of Peter).
as “human” and the contrasting Evangelical belief or practice as “divine,” and then moves on to his or her next point.

This “divine vs. human” rhetorical strategy was probably so popular because it could be applied to almost any religious issue. Evangelicals often used this human/divine word-play, for example, as a supplement to appeals centered around favorite key words, such as “private judgment” or “idolatry.” The closing lines of the 1843 Christian Lady’s Magazine article “The Divine Efficacy of the Sacraments?” provide one such example:

Our Ultra-Protestant notions of the right of private judgment [asserts the author] permit each one to form his own opinions, and to select which he prefers as most scriptural and rational—the written and fulfilled promises of the Lord God Almighty, or the self-interested dogmas of Popish and Puseyite Catholics. “Let me fall into the hands of God rather than men.” (I. Cor. xiii.) (122)

In this concluding paragraph, the anonymous writer does more than simply appeal to “the right of private judgment.” He/she skillfully uses language of the human vs. the divine to underscore why following “private judgment” is so important. To neglect “private judgment” would be, in the author’s words, to prefer “the self-interested dogmas of Popish and Puseyite Catholics” (i.e. the teachings of humans) to “the written and fulfilled promises of the Lord God Almighty” (the instructions of the divine). Lest his reader could somehow overlook or under-appreciate the gravity of such privileging of the human over the divine, the author, in a fashion quite typical of the full-length versions of human/divine appeals, tacks on yet another appeal to the divine vs. the human—a
scriptural reference asserting the necessity of following God rather than man ("Let me fall into the hands of God rather than men") (I Cor. xiii)).

As well as to support claims already involving favorite Evangelical key terms, anti-Oxford Movement Evangelical writers also use the divine/human dichotomy to critique aspects of Catholic belief or practice that may not have neatly fallen within the purview of existing key terms. In the name of preferring the divine to the human, Victorian Evangelicals, critique, for example, the Catholic doctrine of the atonement, the "unconverted" nature of the Catholic mind, and the practice of auricular confession. Such divine vs. human appeals also enable Evangelical writers to make blanket criticisms against Catholicism. Caroline Fry offers one such broad wielding of the language of the divine vs. the human when she reminds her readers some twenty-seven pages into her book The Listener at Oxford, "We must cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils and confine ourselves to the Written Word" (27). Rather than in opposition to some specific belief, such as an erroneous notion of the atonement, or some specific practice, such as confession, Fry notably offers this appeal to the divine over the human in opposition to the vague category of "these new things" (27). Considering that Fry has devoted the previous twenty-seven pages to critiquing Tractarian innovations and that she will spend the next one hundred and fifty pages doing the same, "these new things" that

54 For other examples that combine appeals to the divine vs. human with appeals to private judgment, see Shirley 3 and Stowell 301. For combinations of appeals to the divine vs. human and conscience, see Goode II 57; of the divine vs. human and mediation, see "On Puseyism" Christian Lady's Magazine vol. XVIII (1842): 335; and of the divine vs. human and idolatry, see Fry. The Listener at Oxford 162 and "Essays on Idolatry" Christian Lady's Magazine (Feb. 1847): 148.

are human rather than divine could include almost any or all Catholic beliefs and practices. As Fry's usage of such language shows, Victorian Evangelicals managed to wield the human vs. divine dichotomy against just about any imaginable Catholic threat.\(^5\)

As well as to its broad applicability, the human/divine dichotomy's popularity can also probably be attributed to the Protestant individualist power that such word-play provided. This power comes across particularly clearly in Bishop Walter Shirley's 1847 Bampton Lecture on Isaiah 8:20. Explaining to his Oxford University audience why it is so vital "to distinguish between what is human and divine in religious teaching" (27), Shirley remarks,

> While we bow with reverential and silent submission to "every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," the same feeling of humble piety will make us "very jealous for the Lord of Hosts," lest the word of man be received as the Word of the living God, for this produces the same practical effect as when the divine authority of God's Word is denied. (27-28)

From the context of this passage, we, of course, know that the Christians whom Shirley is describing are in the process of defying human authority. As he presents these Christians, such defiance slips almost entirely from view, however. These Christians, as Shirley depicts them, are lying prostrate before God—showing "reverential and silent submission" to all his commands—exhibiting something that Bishop Shirley delineates

\(^{5}\) For other, very non-specific attacks on the human nature of Catholicism, see Tonna. A Peep Into Number Ninety 45 and "Jesuit Morality" Christian Lady's Magazine Vol. XXIX (1848): 114.
“humble piety” (27). The only hint we get of the Christians’ self-assertion comes in the middle of Shirley’s very long sentence—when we are told that these Christians are becoming “very jealous for the Lord of Hosts” (27-28). This jealousy, Shirley reminds us, though, is not on their own behalf but rather on behalf of “the Lord of Hosts”; it, we are also assured comes from the same “humble piety” so vividly depicted at the beginning of the sentence. Re-presenting an act of defiance as an act of deference, Shirley’s sentence points to the Protestant individualist power of appeals to the divine over the human. By appealing to the divine rather than the human, individual Christians could trump man’s authority with God’s, and, in turn, make acts that may otherwise have seemed self-assertive, even selfish, read as expressions of the profoundest and most selfless submissions to God.\(^57\)

6. Protestantism as Freedom/Catholicism as Oppression

Nearly as popular as the divine vs. human language was a second dichotomy: the contrast between the liberty of Protestantism and the tyranny of Roman/Anglo Catholicism. Like the other anti-Tractarian key words and dichotomies, this final dyad was a long-standing part of England’s pro-Protestant/anti-Catholic rhetoric; associations of Protestantism with freedom and Catholicism with oppression go back, in religious historian David Bebbington’s estimation, to at least the seventeenth century (Evangelicalism in Modern Britain 101). Though hardly new, such Catholicism=tyranny/Protestantism=liberty dichotomies became pervasive enough in the

\(^{57}\) This sentence of Shirley’s is just one of a number of Victorian Evangelical statements pointing to the libratory potential of appeals to the divine vs. human. For other such statements, see Fry. The Listener in Oxford 181 and “The First Step Towards Puseyism.” The Christian Lady’s Magazine vol. XIX (1843): 141.
early-to-mid nineteenth century and integral enough to this period’s sense of Protestant individualism that they warrant some further explanation. The common Victorian Evangelical equations of Protestantism with freedom and Catholicism with oppressiveness typically take on one of several forms. Oftentimes, Victorian Evangelicals will simply proclaim the freedom of Protestantism and the tyranny of Catholicism outright. A Christian Lady’s Magazine article entitled “Jesuit Morality” presents both such explicit declarations of Protestantism’s freeing power and of Catholicism’s oppressiveness. In the anonymous author’s words, the Protestant faith is the “religion of light and liberty” (115) whereas Catholicism is “opposed to all individual freedom” (115). Victorian Evangelicals tend to spend more time, though, decrying the tyrannies of Catholicism than celebrating Protestant freedom. Thus, discussions of the oppressiveness of Catholicism take a wider variety of forms. In a common variation on the general tyranny theme, Evangelicals often turn to a language of bondage.

Catholicism, as Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna maintains in her Peep into Number Ninety, puts a “yoke of anti-Christian bondage” on the individual Christian (17). In another, somewhat less common variation, Evangelicals also present Catholicism as something that will literally strip people of their self-hood. In “Jesuit Morality,” the same article that I quoted above, The Christian Lady’s Magazine contributor labels Catholicism a “labyrinth in which men lose themselves” (113-114). Expressing fears that the tyrannous Catholic priesthood will make men “into passive machines,” Hugh Stowell similarly suggests that Catholicism can potentially destroy the self (276). On a similar note, William Goode describes Tractarians’ aim as “to throw people into the hands of the

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58 For more general declarations of Protestantism’s freeing power and/or Catholicism’s oppressiveness, see Christian Observer 27; Stowell 278-279; Melvill 86, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna A Peep into Number Ninety 13, Goode I xxxi.
clergy, to be moulded by them according to their will” (III 540). Such statements about Catholicism’s threat to independent selfhood are particularly telling because make explicit something that I firmly believe underlies almost all Victorian anti-Catholicism: a fear of the dissolution of the unified, Protestant self.59

Broad Church Protestant Individualism

Compared to Evangelicalism, Broad Church Protestant individualism has received even less critical attention. Nevertheless, Broad Church members were, in their own way, just as vehemently individualistic as their Evangelical brethren. In some ways, such a claim sounds rather surprising. The Broad Church has long been associated with the Christian Socialist Movement, and rightly so. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the Christian Socialist movement took the Broad Church classic, F.D. Maurice’s The Kingdom of Christ, as its starting point, and over the course of the nineteenth-century, many prominent Broad Church figures, such as Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes, and Octavia Hill, were directly involved with Christian Socialism. Also pointing to some degree of Broad Church anti-individualist sentiment was such writers’ common rhetorical practice of lambasting Evangelicals (both Anglican and Dissenting) for what they perceived to be their excessive Protestant individualism. As I will discuss in greater detail later in this section, almost every prominent Broad Church personality—

from Thomas Arnold to F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Benjamin Jowett, and Matthew Arnold—launched an attack at some point (often many such attacks) on what they saw as Anglican Evangelicals' and especially Dissenters' excessive Protestant individualism. As I will discuss in more detail later, such condemnations of excessive Protestant individualism figure as key themes within some of the most famous Victorian Broad Church texts, most notably Maurice's *Kingdom of Christ* and Matthew Arnold's *St. Paul and Protestantism*.

Despite such apparent (and in many cases, real) anti-individualism within Broad Church thought, such Anglican liberals could, this section argues, in many respects, be just as individualistic—if not more so—than the Evangelicals whom they criticized. For all of their critiques of Evangelical individualism, Broad Church writers expressed a Protestant individualism that was remarkably similar to that of the Evangelicals—one that was strongly anti-Catholic, responded to the same historical events, and which even used most of the same key terms. Such Broad Church Protestant individualism, as I will argue, was, in certain respects, actually more extreme. Questioning the infallibility of the Bible and its absolute authority over private judgment and conscience, Broad Church writers largely destabilized, and in some cases, completely dismantled, the single biggest check that Evangelicals put on religious individualism. Compared to their Evangelical compatriots, Broad Church Anglicans can, thus, be accurately described as prone to far greater extremes of individualism and anti-individualism. Depending on the issue, they might likely feel anti-individualistic compunctions that most Evangelicals did not, or they might be willing to push individualism far beyond where most Evangelicals dared to go.
The one area where scholars have already evaluated the extent of Broad Church individualism is concerning such Victorians’ positions on social and economic policy. In his 1987 book *The Victorian Christian Socialists*, Edward Norman provides a fairly thorough look at Christian Socialist socio-economic views. Christian Socialists, Norman argues, could be surprisingly individualistic for a group that called themselves socialists. Separating the Victorian Christian Socialists from orthodox *laissez-faire* economic individualism, Christian Socialists were, Norman asserts, opposed to the “principle of competition and Malthusian population ideas” (40). They also, of course, advocated the idea of cooperative societies, small groups where the working classes could band together and offer each other insurance, collective profits, and other joint benefits (16). Despite what the label “socialism” might suggest, Christian Socialist were, however, generally opposed to almost all state intervention in the economy. They, for example, opposed the founding of the Health League, urging people to look instead to private philanthropy (18). Christian Socialists, Norman also maintains, tended to be enthusiastic advocates of the favorite Victorian individualistic ideal of “self-help” (38).

Although such studies of Broad Church social and economic policy provide some sense of such liberal Anglicans’ divided feelings concerning Protestant individualism, they provide, at best, a limited picture. To better understand Broad Church ambivalence towards Protestant individualism, it is necessary to take a closer look at the theological teachings that undergird the socio-economic views of Broad Church leaders, such as Thomas Arnold, F.D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and Benjamin Jowett. As I will argue in this next section, the pull between individualism and anti-individualism that has been repeatedly recognized in Broad Church social and economic thought can be traced back
to a more fundamental tension at the heart of Broad Church theology. On the one hand, Broad Church theology set up highly subjective standards for truth and regularly trumpeted the merits of freedom of thought. At the same time, though, this same theology advanced high views of the state Church and its role as a unifying, and, in many respects, controlling social and spiritual institution. Although not High Church in the traditional sense of venerating clergymen’s Apostolic Succession or of viewing the Sacraments as the premier pathway to God, Broad Church Anglicans held views of the Church that could, in certain ways, be just as exalted as those of the strictest Tractarians.

Truth and Broad Church Individualism

Central to the individualistic side to Broad Church theology was this party’s understandings of truth. Like their fellow Anglicans, the Anglo-Catholics and the Evangelicals (and most historical Christians, for that matter), Broad Church members regularly admonished their followers to seek and follow the Truth.60 Broad Church members differed from their Low and High Church brethren, though, in the extent to which they allowed—even encouraged—individual Christians to ascertain the truth for

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60 For a sampling of Broad Church appeals to Truth, see, Thomas Arnold’s An Essay on the Right Interpretation of Scriptures, 1, 20, 33, 59, 69, 81, 82, 85 and The Christian Life: Its Course, Its Hindrances, and Its Helps, 310, 341, 351, 383, 385, 386, 389, 390, 394, 398, 403; Colenso’s Joshua and the Pentateuch, 7, 8, 10, 12, 22, 27, 30, 34, 35, 37, 49, 53, , 56, 58, 207, 222, , William Henry Fremantle’s The World as the Subject of Redemption, 7, 95, 153, 200, 255. T.H. Green’s “The Witness of God” 237, 240, 243, 248, “Faith.” 273, 273; Benjamin Jowett’s College Sermons, 22, 23, 71, 75-76, 85, 118, 123, 182, 201, 263, 286-7, 294, 304, 316, 347, 348, 421, and Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous, 263, 264, 294, 298, 366, 367; Charles Kingsley’s Village Sermons, 72, Sermons for the Times, 16, 23, 336, and “What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?": A Reply to a Pamphlet Lately Published by Dr. Newman.” 6, 34, 36, 50, 60. For examples of guarantees that the pursuit of truth will not lead one to harm, see, for example, Colenso 8
themselves. Unlike the Anglo-Catholics, who saw they Church as the final word on Truth, and the Evangelicals, who gave ultimate precedent to the Bible, Broad Church Anglicans chose no single guide as the absolute word on truth. Instead, Broad Church members sought truth through a variety of sources, both outside and inside the individual. Like the Evangelicals, Broad Church members venerated the Bible and regularly proclaimed it to be a source of truth, and like the Anglo-Catholics, Broad Church members touted the merits of the Church and proclaimed the value and truth of its teachings. In their quest for divine revelation, Broad Church members were equally prone, though, to turn to various forms of secular learning—to history, the hard and social sciences, and Biblical scholarship, including the controversial and unorthodox “Higher Criticism” often associated with Germany. Drawing on a range of outside sources without clearly favoring one, Broad Church theology allowed individual truth-seekers to choose between and negotiate amongst a multiplicity of standards for truth.

Even more so than in outside sources, Broad Church teachers counseled followers to seek truth right within themselves. In his book-length study *The Broad Church: A Biography of a Movement* Tod Jones defines the Broad Church in terms that attest to this very fact. The Broad Church, according to Jones, is “that which begins by asking first

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61 In the same *Essays and Reviews* essay in which he insists that the Bible is fallible and should be approached “like any other book,” Benjamin Jowett also calls the Bible a “witness...to...higher things,” “a way to a better life,” and, most notably of all, “the inspired source of all truth” (“On the Interpretation of Scripture” 503). For more appeals to Bible as a source of truth, see Arnold, Thomas. *The Christian Life* vol. I. 341; Williams 186, 188; Arnold, Matthew. *Literature and Dogma*. 45. For references to how truth can be found in the Church, see Maurice. *The Kingdom of Christ*, II 178; Green. “The Witness of God.” 237.

62 For references to how individuals should seek truth in science, see Colenso 57, Powell 256, Green 2 264, Jowett, Benjamin. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 483, 487-88 and CS 75-77; Concerning how he/she should seek truth in history, see Williams 186; Fremantle xiii, Jowett. CS 313; Jowett. *Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous* 263; Jowett. “Essay on the Interpretation of Scripture.” 487. Concerning how he/she should seek truth in Biblical scholarship, see Maurice. *The Kingdom of Christ*, II 158; Fremantle xiii, Jowett. *College Sermons* 77, 83.
what the reason and conscience can teach” (1). My own reading of Broad Church theology has revealed that Broad Church members commonly seek truth in at least four inward faculties: not just in the conscience and reason, but also through the judgment (as in private judgment) and the heart.63 Conscience and judgment, were, as I have already discussed, favorite Evangelical sources of insight—revelations of sorts that Evangelicals consistently privileged above Church teaching and all other earthly authorities. Although I did not discuss them in detail in my section on Evangelicalism, both reason and, most especially the heart, were also ideals that Evangelicals commonly appealed to—albeit not typically with quite the fervor of their calls upon conscience or private judgment. In appealing to conscience, judgment, reason, and the heart, Broad Church members were thus, in one sense, doing exactly what Evangelicals (and many other Christians) already did.

Broad Church departed, though, from their more orthodox brethren concerning the degree of authority that they accorded such inward faculties. Evangelicals may have praised such faculties and encouraged their adherents to follow them, but they placed a key check on such individual determining of truth and right: the absolute and final authority of the Bible. When reason, the heart, conscience, or private judgment said one thing and the Bible another, Christians, Evangelicals consistently urged, were always to follow the Bible. In stark contrast, Broad Church members tended to give the exact opposite advice. Such privileging of conscience, private judgment and other inner faculties over the Bible was already implicit in early Victorian Broad Church teachings,

63 For statements about how truth is found in conscience, see Maurice, F.D. The Kingdom of Christ. Vol. I. 171).Williams 182, Jowett, Benjamin. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 298; For statements about how truth can be found through one’s private judgment, see Powell, Baden. 250.
such as Thomas Arnold's theories of accommodation, which judged certain Biblical practices and teachings immoral and insisted they had only been tolerated because of ancient man's ignorance. From the 1860 publication of Essays and Reviews onwards, Broad Church Anglicans became much more explicit about their privileging of inner faculties over the Biblical text. Within the notorious Essays and Reviews, Frederick Temple, who would later become the Archbishop of Canterbury, declared conscience "the supreme interpreter [of the Bible], whom it may be a duty to enlighten, but whom it can never be a duty to disobey" and went on to add, "When conscience and the Bible appear to differ, the pious Christian immediately concludes that he has not really understood the Bible" (162). Within the same volume, Roland Williams, Baden Powell, and Mark Pattison offered similar statements concerning reason's supremacy over the Bible, Roland Williams and Frederick Temple of private judgment's preeminence, and Benjamin Jowett of the superior authority of the heart. Essays and Reviews only marked the beginning of such overt declarations of the supreme authority of inward faculties; such statements continued to appear regularly in Broad Church writings throughout the rest of the nineteenth-century, appearing in the writings of figures ranging from Benjamin Jowett, Charles Kingsley, and William Henry Fremantle to Matthew Arnold and T.H. Green. Allowing individual Christians an almost completely

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64 For more Essays and Reviews declarations of conscience's supremacy, see Williams, Roland 182 and Jowett, Benjamin. "The Interpretation of Scripture." 523, 532, 534.
65 For declarations of the supremacy of reason, see Williams 186; Powell, Baden. 234, 259; Pattison, Mark. "Tendencies in Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750." 389. For announcements of the preeminence of private judgment, see Williams 197 and Temple 162. For a statement of the premier authority of the heart, see Jowett, Benjamin. "The Interpretation of Scripture." 503.
66 For post-1860 declarations of reason's supremacy, see Jowett, Benjamin. CS 286-7, 329; Colenso 220; Charles Kingsley. Selections 7; Green. "The Witness of God." 239; and Arnold, Matthew. Literature and Dogma. 30. For post-1860 statements of conscience's supreme authority, see Colenso 220, Charles Kingsley. Selections 687; Jowett, Benjamin. CS 314; and Fremantle 315; For statements of the heart's authority over the Bible, see Jowett, Benjamin. CS 314 and Colenso 220. I have run across no explicit
unchecked power to determine truth for themselves, such privileging of inner faculties made Broad Church theology, in many senses, strongly individualistic.

Such subjectizing of truth within Broad Church theology, of course, potentially stood to backfire and lessen truth’s status as an absolute, all-powerful and hence strongly self-authorizing ideal. Broad Church Anglicans fought hard, however, to keep truth from losing any of its self-justifying power. Broad Church Anglicanism did this largely by taking zeal for truth to an unprecedented level. Broad Churchmen called upon truth more obsessively than members of any other party, praised the “love of truth” above all other virtues, presented the pursuit of truth as the premier duty of a Christian’s life, and frequently critiqued opposing parties for a want of reverence for truth.\footnote{For appeals specifically to the “love of truth,” see Powell 236; Fremantle 21; Colenso 17, 19, 47; Jowett. \textit{College Sermons}, 77, 83, 98, 123, 161, 163, 200, 293, 294, 303, 311, 344; Jowett. \textit{Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous}, 331; Jowett. “Essay on the Interpretation of Scripture.” 536. For condemnations of opposing parties and their lack of respect for truth, see Arnold, Thomas. \textit{Essay on Church Reform}, 82; Powell, Baden. 236, 253-4; Jowett, Benjamin. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 502, 536; Kingsley, Charles64 34, 60.} Even more importantly, such liberal Anglicans regularly taught that God was the “God of Truth” and went on to maintain that to seek truth was inherently to seek God. As a corollary of these of equations of God and truth and the pursuit of God with the pursuit of truth, Broad Church members often offered explicit statements about how the search for truth would inherently protect the truth-seeker from coming to harm.\footnote{For statements that equate God with truth, see Arnold, Thomas. \textit{Principles of Church Reform}, 69; Kingsley52 81; Jowett. \textit{College Sermons}, 146; Jowett. \textit{Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous}, 263; and Colenso 6, 45, 53, 209. For statements which equate seeking truth and seeking God, see Green. “Faith.” 275; Fremantle 21. For statements about how seeking truth will inherently protect the truth seeker, see Arnold, Thomas. \textit{The Christian Life}, vol. I 394, 403; Colenso, John William 8; Jowett, Benjamin. \textit{Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous}, 263-264; Jowett, Benjamin. \textit{College Sermons}, 118.}
Broad Church members further protected truth’s self-authorizing power by resisting truth’s complete relativization. A certain relativizing of truth logically stemmed from Broad Church members’ tendencies to 1) accept a variety of sources for truth without clearly privileging any single one and 2) to pay particular attention to the truth that could be gained through higher subjective inner faculties, such as conscience, reason, truth, and the heart. In certain respects, Broad Church writings embrace such a relativity of truth. Such relativism appears, for example, in the favorite Broad Church declarations that “religious opinions [must] differ because. . .characters differ,” a statement that can be found with slight variation in the writings of Broad Churchmen ranging from Thomas Arnold, to Charles Kingsley, and Benjamin Jowett69

The Broad Church’s relativization of truth was far from complete, however. At the same time that Broad Church members tended to reject rigid true vs. false dichotomies and recognize multiple, sometimes even self-contradictory ideas as various “truths,” they also showed an obsessive desire to hierarchalize such plural truths. Most commonly, Broad Church members ranked truths by using spatial terms. Rather than call their views true and their Evangelical or Anglo-Catholic opponents’ false, Broad Church members would refer to their truth as “higher,” “broader,” deeper”, and/or more complete.70 In a common variation, Broad Church would also turn to alternate, non-spatial dichotomies to articulate the superiority and inferiority of certain truths. Such

69 This exact quote comes from Jowett. College Sermons 98. Very similar remarks also appear in the writings of Thomas Arnold and of Charles Kingsley. See Arnold, Thomas. Principles of Church Reform, 16, 39; and Kingsley, Charles 59. 111.

dichotomies included “spiritual truth” vs. “material truth,” “essential truth” vs. “unessential truth,” “new truth” vs. “old truth,” and even “true truth” vs. “truth mixed with falsehood.” As should become even clearer as this project progresses, such partial relativizing of truth increased Broad Church members’ rhetorical power in a way that neither a clear maintaining nor rejecting of the true vs. false dichotomy could have done. Such hierarchalization of truth enabled Broad Church members to look tolerant but still enabled them to privilege their views of truth above those of their opponents. Such semi-relativization of truth made such privileging of Broad Church truth easier, in fact, because it took away the need to prove opposing ideas unequivocally false. Rather than having to disprove another party or person’s truth, the Broad Church member could simply transcend it. In this sense, the Broad Church’s semi-relativized truth garnered tremendous individual freedom, power, and authority for the individual Broad Churchman. As I will explore much more in my second chapter, such individual freedom, power, and authority tended to come at the expense of the individual freedom, power, and authority of those of lesser social power—those either less apt to present their truth as transcendent and those whose claims of transcendence were less likely to be respected. Still, for the powerful class of middle-to-upper class men who generally

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71 For references to “truer” truth, see Arnold. Principles of Church Reform, 18, Temple 308, Matthe Arnold Literature and Dogma 349, God and the Bible 12, Last Essays on Religion 177-178, Benjamin Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 298; Fremantle 8. For discussions of “perfect” vs. imperfect truth, see CS 201, and for “fixed” vs. changing truth or “eternal” vs. temporary truth, see Thomas Arnold The Christian Life I 315, 317, Maurice. Theological Essays, 300; Jowett. College Sermons. 348, Jowett. “The Interpretation of the Bible.” 529, Colenso 222, Green 1 232, God and the Bible 335, 338), Culture and Anarchy 109, St. Paul and Protestantism, xii-xiii. For an evolutionarily improving view of truth, see Temple 151, Jowett. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 490, 509, 511, 523); “spiritual” vs. less spiritual or physical truth (Temple 163), Powell 252, Jowett. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 532); “essential” vs. “unessential truth” Ludlow, J.M. Woman’s Work in the Church, 209; old vs. new truths Thomas Arnold The Christian Life I 316, Benjamin Jowett College Sermons 311, 367.
comprised the Broad Church ranks, this semi-relativization of truth significantly bolstered their individual power and authority.

**Self-Development and Broad Church Teaching**

Broad Church theology was also individualistic in the sense that it celebrated self-development. Such venerations of self-development appear in a variety of forms in Broad Church works. Sometimes, especially in fairly late nineteenth-century writings, Broad Church writings specifically praise “self-development” or some very similar term. T.H. Green offers such an explicit encomium to self-development in his famous and widely-read 1877 lay sermon, “Faith,” where he insists that “the life of faith” must be a “life of self-development” (270); and Matthew Arnold offers similar praise in his 1869 *Culture and Anarchy*, where he insists upon the importance of develop[ping] the whole man” (103). More commonly, though, Broad Church, members praise self-development under alternative names. In Matthew Arnold’s *Literature and Dogma*, calls to self-development appear in terms of how “We must all] fulfill the law of our being” (349), and in Benjamin Jowett’s *College Sermons*, such injunctions take the form of how each of his students must build up his own unique “character” (*College Sermons* 7, 161). In a similar vein, William Henry essentially enjoins self-development when he tells his readers to “cultivate the power [they] feel within” themselves (*The World as the Subject of Redemption* 172). Broad Church members also move beyond merely praising self-development and frequently present it as an indispensable part of the individual
Christian’s life. Following the same sort of evolutionary model that they commonly apply to the world as a whole, Broad Church members imagine the individual Christian’s walk as an on-going education, a journey to spiritual manhood, or, as Matthew Arnold puts it, a process of “making [continually] progress and peace in oneself” (Last Essays 343). To live Christianly is, as most Broad Church members envision it, to continuously develop oneself.\textsuperscript{72}

To the extent that it put such focus on the individual and his or her capacities, the Broad Church ethic of self-development was, of course, inherently individualistic. This emphasis on self-development emerges as all the more individualistic when noting how closely Broad Church members associated such self-development with the individual’s increasing independence from others. This association of self-development with independence comes across especially clearly in Benjamin Jowett’s writings on “character,” Jowett’s particular term for self-development. “Character,” the trait that Jowett believes that individuals should cultivate so assiduously, is, as he defines it, “an independent way of thinking and acting, which was our own and no one else’s” (College Sermons 161). To develop oneself is thus, as Jowett maintains, to learn to think and act for oneself. A similar association of self-development with independence also appears in the numerous Broad Church writings that present self-development as a progress towards spiritual manhood. Spiritual manhood, such texts consistently maintain, is a state of independence from the opinions of others; to rely on the help and beliefs of other is,

\textsuperscript{72} For references to the individual spiritual life as a process of education, see Jowett. College Sermons, 263as well as the entirety of Frederick Temple’s Essays and Reviews essay, “The Education of the World.” For descriptions of this same individual walk as a process of moving towards spiritual adulthood, see Thomas, Arnold. The Christian Life I 308, II 43; Charles Kingsley, Selections, 55, 67 376; Temple 149, 154, 156, 164; Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 247; and Green. “The Witness of God.” 245.
conversely, to remain in a state of spiritual childhood. To such explicit equations of maturation with increasing maturity, Broad Church members add numerous, more general statements about how “men” should act, and most especially, think for themselves. 73 As should be becoming increasingly obvious, such Broad Church celebrations of the independence of spiritual maturity tend to appear in masculine terms, such as spiritual “manhood” or statements of how all “men” should behave, leaving some doubt as to how fully such ideals of self-realized independence were expected to be applied to women. The applicability of such ideals to women comes to seem all the more tenuous when considering, as I will explain in greater detail in the next chapter, how closely such Broad Church descriptions of the independent fully developed self resembled Victorian ideals for masculinity. Nevertheless, for those who could credibly lay claim to being full-fledged “men” in their full spiritual maturity, Broad Church idealizations of self-realization constituted yet another powerfully individualistic force within Broad Church theology.

Anti-Catholicism, Freedom of Thought, and Broad Church Individualism

Finally, Broad Church theology was individualistic in the sense that it was strongly anti-Catholic and used such anti-Catholicism to bolster its individualist claims.

73 For statements that directly equate spiritual maturation with increasing independence, see Thomas, Arnold. The Christian Life I 308, II 43; Charles Kingsley. Selections. 55, 67 376; Temple 149, 154, 156, 164; Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 247; Green. “The Witness of God.” 245. For more general statements about how men should think and/or act for themselves, see Temple. 157-158; Jowett. College Sermons. 18, 159, 246; Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 246, 331. Kingsley72 35-37; and Maurice Kingdom of Christ II 72.
For all of their reputation for liberalism and open-mindedness, Broad Church Anglicans could be vehemently anti-Catholic. In the case of Charles Kingsley, such anti-Catholicism is well known. Kingsley, of course, became notorious, and probably will always remain notorious, for having penned the 1864 pamphlet, “What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?,” the particular diatribe against John Henry Newman that prompted the renowned Catholic to write his now classic spiritual autobiography, Apologia Pro Vita Sua.

Although atypical in terms of the eloquence with which his pamphlet was answered, Kingsley was far from the only Broad Church figure to exhibit flagrant anti-Catholicism. Broad Church anti-Catholicism went back to the Broad Church party’s earliest days, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Church and State, which he largely wrote as a response to Catholic Emancipation (which he opposed). Such Broad Church anti-Catholicism only grew with the emergence the Tractarian and the Ritualist movements. With his scathing 1836 article “The Oxford Malignants,” Thomas Arnold became the first prominent Churchman of any party to renounce the Oxford Movement. Richard Whately, the well-known economist and Broad Church Archbishop of Dublin, also entered first the anti-Tractarian and then the anti-Ritualist fray. In the years following Arnold’s scathing article, Whately edited and, in some cases, helped write a series of thirty-four anti-Catholic Broad Church tracts, ultimately collected and published under the title Cautions for the Times. When Kingsley penned his infamous 1864 pamphlet he was entering into a long-standing tradition of Broad Church anti-Catholic polemical literature.
Broad Church anti-Catholicism was far more pervasive, though, than such a history of Broad Church overtly polemical anti-Catholic writings would suggest. Regardless of the over-arching topic of a particular sermon, pamphlet, or treatise, Broad Church writings typically make numerous jabs at Catholicism (Anglo and Roman). This is not only the case with anti-Catholic polemicists, such as Thomas Arnold and Charles Kingsley, who regularly critique Catholicism in their ostensibly devotional writings, but also the many other prominent Churchmen who officially abstained from anti-Catholic controversial writing. In my research, I have yet, in fact, to encounter a single prominent Broad Churchman who does not critique Catholicism at some point in his writing. Typically, anti-Catholic remarks recur throughout Broad Church writings, constituting a major theme within these works. Two texts that demonstrate such recurring anti-Catholicism particularly clearly are F.D. Maurice’s 1838 *The Kingdom of Christ* and William Henry Fremantle’s 1883 *The World as the Subject of Redemption*. Although primarily devoted to topics other than attacking Catholicism (in the case of *The Kingdom of Christ*, to how both the Church and the whole world are Christ’s kingdom, and in the case of *The World as the Subjection of Redemption*, to how the whole world needs to be physically, spiritually, and morally saved), attacks on Catholicism, in particular, accusations of how Catholicism oppresses the individual Christian, recur throughout these works. Interestingly, Maurice’s and Fremantle’s texts appeared a full forty-five years apart, demonstrating just how long-lived such Broad Church anti-Catholicism was.

Despite the many differences between Evangelical and Broad Church theology, Broad Church anti-Catholicism looked and worked surprisingly like the Evangelical anti-Catholicism that I discussed in the first half of this chapter. Liberal Anglicans used the
same basic anti-Catholic vocabulary. Appeals to private judgment and conscience, declarations of Jesus’s status as the one and only Mediator, and accusations of idolatry, and condemnations of ritualism, materialism, and elevating the human in place of the divine abound in Victorian Broad Church writings. As my references to Maurice and Fremantle in the previous paragraph already suggested, Broad Church anti-Catholicism further resembled Evangelical anti-Catholicism in that it obsessively set up the traditional Protestantism=liberty/ Catholicism=oppression dichotomy. As in the case of the Evangelicals, such Broad Church associations of Protestantism with freedom and Catholicism with oppression could take one of several forms: general declarations of Protestantism’s freeing and Catholicism’s repressive power, specific denunciations of the despotism of Catholic clergy, or celebrations of the Reformation as a key liberating moment in English/Protestant history. As I already argued, all such anti-Catholic language promoted Protestant individualism of some variety or other. (Appeals to

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75 For general associations of Protestantism with freedom and/or Catholicism with oppression, see Charles Kingsley. Sermons for the Times 91, 335; Pattison 388; Williams 182, 200; Powell 237-8; Colenso 10; Fremantle 168, 174, 186; and Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous, 264. For specific complaints about how the clergy pose a potential threat to liberty, see Charles Kingsley. Selections. 178-9; Williams 199; Maurice. The Kingdom of Christ II 326; Wilson 288; Fremantle 81, 151-152, 163, 171, 186, 223-224, 237. For specific celebrations of the Reformation as a liberating moment, see Arnold, Thomas. “The Oxford Malignants and Dr. Hampton.” 234; Maurice, F.D. The Kingdom of Christ, I 78, 79; Temple 161; Jowett. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 514-5, 523, 538; Colenso 34, 35 Arnold, Matthew. God and the Bible. xxxii; and Fremantle 172-3, 195.
conscience and private judgment defended the individual’s right and ability to apprehend God for himself, denunciations of idolatry or improper mediation insisted upon the individual’s right and ability to come directly and individually into the presence of God, and evocations of the Protestantism=liberty/Catholicism=oppression dyad promoted general freedom for the individual by making individual freedom the only properly Protestant course). Thus, in obsessively referring to such key anti-Catholic terms and dichotomies, Broad Church members, like their Evangelical brethren, were highlighting and bolstering not just their Protestantism but their Protestant individualism.

Despite its strong overall resemblance to Evangelical anti-Catholicism, Broad Church anti-Catholicism had a few distinguishing features, distinctions that, for the most part, further heightened Broad Church theology’s potential for promoting individualism. The first important distinction was one that I already hit upon in my discussion of Broad Church understandings of truth: the Broad Church members’ abandoning of the Bible as an absolute last word and check on inward faculties, such as judgment and conscience. Conscience and judgment were not just avenues where Broad Church members sought truth; they were also, as my section on the Evangelicals already highlighted, favorite terms to wield against Catholics. This meant that in declaring conscience and judgment supreme over the Bible, Broad Church members were not merely increasing their individual authority to decide the truth; they were presenting such greater personal latitude as fundamental to proper Protestantism.

Further distinguishing Broad Church anti-Catholicism from Anglican anti-Catholicism was Broad Church members’ ambivalent handling of the human vs. divine dichotomy. Oftentimes, Broad Church members employed the human vs. divine dyad
almost exactly as the Evangelicals did.\textsuperscript{76} (The Broad Church members labeled the Catholic view human, declared their own view divine, and then trumped the human with the divine). On many other occasions, however, Broad Church members fundamentally questioned such rigid human vs. divine distinctions. In early Broad Church writings, such challenges to the human vs. divine distinction tend to be only implicit and appear in the form of a shift in theological emphasis away from the Atonement (Christ’s dying on the cross for humankind’s sins) and towards the Incarnation (Christ’s assumption of human flesh).\textsuperscript{77} Even if they do not announce that they are doing so, such celebrations of the Incarnation inherently disrupt rigid human vs. divine dichotomies in a couple of key ways. First, they celebrate the corporeality of the divine figure Jesus. Secondly, they offer an account of Jesus’ ministry and salvation of mankind that emphasizes the similarities between Jesus and mankind (their common humanity) as opposed to the differences between them (Jesus’ unique sinlessness, the fundamental idea underlying the Atonement). During the second half of the nineteenth-century, the once implicit challenges to the human vs. divine dichotomy tend to become much more overt. Such explicit challenges to human vs. divine distinctions typically take on of two forms. Oftentimes, later Broad Church writers overtly announce that they are attacking the human vs. divine or the very closely related secular vs. sacred dichotomy. Other times, late Broad Church members are slightly more subtle and merely take a single subject or


item (Jesus, human beings, the Bible, science, etc.) and declare it to be simultaneously 
human and divine.\textsuperscript{78}

Regardless of the exact form it took, this blurring of the human vs. divine in 
Broad Church theology typically bolstered the individualism within such liberal thought. 
Making the human seem inherently more precious and valuable, the breakdown of the 
human vs. divine dichotomy supported the newfound Broad Church emphasis on self-
development, a phenomenon, which as I have already argued, was in itself highly 
individualistic.\textsuperscript{79} The questioning of the human vs. divine and the closely related sacred 
vs. secular were also instrumental to the Broad Church’s turning away from absolute 
Biblical authority and towards its increasing embracing of traditionally secular forms of 
knowledge, such as science, history, and Biblical criticism. Unsurprisingly, Broad 
Church attacks on the Bible’s inerrancy often point out the human side to the Biblical 
message. Conversely, Broad Church statements concerning the value of science or other 
learning frequently announce the potentially divine quality of such ostensibly human 
knowledge.\textsuperscript{80} As I have already argued, such lowering of the Bible’s authority and 
elevation of other forms of authority inherently fostered Broad Church individualism in 

\textsuperscript{78} For examples of explicit attacks upon the human vs. divine dichotomy, see Fremantle 5, 161, 167-8. And 
Jowett. \textit{College Sermons}. 111-112. For moments where Broad Church members declare a single item both 
human and divine, see Charles Kingsley. \textit{Town and Country Sermons} 270; Charles Kingsley. Selections. 
178-9; Charles Kingsley. Selections. 23; Jowett. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 488, 503, 505, 524; 
The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans. Vol. II 367. Williams 197; Powell 261; 

\textsuperscript{79} For statements about the preciousness, even the quasi-divinity, of the human, see Maurice, F.D. \textit{The 
Kingdom of Christ}. I 243; Kingsley54 114; Charles Kingsley. \textit{The Good News of God}. 29, 30, 51, 188, 189; 
Charles Kingsley. Selections. 57, 66, 68; Jowett. \textit{Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous}. 338; Arnold, 
Matthew. \textit{Last Essays}. 175; Fremantle xiv, 3, 14, 189, 248, 253; and Green2 257, 265, 273

\textsuperscript{80} For statements about the human status of the Bible, see Arnold, Thomas. \textit{The Christian Life}. I 382-3, 
400. Williams 197; Powell 261; Wilson 292, 297. For statements about the divine status and/or divine 
revelation provided by learning traditionally thought secular, see Arnold, Thomas. \textit{The Christian Life} II 40 
Charles Kingsley. \textit{Selections}. 23; Jowett. “Essay on the Interpretation of Scripture.” 488; Powell 261; and 
Fremantle 5.
that it gave the Broad Church member a choice of which authority to follow. Thus, the breakdown of the human vs. divine distinction can once again be said to increase Broad Church individualism. Perhaps, the greatest individualistic power behind the Broad Church challenge to the human vs. divine dichotomy lay, though, in the rhetorical flexibility that it gave Broad Church members. As I pointed out in the previous paragraph, Broad Church members did not entirely turn away from the traditional Christian and anti-Catholic practice of setting up the human and the divine as dichotomous. Whenever the traditional human vs. divine dichotomy proved advantageous to their case, they could and did evoke it. Whenever such distinctions did not support their point or whenever opponents used such rhetoric against them, they could alternately, though, make the rhetorical move of rejecting all such dichotomies, and, in effect, transcend their opponents views, much like the did through their appeals to higher, better, more capacious, or more spiritual forms of truth.

As well as through their differing uses of certain key words and dichotomies, Broad Church theology also departed from Evangelical practice in terms of how broadly it applied its anti-Catholic critiques. Unsurprisingly, Anglo and Roman Catholics, those groups traditionally classified as Catholic, were the most common recipients of Broad Church anti-Catholic attacks. In an ingenious move, Broad Church members also, though, turned their anti-Catholic rhetoric against the staunchly Protestant Evangelicals. Sometimes through direct declarations but more often through subtler insinuations, Broad Church members would accuse the Evangelicals of being like their archenemies, the Catholics. At their most overt, Broad Church members would proclaim that the Evangelicals were behaving like the Catholics or they would compare some Evangelical
doctrine, such as the absolute authority of the Bible, to a roughly analogous Catholic doctrine, such as the absolute authority of the Church. More commonly, though, Broad Church members would insinuate an Evangelical/Catholic connection by accusing the Evangelicals of stereotypically Catholic transgressions. Pulling in favorite anti-Catholic key terms, Broad Church members frequently accused the Evangelicals of neglecting conscience, private judgment, or the truth. Continuing the anti-Catholic rhetoric and building upon Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s accusations that the Evangelicals were guilty of “Bibliolatry,” Broad Church members also frequently labeled the Evangelicals’ veneration of the Bible idolatrous. Most commonly, though, Broad Church members accused the Evangelicals of perpetrating religious oppression. Victorian Protestants tended to associate Protestantism so closely with liberty and Catholicism so closely with oppression, that any accusation of oppression, especially religious oppression, would likely have evoked thoughts of Catholicism. Broad Church texts go out of their way, though, to encourage such associations between the Evangelicals and the Catholics. When trumpeting the freedom of thought that they see the Evangelicals as neglecting, Broad Church members typically present their ideal as specifically “Protestant freedom” or “Protestant liberty.” Conversely, when critiquing Evangelical incursions on this freedom, Broad Church writers typically describe such violations in stereotypically anti-

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81 For examples of overt comparisons between the Evangelicals and the Catholics, see Arnold, Thomas. "The Oxford Malignants." 234; Maurice. Theological Essays. 477; Kingsley Sermons for the Times 79; Jowett. "The Interpretation of Scripture." 536; Hughes 605; Arnold, Matthew. Culture and Anarchy 94; Arnold, Matthew. Literature and Dogma. xxv. 82 For accusations that Evangelicals violate conscience and/or private judgment, see Williams 182, 186, 202; and Powell 235. For critiques of Evangelicals’ lack of respect for truth, see Arnold, Thomas. Principles of Church Reform. 82; Jowett. College Sermons. 111; Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous. 263; Jowett. "The Interpretation of Scripture." 530; Powell 234, 236, 253-4; Colenso 37, 207; Arnold, Matthew. God and the Bible. 17. For accusations of Evangelical idolatry, see Coleridge. Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit. 76; Arnold, Thomas. The Christian Life. I 319, 379; Maurice. The Kingdom of Christ. II 158-159, 163; Arnold, Matthew. Culture and Anarchy. 94; and Arnold, Matthew. Literature and Dogma. xxv.
Catholic terms. In particular, Broad Church writers tend to turn to the favorite anti-
Catholic metaphor of entrapment. Expecting individuals, especially individual
clergy men, to bow to the letter of the Bible and the Thirty-Nine Articles, Evangelicals,
Broad Church members allege, are placing such Christians in a state of “bondage,”
“ensnaring” them, placing a “yoke of subjection” over them, or catching them in their
“trammels.”

Church Establishment and Broad Church Anti-Individualism

Despite its many individualistic currents, Broad Church theology could, in certain
respects, be downright anti-individualistic. If the individualism of Broad Churchmen
could be said to be more extreme than that of the Evangelicals, so could its anti-
individualism. The first major limit to Broad Church individualism rose out of what
Victor Shea, William Whitla, and Tod Jones have dubbed “The Broad Church
Compromise.” The Broad Church struck a compromise, Jones argues, in that it
supported “any intellectual effort with pretensions to freedom of inquiry” but, at the same
time, insisted that such inquiries should take place within a powerful, institutional,
national church, the Church of England (256). For all their theological liberalism, Broad
Church members tended to be staunch, often downright militant, defenders of the

83 For places where Broad Church figures explicitly declare the Protestant nature of their freedom, see
Colenso 10; Pattison. “Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750.” 388; and Fremantle 173-
4, 195, 200. For places where Broad Church writings closely associate Evangelical and Catholic
oppression, see Kingsley. Sermons for the Times, 91; Jowett. “The Interpretation of Scripture.” 536;
84 For discussions of this concept of “The Broad Church Compromise,” see Whitla and Shea 123-126 and
Jones 4, 256.
established church, much more so than the more theologically conservative Evangelicals. As this section will argue, such Broad Church fervor for the state church was, in essence, an anti-individualist stance, one that Broad Churchmen saw as a necessary counterbalance to the highly individualistic “freedom of inquiry” that these liberal Anglicans typically supported.

The Broad Church party’s strong commitment to a national church shows up in at least two main ways. First and most obviously, Broad Church members offered numerous long, passionate defenses of the state church. Many of foundation texts behind Broad Church thought are, in fact, sustained defenses of Church of England. Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s 1829 Church and State, Thomas Arnold’s 1831 Principles of Church Reform, and F.D. Maurice’s 1836 Kingdom of Christ are three such examples. The Broad Church fervor for Church establishment comes across perhaps even more clearly, though, in this party’s often vitriolic remarks about Dissent and Dissenters. As David A. Ward has pointed out, an attack upon Dissent lay at the heart of just about all of Matthew Arnold’s prose religious works. Although less prolific in their attacks on Nonconformity, numerous other Broad Churchmen, such as Thomas Arnold, F.D. Maurice, and Essay and Reviews contributor William Bristow Wilson, also offered their own, often quite scathing critiques of Dissent. Dissent, as Broad Churchmen ranging from the Arnolds, to Maurice, and Wilson, presented it, was not just misguided; it was wrong and dangerous.

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85 In what is the fullest treatment of Matthew Arnold’s anti-Dissent campaign that I have found, see Ward. “The Transformed Religion: Matthew Arnold and the Refining of Dissent.”
86 See, for example, Arnold. Principles of Church Reform. 4, 14, 33, 47, 51, 75; Maurice. Kingdom of Christ II 266, 243; and Wilson “Séances Historiques de Genève” 304.
As a look at Broad Churchmen’s specific pro-establishment and anti-Dissenting arguments reveals, Broad Churchmen saw the state church as an absolutely vital force for keeping otherwise unbridled Protestant individualism in check. Broad Church defenses of the state church typically center around three main arguments, each of which point to Broad Church members’ fears of excessive individualism. In the first and probably the best known argument, Broad Church writers frequently argue that the national church establishment is essential for maintaining social stability and harmony. In Coleridge’s words, the Church is vital to the nation’s “permanence and progression” (Church and State 78). Almost exactly echoing Coleridge, Thomas Arnold declares “the Church establishment essential to the well-being of the nation” (Principles of Church Reform iv), and Maurice proclaims it vital to the “sustain[ing] of national order” (Kingdom of Christ I 20). The British nation, Broad Church members fear, would lose its social cohesion, descend into chaos, and stop progressing if the Church of England were to be disestablished.

The second recurring pro-establishment argument is equally anti-individualistic. The state church must be preserved, men such as Coleridge, Arnold, and Maurice argue, because it provides a necessary check to laissez-faire economics. Whatever property belongs to the Church has, in Broad Church writers’ estimation, been set apart for public purposes, for the enjoyment and betterment of the nation. Thomas Arnold articulates the church’s public role particularly eloquently. Having just criticized the evils of a system of “letting alone,” Arnold remarks, “The sight of a Church tower, whenever it is met with, is an assurance that every thing has not been bought up for private convenience or enjoyment; --that there is some provision made for public purposes, and for the welfare
of the poorest and most destitute human being who lives within hearing of its bells” (Principle of Church Reform 8). Although the powerful Church tower metaphor is, as far as I know, unique to Arnold, Coleridge and Maurice make the same basic underlying point: that ecclesiastical property is a necessary counterbalance to personal property, which was, of course, very unevenly distributed during the Victorian period.  

In a third anti-individualistic pro-establishment argument, Broad Church members push for a state church on the grounds that such an arrangement best parallels the fundamentally social nature of man. In Coleridge’s words, men, from the beginning, have existed in a “social bond with one another” (Church and State 97). Thomas Arnold similarly affirms a belief in the basic sociality of humankind. As Arnold asserts, it is both “unphilosophical and unchristian” to regard “society...as a mere collection of individuals, looking each after his own interests” (Principle of Church Reform 7). Of these three early Victorian works on Church reform, Maurice’s Kingdom of Christ devotes by far the most attention to human beings’ fundamentally social natures. Whereas Coleridge and Arnold make such statements once or twice in passing, Maurice reiterates this tenet throughout his lengthy, two volume Kingdom of Christ.  

As Maurice repeatedly insists, each person is first and foremost a member of the great society, the Church (or “the Kingdom of Christ” as Maurice dubs it); it is only secondarily, Maurice insists, that people are independent individuals (I 143).

Broad Church anti-Dissenting “arguments” similarly attest to such liberal Anglicans’ desire to rein in what they saw as excessive Protestant individualism. I have

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87 See, for example, Coleridge 42, 46; and Maurice, Kingdom of Christ II 235-236.  
88 For instances in the where Maurice explicitly declares the basic sociality of humankind, see The Kingdom of Christ, I 102, 143, 168, 189, 233, and II 328.
put the word “arguments” in quotations here because Broad Church members’ anti-Dissenting diatribes typically take the form of name calling rather than of cogent arguments. Still, the names that Broad Churchmen call Dissenters fall into two major categories, both of which suggest that these liberal Anglicans regarded Dissenters as excessively individualistic. In the majority of cases, Broad Church call Dissenters names that suggest that they are being overly selfish or self-centered. Thomas Arnold makes this accusation when he calls Dissenters “self-seekers” (Principles of Church Reform 4). Matthew Arnold similarly reads Dissenters as seeking self-aggrandizement when he attributes Dissenters’ desire to Dissent to how “the fuss, bustle, and partisanship of a private sect” fans their sense of “self-importance” (St. Paul and Protestantism xxix). In a slight variation on this same selfishness/self-centeredness theme, Broad Church members also criticize Dissenters for having the audacity to choose their own religious teachers and to set up what Matthew Arnold decries as a “self-made religious community” (Culture and Anarchy 11).

The second major strain of anti-Dissenting name calling attacks Dissent from a slightly different angle. Tapping into the first and best known pro-Church argument, Broad Church members present Dissent as endangering the entire order of society—as threatening to make it break up into atomistic parts. Maurice suggests such a threat to social cohesion when he alleges that sects “divide instead of harmonize society” (I 206). Getting slightly more dramatic about the dangers of Dissent, Thomas Arnold labels Dissenters “Destroyers” (Principles of Church Reform 4). In an even more scathing indictment, perhaps the single most mean spirited Broad Church remark about Dissent, Matthew Arnold denounces each and ever Dissenter as “a wild ass alone by himself”
(Culture and Anarchy 24). As Arnold’s language here suggests, he views Dissenters as “wild” (i.e. out of control and potentially disruptive). Following the word “wild” with the word “ass,” Arnold pulls together association of asinine behavior and animality, suggesting that the Dissenter is behaving in such a wild, foolish way that he no longer seems fully human. Concluding his rant with “by himself,” Arnold strengthens the idea that Dissent is anti-social, or as the title Culture and Anarchy suggests, potentially anarchic.

Dissenters are not the only group, though, that Broad Church members accuse of being anti-social and divisive. Broad Church encomiums of the state church and/or attacks on Dissent often turn to critiques of doctrinaire Anglicans as well. Dogmatic Anglicans, be they High Church or Low Church are, as Broad Church members frequently argue, equally culpable for the “evil” of Dissent because they set up very specific dogmatic doctrines that many people cannot in good conscience agree with. In William Henry Wilson’s words, such dogmatic Christians “so limit the terms of [the Anglican] communion as to provoke—as human beings are constituted—to necessitate separation from it” (Wilson 304). On a closely related note, Broad Church members also include party divisions among the “deadly evil[s] of religious divisions” (Thomas Arnold Principles of Church Reform 17). 89 Conveniently, Broad Church members, as Tod Jones has pointed out, typically insist that because of their rejection of “dogma,” theirs is not an actual religious “party” (206-207). Denouncing division but associating division specifically with dogmatic religion, Broad Church members thus set up a rhetorical

89 For critiques of party divisions, see, for example, Arnold. Principles of Church Reform 17, 22, 71; Arnold, Matthew. Last Essays on Religion 183; Jowett. Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 271; Fremantle 186, 287.
situation where they can decry their opponents' insistence upon the correctness of their beliefs as excessive, divisive individualism and yet still retain full rights to advance their own idiosyncratic doctrines and personalized truths.

Salvation, Individual Accountability, and Broad Church Teachings

Another potential anti-individualistic current in Broad Church teaching centered around Broad Church teachings concerning Judgment Day and salvation. As I pointed out from the very beginning of this dissertation, Evangelical Protestant individualism was firmly predicated on the notion of each individual's accountability to God, specifically how each person would have to stand alone before God and be judged individually on Judgment Day. As the nineteenth-century progressed, Broad Church members, however, increasingly moved away from traditional notions of Judgment Day and salvation vs. damnation, potentially destabilizing the traditional basis for Protestant individualism.

In the case of the early Broad Church figure Thomas Arnold, Broad Church theology subscribed to the individual accountability model of orthodox Protestant individualism. In Thomas Arnold's writings, the Broad Church teachings concerning Judgment Day and salvation vs. damnation are virtually indistinguishable from those of the contemporary Evangelicals. In his Christian Life, Arnold repeatedly reminds his readers of the individual judgment before God that is to come on Judgment Day, even declaring outright, "We each of us, no doubt, shall have our own separate individual judgment after death" (I 353). Making clear that such Judgment Day carries with it the
very real possibility of damnation, Arnold goes on to remark, "there may be a time to each of us,---there will be, assuredly, if we will not believe that he [God] loves us, when he will love us no more for ever" (Christian Life I 343). Further conforming to the traditional individual-accountability-based model of Protestant individualism, Arnold presents such an inevitable Judgment and real threat of damnation as inherently justifying certain individual rights and privileges. Writing of the ultimate decisions about right and wrong, orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, that Christian must face, Arnold enjoins his listeners to humbly pray to God and to consider to the counsels of friends and fellow Churchmen, but ultimately, he counsels them:

remember that other men are encompassed with error also, and that we, and not they, must answer for our choice before Christ's judgment, we must, in the last resort, if our conscience and sense of truth cannot be persuaded that other men speak according to God's will, --we must follow our own inward convictions, though all the world were to follow to the contrary. (The Christian Life 310)

Thomas Arnold died, though, in 1842, and in the years following his death, Broad Church writers increasingly moved away from his traditional theological positions concerning Judgment Day and salvation. Inaugurating this shift was F.D. Maurice's 1853 Theological Essays, the particular controversial volume that ultimately led King's College, London, to strip Maurice of his chair-ship there.  
Maurice’s Theological Essays sparked such controversy precisely because it fundamentally questioned core Anglican teachings concerning salvation vs. damnation and heaven vs. hell. The

centerpiece of the controversy was the collection’s final essay, “On Eternal Life and Eternal Death,” a forty-page sustained assault on the orthodox position concerning salvation and damnation. In this essay, Maurice launches his attack in two stages, first by examining the meaning of the word “eternal” and then by reworking what salvation and damnation themselves mean. In response to the word “eternal,” Maurice insists that, when associated with God, eternity has nothing to do with time since God is above time (450). Based on this assertion, Maurice concludes, “If it is right, if it is a duty, to say that Eternity in relation to God has nothing to do with time or duration, are we not bound to say that also in reference to life or to punishment, it has nothing to do with time or duration?” (450). Continuing this questioning of traditional notions of eternity, Maurice goes on to specify that he is not following the older “Universalist” reading of eternity, which “dwelt on the possibility of men being restored after ages of suffering to the favor of God” (451). Rather than suggesting that eternal punishment might have eventual end, Maurice is thus arguing that eternal punishment or salvation essentially transcend time. Having questioned the “eternal” in eternal salvation or damnation, Maurice then moves on to interrogate traditional understandings of salvation vs. damnation. “Eternal life,” Maurice insists is “the knowledge of God who is Love, and eternal death the loss of that knowledge” (462). Thus, rather than literal places, Maurice imagines heaven and Hell as measures of the status of a person’s relationship with God.

Although offering a less sustained attack on orthodox notions of salvation vs. damnation and heaven vs. hell, Maurice’s other Theological Essays further bolster his attack on orthodox Protestant individualism’s underlying assumptions. In “On Justification By Faith,” the ninth essay of the collection, Maurice declares all of
humankind to be *already* justified by Christ’s death and resurrection, casting further
doubt as to whether individual Christians can truly be lost. Maurice’s next essay, “On
Regeneration,” brings traditional notions of individual salvation vs. damnation into even
greater question by announcing the doctrine of “social regeneration,” the idea that society
as a whole, not just the individual Christian, needs to be saved. Maurice’s assault on the
individual accountability model of orthodox Protestant individualism continues in his
eighth and twelfth *Theological Essays*, “On the Resurrection of the Son of God From
Death, the Grave, and Hell,” and “On the Judgment Day,” where he revamps the closely
related concept Judgment Day. Maintaining a certain modicum of orthodoxy, Maurice
announces his belief in an eventual Judgment Day, or as Maurice puts its, that “we must
all...BE MADE MANIFEST before the tribunal of Christ” (301). At Maurice soon
clarifies, though, this ultimate Judgment Day will when be an occasion, not of impending
reward or doom, but merely of greater knowledge. On that day, all people, Maurice
insists will have it “MADE MANIFEST...what their state was while they were pilgrims
in this world” (301). To this notion of the final Judgment Day as a day of knowledge
rather than punishment, Maurice also adds a concept of on-going Judgment in the here
and now. God, Maurice insists, is “the judge of the living and the dead” (297). Every
day, we are standing before Him and His Judgment, or as Maurice puts it, “every hour of
their lives [all people] are in the presence of the One who kn[ows] the intents of their
hearts, and who [is] calling them to account for these and for the acts to which they gave
birth” (293).

Put together, the teachings of Maurice’s *Theological Essays* largely weakened,
but did not destroy the accountability model underlying orthodox Protestant
individualism. With damnation or even divine punishment no longer being held up as credible threats, the prospect of having to stand individually before God on Judgment Day lost some of its gravity. Impending individual Judgment lost even more of its urgency in light of Maurice’s newfound emphasis on saving all of society and not just individuals. Nevertheless, Maurice’s teaching about Judgment still bore some resemblance to the orthodox individual-accountability model of Protestant individualism in that it still placed considerable emphasis on individual accountability—albeit in the unconventional form of an on-going, fire and brimstone-less divine Judgment. Even if he or she did not have to worry about some final Great Assize where he or she could be cast into Hell forever, the Mauricean Christian was reminded that he or she was always being watched by God and having each of his or her actions evaluated as righteous and unrighteous. As Maurice himself pointed out, such a model of on-going Judgment could have the potential effect of heightening Christians’ sense of individual accountability because it presented divine Judgment as something that was always already occurring and that could not be postponed to some distant future date (Theological Essays 293).

Over the course of the rest of the nineteenth-century, Broad Church members would only further dismantle traditional notions of salvation and divine Judgment. Taking such dismantling to the very next step was Maurice’s disciple and popularizer, Charles Kingsley. Defining salvation vs. damnation in terms of one’s nearness or distance from God and presenting such state as beginning, if not ending, in the here and now, Kingsley essentially reiterates Maurice’s teachings—although in much clearer,
more straight-forward prose.\footnote{For places where Kingsley speaks of salvation, damnation, heaven, and hell in heavily Mauricenean terms, see, for example, Charles Kingsley. \textit{Sermons for the Times}, 16, 20, 22, 24, 27, 34, and 91.} Notably, though, Kingsley takes his attack on traditional salvation and Judgment one step further. Moving beyond Maurice, who merely announces the concept that salvation should be social and not just individual, Kingsley harshly critiques those who attend to their own spiritual fates at the expense of the redemption of society. To focus to singleheartedly on saving one’s own soul is, in Kingsley’s estimation, to fall into a particularly egregious form of selfishness.\footnote{For places where Kingsley denounces excessive concern with one’s soul as a form of “selfishness,” see Charles Kingsley. \textit{Village Sermons}, 12, 83; and Charles Kingsley. \textit{Sermons for the Times} 18, 84, 87.} With such statements, Kingsley declares more orthodox Christians’ focus on individual salvation to be not just incomplete, but downright wrong.

Later Broad Church figures continue this process of dismantling traditional notions of salvation and Judgment. In the decades following Maurice’s \textit{Theological Essays}, Broad Church writers started devoting less and less attention to any sort of impending divine Judgment. From about 1860 onwards, mentions of damnation, metaphorical or otherwise, also disappear from their writings. In their place, Broad Churchmen begin paying more and more attention to the concept of social salvation. Social salvation figures prominently, for example, in Henry Bristow Wilson’s \textit{Essays and Reviews} essay, “Séances Historiques de Génève.” In this essay, Henry takes the favorite Broad Church topic of the necessity of a national church and predicates it upon what he sees as a compelling need for social salvation. A state church is indispensable, Wilson argues, because whole nations, not just the individuals who make them up, need to be saved” (288, 290-291, 303). Similar statements about the need to save whole societies also appear throughout the religious writings of Matthew Arnold. Christianity, Arnold
insists, is "a religion divinely revealed for the salvation of the human race" (emphasis mine) (God and the Bible 13). Further favoring notions of social as opposed to individual salvation, Arnold also singles out the focus on "saving [one's] individual soul" as one of the "Philistine's" great shortcomings (Culture and Anarchy 105). Social salvation received its most thorough, sustained attention, though, in William Henry Fremantle's 1883 Bampton Lecture series, The World as the Subject of Redemption. In this series of eight lectures, which were given at Oxford University and then published and widely circulated, Fremantle devotes over three-hundred pages of print to arguing that the whole world needs saving and that the Church's primary goal should be such redemption of society as opposed to the mere saving of individual souls.

Despite such attention to social salvation, later Broad Church writings continue to discuss individual salvation. Most frequently, though, these writings broach the topic of individual salvation as the beginning point of a statement about the equal importance of social salvation. In his 1883 The World as the Subject of Redemption, for example, William Henry Fremantle recognizes the value of "the redeemed [individual] man" but he immediately goes on to insist that the redeemed individual should be seen as a "microcosm...a little copy of the redeemed humanity, which is the Church" (257). Occasionally, later Broad Church writings speak of individual salvation as an issue in its own right, but even then, they speak of individual salvation in ways that explicitly discourage any self-assertion based on individual accountability. When they speak of individual salvation, late Broad Church members typically equate it specifically with a

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93 For further discussion of Matthew Arnold's treatment of salvation, see Franco Marucci's book article "Matthew Arnold's Biblical Reductionism." 83.
94 See Fremantle ix, xi, xv, 1, 6, 8, 9, 84, 181, 189, 261, 262-263, 311, and 322.
putting away of self-centeredness or selfishness. Writing of “true salvation,” T.H. Green, for example, describes it as “the deliverance from the self-seeking self” (234). On a similar note, Matthew Arnold equates “the righteousness which is salvation” with “self-renouncement” (Literature and Dogma 337). William Henry Fremantle expresses salvation as self-renunciation perhaps most dramatically. Writing of the process by which the individual Christian is saved, Fremantle remarks,

The evil, the ruin from which we are redeemed, is best expressed by the word Selfishness, the narrowness of mind and heart which exalts the individual and his own circle of interests to the exclusion of all that is beyond him, of God and humanity. The restoration consists in the reverse process, the attaching of self to the larger unity, the losing of self, so far as this is possible for a moral being, in God and man, the self-forgetting, universal love. In the former state, the part is everything, the whole is lost; in the latter, self is subordinated to the supreme Unity and to those circles of life through which the supreme Unity is manifested to us. Self is subdued and God and Christ reign within us. (257-258).

Referring at least in passing to a loss of self that is “possible for a moral being” (257), Fremantle momentary evokes traditional notions of individual accountability, but rather than build upon the notion of individual moral responsibility, Fremantle soon moves on to an almost mystical account of the stripping away of self in an act of “self-forgetting universal Love” (257).

As Fremantle’s comments show, the accountability model of Protestant individualism may not have been entirely dead in late Broad Church writings, but it had
largely been eviscerated. With the individual’s soul no longer seen as being in eternal
danger, with undue concern with one’s own soul being denounced as selfish, and with
salvation being directly equated with a putting away from self, accountability-based
individual assertion lost most of its rhetorical viability in Broad Church circles. This is
not to say that Protestant individualism was at an end amongst Broad Church members.
It merely had to take other forms besides the classic Evangelical model of the individual
preparing to face God on Judgment Day. Tapping into enduring Anti-Catholicism, Broad
Church members could still trumpet individual rights and privileges by labeling them
Protestant and associating the denial of them with Catholicism. Perhaps even more
importantly, they could also still appeal to what Mary Augusta Ward referred to as their
“the modern gospel of the divine right of self-development” (Robert Elsemere 209). This
call to self-development was, however, as I will explain in my second chapter, easy to
apply unequally to women, the poor, and other less privileged members of Victorian
society. For those whose claim to individuality was not already endorsed by Victorian
society, the move away from the highly democratic accountability model could be
precarious.
Chapter Two-Women and Protestant Individualism in Victorian Sermons and Other Religious Writings

As I have shown in my first chapter, Protestant individualism was a powerful force in both Evangelical and Broad Church Anglican writings. With individualism more closely associated with masculinity and with men more classically regarded as individuals, the degree to which Victorian Protestant individualism was available to women needs to be examined. Chapters three and four will look at how available the novelists Charlotte Brontë and Mary Augusta Ward envision such Protestant individualism as being available to women. This chapter, though, will continue my examination of Victorian sermons, religious periodicals, and other classically religious writings and consider the degree to which such writings suggest that Victorian Protestant individualism was accessible to women. As I will argue in this chapter, Evangelical sermons and other religious texts suggest that Protestant individualism was fairly available to Victorian Evangelical women. In contrast, Broad Church texts raise serious questions about the ease with which women could tap into their less orthodox brand of Protestant individualism. This is not to say that Broad Church women could not seize upon Protestant individualism, but rather that they had to rework such individualism significantly to make it viable for them.

My argument that Evangelicalism was so potentially empowering to Victorian women may admittedly sound a bit counterintuitive. As numerous scholars have pointed
out, Evangelicals tended to embrace separate spheres ideologies. As Catherine Hall has argued, late eighteenth to early nineteenth-century Evangelicalism was, in fact, a strong contributing force in the actual rise of such understandings of gender. Further making Victorian Evangelicalism seem an unlikely place for finding female empowerment, Evangelicals, as Julie Melynke has pointed out, tended to be ambivalent when it came to supporting nineteenth-century legislative reforms concerning women’s legal rights (137-138). Writing of Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Monica Correa Frykstedt puts the common Evangelical position on the woman questions particularly clearly. “As editor of a woman’s magazine, Charlotte Elizabeth made it clear from the beginning that it was not her intention to advocate equality between the sexes” (45).

With her very next breath, Frykstedt goes on, though, to note an important exception to Charlotte Elizabeth’s rejection of gender equality. “In one respect only was woman equal with man,” Frykstedt writes, “her soul was as immortal as his. This belief,” Frykstedt notes, “not only served as an impetus for Charlotte Elizabeth to object to the degradation and humiliation which the women of the labouring classes suffered, it also endowed her with deep respect for the minds and souls of her readers” (45). It was from this fundamental spiritual equality between the sexes that the female Protestant individualism that I am examining garnered its power. Evangelicals may have made few claims to gender equality besides arguing for the equality of all immortal souls, but such claims for spiritual equality could be quite powerful, in themselves, since they articulated equality in terms that made it difficult to exclude anyone, male or female, rich or poor.

95 See, for example, Catherine Hall. White, Male, and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992. 82-92; Françoise Basch. Relative Creatures. 274; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family Fortunes. 1987, 33.
This wide availability of Protestant individualism comes across, for example, when looking at Evangelical presentations of private judgment. The specific wording of Evangelical sermons and other religious writings suggests that such writings generally extended the “right to private judgment” liberally. When describing how all must use their private judgment to interpret the scriptures for themselves, Evangelical writers frequently go out of their way to include less privileged members of society. When interpreting the Bible, the poor, *The Christian Observer* contributor insists, should save their “supreme deference [for] the only infallible Instructor” (“On Conscience, Natural and Spiritual” 394). On a similar note, William Goode concludes his long *Divine Rule of Faith and Practice* by specifically announcing that “young and old” alike should be allowed to judge the scripture for themselves (III 543). Continuing the theme of egalitarian access to Biblical truth, the great Evangelical tract writer J.C. Ryle also goes out of his way to warn against giving undue sway to educated people’s interpretations of the Bible. In Ryle’s words, “Infallibility is not to be found among the learned, but in the Bible” (“The Fallibility of Ministers” 290). At least one Evangelical Churchman, Walter Shirley, strongly implies that women too should be allowed to judge the Scriptures for themselves. “All Christians,” Shirley writes, “are now encouraged to search the Sacred Scriptures...with the promise that, if they search them in humility, and faith, and prayer, they shall be taught of God” (171). Although Shirley does not explicitly extend the right to judge the Scriptures to women, the context of the passage very strongly suggests that he is doing so. Earlier in the same paragraph, he has referred to how “the prophecy of Joel predicts that even the servants and handmaids should prophesy...that the vail is done away in Christ” (171), and two pages earlier, Shirley has specifically quoted
Galatians 3: 28: “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for they are all one in Christ Jesus” (469). Having just explicitly declared that women too will “prophesy” and that they too have equal Gospel privileges, Shirley seems almost certainly to be including women among his group of “all Christians” who should search and judge the Bible for themselves.

Unsurprisingly, women religious writers are even more overt than their male counterparts about women’s right to private judgment. Caroline Fry, author of The Listener at Oxford, a book-length anti-Oxford Movement controversial work, repeatedly calls upon her and her largely female readers’ private judgment. Adding extra authority to her claim, Fry pulls in a scripture to bolster her request: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things we have wrought; but that we receive a full reward. Whosever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God” (2 John 1:8, Fry 125). This scripture, of course, basically proclaims the idea of ultimate accountability to God that I have been speaking about throughout this dissertation. Based on this scriptural statement of every person’s individual responsibility for his or her soul, Fry launches into a passionate and strikingly egalitarian statement of the universal right to private judgment. Referring to 2 John 1:8, Fry writes, “this admonition is not addressed to learned colleges, and theological halls, and episcopal council chambers; to the strong, the wise, and the experienced in the churches; it is a lady and her children, the simplest and the weakest of the flock of Christ, who are enjoined to be the judges of what they hear; and taught of the word, and guided by the Spirit, to refuse and resist whatever is not agreeable to their testimony” (124-125). As Fry explicitly points out, John addresses his
second epistle to “the chosen lady and her children” (124). In reading 2 John 1:8 as an authorization of private judgment and then pointing out that this epistle is specifically addressed to “a lady and her children” (124), Fry thus provides a Biblical proof case in favor of women and children’s right to private judgment. Although she is never again as overt and extended in her defense of women’s private judgment, Fry continues to appeal to her “judgment” throughout the rest of her book. In support of her argument that ministers should primarily focus on preaching rather than administering the sacraments, Fry comments, “This is my judgment formed on the written word; to which alone I refer you to examine and decide if it be not so” (164). In this reference to her private judgment, Fry notably invites her mostly female readership to check the Bible for themselves and “decide if it be not so” (164). If Fry made this statement in the context of something other than an appeal to private judgment, she might seem to be undercutting her own message by declaring the possibility that she could be wrong. Since private judgment, though, is all about each individual’s checking the Bible and judging for him or herself, Fry seems more likely hear to be inviting her female readership to come join her in using their own private judgments. Fry makes a move that is simultaneously both daring and effacing when she again appeals to her private judgment. As preface to her assertion that Tractarianism is, at bottom, disguised “Popery” (173), Fry stipulates that this is what she believes “in [her] most conscientious judgment” (173). Once again in specifying that the principle that she is asserting is her judgment, Fry is, in a sense being unassuming, in that she is highlighting how this is her own interpretation; it is not an absolute standard of truth. However, since the whole point of the argument for the right of “private judgment” is that all persons should be allowed to make such individual
judgment calls, what may seem like hedging, only strengthens her point. It is also notable that Fry includes the extra adjective “conscientious” to describe her judgment. In doing so, she both claims a right to follow conscience and bolsters her controversial statement with not one, but two favorite Protestant individualist key terms.

Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna and The Christian Lady’s Magazine, the magazine she edited, similarly claim women’s right to judge spiritual matters for themselves. The quotation from The Christian Lady’s Magazine that I began this dissertation with notably makes such a point. “If the great and wise must answer before God for their opinions,” the Christian Lady’s Magazine contributor writes, “we, however stupid and ignorant, must equally answer for ours” (“The First Step Towards Puseyism.” The Christian Lady’s Magazine, 1843). Although she uses the word “opinions” rather than “judgment,” the writer of this passage makes a very similar point to Fry’s about how the “lady and her children” must judge. Returning to the very basics of Evangelical doctrine, she reminds her readers of each person’s individual accountability. In doing so, she, even more so than Fry, puts her claim in what sounds like it should be very self-effacing language. At the same time that such language is, in a sense, deprecating to both the writer and her predominately female readership, it only strengthens her claim that all have the right to judge. If even “ignorant” and “stupid” people have to the right to judge, then she and her readers need not prove their education, reasoning powers, or any other credentials. By itself, divine accountability provides sufficient authorization. This is just the sort of passage that Krueger’s “woman preacher” thesis so dramatically fails to account for. Notably, Tonna uses the adjective “we” (141). Moreover, she makes her claims in terms of divine accountability, which unlike some special calling to preach, is
applicable to all. In thus appealing to core Protestant ideals, Tonna is not merely bolstering her own religious authority but that of all of her fellow human beings.

As well as being quite egalitarian in its treatment of private judgment, Evangelical theology also tends to be capacious in terms of who it accords the power and duty to ascertain truth. As a key starting point, Evangelicals present truth as something that just about everyone can potentially comprehend. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Evangelicals present truth as coming from one and only one place: the Bible. Thus, anyone who can read the Bible (or even hear its being read) is capable of coming to the truth. Making Biblical understanding even more available to women, children, and the poor, Evangelicals, as I also pointed out in the previous chapter, saw the aid of the Holy Spirit as the single most important factor in determining whether a person would correctly understand the Scripture. In Evangelical teaching, the Holy Spirit, as both William Goode and Walter Shirley highlight, is available to all—at least to all who were saved (Goode III 541-542, Shirley 197). Evangelical teachings about the Holy Spirit and its vital role in Biblical interpretation might not place all interpreters on equal footing, but the distinctions they made had nothing to do with common Victorian social categories, such as race or class. Rather, they broke people down into the saved and the unsaved.

As well as something that all Christians could understand, truth was something that Evangelicals maintained that all people were obligated to follow. Walter Shirley articulates such a principle when he writes that there is “one standard of everlasting truth; the standard, be it remembered by which all of us shall be judged at the last day” (67). As in the case of private judgment, God’s impending judgment of each individual person obligates all people to seek the truth for themselves. J. C. Ryle, the famous Evangelical
tract writer, also proclaims the universality of people’s obligation to truth and grounds such obligation on impending judgment. Urging all of his readers to action, Ryle asserts, “every Christian man, and every Christian woman, must do their part in contending for the truth” (44) and then immediately moves into a reiteration of how all must stand individually before God on Judgment Day. Ryle’s comment is particularly notable because it explicitly includes women amongst those who must contend for the truth, suggesting that even if Victorian women writers pushed Evangelicalism’s religious egalitarianism a bit farther than male Evangelicals, they were still building upon a well-established tradition.

Charlotte Tonna makes her own very bold and dramatic claim to truth in the preface to the 1843 volume of her Christian Lady’s Magazine. Responding to critics who have lambasted her as “a muslin divine” (i), Tonna offers a very dramatic statement of her and her female reader’s inescapable duty to follow truth. Tonna writes,

. . . We have always stood ready at any moment to relinquish our office [the editorship of The Christian Lady’s Magazine] beloved and cherished as it really is in our inmost heart; but resolved by God’s grace to yield no point of Christian verity; nor even to be silent in any matter where the truth of the gospel is assailed.

It has recently pleased the conductors of that very able, but somewhat eccentric publication of the Quarterly Review, to dub Charlotte Elizabeth ‘a muslin divine.’ It is far from her wish or province, to intrude into the arena of theological controversy; but when cambric, lawn, and crape are all agitated by such extraordinary winds of doctrine, muslin will
also flutter in the breeze. Women have souls and any attempt to corrupt the saving knowledge whereby alone a sinner may attain to eternal life becomes an attack upon individual faith, to be individually repelled and answered. On this ground we respectfully crave of our brethren, Reverend and literary, freedom of speech, at least among ourselves: and we would thankfully remind them that the muslin attire of Anne Askew, and many others, caught the flames of martyrdom no less constantly, no less joyfully than did the Episcopal lawn of our honoured Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Hooper, and Farrar. Should those days return, we hope our Protestant men will find their Protestant wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, not a whit behind those of the Reformation, in strengthening them to suffer for Christ, and in shewing all joyous readiness to suffer by their side. (i-ii)

Following the same general pattern of the male clergymen Shirley and Ryle, Tonna declares her duty to follow truth and (with her references to women's "souls" and "saving knowledge" (ii)), attributes such a responsibility to speak truth to her and her readers' impending judgments before God. Tonna, once again, also includes her female readers in her claims for a Protestant individualist ideal, in this case truth. Describing the women as coming together to speak because of their common individual accountability to God, this passage of Tonna's also highlights the rather paradoxical related individuality of Evangelical Protestant individualism. It is precisely Tonna and her readers' common duties to their individual souls that draw them together to speak.

Unlike Evangelical works, Victorian religious writings suggest that Broad Church individualism may have been difficult for women to realize. The first impediment to
women's realization of Broad Church individualism that emerges in Broad Church writings is the pronounced elitism of such liberal thought. At the heart of such elitism were Broad Church members' highly complex conceptions of truth. Unlike Evangelicalism, which presented truth as accessible to anyone who had a Bible and the guiding Holy Spirit residing within him or her, Broad Church teaching regarded truth as very difficult to determine. Broad Church members often explicitly make comments about the challenging nature of ascertaining truth. Just within the 1860 collection Essays and Reviews, for example, Baden Powell warns readers of the "difficulty which always occurs in eliciting the truth" (240), and Benjamin Jowett proclaims that one must be a "strong swimmer" to seek and find religious truth ("On the Interpretation of Scripture" 535). More frequently, though, Broad Church statements about the elusiveness of truth take the form of declarations concerning the difficulty of accurately interpreting the Bible.⁹⁶ As a starting point, Broad Church writers often assert that full understanding of the Scriptures only comes to the educated. By such education, Broad Church writers sometimes mean that the Bible interpreter should have a reading knowledge of the Biblical languages, especially Greek.⁹⁷ Other times, as in the case of Matthew Arnold's famous assertion "No man, who knows nothing else, knows even his Bible" (Culture and Anarchy 103), Broad Church writers suggest that proper scriptural interpretation requires a more broad-based education, a knowledge of what Arnold calls "culture." In Broad Church understandings, education does not, however, necessarily guarantee that a person

⁹⁶ For more examples of Broad Church texts that present the Bible as very difficult to interpret aright, see Arnold, Thomas. Principles of Church Reform. 16; Colenso 25, Williams 184, and Powell 259.
⁹⁷ Like Benjamin Jowett, Matthew Arnold asserts that those who have to read the Bible in translation will only develop a limited understanding of it (St. Paul and Protestantism 23-4). On a similar note, Roland Williams and Colenso speak of the "special training" (Williams 184; Colenso 25), a special training by which they likely mean a command of Biblical languages.
will correctly interpret the Bible. Jowett, in his “On the Interpretation of Scripture,” provides perhaps the loftiest account of the depth and breadth of intellectual ability needed to tackle the Scriptures. “To get inside the [Scriptural] world,” Jowett writes, “is an effort of thought and imagination, requiring the sense of a poet as well as a critic—demanding much more than learning, a degree of original power and intensity of mind” (“On the Interpretation of Scripture” 512). Jowett’s comment, of course, strongly anticipates Matthew Arnold’s later assertions that “the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary” (Literature and Dogma xiii) but it is much more explicit about demanding not just a proper general understanding of Bible’s nature but also particular brilliance—almost genius—from the Biblical interpreter.

Such exclusivity about who can properly apprehend truth did not, of course, bode well for women, the poor, or other people who were either poorly educated or not regarded as properly intellectual by Victorian society. The requirement that a true understanding of the Bible required a knowledge of Biblical languages, such as Greek, immediately disqualified all who had not received an education in the Classics, which, in Victorian times, would have meant virtually everyone besides upper-class, university-educated men. Considering that women’s education was generally less rigorous than men’s and that the education of the poor was typically rudimentary at best, the requirement that one have a strong, broad-based education also put women and other less socio-economically privileged people at a disadvantage. 98 Even the requirement that truth-finding required particular intellectual acumen did not put women or the poor in a much better position. Less rigorously educated, women and the poor would likely have had what college educators now call their “critical thinking” skills less fully honed. Even

98 For further information about what a Victorian woman’s education was typically like, see Prochaska 3.
if, despite all impediments, women or lower class people could intellectually equal educated, upper class men, Victorian society was less likely to recognize such accomplishment in such unexpected sources. As Genevieve Lloyd has pointed out in chilling detail, women have historically been considered less capable of reason than men. This particular historical generalization was also true about the Victorians, as even a quick look at the writings of John Ruskin or even F.D. Maurice will reveal.

This is not to say that Broad Churchmen envisioned women, the poor, or even the more orthodox as completely incapable of recognizing the truth. Harkening back to the hierarchalization of truths that I discussed in the previous chapter, Broad Churchmen would more likely label those who did not share their social status and/or their particular views as only appreciating some lower, smaller, less advanced, or some otherwise inferior form of the truth. In short, Broad Church member’s elitist understandings of truth allowed them at least to subordinate, if not perhaps outright deny, less socially privileged people’s claims to truth. Such inequality in terms of command of truth, especially Biblical truth, comes out particularly vividly in Jowett’s 1855 Epistles of St. Paul. First speaking to the “poor and uneducated,” Jowett remarks that “no better advice can be given for [their] understanding of Scripture than to read the Bible humbly with prayer” (Epistles of St. Paul I 366). When he immediately moves on to the “critical and metaphysical student” Jowett, however, recommends what he himself delineates “another sort of rule” (I 366). Rather than rely on the humble, prayerful Bible reading of the poor, uneducated man, the “critical and metaphysical students’ duty,” Jowett writes, is to throw himself back into the times, the modes of thought, the language of the Apostolic age. He must pass from the abstract to the concrete, from
the ideal and intellectual to the spiritual, from later statements of faith or doctrine to the words of inspiration which fell from the lips of the first believers. He must seek to conceive the religion of Christ in its relation to the religions of other ages and distant countries, to the philosophy of our own or other times. (Epistles of St. Paul I 366)

As Jowett’s relates through his respective descriptions of the “poor and uneducated” person’s versus the “critical and metaphysical students” interpretative processes, the “poor and uneducated” person can and should arrive at some degree of understanding of Scripture. The poor man’s understanding, however, pales in comparison beside the “critical and metaphysical students” greater comprehension. (I 366). Armed with superior training and intellect, the “critical and metaphysical student” can move seamlessly between literal vs. figurative, material vs. spiritual, and temporal vs. universal truths, grasping a truth that is bigger, higher, and more spiritual than that of the poor, uneducated person.

A similar elitism also shows up in Broad Church members’ handling of the key Victorian Protestant “right of private judgment.” At times, Broad Church members treated the right of private judgment almost exactly as the Evangelicals did: They presented private judgment as a right that all people held based on the inescapable fact that each and everyone would have to stand individually before God on Judgment Day. The Thomas Arnold quotation on individual accountability and private judgment that I cited near the end of the previous chapter provides one such example. Just as often, though, Broad Church members could be rather selective about who should hold full rights to private judgment. Such selectivity is implied in the wide Broad Church practice
of commenting on the quality of a person’s judgment: Rather than speaking in terms of a person’s right to private judgment, Broad Church members often remark upon the rightness of a person’s judgment. Such a move in Broad Church thought is not all that surprising because, as I have already argued, these liberal Anglicans downplayed and even turned away from the classic Protestant individualist accountability model which undergirded the claim that all should hold the right to private judgment.

Curiously, though, such selectivity in terms of who should hold the right to private judgment appears even in Thomas Arnold’s The Christian Life, the same work where he, at least a certain moments, proclaims each person’s individual accountability and resulting right to private judgment. In his Christian Life, Arnold introduces an alternate model of the “right to private judgment” that will recur in later Broad Church teaching. Seizing upon the Broad Church’s fondness for progressivist views of both individual and global history, Arnold presents the “right of private judgment” as something that increases as individuals move closer and closer to maturity. Arnold presents such a progressivist model of the right of private judgment late in the first volume of The Christian Life, where he is discussing the degree to which individuals should accept versus question the teachings of the Church (i.e. use their private judgment). The individual’s degree of dependence on Church authority, Arnold argues, should decrease over time:

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99 For references specifically to “right judgment,” see . In a common variation on this same idea, Broad Church writers also frequently write about how people should focus on cultivating or improving their judgment. For such examples, see Maurice. Kingdom of Christ II 169, 183, 326; Arnold. Principles of Church Reform. 12;

100 This same progressivist model of private judgment also appears for example in Frederick Temple’s Essay and Reviews essay “The Education of the World.” See especially p. 140.
To rise gradually and gently from a state of passively leaning, as it were, on the arm of another, to resting more and more of our weight on our own limbs, and, at last, to standing alone, this has perpetually exemplified our relations, as individuals, to the church. . .if it should be, that her teaching contained any thing at variance with God’s word, we should perceive it more or less clearly, according to the degree of knowledge. (The Christian Life I 308).

Arnold may not use the word “private judgment” in this passage, but since he presents the individual as comparing “God’s word” to the teachings of the church, he is clearly discussing what people of his day frequently referred to as “private judgment.” Such a right to private judgment, as Arnold imagines here, actually increases over time as one attains greater and greater maturity. Not surprisingly, this particular passage does not base the individual Christian’s right to private judgment on any kind of universal personal accountability. Rather, private judgment, as this passage imagines it, depends upon the individual’s “degree of knowledge” (The Christian Life I 308).

As in the case of Broad Church members’ complex and hierarchical understandings of truth, such a progressivist model of private judgment was potentially precarious for women and other socially disadvantaged people. Without the same quality of education, women or the poor were unlikely to hold a claim to the same “degree of knowledge” (I 308) as would an upper-class man. The language of maturation added additional potential pitfalls for women and the poor. Predicating one’s rights on full maturity was risky for those, such as women and the poor, whom Victorian society frequently infantilized. Broad Church teachings, in fact, abound with descriptions
concerning how at least poor and non-European people are perpetually child-like.\textsuperscript{101} Arnold says nothing about the applicability of his maturity model to women, which is hardly surprising considering his \textit{Christian Life} is a collection of sermons that he delivered before his all-male Rugby school. Imagining the individual as progressing from “passive leaning” to “standing alone,” Arnold’s description of maturation sounds remarkably like Victorian ideals of masculinity, making it all the more uncertain whether women would have been seen as ever realizing such a state of maturity and hence coming into their full rights of private judgment.

Also making Broad Church Protestant individualism difficult for women to realize would have been the Broad Church’s fundamental ambivalence towards religious individualism. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Broad Church members, on the one hand, enthusiastically embraced highly subjective models of truth and highly independent models of self-development, but on the other hand, they showed discomfort with a focus on individual salvation and disputed whether the individual was really the fundamental spiritual unit. Unlike Evangelical Protestant individualism, Broad Church individualism lacked a single underlying principle, such as the Evangelicalism’s individual accountability model. Minus such a clear standard, it was potentially difficult to ascertain when one was legitimately pursuing truth and following conscience and when one was being divisively dogmatic. As I highlighted towards the end of the previous chapter, powerful leading Broad Church figures, such as Thomas and Matthew Arnold, F.D. Maurice, and Benjamin Jowett had no trouble making such delicate distinctions between proper vs. excessive individualism, and having others respect their distinctions.

\textsuperscript{101} For places where Broad Church texts explicitly declare the poor and/or non-European people perpetually child-like, see, for example, Jowett. \textit{College Sermons} 176, 286; Temple 145; and Fremantle 189.
Less powerful people, especially women, were less likely to have such an easy time, however. Lacking the temporal authority and social clout of a Jowett or a Dr. or Matthew Arnold, women and less privileged people would have been less likely to have had their particular navigation of the Broad Church individualism vs. anti-individualism tension automatically considered wise and proper. Perhaps even more challenging to Victorian women, though, would have been the degree to which Victorian society tended to associate self-assertion (i.e. individualism) with masculinity and self-abnegation (i.e. anti-individualism) with femininity. With Broad Church theology providing no clear, gender-neutral guideline analogous to the Evangelicals’ individual accountability model, a greater deal of self-assertion was likely to be valued in men and a greater amount of self-abnegation in women.

A couple of aspects of Broad Church thought made it especially susceptible to falling into such a gendered division of individualism. I already brought up the first such problem in the previous chapter: the very close resemblance between masculinity and Broad Church ideals of self-development. Male Broad Church members enjoined self-development but almost always imagined such self-development in either clearly masculine or gender ambiguous terms. Considering that these same Broad Church members tended to equate self-development with the cultivation of the traditionally masculine virtues of independence of thought and action, such calls to self-development seem all the less likely to have had women as well as men in mind.

At least one prominent Broad Churchman, the Christian Socialist J.M. Ludlow explicitly applied the responsibility of self-development to women, but, as a close look at his writing reveals, his visions of female self-cultivation bore little resemblance to the
staunchly independent Broad Church ideals of masculine self-development. Ludlow specifically endorses female self-development in his 1866 book *Woman's Work in the Church: Historical Notes on Deaconesses and Sisterhoods*. A female diaconate would be so beneficial, Ludlow argues precisely because it would "afford a full development to female energies for religious purposes" (*Woman's Work in the Church* 72). In context, though, Ludlow strongly implies that such female self-development should not look like male self-development. Suggesting that Ludlow wants to preserve tradition masculine/feminine distinctions, Ludlow immediately follows his statement about women's responsibilities for self-development by proclaiming his allegiance to separate spheres ideology, in Ludlow's words, of the importance of "preserving to each sex its distinct sphere activity; to the one the supremacy of the head, to the other that of the heart; to the one the office of public preaching, exhortation, relief, to the other that of private exhortation, consolation, and helpfulness" (73). It is almost as if female self-development is such a potentially dangerous notion that Ludlow has to assure his readers (and perhaps himself) that such self-development will not justify deviations from gender norms. Ludlow's later remarks make it even clearer that he does not believe that female self-development should entail any dramatic independence of thought and action. A "Deaconesses' Institute," Ludlow writes, should focus on "the due training of women in those ministering functions which have their root in woman's own nature as the best nurses, the gentlest of almsgivers, the tenderest of educators for the young of both sexes, the great trainer and reformer of her own" (208). Imagining the sorts of activities that a deaconesses' institute should ready women for, Ludlow proclaims it as in keeping with "woman's own nature" that the institute prepare women for traditionally feminine
caretaking activities. Ludlow may commend deaconess institutes as fostering selfdevelopment in women, but in imagining such institutions as cultivating women’s
“natural” abilities to care for others, Ludlow is advancing a picture of female selfdevelopment that differs sharply from the traditional equations of self-development with independence.

Female independence is something that Ludlow, in fact, specifically seems to fear. Ludlow’s discussion of female self-development appears in a book devoted to relating the evils and dangers of sisterhoods and other institutions that enable women to exist separately from men. As Ludlow first announces in his preface and reiterates over and over with slight variation, “Every Sisterhood, to be really useful, to be really harmless, must, in my opinion, have at its head not only a man, but a married man” (xiii). Ludlow, notably, opposes such female separatism, at least in part, because he fears that it would foster excessive individualism among women. Of the deaconess, Ludlow writes, “But place her under a vow of celibacy, she dare no longer forget herself in the abundance of her zeal; her seeming self-sacrifice is really enthronement of self; her piety a personal object, most contrary to active charity” (4). Unless kept not just in contact with but under the “head” ship of a man (xiii), the deaconess, Ludlow fears, will get so carried away with “zeal” (4), will become so focused on her personal “piety,” that her religiousity will lead to an “enthronement of self” (4). Later in this same book Woman’s Work in the Church Ludlow comes back again to this idea of women’s piety threatening to get out of control. If allowed to live under a vow of celibacy, deaconesses, Ludlow fears, might begin to “aspir[e] to a perfection higher than the holiness of ordinary life, and, above all, from the deadly dream of a special union of woman with Christ as a
Bridegroom” (208). The imagery here is of the nun’s taking Christ as her spiritual
bridegroom is, of course, distinctly Catholic, but it exposes a fear of something that also
figures prominently in Evangelical Protestant individualism as well: the concept that,
regardless of sex, an individual Christian’s primary relation should be to God, not any
other human being.

Although Ludlow is the only male Broad Church member that I have run across
who specifically refers to female self-development, he is, notably, far from the only
Broad Churchman to express fears of women’s becoming overly independent and/or
separating themselves from men. Probably the best known Broad Church statement of
such fears is Alfred Lord Tennyson’s 1847 The Princess. This early long-poem of
Tennyson’s tells the story of Ida, a princess who vows never to marry so that she can
devote her life to founding a women’s college. After a long struggle and many speeches
from the hero Prince Florian about men and women’s fundamental interdependence, Ida,
of course, ultimately relents, gives up her projects, and marries her prince. Similar fears
of female separatism figure prominently in the works of Charles Kingsley and F.D.
Maurice.102 Both Maurice and Kingsley explicitly condemn any and all all-female
separate societies as unnatural and harmful to both men and women. Additionally, both
writers specifically warn of how religiosity can potentially lead women into an excessive,
unwomanly individualism. In an 1859 lecture entitled “False Ideas of Woman’s
Mission,” Kingsley cautions against the “self-willed and proud longing of a woman to
unsex herself, and to realise, single and self-sustained some distorted and partial notion of
her own as to what the ‘angelic life’ should be” (Selections from the Writings of Charles

102 See, for example, Maurice. “On Sisterhoods”; Maurice. Social Morality. 64; and Kingsley. Selections
from the Writings of Charles Kingsley. 225.
Kingsley 225). Although in slightly convoluted form, Maurice offers a very similar admonition in his 1866 pamphlet “On Sisterhoods.” Towards the end of the pamphlet, which Maurice has notably devoted to the condemnation of all-female “separate societies,” Maurice distinguishes between true and misguided notions of women’s religious “vocations.” Women, Maurice insists, indeed have vocations, but the woman who is following the direction of “the true Spirit” will “cast aside her own dreams and imaginations of what is best for her.” Instead, she will look to her familial and social obligations which will tell her “what is really best.”

Even if women have divine callings, including the calling to develop themselves, such vocations, Broad Churchmen frequently insist, do not justify the independence and self-assertion commonly associated with masculine self-development.

Further promoting a gendered division of individualism was the prominence of family language within Broad Church theology. As numerous scholars have pointed out and as the first chapter of this section showed, Evangelicals were also, of course, quite prone to idealizing the family. Broad Church members took such idealization further, though, in the sense that they made familial relatedness and love an integral part of their actual theology. Such theologizing about the family goes back at least to F.D. Maurice. In my first chapter, I discussed Maurice’s teachings about the fundamentally social nature of human beings, but what I did not bring up in the previous chapter was the degree to which Maurice uses familial language to describe such interconnectedness. On many occasions, such references to family deal with God’s family in the sense that all humanity

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103 Maurice reiterates this idea that men and women have gender-specific “vocations” in Social Morality (81-82). Charles Kingsley makes a similar point in “Woman’s Work in a Country Parish” (9). Although he does not make his comments gender-specific, Benjamin Jowett posits a similar principle—that one’s condition in life reveals one’s vocation—when insists that it is “not right for us to quit our daily pursuits and go about doing good” (College Sermons 323).
is God's family. Through Christ's taking on of human flesh (i.e. becoming like man), all
people, Maurice asserts repeatedly in his Kingdom of Christ, have become fellow sons of
God and brothers in Christ. Calls to look at and treat one's fellow man as a brother and a
fellow son of God thus abound in Maurice's works and throughout many later Broad
Church works, which as Tod Jones and others have argued, were profoundly influenced
by Maurice.

Discussions of family in Maurice's works or in other Broad Church writings do
not, however, confine themselves to metaphors about how all people are God's family.
Going back at least to his 1836 The Kingdom of Christ and continuing throughout his
later works, Maurice gives the individual biological and/or marital family unit
considerable prominence in his theology. The prominence of biological and/or marital
family in Maurice's theology comes across particularly clearly in his discussions of how
God made his original covenant not just with Abraham, but with his entire family. "That
there is a God related to men and made known to them through their human relations, this
was the faith of Abraham, the beginning of the Church on earth. But this truth could not
be exhibited in one individual faithful man; it must be exhibited in a family" (Kingdom I
238). Through statements such as this one, Maurice sets up the family, not the
individual, as the fundamental spiritual unit. God has made his covenant with them in
familial groups and he reveals Himself to them "makes [Himself] know to them" (I 238)
through such familial relationships. Particularly subversive to traditional notions of
Protestant individualism (even many of the individualistic currents in Broad Church
thought) is the concept that God reveals himself first and foremost through human
relationships—especially through familial relationships. At his moments of strongest
wording, Maurice suggests that “human relations. . .are actually the means and the only means, through which man ascends to any knowledge of the divine” (emphasis mine) (Kingdom of Christ I 243). Without human relationships, most especially the family relationship, human beings, Maurice suggests, cannot come to a knowledge of God. This puts a far greater burden on family than anything found in Evangelical teaching. Evangelicals might highly value family and frequently speak very idealistically and sentimentally about it, but, armed with an infallible Bible, Evangelicals were not dependent on familial relationships to come to know God.

Being, as Tod Jones and others have argued, the single-most influential voice in nineteenth-century liberal theology, Maurice was not the only Broad Churchmen to give family relationships such theological primacy. From Maurice forward, numerous Broad Churchmen—Charles Kingsley, Benjamin Jowett, T.H. Green, and William Henry Fremantle, to name a few—repeatedly describe human beings as all being brothers and/or fellow “sons of God.”104 Having even more potential impact on women, many of these same Broad Churchmen also adopt similar teachings about how the individual biological and/or marital family’s fundamental spiritual importance. Charles Kingsley, for example, calls “family ties. . .not of the earth, earthly, but of heaven of God, eternal” (“What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?” 59), and William Henry Fremantle calls family “a little kingdom. . .of God” (Fremantle 267). On a similar note, Benjamin Jowett writes of family, that it is “a temple which is consecrated by love and affection, a holy place in which the God of love takes up his abode” (SBM 340). Of these statements, Jowett’s is

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104 For discussions of “brotherhood” and or fellow “sonship,” see, for example, Kingsley. Selections from the Writings of the Rev. Charles Kingsley 41, 332; Kingsley Village Sermons 123; Kingsley The Good News of God 51, 185; Wilson 306; Jowett. College Sermons. 258, 323, 345; Colenso 6; Hughes 578-579; Fremantle xvi, 9, 199, 204, 237; Green. “Faith.” 258-259.
particularly noteworthy because it comes closest to proclaiming Maurice's teaching that God makes himself known primarily through the family. In Jowett's version, God is actually made present through the family much like he was made present in the temple of the ancient Israelites.

In making the family the fundamental spiritual unit, Broad Church writers make a move that endangers women's Protestant individualism in a number of respects. Suggesting that the family is not just the most "natural" unit but also a core medium through which God reveals himself to human beings, Broad Church teaching made the individual's apprehension of God dependent on the presence and quality of family life. Since Victorians associated women more closely with their family ties than they did men, this meant that the Broad Church teachings about the primacy of family provided actual theological justification concerning how it was women's job to help men see and believe in God. Additionally, such teachings about family rendered family in itself divine, thwarting any appeals that women might make to some divine obligation above family. In Kingsley's words, "family ties...[are] not of the earth, earthly, but of heaven of God, eternal" ("What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?" 63), or, as Benjamin Jowett puts it, family is the "kingdom of heaven on earth" (Sermons Biographical and Miscellaneous 343). Broad Churchmen, such as Kingsley and Jowett, unsurprisingly tend to speak very critically of any people who let their faith come between them and their obligations to family.

Despite such impediments to female Broad Church individualism, some Broad Church women still assumed Broad Church Protestant individualism for themselves. Compared to Evangelical women, Broad Church women had to make more dramatic
changes, however, to the mainstream masculine Broad Church Protestant individualism.

Florence Nightingale was one such Broad Churchwoman. Although better known for her work and writings as a nurse, Nightingale was also a religious philosopher of sorts. Nightingale first entered the world of religious writing in 1851, with the anonymous publication of "The Institution of Kaiserwerth on the Rhine, For the Practical Training of Deaconness," a pamphlet in which she examined how Protestant Deaconesses were employed in Germany and suggested that they might be similarly used in England. In the ensuing years, Nightingale's religious writings became much more speculative and unorthodox. Nightingale first entered the realm of controversial religious writing in 1860 with Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth, an 829, three-volume theological work, which Nightingale had privately printed, but largely at Benjamin Jowett's urging, never had published in her lifetime. Some years later, Nightingale returned to speculative religious writing, this time condensing her religious philosophy into two brief articles, which she published in the May 1873 and July 1873 editions of Fraser's Magazine.

Compared to the other women religious writers whom I have discussed in this chapter, Nightingale's religious teachings have received particular critical attention. Such scholarly attention is probably partly attributable to Nightingale's fame as a nurse and a Victorian cultural icon and partly to the degree to which, as Ruth Jenkins and Hilary Fraser and Victoria Borrows have pointed out, Nightingale's writing anticipates numerous trends in modern-day feminist theory and theology.\(^{105}\) My interest in the concluding section of this chapter is not, however, in what twenty to twenty-first century

\(^{105}\) Jenkins devotes her second chapter of her book and Fraser and Burrows the entirety of their book article to looking at Nightingale's feminist theology.
ideas Nightingale’s work anticipates but rather in how it reworks the teachings of her day, in particular the Protestant individualism of the mid-to-late Victorian Broad Church.

As I argue in this final section, Nightingale’s religious writings posit a Protestant individualism that is in many ways similar to contemporary Broad Church Protestant individualism but which is far more inclusive. That Nightingale has a strong individualistic current in her thought is something that Fraser and Burrows have already recognized (199).

To describe Nightingale’s writing as Broad Church individualism may sound surprising to some. True, as Ruth Jenkins and others have noted, Nightingale finds a certain value in Catholicism, particularly in traditions of female mysticism and female monasticism. Still, Nightingale’s writings are, in most respects, classically Broad Church. Like her Broad Church brethren, Nightingale venerates truth as the ultimate goal and standard, even at times appealing to higher vs. lower truths. Further linking her thought to Broad Church Protestant individualism, Nightingale also challenges Biblical authority, trumpets the importance of self-development, and even wields periodic anti-Catholic barbs about the oppressiveness of Catholicism.

Nightingale, however, reworks classic Broad Church Protestant individualism so as to extend it more fully to all people, including women. In a first major change, Nightingale takes the Broad Church’s favorite ideal of truth and presents it as within every person’s grasp. Nightingale begins this democratization of truth by being explicitly spacious about she includes among the “searchers for truth” addressed in her title. As Nightingale suggests through the full-length title of her first volume Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth among the Artizans of England (emphasis mine), she
is intentionally including the masses of people, not just the Victorian social and intellectual elite among the “searchers for truth” whom she is addressing. A few pages into her text, Nightingale explicitly declares that her targeted “searchers for truth” also includes women, a group whose religious questioning, she points out, society tends to look at as “pedantic and presumptuous” (Suggestions 7). Nightingale further democratizes truth by challenging the link between intellectual accomplishment and command of truth. Intellect, Nightingale concedes, can be useful in religious inquiry but, sounding almost Evangelical, Nightingale declares “the heart” to be “the [true] seat of religion” (Suggestions 23). Building upon this idea that all can apprehend the truth, including the God of Truth, Nightingale also posits the idea that simply being oneself will lead a person to come to know God’s truth. In Nightingale’s words, “there is a revelation to everyone, through the exercise of his own nature” (emphasis mine) (Suggestions 25). All people need to do, according to Nightingale, is to be who God wishes them to be and they will come to understand God and his truth.

This idea of fully “exercising one’s “own nature” (Suggestions 25) also points to a second way in which Nightingale democratizes Broad Church Protestant individualism: She presents independent self-development in terms that demand it from everyone, rich or poor, male or female. Appearing throughout Nightingale’s writings is the idea that each individual person has some God-given purpose, some designated work to do. Departing dramatically from the Broad Church teaching of men such as Maurice and Kingsley, Nightingale insists that accidents of birth are an unreliable indicator of one’s vocation (“A Sub ‘Note of Interrogation’” 29). To determine one’s God-given purpose, one should instead, Nightingale stresses, examine one’s particular desires and talents. All
“personal desires or plans” all “thirst[s] for action, useful action” are, in Nightingale’s estimation, God-given (Suggestions 99; Kaiserswerth 8). Thus, honing one’s talents and pursing one’s yearnings, in short developing oneself, is, in Nightingale’s opinion, the best way that each and every person can realize God’s will for his or her life.

Nightingale goes out of her way to make sure that no one misreads her injunctions to self-development as excluding anyone. On repeated occasions, Nightingale proclaims the wasteful wickedness of neglecting self-development. As Nightingale announces in her Suggestions for Thought, having “personal desires or plans” is “throwing away the gifts of God as worthless” (99). Nightingale makes a similar point in her July 1873 “Sub ‘Note of Interrogation.’” Appealing to the favorite Protestant ideal of conscience, Nightingale insists that only “complacency of conscience” could permit a person to neglect his or her God-given work (30). Lest anyone might still exclude women or anyone from such moral obligations to realize their God-given talents and follow their God-given desires, Nightingale concludes her “Sub ‘Note of Interrogation’” her last published theological work, by making the universality of her claims indisputably specific. Speaking in imperative terms and employing very inclusive language, Nightingale remarks, “There must be an ideal in God’s mind for each man, woman, and child for the work he, she, or it is put here to do” (“A Sub ‘Note on Interrogation’” 35). Nightingale’s inclusion of the “its” of the world in her claim is particularly telling; in Nightingale’s phrasing, one does not even have to be unambiguously human to be included in the universal call to self-development.
Chapter Three: Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*: Explorations of Orthodox Protestant Individualism

Many critics have paid passing acknowledgment to the “individualism” or “Protestant individualism” within Charlotte Brontë’s novels. Of these critics, Ruth Jenkins has probably given the most sustained attention to this issue in Brontë’s work. In her chapter on Brontë’s *Shirley* in her book *Reclaiming Myths of Power*, Jenkins argues that “Brontë presents a radical Protestantism that invests each individual—whether male or female, worker or industrialist—with the power to interpret God and His intent” (92).

This chapter makes a similar claim about two of Brontë’s other novels, her 1847 *Jane Eyre* and 1853 *Villette*. Beginning in *Jane Eyre* and culminating in *Villette*, Brontë, I argue, increasingly endorses at least one prominent model of Protestant individualism. As this understanding of Protestant individualism asserts, each individual person, whether male or female, is ultimately accountable to God, and, as a result of this answerability to the divine, holds the right to think and to act for himself or herself, and the responsibility to respect the rights of other individuals. At the same time that Brontë becomes increasingly fervent about Protestant individualism in the sense of individual accountability to God, her œuvre, I argue, grows increasingly unsettled, however, about another model of Protestant individualism: the Robinson Crusoesque Protestant ethic of emotional self-sufficiency. Human companionship, this model of Protestant individual admits, may be enjoyable, but the sufficiently Protestant Christian should be able to

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survive all alone—accompanied only by God and his Bible. This conflict between different models of Protestant individualism leads Brontë’s novels into increasing spiritual turmoil, culminating in the spiritual questioning and suffering of Villette’s Lucy Snowe.

At the same time that I am largely aiming to do for Jane Eyre and Villette what Jenkins’ chapter did for Shirley, this chapter, as its title suggests, makes at least one major departure from Jenkins. Unlike Jenkins, who labels Brontë’s Protestant individualism “radical,” I am calling this same power “orthodox” Protestant individualism. By using this descriptor orthodox, I do not mean to discount the unorthodox elements within Charlotte Brontë’s theology, which scholars such as Jenkins and Marianne Thormählen have noted. What I do wish to do, though, is to recognize the strong parallels between Brontë’s Protestant individualism and the Protestant individualism that appears in Evangelical and early, more conservative Broad Church Protestant individualist texts. Jenkins may eloquently describe the Protestant individualism within Charlotte Brontë’s work, but she grossly underestimates just how indebted Brontë is to a reasonably orthodox Victorian Christianity.

Brontë’s strong Protestant individualist sense emerges within the first pages of Jane Eyre. The whole Gateshead section of the novel is, in a sense, organized around Jane’s first discovery and assertion of her individual rights. In selectively picking out just a few episodes from her early life at Gateshead, the novel has Jane focus upon those that best show her incipient sense of Protestant individualism. Jane, the first chapter tells us, has long been “accustomed to John Reed’s abuse” but she has “never had an idea of replying to it” (17). All this changes, though, when, near the end of this first chapter,
John Reed hurls a book at Jane, knocking her down and cutting her head, and Jane, almost to her own surprise, finally speaks out. “Wicked and cruel boy!” Jane retorts, “You [she tells John Reed] are like a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!” (17).

As a direct result of this initial indignant outburst, Jane soon enters into a series of meditations on and assertions of her individual rights. As punishment for her outburst, Jane finds herself thrown into the Red Room, and once in the Red Room, Jane promptly begins questioning the rightness of the whole Reed family’s treatment of her. Initially, Jane simply asks the question, “Why was I always suffering, always brow-beaten, always accused? for ever condemned?” but before long Jane’s queries give way to declarations of outrage: as Jane’s “Reason” suddenly tells her, the Reeds’ treatment of her is “Unjust-unjust!” (22). Just as the novel presents Jane’s outburst at John Reed as something she has never done before, so does it present this realization of the “unjust” nature of her treatment as a landmark event. As the novel remarks, “the agonizing stimulus” (of John Reed’s injury of her and of her being thrown into the Red Room) has “forced” Jane’s “reason. . .into precocious though transitory power” (22). In the intensity of this agonizing moment, ten-year old Jane recognizes a claim to individual rights that she will articulate increasingly strongly as the novel and her development progress.

As the Gateshead section unfolds, Jane’s initial outburst leads to more moments of her contemplation and assertion of her individual rights. Struck with the “unjust” nature of her treatment, Jane almost immediately begins to imagine some higher authority that her persecutors will be accountable to. Initially, Jane imagines this higher power in the form of a ghost of her uncle Reed. The late uncle Reed will come visit Gateshead,
Jane imagines, out of outrage at his family’s treatment of her. Within pages, this higher authority grows larger as Jane adds her late “papa and mama” to her list of heavenly beings who “can see all [that the Reed family] do[es] and think(s) (36). Armed with this sense of a higher authority, Jane soon delivers the most daring proclamation of her childhood. In words that are so strong that Brontë has Jane’s aunt angrily recall them on her deathbed, Jane retorts, “You [aunt Reed] treated me with miserable cruelty. People think you a good woman, but you are bad; hard-hearted. You are deceitful” (46).

It is not only through such crafting of the plot, though, that Brontë’s Gateshead section of *Jane Eyre* points to prominent role that Protestant individualism will play in her novels. Through the way she crafts Jane’s early individualist remarks, Brontë also points to the main rhetorical strategies she will have Jane and her other heroines use over the rest of her novels. The first of these rhetorical strategies appears in Jane’s initial statement of protest: her remark “Wicked and cruel boy!... You [John Reed] are like a murderer—you are a slave driver---you are like the Roman emperors!” (17). As is, this first protest of Jane’s is not as effective as it could be (and that Brontë would probably have had a mature Jane make it to be). In her initial tirade against her unjust treatment, Jane throws a wide range of insulting similes at John so quickly (He simultaneously embodies evil as the Bible, current events, and ancient history present them.) and expresses these accusations so that they are so over the top (Though cruel and bad, little John Reed is not exactly a Caligula or even a murderer.) that her words border on the comic. As awkward, though, as Jane’s first outburst is, it hits upon one of the main Protestant individualist rhetorical strategies that Brontë will use throughout her novels: Brontë’s common practice of denouncing her heroines’ oppressors by associating these
oppressors with some dreaded historical, or, preferably, religious prototype. In having Jane denounce John Reed as a wicked Roman leader, Brontë, in fact, comes (at least verbally) close to attacking what will become her favorite example of oppressive badness: the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the ensuing episodes of Jane’s initial spree of individualist self-assertion, Brontë continues to foreshadow what will become her novels’ favorite Protestant individualist rhetorical techniques. The next of these techniques emerges while Jane is still in the Red Room. In an attempt to explain why her “Reason” tells her that the Reeds’ treatment of her is “Unjust-unjust!” (23), Jane begins to look up towards some higher being to whom her oppressors will have to answer. The beings that little Jane imagines are still painfully human. At first she imagines that the outraged ghost of Mr. Reed is looking down at her unjust treatment; within a few pages, this higher authority broadens to include not just Jane’s dead uncle but also her late mother and father. Human as these initial “higher” beings are, they still provide Jane with an authority to appeal to that transcends that of her oppressors. Little Jane conveys this sense that someone is watching and judging from above when she proclaims to her aunt Reed, “My uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mama: they know how you shut me up all day long and how you wish me dead” (36). In Brontë’s later scenes, this higher authority will, of course, come to be superhuman—to be at least angels or Mother Nature—and at the most powerful, God; but such higher powers will continue to work rhetorically for Jane very much like her early appeal to her dead ancestors.
Yet another favorite Protestant individualist rhetorical strategy appears in the scene where Jane launches her big, final tirade against her aunt Reed. As Jane relates, her aunt has “treated [her] with miserable cruelty” (45) and is, therefore, a “bad. . .woman” (46). In an effort to silence the enraged Jane, aunt Reed immediately appeals to her higher status and authority, pronouncing, “How dare you affirm that, Jane Eyre?” (45). As older, richer, and more socially important as her aunt is, Jane, though, finds a way to silence Mrs. Reed. Jane “dares” say what she does, she tells her aunt, “Because it is the truth” (45). With this appeal to truth Jane, of course draws upon one of the most prominent Protestant individualist terms of her day, one that I discussed in detail in both chapters one and two.

The little Jane of the Gateshead section may already possess an incipient sense of personal rights. She, however, is much less precocious when it comes to individualism in the sense of her ability to emotionally survive alone. In her tirade against Mrs. Reed, Jane, in fact, explicitly voices a visceral need for love from other people. As part of her explanation concerning how Mrs. Reed has “treated [her] with miserable cruelty” (45), Jane retorts, “You think I have no feelings, and that I can do without one bit of love or kindness; but I cannot live so: and you have no pity” (45). Jane’s behavior in the Gateshead section further points to the heroine’s initial incapacity to sustain herself emotionally in the absence of human companionship. As Brontë presents the Gateshead section, little Jane’s fleeting moments of happiness and comfort all occur on the rare occasions when she feels loved and supported by other human beings. Jane’s first moment of great contentment occurs when she finds herself in the presence of the benevolent apothecary Mr. Lloyd. Brontë has Jane remark, “I felt so sheltered and
befriended while he sat in the chair near my pillow; and as he closed the door after him, all the room darkened and my heart again sank: inexpressible sadness weighed it down” (27). Having Jane’s contentment wax and wane with Mr. Lloyd’s presence and absence, Brontë ties Jane’s happiness quite directly to the literal, physical presence of human love. Brontë reaffirms little Jane’s emotional dependency on human love when she has Jane close the Gateshead section of the novel by remarking, “Even for me life had its gleams of sunshine” (49). This “gleams of sunshine” remark, of course, specifically describes the moments in which Jane has received affection from her favorite servant Bessie. Highlighting the happiness/human love connection, Brontë, in fact, spends the entire earlier part of the paragraph describing Bessie’s affectionate treatment of Jane—how she has kissed and “embraced” Jane and “told [her] some of her most enchanting stories, and sang [her] some of her sweetest songs” (48).

Further highlighting Jane’s emotional dependency on other human beings, the Gateshead section of the novel also dramatizes a series of events in which Jane is given but rejects the opportunity to find solace in something besides the companionship of other humans. The Gateshead Jane first rejects the companionship that she could potentially find in being with herself. One of Jane’s first responses after being thrown in the Red Room is to look at herself in the mirror, where she sees a “strange little figure there gazing at” (her) (21). Describing Jane’s reflection as a separate being, as Brontë does, it looks almost like Jane could perhaps find some sort of solace in the companionship of the second self of her reflection. As Brontë continues her description of Jane’s looking at her self in the mirror, Brontë shows, though, that this is not the case. The second self that Jane sees in the mirror frightens rather than comforts her. As Jane
sees her mirror image, it is preternaturally white with “glittering eyes” has “the effect of a
real spirit. . .a tiny phantom. . .half fairy, half imp” (21-22). Rather than finding her
mirror image to be a friend, Jane has to struggle to quell her “superstition” (22).107

In contrast to these many failed attempts at finding comfort in something besides
human companionship, the Gateshead section dramatizes one scene in which little Jane
finds solace in at least one not exactly human other: her doll. As long as the child Jane
has her doll in bed with her “safe and warm” she is “comparatively happy, believing it to
be happy likewise” (37). Though the doll enables little Jane finally to find happiness in
the absence of other human beings, the novel, however, resists considering Jane’s turning
to her doll a Protestant individualist success. Jane, of course, has not really escaped the
realm of human companionship; the doll is painfully human-like with both its human-
looking body and its tendency to have (at least according to the child Jane) human
emotions. If anything Jane has done something even more pitiful (and spiritually
pointless) than depending on other human beings: she has placed her love, devotion, and
dependency on something less than human. Having Jane turn away from divine comfort
and instead look to an inanimate object for succor, Brontë crafts this scene so that little
Jane becomes literally guilty of idolatry, a sin, which as I argued in chapter one, received
particular attention in Brontë’s day, especially in contemporary Evangelical writings.
(Lest the reader could possibly overlook little Jane’s idolatry, Brontë describes Jane’s
doll as “a faded graven image” (37)).

107 This mirror scene in Jane Eyre reminds me of the scene at the beginning of L.M. Montgomery’s Anne of
Green Gables, where another lonely orphan stares at her reflection. Montgomery’s Anne has the opposite
response, though, from Jane Eyre; she regards her reflection as her “window friend” rather than as some
sort of threat.
Jane’s spiritual development continues as Jane leaves Gateshead and moves onto her next residence, Lowood School. Here Jane finds an important spiritual teacher in a fellow student, Helen Burns. Helen provides Jane with her most important schooling in Protestant individualism in the sense of emotional self-reliance but sends a much more ambivalent message when it comes to Protestant individualism in the sense of coping with oppression.

In terms of emotional self-reliance, Helen Burns introduces Jane to a rather extreme Protestant individualism. As Helen formulates her own Protestant “creed,” individual Christians, she insists, should be able to survive without friendship or support from any other human beings. In response to Jane’s fears that the whole school will ostracize her after Mr. Brocklehurst has publicly branded her a liar, Helen voices a theological perspective that allows an individual Christian to be simultaneously all alone and yet not alone at all. In Helen’s words, “If all the world hated you, and believed you wicked, while your own conscience approved you, and absolved you from guilt you would not be without friends” (81).

Built into this statement of Helen’s are powerful Protestant individualist ideas. Appearing first is the principle of the individual Christian’s reliance upon his or her “conscience”; armed with his or her clean conscience, the ostracized Christian can face the world far from alone. Notably, though, Helen’s statement does more, though, than just promise the righteous Christian a friend; it assures him or her that he or she will possess friends. Implied in this choice of the plural is the expectation that the ostracized Christian will enjoy some sort of companionship beyond his or her clean conscience.
Helen soon clarifies how the lonesome but righteous Christian can be said to have an actual plurality of friends. Helen reassures Jane:

[The sovereign hand] has provided you with other resources besides your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you. Besides this earth, and besides the race of men, there is an invisible world and a kingdom of spirits; that world is round us, for it is everywhere; and those spirits watch us, for they are commissioned to guard us; and if we were dying in pain or shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures, recognize our innocence. (82)

Helen significantly presents such angelic companionship as more than just some possible last resort for the abandoned Christian. In Helen’s reading, both the individual self and other human beings are “feeble. . .creatures” (81). Lest Jane miss her point about the superiority of divine companionship, Helen tacks on the additional, more blatant admonishment: “Jane! You think too much of the love of human beings” (81).

The child Jane is notably quite skeptical of such advice from Helen. Jane interrupts Helen’s sermonette by vehemently expressing her own emotional need for the friendship and support of other human beings:

I know [Jane insists] that I should think well of myself [as long as my conscience was clean]; but that is not enough: if others don’t love me, I would rather die than live—I cannot bear to be solitary and hated, Helen. Look here; to gain some real affection from you,
or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest” (81).

Here Jane does more than just avow her need for love from other human beings. She does so in a language that is both startlingly violent and reminiscent of the Bible. As Jesus teaches in both Matthew and Mark, rather than sin, a person should be willing to “pluck...out” his “right eye” and “cut...off” both his “right hand” and his foot (Matthew 5:29-30; Mark 9: 43-48).\(^\text{108}\) The child Jane’s willingness to injure herself comes, however, with a twist: rather than intended to prevent the evils of sinning and consequently being cast into Hell, the child Jane’s imagined self-mutilation aims to avoid what she instead sees as the ultimate evil: being cast away from all human love. Having Jane echo the Bible while missing its point, Brontë highlights the spiritual misguidedness of her young heroine.

Emotional self-sufficiency remains a struggle for Jane throughout her ensuing eight years at Lowood. Jane finds peace and contentment as, first, a student and, then, a teacher at Lowood. Only belatedly, though, does she realize that this contentment has been almost entirely dependent on the companionship and friendship of Miss Temple.\(^\text{109}\)

As Jane realizes once Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, her “mind had borrowed

\(^{108}\) More than just this rhetorical resemblance connects Jane’s words to the Bible. Less than ten pages earlier in the text, Jane Eyre specifically refers to the particular section of the Bible that Jane is evoking but getting wrong. Part of the Lowood Sunday evening ritual, we are told, is “repeating by hear, the Church Catechism, and the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of St. Matthew...” (72).

\(^{109}\) The one possible exception is the pleasure that Jane derives from painting pictures during the breaks between terms. “To paint them, Jane later tells Rochester, “was to enjoy one of the keenest pleasures I have ever known” (143). This reference to Jane’s deriving of pleasure from her imagination fits into the novel’s development of a sort of romantic individualism for Jane. Though officially occurring during Jane’s years at Lowood, the novel does not tell us about this further romantic individualist development until Jane has been at Thornfield for some weeks.
[its serenity from] Miss Temple” (99). Without this “reason for tranquility” (99), Jane almost immediately begins “to feel the stirring of old emotions” of discontentment and restlessness. As powerfully as the novel allows Helen to articulate her emotional reliance on God (rather than humans), this experience of Jane’s highlights that such attainment of emotional independence is much easier said than done.

In addition to this doctrine of emotional self-sufficiency (in God), Helen also introduces Jane to another important spiritual teaching: a philosophy of non-resistance towards oppression. Jane first encounters Helen’s non-resistance stance when she sees Helen being unfairly punished by a teacher, Miss Scatcherd. Much to Jane’s surprise, Helen makes no effort to defend herself, much less to oppose her oppressor. Right after the event, Jane tells Helen what she would have done in her place: “If I were in your place I should dislike [Mrs. Scatchard]: I should resist her; if she struck me with that rod, I should get it from her hand; I should break it under her nose” (66). In response, Helen explicitly articulates her credo of non-resistance—something that Jane refers to as Helen’s “doctrine of endurance” (66). “It is far better,” Helen maintains, “to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you—and, besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil” (66).

In one sense, Helen’s philosophy of non-resistance advances one of the most important Protestant individualist ideas in the novel: the individual contentment and empowerment that comes with forgiving others. As Helen (rhetorically) asks Jane, “Would you not be happier if you tried to forget [Mrs. Reed’s] severity, together with the passionate emotions it excited?” (69). In other words, Helen points out how forgiving
others frees individual Christians from the emotional burden of their animosity. Here, the individual empowerment within forgiveness only appears as a passing statement. Brontë will soon dramatize the power of forgiveness quite vividly through the scene where Jane confronts Mrs. Reed on the latter’s deathbed.

Though individualistic in that it gives Christians inner peace regardless of how other people treat them, Helen’s philosophy of non-resistance simultaneously emerges as, in most other respects, anti-individualistic. Helen may eventually find an individual benefit in non-resistance (in the freeing power of forgiveness), but her sermonette on non-resistance begins on a far from individualist note. In response to Jane’s declaration that she would resist Miss Scatcherd by breaking “the rod [that she whipped Jane with] under her [Miss Scatcherd’s] nose, Helen remarks:

Probably you would do nothing of the sort: but if you did, Mr Brocklehurst would expel you from the school; that would be a great grief to your relations. It is far better to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you—and, besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil. (66)

In this, the starting point of her sermonette on non-resistance, Helen places her emphasis on taking care of the group (the family) rather than the individual Christian (and his or her soul). The individual Christian may not be supposed to rely on the approval or affection of others, but “grieve”(ing) others still emerges as an evil that must be avoided. In dictating that individual Christians should avoid displeasing others, Helen’s creed essentially prescribes traditional people-pleasing femininity; only, it gives such classic
feminine behavior an extra self-sacrificial twist: though the Helen Burns-style Christian is supposed to live to please others, she is never to expect to succeed in doing so, nor is she to enjoy it too much when she may actually manage to please.

Also making Helen's creed potentially anti-individualistic is its downplaying of both personal rights and responsibilities. Unlike Jane, who appeals to rights from the first pages of the novel, Helen only refers to "rights" on one occasion--when discussing the execution of Charles I--and she refers to "rights" on this occasion only to insist that Charles I's countrymen "had no right to shed" his blood (68) (emphasis mine). Helen, notably, comes to this conclusion about Charles I's execution even after she has recognized that Charles often "act[ed] ... unjustly and unwisely" (68). And, nowhere does Helen suggest any alternate form of redress for the subjects of Charles's who had been treated "unjustly and unwisely" (68).

In her ensuing articulation of her "...other creed" (69), Helen points to why she discounts personal rights even when an individual is facing clear injustice. In Helen's words, "injustice never crushes [her] too low" (70) because she is able to "look to the end" (70). This end is an eternal life in Heaven. As Helen tells the defiant Jane (who has just been complaining about Miss Scatcherd's mistreatment of Helen and Mrs. Reed's cruelty towards herself):

 God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward. Why, then, should we ever sink over-whelmed with distress, when life is so soon over, and death is so certain an entrance to happiness-to glory? (82)
As this remark of Helen’s highlights and critics, such as John G. Peters have pointed out (59), Helen is so focused on the anticipated ecstasy of the afterlife that her philosophy leaves little room for asserting a person’s individual rights in the here and now.

Though much less noted by critics, Helen’s “creed” also downplays the individualist notion of personal responsibility. In one sense, Helen insists on the importance of personal responsibility. She repeats Biblical injunctions that we are to “return good for evil” (66) and insist that it is Jane’s “duty to bear. . .what it is [her] fate to be required to bear” (66). Helen also comes up with a reward of sorts for the individual Christian’s proper behavior. Angels, she insists, look down from heaven and “see our tortures, recognize our innocence” (82).

At the same time that Helen offers this surface message of individual responsibility (and of divine reward for such behavior), her religious teachings also bring such responsibility (and its rewards) under question. This is the implication of Helen’s most extended articulation of her “creed” (71). As Helen tells Jane:

We are, and must be, one and all, burdened with faults in this world: but the time will soon come when, I trust, we shall put them off in putting off our corruptible bodies; when debasement and sin will fall from us with this cumbersome frame of flesh, and only the spark of the spirit will remain—the impalpable principle of life and thought, pure as when it left the Creator to inspire the creature: whence it came it will return; perhaps again to be communicated to some higher being than man-perhaps to pass through gradations of glory, from the pale human soul to brighten to the seraph! Surely it
will never on the contrary, be suffered to degenerate from man to
fiend? No; I cannot believe that: I hold another creed; which no
one ever taught me, and, which I seldom mention; but in which I
delight, and to which I cling: for it extends hope to all: it makes
Eternity a rest—a mighty home, not a terror and an abyss. (70-71)

In the sense that it is original (something that “no one ever taught” her), Helen’s “creed”
is, of course, highly individualistic. In the sense of what it preaches, Helen’s “creed” tells
a different story, however. The anti-individualist potential within Helen’s beliefs shows
up within the first line that I have quoted above—Helen’s remark that “We are, and must
be, one and all burdened with faults in this world” (69) (emphasis mine). Claiming that
people “must be burdened with faults” (69), Helen comes close to suggesting that
individuals cannot help their spiritual condition. Notably, this reading of Helen’s “creed”
is consistent with the account that Helen gives of her own personal faults some two pages
earlier. As Helen laments some two pages before her long explanation of her “creed,”
she has such a “wretchedly defective nature” that even Miss Temple’s “expostulations...
cannot stimulate” her to amend her faults of sloppiness and inattention. For all of her
benevolent views of God, Helen articulates a “creed” that, in at least one sense, accords
with the hardest-line Calvinism: like hard-line Calvinists, Helen regards the individual
Christian as fundamentally incapable of resisting sin.

As Helen continues her explanation of her beliefs, she soon reveals, however, that
her “creed” gives even less room for individual volition than even the hardest-line
Calvinism. The complete determinism of Helen’s beliefs becomes particularly apparent
as she relates what she believes will happen to all human beings upon death: their
“debasement and sin will fall from [them] with this cumbrous frame of flesh” (69). In other words, people’s sins will miraculously fall away along with their earthly, fleshly bodies.\footnote{Helen’s identification of the flesh with sinfulness also, of course, aligns her with traditional Calvinism.} This sense that people (or at least some people—the “elect”) will become increasingly righteous through no merit of their own is, of course, a standard part of the traditional Calvinist belief in sanctification. Helen Burn’s version of sanctification differs significantly, though, in that, unlike the classic Calvinist version, which asserts that sanctification begins at the time of the individual’s conversion, Helen Burns’s “creed” imagines sanctification as only occurring after that person’s death.\footnote{Though Calvinists believed that sanctification began upon conversion, they did not believe that individual Christians become perfect (i.e. completed sanctification) until in the afterlife. Some other groups, such as many Wesleyans, believed that at least some Christians could become perfect in this life; this movement is often called the “Holiness” Movement.} Strictly speaking, this difference in the start time for sanctification should make no difference in the degree of control that the individual Christian would have over his or her spiritual life. Sanctification, after all, is supposed to be the work of the Holy Spirit on man, not man’s work on himself. In a practical sense, though, the differing starting times for sanctification could prove much more important. As Max Weber has pointed out, Calvinists, for all their official rejection of the notion that a person could save him or herself through works, still regarded good works as “indispensable as signs of election” (79). Calvinism, thus, encourages a person to amend his or her faults—even if only to demonstrate that he or she is undergoing the sanctification characteristic of the “elect.” The individual Christian of Helen Burns’s “creed” need not, feel such concerns, though, about improving in the here and now, for she would not expect her sanctification to begin until the afterlife, and then she would trust that it would occur almost instantaneously and without effort (at the moment of putting off her “corruptible bod(y)” (69)).
Potentially undermining personal responsibility even further, Helen Burns’ Christian need not worry about damnation or even punishment for sin in the afterlife. As Helen exultingly proclaims, all people will enjoy an afterlife of bliss in heaven. Once in heaven, the individual’s “spirit”(s) will return to the “Creator” and “perhaps again... be communicated to some higher being than man—perhaps to pass through gradations of glory, from the pale human soul to brighten to the seraph!” (71). As a worst case scenario, Helen imagines that individual Christians will be cleansed from sin and reunited with God. As a best case, Christians may go on to take higher and higher heavenly life forms until they eventually become seraphim, the mightiest and holiness of angels.  

Jane Eyre sends a somewhat mixed message about whether Helen is right. Although Jane immediately suspects that Helen “might be right and [she] wrong” (67), the novel has Jane choose to put off thinking further about the matter. In Jane’s words, she will “not ponder the matter deeply: like Felix, [she will] put if off to a more convenient season” (67). With this allusion to Felix, Jane does more, though, than just choose not to consider Helen’s viewpoint right away. By having Jane explain her actions in terms of a Biblical allusion (albeit an allusion to a less-than-exemplary Biblical character), Jane Eyre garners a scriptural authority of sorts for Jane’s decision to defer judging Helen’s teachings of non-resistance.

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112 Helen’s use of the word “perhaps” opens up the possibility that she may see some cause/effect relationship between goodness in this life and reward in the next. In the main text of this essay I was assuming that Helen’s “perhapses” indicate her uncertainty about the exact glorification process that human beings will undergo in heaven. I also see a possible alternative reading, where “perhaps” may indicate that some people will only reach lower “gradations of glory” and never become seraphim. In any case, a lower (but superhuman) status of eternal glory provides, at most, a minimal consequence for not living as one should in the here and now.
The novel does not, however, have Jane defer her judgment of Helen’s stance for long. Within less than two pages of officially deferring her judgment, Jane articulates her own counter-argument to Helen’s policy of non-resistance. Jane tells Helen:

If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse. When we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard; I am sure we should—so hard as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again (68).

In other words, Jane argues that we must stand up to those who are cruel and tyrannical lest they increasingly become more cruel and tyrannical.

In one sense at least, Brontë’s novel immediately undercuts this counter-argument of Jane’s. With her closing declaration—that “we should strike back again very hard” (68), Jane hits upon what most Victorians would have recognized as the exact opposite of Jesus’s famous teaching that we are to “turn . . . the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39). Driving this point further home, Brontë has Helen almost immediately answer this remark of Jane’s with another (this time correctly worded) quotation from the Sermon on the Mount. Picking up just five Bible verses after Jane’s mangled Biblical allusion left off, Helen reminds Jane of Jesus’s remark, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you” (Jane Eyre 69; Matthew 5:44). So clearly contrary to Jesus’s teachings, Jane’s viewpoint seems like it can hardly be right.
Yet, something about Jane’s argument remains compelling. Helen may point out the apparent unbiblicality of Jane’s argument, but she says nothing to address Jane’s primary concern—that complete non-resistance will encourage oppressors to oppress all the more. Jane’s concern comes to seem especially compelling when considering the first, rather than the second sentence, of her rebuttal—Jane’s remark that “If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse” (68). This first statement of Jane’s is much more calmly worded that her declaration that “we should strike back again very hard” (68). Not only does it avoid the downright violent language of her later assertion—that “we should strike back again very hard: (68); it also presents her concerns in the third person and in the hyper-logical, philosophical language of an “If . . .then” statement. Calm, impersonal, and structured according to one of philosophy’s favorite verbal forms, Jane’s initial statement reads an unbiased commentary on how people in general should respond to oppression. This, of course, stands in stark contrast to her ensuing remark, which with its violent language and use of the first person voice, reads like more of a resolution to seek personal vengeance.

In the scenes that follow, Jane Eyre points further to a type of resistance to oppression distinct from self-gratifying vengeance. Several scenes after her “if people were always kind and obedient speech” (68), Jane erupts once more into passionate resistance towards oppression. In this case, though, Jane shows this outrage on behalf of another rather than on her own account. Having seen Helen calmly and resignedly

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113 I am identifying “if . . .then” statements as “hyper-logical” and “philosophical” because of the prominence they play in the formal study of logic.
wearing a “Slattern” sign all morning, Jane takes the first possible opportunity to tear this brand of shame from Helen’s head. Feeling “fury” and “burning in [her] soul” (86), Jane outrage at Helen’s punishment is nearly as passionate as her indignation for being locked in the Red Room. Having Jane show this indignation in response to the oppression of another person rather than her own mistreatment, the novel, however, points to the potentially unselfish nature of even such passionate resistance to injustice.114

Even more than Jane’s actions, Miss Temple’s actions solidify this distinction between selfish vengeance and a less self-seeking commitment to justice. Soon after Jane’s arrival at Lowood, Miss Temple disregards Mr. Brocklehurst’s rules and gives a lunch of bread and cheese to her famished students. When eventually accosted about her departure from the rules, Miss Temple offers no apology, but simply avows her personal responsibility to do that which is right when dealing with her students. In Miss Temple’s words, she “dared not allow [the students] to remain fasting till dinner time” (74). Miss Temple’s manner when articulating such statements highlights the disinterestedness of her commitment to doing what she believes right. Unlike Jane, who even when acting on behalf of another erupts into passion, Miss Temple resists oppression with “coldness and fixity” (75); with little talk and no show of anger, Miss Temple simply decides not to carry out Mr. Brocklehursts’s unjust orders.

Jane’s and Miss Temple’s resistance to oppression come together in the scene where Miss Temple teaches Jane how to respond to Brocklehurst’s unjust accusations

114 Though it is the first time that Jane acts out in opposition to injustice after her “if people were always kind and obedient” speech, it is not, of course, the first time after the speech that she feels such indignation. Several pages before tearing off Helen’s “Slattern” sign, Jane is outraged at Mr. Brocklehurst’s publicly (and falsely) accusing her of being a liar. In this first instance (one in which she is experiencing the oppression first hand rather than witnessing it befalling another), Jane, notably, does not act out in response to her anger. This showing of greater forbearance towards personal injustice than towards unfair treatment of another person, highlights the increasingly less selfish nature of Jane’s outrage towards oppression.
(that she, Jane, is a liar). In stark contrast to Helen, who silences Jane’s protests on the grounds that the angels know the truth and that Jane will soon be in heaven anyway, Miss Temple gives Jane the opportunity to defend herself. “When a criminal is accused,” Miss Temple informs Jane, “he is always allowed to speak in his own defence. You have been charged with falsehood: defend yourself to me as well as you can” (83). With these words, Miss Temple sets an important example of how an individual can properly go about resisting injustice. She frames her claims in a language of political justice and rights. Moreover, she starts by articulating an abstract general principle (how accused people should be treated) and then applies this general rule to a specific case (Jane’s being accused of being a liar). Though very subtly, Miss Temple also makes an appeal to religiously loaded language; as she counsels Jane, Jane should say whatever she deems necessary, provided that it is “true” (both in the sense of not false and not exaggerated) (83). Jane’s response solidifies the idea that the novel has been building to— that there is an acceptable way of resisting oppression and injustice. In defending herself, Jane makes a particular effort to be “mindful of Helen’s warnings against the indulgence of resentment” (83). This prompts Jane to put less “gall and wormwood than ordinary” into her account of her wrongs (83). It in no way, though, stops Jane from articulating her grievances. Jane may be implementing Helen’s teachings about avoiding vengeance, but, following Miss Temple’s lead, she stops short of adopting Helen’s policy of total non-resistance.

Though Miss Temple sets a powerful example of a Christian resistance to injustice, she does this with minimal commentary (Her remark about the criminal’s right to defend himself is her most extended statement about justice), and in a language that
makes little explicit reference to Christianity (Her insistence that Jane tell her “the truth” is the closest that she comes to appealing to Christianity outright). To begin to tap into Protestant individualism’s full power—one that, as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, is largely rhetorical—Jane has to turn to another teacher, one, who embodies what Maria Lamonaca calls the “male garrulousness about the Word” (253). Once at Thornfield, Jane finds this teacher in the voluble (albeit less than exemplary) Mr. Rochester. With Rochester’s help, Jane learns to lay hold of Protestant individualism’s greatest power: its power to divinely authorize the assertion of individual rights.

As Jane has all along, Rochester holds a strong sense of his personal rights. Using the same language of rights and freedom that Jane has used since her Gateshead days, Rochester declares, for example, that he “ought to be at liberty to attend to [his] own pleasure” (149) and that he “ha[s] a right to get pleasure out of life” (155) (emphases mine). Rochester differs from the Jane of Gateshead and Lowood, though, in that he speaks in a much more distinctly Protestant language. In the same pages where he first proclaims his rights, Rochester uses some of 1840’s Protestantism’s favorite key terms, insisting that he “shall judge [Jane’s] character for [him]self” (140), and reminding both Jane and Mrs. Fairfax that he is a person who “bear[s] a conscience” (150) (emphases mine).

Within pages of his first conversation with Jane, the novel has Rochester bring his Protestant diction and language of rights together within the same statements, so that this

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115 Maria Lamonaca makes the perceptive observation that Jane Eyre’s female characters tend to silently live their Christianity, whereas the novel’s male characters spend more time expatiating about theirs. In setting up this generalization, Lamonaca makes one glaring oversight, however. She recognizes that Helen Burns, with her long speeches, as an exception to her rule, but she overlooks a perhaps even more important exception: the heroine Jane Eyre, herself. As my essay will go on to argue, Jane learns to hold her own with the novel’s “garrulous” males when it comes to talking about the “Word.” This capacity of Jane’s is especially important because it questions both Lamonaca’s and a common feminist theoretical assumption that the “Word” is some solely male province.
religious language implies divine sanction for what the reader will later learn is Rochester's resolution to commit bigamy. Rochester first taps into such divine authority in order to silence Jane's objections to his "right to get pleasure out of life" (155) (i.e. to begin a bigamous relationship with Jane). To Jane's assertion that such pleasure seeking will cause Rochester "to degenerate still more" (155), Rochester retorts, "You [Jane] have no right to preach to me; you neophyte" (155). In one sense, Rochester is, of course, simply saying that Jane is too inexperienced to understand his moral dilemma. Through his choice of the words "right" and "neophyte" (155), Rochester is also doing something more, though. A neophyte is not just any beginner; the term often refers more specifically to a new member of the Roman Catholic clergy: a young priest or nun. In proclaiming his "right" to resist the pressures of a "neophyte" (155), Rochester is thus, in a sense, asserting his right to resist the Roman Catholic clergy and instead think for himself. In associating his opposition (in this case, Jane) with Roman Catholicism and then opposing the opposition on these grounds of its Catholic tendencies, Rochester is, of course, employing a favorite rhetorical strategies of the many Protestant sermons and treatises written in response to the Oxford Movement. Strengthening this idea—that in disregarding Jane's admonitions, he is valiantly defending Protestantism—Rochester immediately follows his "neophyte" remark with an appeal to one of Victorian Protestantism's most cherished ideals: conscience. Aiming to silence Jane's objections once and for all, Rochester reminds her that she, Jane, is "not [his] conscience-keeper" (156).

As the Thornfield section progresses, Rochester begins to claim more and more explicitly that God approves of his plans. Rochester makes an important move towards
declaring such divine approval when, on the eve of Jane’s visit to her Aunt Reed’s deathbed, he refers to prohibitions against bigamy as “obstacle[s] of custom. . .which neither [his] conscience sanctifies nor [his] judgment approves” (246). In this statement, Rochester appeals once again to the favorite Protestant ideals of conscience and judgment. Even more significantly, he frames his statement about conscience and judgment so that they clearly suggest that to appeal to conscience or judgment is, in essence, to appeal to God. As Rochester puts his case, he rejects universal prohibitions against bigamy on the grounds that they are something that his “conscience” does not “sanctify” (emphasis mine) (246). Rochester solidifies this claim of divine approval by making an additional rhetorical move in this passage: though much more subtly than he will later do, Rochester dismisses traditional moral compunctions against bigamy as mere “custom” (245), and then sets himself up as “daring the world’s opinion” (246) (i.e. human norms) to follow the quasi-divine guidance of “conscience” and “judgment.”

What Rochester suggests in this first scene he declares much more explicitly in the scene where he proposes to Jane. Holding Jane after she has said yes, Rochester passionately proclaims:

It will atone—it will atone. Have I not found her friendless, and cold, and comfortless? Is there not love in my heart and constancy in my resolve? It will expiate at God’s tribunal. I know my Maker sanctions what I do. For the world’s judgment—I wash my hands thereof. For man’s opinion—I defy it. (287)
In this statement from the end of the proposal scene, Rochester boldly reiterates the claims that he made some pages before, when Jane was about to leave for Gateshead: 1) Rochester declares outright that God, “his Maker[,] sanctions” his conduct (i.e. his bigamously marrying Jane), 2) He explicitly denounces possible objections to his conduct as merely “the world’s judgment” and “man’s opinion” (287), and 3) Bringing these two together, Rochester argues that he is merely “defy”(ing) man’s opinion” in the name of God’s higher authority.

Unlike in his earlier, somewhat subtler appeals to divine authority, Rochester adopts a much less clearly Protestant diction here in this passage, though. Like almost all Evangelical sermons or treatises, Rochester brings his discussion to Judgment Day,\(^{116}\) but he does so in a way that most Victorians would have read as Catholic rather than Protestant. Dramatically departing from Evangelical orthodoxy, Rochester presents the “atonement” and the “expiation”(ion) that he anticipates on Judgment Day as resulting not from Jesus’s death on the cross but from the power of his good works to cancel out his bad.\(^{117}\) It is moments, such as this one in the proposal scene, that have prompted Kathleen Vevjoda to identify Rochester as a Catholic-like, almost Jesuitical character. Striking to me, though, is the degree to which Rochester’s most Catholic and Jesuitical grapple for spiritual power resembles his earlier, more Protestant moral defenses. Once

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\(^{116}\) In their book-length works on Victorian Evangelicalism, Ian Bradley and Elizabeth Jay both note that Victorian Evangelicals were obsessed with Judgment Day (Bradley 22, Jay 178). As Jay interestingly points out, a sense of “imminent judgement” was common even among those Evangelicals who believed in universal salvation” (178). In my own reading of Evangelical writings, I have found that the majority of Evangelical sermons culminate in some sort of discussion of Judgment Day, and, more specifically, about how each individual Christian will ultimately be held accountable.

\(^{117}\) I’ve identified Rochester’s comments on atonement as Roman Catholic, first, because accusing Catholics of trying to save themselves through works was a favorite Victorian Protestant strategy and, secondly, because Rochester’s remarks here resemble an earlier assertion of his that the novel has explicitly identified as “a Roman Catholic principle” (159): Rochester’s belief that he will be able to “expiate[e his] numerous sins, great and small, by [the] one good work” of caring for Adèle.
again Rochester judges right and wrong for himself, and once again, he trumps man’s authority with God’s. It is at such moments, when Protestant judgment and conscience become not all that separable from Jesuit casuistry and control that Jane Eyre reveals some its greatest anxieties about the Protestant individualism that it celebrates overall. It is against such powerful but often disturbing appeals to the divine that Jane learns to articulate a distinctly Protestant individualism. As the novel presents her, Jane, of course, already possesses a strong sense of personal rights before she comes under Rochester’s influence. In the very first tête-à-tête that she has with Rochester, Jane already speaks quite eloquently in a language of rights and liberty. She, for example, questions Rochester’s “right to command” her (152), and she describes “insolence” as something “nothing free-born would submit to” (153).

Under Rochester’s influence, Jane’s assertion of personal rights soon begins to take on a more religious tone. Jane first mixes religious language and discussions of rights specifically to answer Rochester’s excessive claims to religious authority. Jane offers her first religiously loaded discussion of rights in response to a comment that Rochester makes just two pages after his first appeals to his Protestant individualist rights (his “neophyte” and “conscience-keeper” remarks (156)). Hearing Rochester go on to declare that he is “pass[ing] a law, unalterable as that of the Medes and Persians, that both [his aim and motives for bigamy] are right” (157),118 Jane retorts that “The human

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118 This “Medes and Persians” comment of Rochester’s is, of course, yet another appeal to religious authority, albeit a fairly convoluted one. As Biblically literate Victorians would have almost all recognized, the inalterability of the laws of the “Medes and Persians” figures importantly in the books of Daniel and Esther. Critical to the plots of these respective books, the inalterability of the laws of the “Medes and Persians” keeps King Darius from being able to rescind the law that condemns Daniel to be thrown in the lion’s den and King Xerxes from being able to reverse his order of a massive, upcoming attack on Esther’s people (the Jews). In referring to the “unalterable laws of the Medes and Persians” (157), Rochester is, thus, clearly evoking the Bible. He is, however, evoking decrees that the kings Darius and Xerxes later came to realize were unwise. Though unwise, these decrees still, though, could not, be
and fallible should not arrogate a power with which the divine and perfect alone can be safely entrusted. . . [the power] of saying of any unsanctioned line of action, -- ‘Let it be right’ ” (157). With this statement, Jane offers a caution against unchecked private judgment that is rather like the warnings commonly offered in Evangelical sermons. “Fallible” as they are, human beings can make erroneous judgments. To guard against this human error, individual Christians should, therefore, embrace only those private judgments (and dictates of conscience) that are “sanctioned” (or at least consistent) with the Bible. Brontë has her heroine stop short of explicitly identifying the Bible as the ultimate determiner of what is “sanctioned” versus “unsanctioned,” but otherwise Jane’s explanation of private judgment’s proper limits reads very much like the typical Evangelical Protestant religious writings that I discussed in chapter one. To this classic caution about the limits of private judgment, Jane also adds her own articulation of the human vs. divine dichotomy. Like Rochester, Jane emphasizes the great difference between the human and the divine. She, however, groups Rochester with the human, meaning that he is not justified in speaking for God, especially not with the boldness that he shows. Brontë highlights the hubristic audacity of Rochester’s claims through the words that she has Jane to finish off her retort. In Jane’s words, Rochester’s great transgression is that he has attempted to proclaim, “Let it [his bigamous plan] be right” (157). This statement “Let it be right” (157), of course, sounds uncomfortably like “Let

undone, and the Bible upholds their inalterability. Rather than undo them, God finds ways to work around them (shutting the lions’ mouths and using Esther to help equip the Jews to defend themselves). In alluding to the “unalterable laws of the Medes and Persians” (157), Rochester puts himself in a position where even if God does not agree with his (Rochester’s) decrees, He will still not undo these decrees outright. Since Rochester’s decree is not merely that his plans will be carried out but that they shall be “right,” Rochester creates a rhetorical position where God (in keeping with Biblical precedent) will, in fact, be unable to not only undo Rochester’s decrees, but, more significantly, to change their “rightness.”
there be light” (Genesis 1:3), the words that the Biblical God used to begin His Creation of the universe. Calling Rochester “fallib[ly] human” (157), and then having him speak and act as if he is the infallible Creator, Jane suggests that Rochester is very wrongly and dangerously attempting to play God.

Several chapters later, Jane offers a second check to Rochester’s overly liberal exercise of his Protestant individualism. In response to Rochester’s assertion that he is “justified” (emphasis mine) in turning to the “regenerat[ing] society” (245) of a female companion, Jane insists that:

A Wanderer’s repose or a Sinner’s reformation should never depend on a fellow-creature. Men and women die; philosophers falter in wisdom, and Christians in goodness: if any one you know has suffered and erred, let him look higher than to his equals for strength to amend, and solace to heal. (246)

Unlike Jane’s first admonishment, which essentially accused Rochester of an excessive Protestant individualism, bordering on anarchy, this second rebuke accuses Rochester of, in another sense, coming up fundamentally deficient in his Protestant individualism. Rochester may show a hyper-individualistic nerve to declare his actions “right” (157) or “justified” (245), but his Protestant individualism collapses altogether when he goes on to explain where he puts his hopes of redemption: in the “regenerating society” (245) of a

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119 The phonetic resemblances between these two statements are numerous. Not only do these two sentences contain exactly the same first and third words (“Let” and “be”); their fourth words (“right” and “light”) are also very similar phonetically. “Right” and “light” do more than just rhyme; their single differing sounds (the “r” and “l”) are particularly similar sounds. “R” and “l” are paired together in linguistic charts because they have the same point of articulation (the alveolar ridge) and because they are the only two sounds in modern English to be classified as “liquids” in terms of their method of articulation.
virtuous female companion (emphasis mine). Instead of trusting himself unduly (as he did in his “Let it be right” speech), Rochester, in this second instance, puts too much faith in the judgment (and even saving power) of other humans. As Jane points out, though, the same divine supremacy/human inferiority that makes it precarious to trust too unquestionably in oneself makes it just as (if not more) dangerous to depend too fully on another fallible, mortal human being. As with the case of Jane’s earlier caution against unchecked private judgment, this warning about putting one’s spiritual accountability off on other humans, is, notably, more than just some idiosyncratic teaching of Jane’s. In having Jane remind Rochester of the individual nature of spiritual accountability (and, in turn, redemption), Brontë is having her heroine appeal to what I have already identified as the logical starting points of almost all anti-Oxford Movement sermons and theological treatises: 1) that each person should have the right to follow his/her conscience and private judgment and 2) that no Christian should put his/her faith or hope of salvation in any mediator, except the one true Mediator, Jesus Christ. In unquestionably following his conscience and judgment, Rochester might have been seeming to play God, but in depending on another mere human to get to heaven, Rochester would have been doing something that would have alarmed many of Brontë’s Protestant contemporaries even more: he would have been acting Catholic, and doing so, specifically in the ways that Protestant writings of the period most vehemently condemned.

Having built her Protestant individualist rhetorical skills by correcting Rochester’s flawed spiritual appeals, Jane soon begins to make such claims of her own. Jane seems to come into her full Protestant individualist voice in the scene where Rochester proposes to her. Faced with Rochester, who is both telling her that she cannot
leave Thornfield and physically holding her still, Jane proclaims that she is “a free human being with an independent will, which [she shall] now exert to leave” Rochester (284). With these words, Jane breaks free from Rochester’s grasp. At first glance, this statement, with its opening assertion of the “free”(dom) that Jane possesses as a “human being,” may seem to owe more to liberal democratic rhetoric than to Protestantism.

Jane, notably, however, declares her freedom on the specific grounds of her independence of will. This concept of an independent or “free will” is, of course, the central tenet of Arminianism, the particular strain of Protestantism that both Charlotte and the entire Brontë family embraced (Fraser 46).

The religious basis of Jane’s declaration of her freedom and independent will becomes even clearer when looking at the long, rather sermon-like speech that she delivers just lines before declaring herself “a free human being with an independent will” (284). Explaining to Rochester why she must go, Jane retorts:

Do you think that I can stay to become a nothing to you?
Do you think that I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? And can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?—You think wrong! I have as much soul as you,--and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to
you through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor
even of mortal flesh:--it is my spirit that addresses your
spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we
stood at God's feet, equal—as we are! (284)

Like her "a free human being" remark, this long speech of Jane's begins with an assertion
of her status as a human being (in this case, a being that specifically is not "an
automaton") (284). Before long, the passage takes a more distinctly religious turn,
though. This shift begins in the third sentence of the speech, where Jane refers to her
deepest, darkest desires as her "morsel of bread" and "drop of living water" (284);
abruptly turning to such a Biblically loaded language of bread and "living water," Jane
almost sounds like she is reading from the Bible.\(^{120}\)

From these Biblical allusions, Jane jumps into what John G. Peters has pointed
out is clearly a case for a spiritual equality (57). Describing this spiritual equality as
centering around the concept of "individual change through individual religion" (57),
Peters, has, in fact, largely already made my case for me concerning the strong Protestant
individualist impulse of this passage. What I still want to point out, though, is the degree
to which Brontë uses a Protestant individualist language that almost sounds like that of
the sermons and religious writings that I discussed in chapters one and two. Opening her
statement of spiritual equality by declaring, "I have as much soul as you" (284), Brontë
comes remarkably close to Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's assertion that "women have

\(^{120}\) Both bread and "living water" figure prominently in the Bible. Bread and water were, of course, the
staple dietary items of Biblical times; having them (or not having them) made the difference of surviving
versus perishing. In keeping with these items' indispensability to life, the Bible often uses this language of
bread to describe Jesus and the language of "living water" to describe both Jesus and God, the Father. For
key Biblical passages about bread, see Matthew 6:11, 15:22-28 and John 6:35, 48-51; for references to
souls” from her “muslin divine” speech (“Preface” 1843 i-ii). Having reminded Rochester that she too has a soul, Jane then makes one of the most common rhetorical moves in Evangelical writings from her day: she asks Rochester to think forward to Judgment Day, a time when “custom, conventionalities, [and] even...mortal flesh” will be stripped away and they will “st[and] at God’s feet, equal—as they are!” (284).

Making each person’s ultimate individual accountability to God the case for certain equal rights, *Jane Eyre* almost sounds like it is about to launch into an Evangelical defense of private judgment. Rather than allow her to interpret the Bible for herself, Jane’s statement of spiritual equality instead authorizes her to speak—to express feelings that a woman, especially a socially inferior woman, would not usually be allowed to voice.

If the Thornfield portion of the novel is a time when Jane becomes very proficient at articulating her Protestant individualist rights, it is not a period when she grows in terms of her ability to rely first and foremost upon God. Turning back to the language of idolatry which it used in reference to little Jane’s excessive attachment to her doll, the novel presents Jane’s love for Rochester as first bordering upon and then ultimately completely transgressing into idolatry. The first hint of the idolatrous quality of Jane’s love appears in Jane’s remark, “He is not of your order: keep to your caste, and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole, heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised” (185). The language of “self-respect” at the beginning of this passage, of course, sounds like it could come out right out of quite secular forms of Victorian individualism, something akin to the writings of Samuel Smiles. As the passage progresses through, it presents Jane’s struggle for individual self-respect in a more clearly religious light. The novel suggests this through an allusion to
one of the most famous verses of the Bible. Having Jane admit that she is “lavish[ing] her *heart, soul, and strength*” upon Rochester (emphasis mine) (185), the novel, closely echoes Deuteronomy 6:5: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and all of thy *might*” (emphasis mine). Rather than giving her “heart,” “soul,” and “might” to God, Jane is, of course, bestowing them upon Rochester. As the Thornfield section progresses, the novel becomes even more explicit about the idolatrousness of Jane’s excessive love for Rochester. Commenting on her relationship with her now fiancé, Jane admits, “My future husband was becoming to me my whole world; and more than the world: almost my hope of heaven. He stood between me and every thought of religion, as an eclipse intervenes between man and the broad sun. I could not, in those days, see God for his creature: of whom I had made an idol” (307).

Looking back on this episode in her life and equating excessive love with idolatry, Jane sounds like she could be speaking right out of the contemporary Evangelical sermons of her day, which as I pointed out in chapter one, frequently used the term “idolatry” for any love for man that exceeded an individual’s love for God.

In the pages that follow Jane’s blatant admission of idolatry, Jane’s Protestant individualism faces its first major test: having learned that Rochester is already married, Jane must decide if she can and will do what she believes right and flee Thornfield. Jane’s challenge is to successfully convince Rochester (and herself) that she is warranted in leaving him. Rochester, as the novel presents him, counters Jane’s rejection of him with two different arguments, but Jane’s Protestant individualist language and principles make each of these easy for her to refute. Rochester’s first argument is that the obstacles that keep Jane and him apart are merely human. Echoing his earlier dismissals of bigamy
prohibitions as “the world’s opinion” (246), Rochester asks Jane the rhetorical question: “Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law—no man being injured in the breach?” (356). Armed with traditional Protestant individualism and its clear distinctions between the human and the divine, Jane has no difficulty countering such an argument, though. Jane merely has to take the social prohibitions against adultery and fornication and declare them “the law given by God, sanctioned by man” (356), a move that would not have been difficult since the Bible, the classic Evangelical standard of truth, specifically condemns such behaviors.

Similar appeals to Protestant individualist language and teachings also allow Jane to refute Rochester’s second and favorite argument: that by leaving, Jane will ruin him morally and spiritually. As in the case of the dismissal of impediments to his desires as merely human, Rochester has already used this argument before when he talked about his search for the “regenerating society” (245) of a virtuous female companion. Rochester’s statement where he dismisses bigamy taboos as “mere human law” (s), of course, also includes assertions of how Jane will “drive a fellow-creature [Rochester] to despair” (356). Rochester also posits similar arguments, when he declares in this same scene, “You [Jane] are scheming to destroy me” (338) and “you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed” (355). Rochester’s arguments about how Jane needs to save him are particularly notable because in having Rochester present his beloved as responsible for his personal salvation, Brontë is having him follow a long Western spiritual tradition going back at least to Beatrice’s leading of Dante through Paradise. As I showed through my discussion of Sarah Stickney Ellis in the introduction and of Broad Church writers, such as Kingsley and Maurice, in the second chapter, Victorians were particularly prone
to accepting this idea that it is women's job to save men. Jane's Protestant individualism allows her to refute such an argument easily, though. In response to Rochester's remark about how Jane is forcing him "to live wretched and to die accursed" (355), Jane tells Rochester, "Do as I do: trust God and yourself" (355). She then adds, "Mr. Rochester, I no more assign this fate to you than I grasp at it myself. We were born to strive and endure—you as well as I: do so" (355). With these words, Jane officially proclaims that she has no ultimate responsibility for or control over Rochester's spiritual fate. It is his job as an individual Christian to "strive and endure"—with God's help, of course. Although the novel does not specifically bring up Judgment Day here, this idea that women are not actually responsible for a man's spiritual destiny logically stems from the traditional Protestant teaching about each man and woman facing God alone on Judgment Day. If a man is truly to stand alone that would prohibit not just his priest's but also his his wife or lover's being there too. This is one of the most original aspects of Charlotte Brontë's Protestant individualism. The Evangelical writings and sermons that I have read notably stop short of placing any burden on women to save men, but, unlike Brontë, they do not follow their own Protestant individualism to its logical conclusion and specifically refute such claims.

In addition to these two arguments, Rochester also considers using violence to stop Jane from leaving him. Specifically, Rochester tells Jane, "Will you hear reason? . . .because if you won't, I'll try violence" (340). The sheer force of Jane's Protestant individualist will stops Rochester, however. Near the end of the scene, Rochester explains what has been deterring him from resorting to such violence:
Never was anything at once so frail and indomitable. A mere shadow she feels in my hand!... I could bend her with the finger and thumb: and what good would it do if I bent, if I uptore, if I crushed her? Consider the eye: consider the resolute, wild, free thing looking out of it, defying me, with more than courage—with a stern triumph. Whatever I do with its cage, I cannot get at it—the savage beautiful creature! If I tear, if I rend the slight prison, my outrage will only let the captive loose. Conqueror I might be of the house; but the inmate would escape to heaven before I could call myself possessor of its clay dwelling-place. And it is you, spirit—with will and energy, and virtue and purity—that I want: not alone your brittle frame. Of yourself, you could come with soft flight and nestle against my heart, if you would: seized against your will you will elude the grasp like an essence—you will vanish ere I inhale your fragrance. (357)

Rochester starts off by acknowledging the power of Jane’s “indomitable” Protestant individualist will and his inability to have any sway over her soul. Bigger, stronger, and more socially powerful, Rochester could probably harm—even kill—Jane’s body, but, as he points out, killing the body would only set the soul free. In other words, when it comes to the realm of the soul, Rochester’s earthly power and authority offer him absolutely no control over another being. Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in her work, Brontë thus acknowledges how religion, especially a religion that emphasizes the individual fates of souls, leaves a man or woman’s soul essentially inviolate.

Once Jane finally quells Rochester’s wrath and decides to leave, she immediately faces yet another Protestant individualist challenge: the incredible isolation that her
decision to leave Rochester leaves her in. It is through this episode of Jane’s leaving Thornfield and then wandering penniless and alone for three days that the novel puts her ability to rely on God, not other human beings, to the test. In the pages where Jane makes and carries out this painful choice, the text emphasizes the profound loneliness of the choice that she is making. This sense of the deep loneliness of following moral conviction comes across within moments of Jane’s arrival at her decision that she must leave Rochester. When Jane’s “conscience” tells her that she can and will leave Rochester, Jane is “terror-struck at the solitude which so ruthless a judge [conscience] haunted,—at the silence which so awful a voice [conscience again] filled” (335).

Emphasizing the loneliness of the moral resolve that Jane is about to carry out, the opening pages do more, though, than just explicitly comment on her “solitude.” In the middle of her internal dialogue with conscience, this first page of volume III has Jane specifically cry out, “Let another help me!” (335) and then has her conscience strike this request down. The reply of Jane’s conscience to her appeal for help further highlights the degree to which Jane must walk her “narrow way” alone:

No; you shall tear yourself away, none shall help you: you shall yourself, pluck out your right eye, yourself cut off your right hand: your heart shall be the victim; and you, the priest, to transfix it. (335).

This statement by Jane’s conscience, of course, very closely resembles some of Jesus’ teachings in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew writes:

If thy hand or foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two
feet and be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (Matthew 18: 8-9)

Brontë’s version is, if anything, more horrific. Unlike in the Biblical text, Brontë prescription for self-mutilation includes a person’s very heart. And, in a twisted application of the Protestant concept of the “priesthood of all believers,” Brontë emphasizes that the individual him or herself must be the one to conduct his or her own extreme self-sacrifice.

The full Protestant individualist significance of Jane’s echoing of Matthew 18 only comes across, though, when viewing this passage in volume III alongside the novel’s earlier allusion to this scripture in volume I. As I pointed out earlier, the volume I evocation of Matthew 18 had Jane set up human companionship as the great cause worth mutilating oneself for. Rather than find herself “solitary and hated” and missing out on receiving “real affection. . .from [those] whom she “really loved”(81) the child Jane was willing to “submit to have [her] arm broken. . .to let a bull toss [her] . . .to let]a kicking horse. . .dash its hoof at [her] chest” (81). In alluding to Matthew 18 at the beginning of volume III, Brontë is thus referring back not only to the Biblical passage but to the less mature Jane’s views. Put together, these passages highlight not just the necessity of sin, but the painful sacrifice of human companionship that the fully mature, orthodox Protestant heroine must be willing to undergo for her faith.

Jane Eyre further emphasizes the loneliness of Jane’s righteous decision when it has her actually start carrying her decision out—something she does as she physically walks away from Thornfield. Pointing to the loneliness of Jane’s choice is this section’s
extended analogy between Jane’s departure from Rochester and Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden. As the text remarks, Jane is leaving the “heaven—[the] temporary heaven” of staying and living (in sin) with Rochester (359). But, instead of staying in this “heaven,” Jane, under God’s guidance, “walk[s] along [her] solitary way” (360) (emphasis mine). In describing Jane’s departure from “heaven” as the taking of a “solitary way” (360), Brontë, of course, echoes both the general situation and the actual wording of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden at the end of Paradise Lost.121 Brontë crafts her allusion, though, so that it points to the differences and much as the similarities between Jane’s departure from Rochester and her foreparents’ dismissal from Eden. Unlike Milton’s Eve, Brontë’s Eve (Jane) has no Adam, and, therefore, cannot take her difficult journey “hand in hand” with another human being (XII 648). So, if Adam and Eve’s journey out of Eden was a “solitary way,” Brontë presents Jane’s departure from Rochester as an even more “solitary way” (360) (emphasis mine).

The full solitariness of Jane’s way still comes out most fully through the plot turns that Brontë has follow Jane’s departure from Thornfield. Heightening the sense of Jane’s total isolation from humankind, Brontë immediately takes her heroine to Whitcross, a place where she knows no one, and, through the incident where Jane leaves her bag on the coach, strips her heroine of all means to return to a place where she is known. Once her heroine is helpless and alone in this remote corner of England, Brontë has Jane declare her total isolation both quite explicitly and poignantly. As Jane laments, “Not a tie holds [her] to human society at this moment – not a charm or hope calls [her] where

121 The final lines of Paradise Lost, of course, read as follows: “They [Adam and Eve] hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow/Through Eden took their solitary way” (XII 648-9) (emphasis mine).
[her] fellow creatures are—none that saw [her] would have a kind thought or a good wish for [her. She] ha[s] no relative but the universal mother, nature” (362-363).

As shown through Jane’s final turn to her “universal mother, nature” (363), the mature Jane of volume III now proves herself capable of emotionally surviving without the aid and companionship of other human beings. “Solitary” as Jane and her way are, the Jane of volume III discovers that she is not really alone. Jane first describes this non-human companion as “the universal mother, nature” (363). Nature, Jane reflects, will provide her homeless self with “lodg[ing]...without money and without price.” Perhaps, even more importantly, nature, as Jane imagines her, will provide Jane with “love” at the very moment when Jane can expect “only mistrust, rejection, [and] insult” from man” (363). The higher power that Jane turns to in her moment of complete loneliness, notably, does not, at least at first appear in the form of the Christian God.

Before long, Jane, however, turns her thoughts to a more orthodox (and masculine) model of higher power. Turning to her “mother, nature” may grant Jane temporary solace, allowing her to go to bed at least momentarily warmed and comforted, but Brontë soon has her heroine wake up feeling heart-broken and “impotent as a bird with both wings broken” (364). It is at this moment that Jane makes a second turn to an even higher power than nature. Rising to her knees to pray for Rochester (and presumably for herself), Jane muses:

We know that God is everywhere; but certainly we feel His presence most when His works are on the grandest scale 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: convinced I grew that neither earth should perish, nor one of the souls it treasured. I turned my prayer to thanksgiving: the Source of Life was also the Saviour of spirits: Mr Rochester was safe: he was God’s and by God’s would be guarded. I again nestled to the breast of the hill; and ere long, in sleep, forgot sorrow. (364)

As Brontë crafts this scene, Jane does not turn away from her “mother, nature,” but instead subsumes Mother Nature into a larger and more clearly Christian metaphysical framework. In a Natural Religion-esque move, Brontë presents her beloved nature as ultimately revealing the “presence” of an even higher being, the Christian God. Brontë, does not, notably, have Jane cast off Mother nature at the expensive of the masculine Christian God; Brontë, in fact, closes this passage by having Jane curl up once again to nature’s “breast” (364). Still, as this passage presents nature and the even higher power of God, God provides something that mother Nature cannot: “omnipotence” (364). Nature may supply love, but the Christian God holds endless “strength and might” (364), allowing Him not just to love Jane, but also to save her (and her beloved Rochester).

Even after this moment of realization of God’s love and His power to save her, Jane still experiences moments of weakness and doubt. The first moment comes when Jane, finding herself almost overcome with hunger, remarks, “Solitude would be no solitude—rest no rest—while the vulture, hunger, thus sank beak and talons in my side”
(367). As Brontë constructs this remark of Jane’s, it reads as a commentary on the status of Jane’s Protestant individualist ability to survive alone. With the opening words “Solitude would be no solitude” (367), Jane affirms the value of being alone, at least theoretically. As the sentence progresses, though, the violently painful reality of Jane’s physical hunger (the “vulture [that sinks] beak and talons into [her] side”) shatters any hope that Jane might have of finding peace and rest alone with God and His Creation. Despite her Protestant strivings to sustain herself with only God’s help, Jane Eyre, we learn in this section of lonely wandering, is no Robinson Crusoe; she is not a person who can somehow cleverly manage to live off the land.

Within pages, Jane’s desperation builds to an even greater moment of spiritual crisis. This crisis occurs when Jane, worn out, freezing, and no longer able to go on, stumbles upon the warm, inviting home of Moor House, only to have the servant Hannah drive her away. Her last hope dashed, Jane’s anguish reaches what Brontë calls a “climax,” as “a pain of exquisite suffering—a throe of true despair—ren[ds] and heave[s] her heart,” prompting her to collapse “groan”(ing) and “wring[ing]” her hands(376). Jane, we soon learn, finds herself in such utter despair because of the “horror” that suddenly strikes her at this moment: Jane not only sees “the spectre of [her fairly immediate] death; she realizes that she is to die in terrible “isolation. . .[in] banishment from [her (i.e. human)] kind” (376). Conspicuously absent from Jane’s thoughts at this moment of despair is any sense from God, his angels, or the nature that He created. Brontë highlights this absence by turning to Biblical allusions when describing Jane’s final moment of despair. At this nadir, Jane, we are told, finds herself lacking both “the anchor of hope” and “the footing of fortitude” (376). “The anchor of hope” (376) is, of
course, an allusion to Hebrews 6:19, where Paul calls man’s “hope” of salvation “an anchor of the soul.” Though perhaps not quite as obviously so, “the footing of fortitude” is also suggestive of the Bible—in particular of the very famous opening lines of Psalm 121:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from when cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

_He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:_ he that keepeth thee will not slumber. (1-3) (emphasis mine)

In having Jane remark that her “anchor of hope” and “footing of fortitude [were] gone” (376), Brontë is thus suggesting that Jane has lost not only her confidence in her salvation, but also all sense that God will take care of her. In other words, Jane’s Protestant individualism has failed her completely—“at least for [the] moment” (376).

This “at least for [the] moment” (376) is key, though, because Brontë almost immediately draws Jane back from this spiritual abyss. In Brontë’s words, Jane “soon endeavour[s] to regain” her “footing of fortitude” (376). To regain this footing Jane only has to turn back to God, which she does by immediately telling herself, “I can but die. . .and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence” (376). With these words, Jane offers the novel’s most vehement statement of the individual Christian’s ability to emotionally survive alone (accompanied only by God). By herself, Jane may not be able to keep life in her body, but she can confidently believe that God will watch over her soul. As strong as it is, the individualism that Jane articulates here is not quite the rugged individualism of a Robinson Crusoe-type. Unlike the individualism of these more traditionally masculine models, Jane’s emotional individualism does not mean coming up
with some ingenious solution to save herself; instead, it means relinquishing control of her life and passively "wait[ing] God’s will in silence" (376). Brontë’s emotional individualism further differs from that of say, Robinson Crusoe, in that she never entirely stops questioning how attainable it is. As strong as Jane’s words are during this—the novel’s supreme statement of emotional individualism, Brontë never entirely suppresses a dissonant voice that seems to question just how emotionally independent from other human beings that Jane is or ever can be. As Jane utters her great Protestant individualist statement, she has, in Brontë’s words, to “thrust...back all [her] misery into [her] heart [and] ma[ke] an effort to compel it to remain there—dumb and still” (376). Despite her eloquent and decisive-sounding resolution to trust God, Jane, the text reveals, has still hardly found a “peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). Jane, though, receives an immediate reward for properly articulating her Protestant individualist credo. As soon as Jane declares human aid unnecessary, the novel finally offers her the aid of a human being in the form of St. John Rivers, who finally welcomes her into the very human haven of Moor House.

After this point in the novel, Jane, notably, never worries again about committing the idolatry of loving some human being more than God. She is able to forge very close friendships with her cousins Diana and Mary. She also, of course, ultimately marries Rochester and writes of their happy marriage in strong terms of how “I am my husband’s life as fully as he is mine” and “we are ever together” (500). In other words, Jane is able to enjoy incredible earthy love without worrying that she is slighting the divine. This freedom, I believe, has much to do with her lonely time of trial in Millcote. Jane has shown that, when morally and spiritually necessary, she will stand apart from other
human beings, but, as long as such separation is not imperative, Jane enjoys close 
relationships. After all, as Rochester points out earlier about Jane, she has a “social 
heart” (353). Jane’s impulse to return to close relationships as soon as doing so is 
morally and spiritually feasible is yet another way in which the Protestant individualism 
of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* differs sharply from Robinson Crusoe’s atomistic asociality.

Although Jane’s struggles to prove her spiritual independence from other human 
beings may end with the conclusion of her three days of lonely wandering, she still faces 
a final Protestant individualist struggle to assert her rights: She must resist St. John 
Rivers’ efforts to coerce her into marrying him. St. John’s pressuring of Jane actually 
occurring in three stages. First, he proposes and then spends a number of immediate pages 
trying to refute Jane’s no. Then, about a week and several pages later, St. John asks Jane 
if she still is resolved not to marry him. The third and final struggle occurs later the same 
evening of St. John’s second effort. In this third scene, Jane hears St. John read the 
apocalyptic Revelations 21 very movingly and nearly gives in to his demands.

The first two of these scenes have Jane use the same two Protestant individualist 
rhetorical techniques to resist St. John. As she did with Rochester, Jane once again turns 
to the favorite human vs. the divine dichotomy. Jane declares St. John’s mere humanity. 
Jane remarks,

> I saw his fallibilities: I comprehended them. I understood that, sitting 
> there where I did, on the bank of heath, and with that handsome form 
> before me, I sat at the feet of a man, erring as I. The veil fell from his 
> hardness and despotism. Having felt in him the presence of these qualities,
I felt his imperfection and took courage. I was with an equal—one with whom I might argue—one whom, if I saw good, I might resist” (452).

As well as clearly showing Jane to appeal to the classic Protestant individualist distinction between the divine and the human, this passage also highlights the power that comes with such an argument. With Jane’s recognition of St. John’s mere humanity, Jane becomes able to see “his fallibilities,” including his naked “hardness and despotism” (452), in turn pulling him down to level of one she can argue with and, if she chooses to, even resist.

*Jane Eyre* bolsters Jane’s claim that St. John is a mere human being with greater pretensions by having St. John spend much of these first two scenes conflating his will with God’s. In one of the most flagrant examples, St. John tells the noncompliant Jane, “Do not forget that if you reject it, it is not me you deny but God. Through my means, He opens to you a noble career: as my wife only can you enter upon it. Tremble forever lest in that case you should be numbered with those who have denied the faith and are worse than infidels” (455). As St. John shows through these words, he is so convinced that God shares his will that he presents a no to him as synonymous with a no to God. To add extra gravity to his speaking for God, St. John includes specific threats of hell in his “divine” decree. St. John similarly combines speaking for God and delivering threats of damnation in his response to Jane in the second scene. “I had thought I recognized in you one of the chosen,” he remarks, “But God sees not as man sees: His will be done” (461). In this second passage, St. John contrasts his previous opinion of Jane’s salvation with his more current belief, but rather than recognize the second opinion as his own, St. John describes it in terms of how “God sees as man sees” (461). St. John then tacks an “His
will be done” on the end, as if to try to reinforce his claim that his own will comes from some higher outside source.

Revealing St. John to be raising himself and his judgment up to the level of God, St. John opens him up to critique, particularly to the common anti-Catholic anti-clerical critiques of the day. For all of his very Calvinist Protestantism, in claiming to speak directly for God, St. John is behaving like Victorian Protestants typically caricaturized Catholic priests as acting. Some of the language that Jane Eyre uses encourages the drawing of a connection between St. John and Catholic Catholic priests. First, the novel repeatedly uses the word “despot” or “despotism,” a favorite anti-Catholic descriptor, in reference to St. John. Secondly, the novel likens John to a “hierophant” and Jane to his “neophyte” on two occasions (454, 465). To call Jane a “neophyte,” of course, conjures up images of a nun. The term “hierophant” specifically suggests an ancient Greek priest, but, most importantly, suggests a priest of sorts. Showing the assumption of divine authority stereotypical of a Catholic priest and being likened to a priest, St. John comes across as surprisingly Catholic-like. Jane Eyre’s use of anti-Catholic critique against staunch Protestants is, notably, something that was not entirely without precedent at the time. As I pointed out in chapter one, Evangelical preachers frequently warned parishioners that they too could fall into the traditionally Catholic sin of idolatry. Jane Eyre might be said to be offering its own warning about how Anglican ministers like St. John can fall into the heresy of behaving as if they are personally infallible.

In addition to such human versus divine distinctions, Jane Eyre also has its heroine appeal to the Christian ideal of vocation. During the first two scenes where St. John tries to convince her to marry him, Jane appeals to her vocation on at least three
occasions. In response to St. John’s claim that he is giving his parishoners (including her) “Heaven’s message...direct from God” (447), Jane replies, “If they are really qualified for the task, will not their own hearts be the first to inform them of it?” (447). Her heart, Jane immediately goes on to specify “is mute” (447). Jane returns once again to the idea of her vocation, or more precisely her lack of vocation to marry St. John and go to India, a couple of pages later during this initial proposal scene. She tells St. John, “Nothing speaks or stirs in me while you talk. I am sensible of no light kindling—no life quickening—no voice counselling or cheering. Oh, I wish I could make you see how much my mind is at this moment like a rayless dungeon, with one shrinking fear fettered in its depths—the fear of being persuaded by you to attempt what I cannot accomplish!” (449). With these words, Jane not only reiterates her lack of vocation; she also expresses the darkness and sense of imprisonment that she experiences in her soul as she is enduring being pressured to act where she has no divine calling. The concept of vocation comes up a final time in the second scene, where St. John asks Jane if she still holds to her resolution. Jane retorts, “God did not give me my life to throw away; and to do as you wish me would, I begin to think, be almost equivalent to committing suicide. Moreover, before I definitely resolve on quitting England, I will know for certain, whether I cannot be of greater use by remaining in it than by leaving it” (461). Speaking of the precious, God-given gift of her life, Jane’s words here come very close to the Broad Church ethic of self-development. Focusing on how she might “be of greater use” in England than in India, Jane returns, though, to the more traditional notion of vocation as a specific purpose to which one is called rather than a more general call to self-realization.
In these first two scenes, Jane has little trouble rebuffing St. John's advances. St. John may remain persistent, but Jane remains unquestioning resolved to stand behind her no. Jane's power to assert her will becomes more precarious, though, in the third and final passage where St. John tries to convince Jane to marry him. At least two factors distinguish this final scene, though, from the earlier two. First, St. John is finally behaving kindly to Jane. "I could resist St. John's wrath," Jane comments, but "I grew pliant as a reed under his kindness" (466). Why this would be the case becomes all the clearer in light of Jane's earlier comment that it is St. John's "fallibilities" (452) and his "despot'(ism), (452) that help her to see his mere humanity so earlier. Jane's description during this scene suggests that she, for the moment at least, is forgetting the human vs. divine distinctions that generally figure so prominently in her thought. In Jane's words, St. John now seems to be her "guardian angel watch[ing] the soul for which he is responsible" (465). The second factor that makes this final scene different is that St. John is reading out of the Bible, a book that Evangelicals and, to a lesser extent, Broad Churchmen believed divine. Describing St. John's reading of the Bible, the novel remarks, "he delivered the oracles of God" (464). Speaking what an Evangelical would have believed were God's words but selectively choosing ones that help make his case, St. John is able to carry out what Marianne Thormählen calls "spiritual blackmail" (98) without obviously appearing to be doing so. As was the case with St. John's earlier statements questioning Jane's salvation, St. John's selected text (Revelations 21:8) touches upon the central Evangelical fixation: Judgment Day. With St. John now behaving with angelic "gentleness" (466) and with his reading a long section of what Evangelicals would have regarded as God's word, Jane this time, though, gets caught up
in St. John’s appeals to Judgment Day. “All was changing utterly with a sudden sweep,” Brontë writes, “Religion called—Angels beckoned—God commanded—life rolled together like a scroll—death’s gates opening, shewed eternity byeond: it seemed that for safety and bliss there, all her might be sacrificed in a second” (466). With these words, *Jane Eyre* reveals a potential peril behind the very powerful Evangelical appeals to Judgment Day: they can be used against rather than for a woman’s assertion of her individual rights. In the right spiritual atmosphere, a woman might actually give in to such spiritual exploitation.

Having repeatedly spoken to St. John about her calling, or rather lack of calling to spend her life with him, Jane’s redemption from St. John’s grasp, unsurprisingly, appears in the form of a call: the sound of Rochester’s voice coming over the moors. I agree with Marianne Thormählen’s interpretation that Jane’s ability to hear Rochester’s voice is the result of “divine assistance” (68). Thormählen makes this case first upon the basis that Jane prays, “Shew me the path, shew me the path!” right before she hears Rochester’s words. Secondly, as Thormählen points out, Brontë often presents God as appearing through nature; in Thormählen’s words, “Brontë heroines tend to receive divine assistance in the open air” (68). If Jane’s hearing of Rochester’s voice is indeed the result of divine intervention, then the voice she hears is likely the very call from God that she has not been hearing when with St. John. Rather than in God’s voice, the call comes, though, through the voice of the one with whom she is called to spend her life. The novel, thus, saves Jane’s Protestant individualism by giving her the experience of having her own revelation of sorts from God. This, of course, does not necessarily resolve the questions raised by Jane’s near capitulation to St. John; without the novel’s *deus ex
machina-like intervention, Jane’s religious fervor might have actually led to the defeat of her Protestant individualism. Still, since Protestant individualism proves very empowering to Jane throughout the rest of the novel and since the novel quickly pulls Jane back from the brink of danger, Jane Eyre emerges overall as a quite powerful articulation of Protestant individualism and its potential for women.

In her 1853 Villette, Brontë comes back to this question of women’s Protestant individualism, still advocating it for the most part but raising some additional, potentially disturbing questions. Throughout my reading of Jane Eyre, I carefully showed how this first novel subtly pulls in the anti-Catholic Protestant individualist rhetoric of Brontë’s day to bolster Jane’s claims for freedom and self-determination. No such explanation of the anti-Catholicism underlying Villette is necessary. Numerous critics have discussed the anti-Catholicism of Villette in detail, and Rosemary Clarke-Beattie, in particular, has examined how this anti-Catholic rhetoric allows Lucy Snowe to assert herself against the oppressive anti-Catholicism of her environment. Clarke-Beattie, also though, points out the severe limitations of such a neat association of tyranny with Catholicism. With oppression presented in such melodramatic terms and so closely associated with a foreign, clearly Roman Catholic threat that is easily distinguishable from English Protestantism, Lucy’s anti-Catholicism, in Clarke-Beattie’s words, leaves her “powerless to rebel” against “the threat of Protestant punishment” (838). Differences in the way that Brontë’s two novels are constructed, such as the distinctions between a domestic and a foreign setting and a subtle anti-Catholicism versus a more flagrant anti-Catholicism,

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might, at least partly account, for the lesser transferability of anti-Catholic discourse in *Villette*. More significant for Victorian women, though, this difference between *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, may also have stemmed from changes in Victorian thought during the 1850s. That year 1850, of course, saw the reestablishment of a Roman Catholic Archbishopric in England. With that event, as Walter Arnstein argues, anti-Catholicism reached a new height (7). That decade also, as Whisenant has argued, saw the rise of the Ritualist Movement and the accompanying anti-Ritualist movement (25). Although Whisenant does not point this out directly, Ritualism differed from the earlier Oxford Movement in that Ritualism made Catholic leanings much more visible: Ritualism could be reliably detected by watching out for certain signs, by looking, for example, at how a clergyman dressed, how he faced and where he stood while performing Communion, and whether or not he lighted candles or burned incense. With the Catholic threat either calling itself “Roman Catholicism” outright or increasingly manifesting visible, physical signs of its Catholic doctrine, Catholicism and Protestantism may have become increasingly easy to distinguish, making it harder to take anti-Catholic discourse and turn it into Protestant self-critique, as *Jane Eyre* does particularly vividly through its depictions of St. John Rivers’ stereotypically Catholic transgressions.

The most important questioning of Protestant individualism in *Villette* comes in the form, though, of an exposure of the potential atomistic isolation that Protestantism can promote. In contrast to Jane Eyre, with her “social heart,” Lucy Snowe, especially the Lucy Snowe of the early novel, flees from human companionship. The novel abounds with references to Lucy’s isolation from others, a disconnection that she seems often to choose for herself. As the novel describes her, Lucy often derives a pleasure,
even a thrill from being alone. Of her experience of wandering around London, Lucy remarks, “To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure” (109). Later describing her solitary walks in the school courtyard, Lucy remarks, “the seclusion, the very gloom of the walk attracted me” (174). As well as describing herself as enjoying solitude, the novel also has Lucy depict herself as intentionally separating herself from others. At Madame Beck’s school, Lucy, the novel tells us, could have had friends, but she “chose solitude” (194). Though never quite as directly, Lucy reveals her desire to get away from others through her complaints that at the school “no corner was safe from intrusion” (310) and that she was “bent on finding solitude somewhere” (323).

At the same time that the novel has Lucy often celebrate her solitude, it also depicts the anguish that such isolation can produce. The novel begins to describe Lucy’s yearning for human companionship particularly vividly and poignantly in the episode surrounding the long vacation, the period in the novel where everyone besides Lucy and a cretin leaves town for a matter of weeks. Left alone, Lucy begins to feel a visceral need for human contact. In Lucy’s words, “a want of companionship maintained in my soul, the cravings of a most deadly famine” (230). Distraught to the point of mental and physical collapse, Lucy finally visits Père Silas’ confessional because she “wanted companionship, [She] wanted friendship,[She] wanted counsel. [She] could find none of these in the closet, or the chamber, so [she] went and sought them in the church and confessional” (258). As Lucy insists, going to confession gives her some comfort: “The mere relief of communication in an ear which was human and sentient, yet consecrated—the mere pouring out of some portion of long accumulating, long pent up pain into a
vessel which it could not again be diffused—had done [her] good” (234). Although the confessional episode is probably the high point of Lucy’s extreme loneliness, the novel also presents her as suffering from debilitating isolation later on in the novel. When Dr. John’s letters stop coming, Villette returns to Brontë’s favorite language of hunger to describe Lucy’s cravings for companionship. Lucy remarks, “The world can understand well enough the process of perishing for want of food: perhaps few people can enter into or follow out that, of going mad from solitary confinement” (356). Thus, the novel moves from presenting solitude as desirable to characterizing it as depriving a person of basic emotional sustenance, potentially leading him or her to go mad and even die. In the scenes that follow this comment, Lucy seems to give into such lonely madness as she goes off in the middle of the night and buries Dr. John’s letters because she is “struck [with] one of those queer fantastic thoughts that will sometimes strike solitary people” (379).

Significantly, the novel suggests that Lucy’s Protestantism may exacerbate her loneliness, even if it does not necessarily cause it. Lucy is alone primarily because she is a marginal member of society, a friendless and family-less “shadow.” The novel, in fact, strongly suggests that Lucy has developed her desire for solitude in response to necessity. The novel suggests this by having Lucy repeatedly comment about how she has no one to turn to. Early on, Lucy comments, for example, “I complained to no one about my troubles. Indeed, to whom could I complain?” (95). Even late in the novel, Lucy still expresses her belief that “If life be a war, it seemed to be my destiny to conduct it single-handed” (381). As this “destiny” remarks, Lucy’s isolation is more a matter of fate than of choice. In an early commentary on her independence, Lucy actually connects such
apparent choice to fate. "I know not that I was of a self-reliant or active-nature," Lucy remarks, "but self-reliance and exertion were forced upon me by circumstances, as they are upon thousands besides" (95). As Lucy's later celebratory comments about isolation show, Lucy learns to desire, or seem to desire, that which is, in essence, inescapable.

As the novel presents it, Protestantism does not necessarily lead to the kind of atomistic individualism that Lucy, especially the pre-confession Lucy, develops out of survival. Many Protestants in the novel, such as the Brettons and the Homes, live in and enjoy close-knit family groups. But, for the person such as Lucy who has no pre-existing ties, Protestantism can exacerbate her isolation. Protestantism's focus on the individual's direct relationship with God can encourage a person, such as Lucy, to continue in that direction. *Villette* suggests this mid-way through the novel when it has Lucy explain her practice of hiding her deepest feelings from other people. Lucy's explanation of her reticence launches her into a long interior monologue examining the pros and cons of turning to heavenly versus earthly beings for comfort:

As to [the feelings that] lie... below [the surface], leave [them] with God. Man, your equal, weak as you, and not fit to be your judge, may be shut out thence: take it to your Maker—show Him the secrets of the spirit He gave—ask Him how you are to bear the pains He has appointed—kneel in His presence, and pray for light in darkness, for strength in piteous weakness, for patience in extreme need. (252)

As she does in so many other cases in her novels, Brontë has her heroine appeal to the divine vs. human dichotomy, but rather than use such distinctions to assert herself, in this case, Brontë has Lucy wield such language to justify remaining aloof from others.
Significantly, the novel has Lucy make this remark not when she is all alone, but when she is recovering with her “friends” (251) the Brettons after her confession and ensuing collapse. Thus, as this passage shows, Protestant individualist rhetoric can lead some people to remain disconnected from others even when possibilities for connection may exist.

Ironically, it is often the very intrusiveness of Catholicism that Lucy decries throughout the novel which allows human companionship to make its way into her life. The most obvious example of this is the confessional. For all of Lucy’s complaints about the evils of the confessional, it is the Catholic confessional which provides her with human contact during a major crisis in her life. M. Paul’s Catholic intrusiveness is also pivotal in the formation of their relationship. Good English Protestant that she is, Lucy, of course, expresses outrage at M. Paul’s spying, “Monsieur, I tell you every glance you cast from that lattice is a wrong done to the best part of your own nature. To study the human heart thus, is to banquet secretly and sacrilegiously on Eve’s apple. I wish you were a Protestant” (456). Spying, a stereotypically Catholic sin in the novel, is, as Lucy argues, an Eve-like quest for inappropriate knowledge, one that violates individual Christians’ liberties by looking into their “hearts” (456). M. Paul’s looking into Lucy’s heart, often through spying, is, notably, however, the very thing that brings him into a close relationship with her. They begin to get to know one another when M. Paul comes up to Lucy offering brazen comments, such as, “You are one of those beings who must be kept down. I know you! I know you! Other people in this house see you pass, and think that a colorless shadow has gone-by. As for me, I scrutinized your face once, and it sufficed” (226). As this passage highlights, M. Paul’s spying is, in some sense, an effort
to control Lucy, much like Père Silas' does when he has Lucy followed around town. At least, though, M. Paul has noticed Lucy's existence. In the free, non-surveying world of Protestantism, Lucy scarcely exists. In Dr. John Bretton's words, she is "inoffensive as a shadow" (403). The connection between Catholic intrusion and the breakdown in Lucy's reserve comes across most clearly, though, in the scene where spying leads M. Paul to find and comfort the depressed Lucy, who has been crying because she has not recently received a letter from Dr. John Bretton. Despite Lucy's protests against M. Paul's "Unwarrantable accost!" (310) and his keeping "no corner [of the house] sacred from intrusion" (310), M. Paul takes the time first to notice that Lucy has been crying and then to ask her why she has been crying. This is, of course, one of a series of intrusive steps on M. Paul's part that allow him to get to know and to fall in love with Lucy. In its official and dominant message, Villette may condemn the oppressiveness of Catholicism, and venerate the contrasting freedoms of Protestant individualism, but beneath its Protestant individualist celebrations, Villette finds some disturbing sides to the Protestant ideal.
Chapter Four- Mary Augusta Ward’s *Robert Elsmere*:
A Look at the Promises and Perils of Liberal Protestant Individualism

Whereas Charlotte Brontë dramatizes fairly orthodox Protestant individualism and its potential impact on women, late Victorian novelist Mary Augusta Ward might be said to do the same for more liberal Protestant individualism. Granddaughter of Thomas Arnold, niece of Matthew Arnold, and a free thinker in her own right, Mary Augusta Ward had an insider’s knowledge of the religious liberalism of her day. Two of Ward’s best-known novels, the 1888 *Robert Elsmere* and the 1898 *Helbeck of Bannisdale* both reflect this background and interest in religious liberalism. In *Robert Elsmere*, which just so happened to be the best-selling novel of the 1880s (Peterson 160), Ward tells the tale of an Anglican clergyman who loses his faith in orthodox Christianity, leaves the Church of England, and founds his own quasi-religious sect based on the doctrine of a purely human Christ. In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, Ward writes of a free-thinking young woman who falls in love with a hard-line Catholic with tragic results.

This chapter will focus on the first of these novels *Robert Elsmere* and how it depicts unorthodox Protestant individualism and its potential impact on women. For all of her embracing of religious liberalism, Ward, as I will argue, raises serious questions about the degree to which liberal theology and, more specifically, liberal Protestant individualism, proves empowering to women. Lurking beneath the surface of her enthusiastically free-
Mary Augusta Ward, I argue, raises uncomfortable questions about free thought's liberatory potential for women through the plotting of her novel. The eponymous hero Robert Elsmere may valiantly wield his Protestant individualist rights, making a freethinking saint of himself in the process, but Ward also tells a chilling counter-narrative of Robert's orthodoxy. His Evangelical wife Catherine and her simultaneous fall from religious authority and power. Pointing to the strong connection between Protestant individualist rhetoric and religious power, the novel, notably, depicts this shift in religious authority from Catherine and towards Robert as leading to a simultaneous shift in terms of who holds the greater power to wield Protestant individualist rhetoric.

Before launching into a discussion of Ward's novels, I should clarify why I have chosen to use the terminology liberal Protestant individualism in this chapter as opposed to the term Broad Church Protestant individualism, which I used extensively in chapters one and two. I have opted against using the term Broad Church Protestant individualism here because, strictly speaking, Mary Augusta Ward was not a Broad Church Christian. Although raised an Anglican, Ward was a regular attendee of Stopford Brooke's Bedford Chapel in Bloomsbury (Sutherland 193). Notably, she also has Robert Elsemere, the exemplary hero of her roman à thèse, leave the Church of England and found his own Dissenting sect. Even though I am, therefore, avoiding labeling Ward's Protestant individualism "Broad Church," the Broad Church teachings that I have discussed at length are, as this chapter are will show, still very relevant to Ward's writing. Ward may have officially joined the ranks of Dissenters, but she also belonged to the Arnold family, probably the most famous Broad Church family. In her Writers Recollections, Ward, in fact, admits how heavily she has been influenced by Matthew Arnold, or "Uncle Matt" as
she calls him. She, in fact, remarked that Arnold had "thrown out in detail much of the argument" of Robert Elsmere in his Literature and Dogma (A Writer’s Recollections 235). Ward was even more vocal about her admiration for Broad Churchman T.H. Green. Ward dedicated Robert Elsmere to Green and openly admitted that she had patterned Robert’s saintly, freethinking mentor Henry Grey after Green. Large portions of Grey’s speeches, in fact, come verbatim from T.H. Green’s writings (Ashton ix). As William S. Peterson and Jonathan Loesberg have pointed out, Ward was also influenced by the unorthodox Dissenter John Morley, who also happened to be Ward’s friend and editor (Peterson 113-115; Loesberg 449). In having Robert respond to his loss of faith by leaving the Church of England Ward was following the course of action that Morley advocated at length in his On Compromise (Peterson 113). Still, with her Arnold pedigree and her admitted indebtedness to Matthew Arnold and T.H. Green, Mary Augusta Ward was very intellectually close to being a Broad Churchwoman. Like her hero Robert Elsmere, Ward may have left the Church of England, but, also like him, she had strong Anglican roots. If Ward raises disturbing questions about theological liberalism’s accessibility to women, then such commentary likely arises as much, if not more so, out of Ward’s experience with Broad Church liberalism as with any other form of liberal theology.

As I stated earlier, Ward’s Robert Elsmere interrogates free thought’s impact on women first and foremost through the shaping of its plot. Alongside her main narrative of Robert’s increasing command of liberal Protestant individualism, Ward tells a heart-wrenching counter-narrative of Elsmere’s wife Catherine and her declining powers of orthodox Protestant individualism. At the beginning of the novel, Catherine is a
formidable character. During the early scenes, Catherine wields an almost patriarchal power over her family and community. In Ward’s words, Catherine is “really in authority” (13) over her entire family. She manages all of their business affairs and decides whether her sister Rose may or may not go abroad to study music. Catherine also garners incredible power in the community at large. As the vicar, Mr. Thornburgh notes, he “doesn’t count for much [in the community], [Catherine] counts for a great deal. She nurses [the people], she scolds them, she preaches to them, and they take it from her when they won’t take it from us” (29-30). As the vicar’s words communicate, Catherine is more esteemed and obeyed than Mr. Thornburgh, the official religious head of the community.

Catherine garners such power because the people around her feel that she is speaking and acting for God. At times, Catherine calls directly upon God, demanding of her family and community “the same absolute surrender to an awful Master she gave so easily herself” (91). As the language of this passage highlights, Catherine makes her claims by the authority of a “Master” higher than herself. This puts her in the position of being simultaneously able to submit to the heavenly and yet demand that others obey her in the here and now.

Most frequently, though, Catherine does not need to call upon God or even use words, such as “conscience” or “judgment” that might suggest such a call. Describing Catherine’s power, Ward writes, “Catherine’s ‘musts’ were never disputed” (76-77). Catherine generally does not need to make explicit appeals to God (or conscience, judgment, etc.) because Catherine’s sheer saintliness confers a certain authority upon her. Over the course of the first seventy-five pages, the narrator and other characters all
remark on Catherine’s saintliness and liken her to an array of saintly figures. These include the Madonna, the Catholic saints Catherine and Elizabeth, and Sister Dora, a renowned nineteenth-century Anglican nun. As the novel makes clear through a statement of Mr. Thornburgh’s, this saintly status translates into community-wide power for Catherine. As Mr. Thornburgh remarks, “Perhaps [the people of the community] think it as a mysterious dispensation of Providence as I do that the brutal, swearing, whisky-drinking stock should have ended in anything so saintly and so beautiful as Catherine Leyburn” (30). Significantly, Mr. Thornburgh offers this statement as an explanation of why the people obey Catherine. In doing so, the novel sets up a logical chain that explains the relationship between saintliness and power. Saintliness, especially when it appears in unexpected quarters, suggests the hand of Providence. And, a creature specially selected by Providence must be obeyed.

This language of saintliness is, of course, more Catholic than Protestant (although the “Sister Dora” in question was, notably, an Anglican rather than a Roman Catholic nun). Ward likely makes this move, at least in part, because her big distinction in the novel tends to be between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, not Protestantism versus Catholicism. As Robert Schork has pointed out, Ward, in fact uses a language of sainthood throughout the novel. Early on, Ward likens Catherine to varies female saints, but, as the novel progresses, Ward shifts the language of sainthood and references to particular saints first towards Henry Grey, Robert’s saintly freethinking mentor, and ultimately to Robert himself. The clustering of Catholic references around Catherine may also, though, serve to evoke fears of Catholic despotism which, as I have argued

123 This Sister Dora of Walsall was also, interestingly, the sister of the prominent Broad Churchman Mark Pattison.
earlier, figure so prominently in Victorian Protestant thought. Ward may, in fact, have been tapping into the Broad Church tradition of not just of condemning the excessive power of Catholicism, but also in criticizing excessive female religiosity, especially celibate religiosity, which might lead women to exceed the bounds of decorum.

Although some of Ward’s language sounds more Catholic than Protestant, many of her descriptions of Catherine sound much more like classic descriptions of Protestant individualism. Upon first meeting Catherine, Robert is struck with her “strength” (39), “individuality” (39), and her “self-sufficingness,” which he finds “not all that attractive” (40). In other words, Robert is struck with Catherine’s ability to stand alone—to exist sufficiently with just herself and God. That Robert’s first reaction is to find such self-sufficiency “not all that attractive” (40) highlights the degree to which Catherine’s religious-based independence deviates from Victorian gender norms which expect women to depend upon human men. As with the case of the numerous references to Catholic sainthood, it also may suggest a discomfort on Ward’s part with such a level of religious power and individualism in a woman.

Catherine also appeals to the core Protestant ideal of conscience. Conscience, as the novel shows, allows Catherine to resist Robert’s initial advances. The novel first has Catherine turn to conscience to authorize not going to the picnic that she had told Robert that she would attend. Writing of the spiritual wrestling that prompts Catherine eventually to decide not to go, Ward remarks, “Catherine’s conscience was pricking her... Twice in the last fortnight she had been forced to give up a night-school she held in a lonely hamlet among the fells because [her social commitmets had made her] too tired to walk there and back. ...Were not the world and the flesh encroaching?” (93).
Catherine also turns to conscience when she finally guesses Robert’s intentions towards her and is trying to decide how to respond. As the wording of this scene suggests, Catherine feels gender pressures to give in to Robert. Having Catherine worry about “His [Robert’s] claim?” (103), Robert Elsmere presents its heroine as grappling with a classic demand of traditional femininity that she think of others rather than her self. To this people-pleasing threat to Catherine’s consent, Ward’s novel adds an additional gender trap. Not realizing Robert’s romantic intentions, Catherine has inadvertently “encouraged him” (102), putting herself in the position where refusing Robert now “will...give him cause to think of her hardly, slightly” (103). In other words, Catherine has, albeit unknowingly, waited too long to say no—long enough that only an improper woman—a coquette—would try to say no now.

As Robert Elsmere soon shows, however, appeals to conscience allow Catherine an escape from such gendered barriers to her meaningful consent, which, as I pointed out in my introduction, Carole Pateman has argued is one of the chief privileges of full “individual” status. Ward’s novel suggests conscience’s freeing potential in the way that it structures Catherine’s wrestle with her conscience. In the first half of this sequence, Catherine’s conscience convicts her of unfoundedly “encourag”(ing) (103) Robert, a gender transgression that she could best remedy by agreeing to marry him. However, in the second half of this sequence, Catherine’s conscience comes back to insist that she must nevertheless refuse Robert. Catherine, her conscience insists, must reject Robert, so that she, a daughter, can continue to act as the spiritual head of her family. Shaping this sequence as she does, where conscience enables Catherine to give a no that violates one gender norm in the name of a duty to transgresses yet another, Ward points to orthodox
Christian conscience's incredible power to overrule social norms, including those that prevent women from acting as full-fledged individuals.

In contrast to Catherine, the Robert of the novel has yet to come into his full religious authority and hence his full Protestant individualism. Robert, we are told, already possesses "a strength of will, a force and even tyranny of conscience" (53), the same features that Catherine has and, notably, many of the features that a proper Broad Church individualist should have. Although already devoted to follow his conscience, Robert has yet, thought, to receive conscience's full message—a message that will lead him to depart from orthodoxy. As the novel has Robert himself admit, he, at this point in the novel, has "never gone deep enough" (67) in his spiritual and intellectual probing.

Catherine's supreme religious authority does not, however, last. As the courtship section advances, the novel launches a preparatory attack of sorts on orthodoxy. Unlike later sections of the novel, the late courtship section stops short of questioning the core truths of orthodox Christianity. Instead, this earlier section confines its critique to what it sees as the extremeness of harder-line strains of orthodox Christianity. Though limited in its scope, this attack on Catherine's beliefs begins eroding the efficacy of her religious authority and, with it, her consent.

Robert Elsemere's preparatory assault on orthodoxy largely consists of a questioning of the reliability of Catherine's hard-line conscience as opposed to Robert's more modern, tolerant one. Robert Elsemere first questions the accuracy of Catherine's conscience by having Robert correct her stance regarding her sister Rose's violin playing. From early in the novel, Catherine's conscience tells her that Rose's desire for a musical career is sensual and prideful--something that a faithful Christian must oppose. Robert,
however, soon offers an alternate view: that music is a gift from God that Rose can use to serve others. Just two pages after Catherine’s powerful rejection of Robert in the name of conscience, Robert Elsemere has Catherine decide that Robert has been right, and she wrong, in this matter of Rose’s music. The effect on Catherine’s self-will is immediate. Catherine’s recognition of her error of conscience puts an end to her long resistance to Rose’s musical career. Even more significantly, it paves the way for a second, more dramatic attack on Catherine’s authority: a questioning of her conscientious refusal of Robert.

Within pages of Catherine’s admission of error regarding Rose’s music, Robert begins questioning her rightness in discouraging his advances. Once again, Robert provides a more modern, enlightened perspective, only this time he posits arguments that are less orthodoxly Christian. Specifically, Robert appeals to what he calls “the divine right of love” (103). According to this quasi-religious modern principle, love should supersede all other concerns.

Although not yet addressing particular controversial doctrinal points, Robert’s reference to “the divine right of love” (103), in many ways, signals a first major challenge to orthodoxy and, in turn, to Catherine’s religious authority. Notably, the novel goes out of its way to contrast this “divine right of love” with Catherine’s religious orthodoxy. The text uses the term, “modern,” one of its favorite descriptors of free thought, in reference to this “divine right of passion.” Moreover, it dubs this romantic passion “divine,” thus giving it a competing claim to the spiritual. As I discussed in chapter two, such application of the language of the divine to matters traditionally thought human was, in fact, a common feature of Broad Church theology. Finally, the
novel explicitly sets "the divine right of passion" in contrast to Catherine's world view, which "kn[ows] no supreme right but the right of God to the obedience of man" (103).

This contrasting of the "divine right of love" with Catherine's old-fashioned, hardline Christianity points to something else about this new claim. Though ostensibly freeing, it is antagonist to the very scrupulous Christianity from which Catherine derives her powerful religious individualism. Robert Elsemere hints at the potentially coercive force of passion, or love, when it has Robert apply a language of conquering to love in the name of "the sacred rights of passion." "He is a man and her lover," Robert muses. "If [Catherine] loves him, in the end love will conquer—must conquer" (112). True, the conquering power of love is contingent on Catherine's loving Robert and thus is not entirely a violation of her will, but as the language of conquering suggests, love is still rather coercive. The "divine right of love" leaves Catherine free not to love Robert, but it does not leave her free to love him and still opt to keep her single life as the "Deborah in [her] valley" (29).

The novel's questioning of Catherine's hard-line conscience and its positing of the "divine right of love" do, not, however, immediately strip Catherine of her capacity to assert a powerful no. A few pages after his ethic of self-realization and "divine right of love" speeches, Elsmere makes what might be described as an indirect proposal to Catherine. "It is one of my strongest wishes," Elsmere remarks, "to bring you [Catherine] and my mother together" (115). This statement is, of course, not quite a marriage proposal, but Catherine clearly understands it as the preface to one. Catherine, the novel tells us, finds herself filled with "a sort of wild dread...of what he might say next. Oh, she must prevent it" (115). To prevent it, Catherine launches into a long
speech about how children erroneously believe they should “put [their] own claims first” (116). In this case, Robert responds to Catherine’s resistance by positing another “modern ethic”: the right to self-development, something that, as I argued in chapter one, figured prominently in Broad Church theology. Responding to Catherine’s assertions of familial duty, Robert remarks,

Surely the child may make a fatal mistake if it imagines that its own happiness counts for nothing in the parents’ eyes. What parent but must suffer from the starving of a child’s nature? What have mother and father been working for but the perfecting of a child’s life? Their longing is that it should fulfill itself in all directions. New ties, new affections on the child’s part, mean the enriching of the parent. (116).

In the short term at least, this claim for “the right to self-development,” which Robert adds to the somewhat similar “divine right of passion,” does not induce Catherine to capitulate to Robert. Telling Robert that she has had “a charge... laid upon [her] with dying lips... which would be baseness, treason, to betray,” Catherine successfully repels Robert—at least for the moment. Catherine’s use of the term “charge” is noteworthy here. In appealing to the word “charge,” Catherine is, of course, literally speaking of the promise that she made to her dying father that she would look after the family after he was gone. Her use of the particular word “charge,” however, simultaneously evokes one of Charles Wesley’s most famous hymns, a hymn that begins, “A charge to keep I have,/A God to glorify/A never dying soul to save,/And fit it for the sky” (Methodist Hymnal 287). Thus, although she does this very subtly, Ward associates Catherine’s rebuff of Robert’s implied proposal with an appeal to her ultimate accountability to God,
a principle, which as I have repeatedly argued, is orthodox Protestant individualism’s most basic and, in many respects, most powerful claim.

Robert certainly reads Catherine’s statement about her “charge” as an individualistic move on her part. Of his response, Ward writes, “A passionate protest rose in him, not so much against [Catherine’s] words as against her self-control. The man in him rose up against the woman’s unlooked-for, unwelcome strength” (117). In the case of this battle at least, Catherine’s appeals to her “charge,” give her victory over Robert. As Ward remarks at the conclusion of this scene, Robert “was quelled. Speech suddenly became impossible to him. He was struck again with that sense of a will firmer and more tenacious than his own” (118).

By themselves Robert’s early questionings of Catherine’s conscience and his positing of the modern ethics of self-development and the “divine right of love” may not be enough to squash Catherine’s ability to say no to Robert. In the scenes that follow, the novel wages yet another attack, though, upon Catherine’s hard-line Christianity—a critique of how her religiosity leads her to defy gender norms. Robert Elsemere begins this critique by having Catherine’s mother, who has received an imploring visit from Robert, openly dispute Catherine’s perceived mission to serve as the spiritual head of her family. Arguing that Catherine should marry Robert, Mrs. Leyburn proposes what she sees as a more suitable mission for Catherine. In her mother’s words, Catherine “ought to be a clergyman’s wife” (130) (italics mine). Further questioning Catherine’s disregard for gender norms, Mrs. Leyburn goes on to specify what kind of head the family needs: a male one. As Mrs. Leyburn insists, a man such as Robert, not a woman such as Catherine, is just what the family needs to keep the wild youngest sister Rose in hand.
The late courtship section continues this critique of Catherine’s overly lax conscience by having Catherine herself criticize her earlier stance. After considering her mother’s counsel, Catherine realizes that she has “over-estimated her value” (132) to her family, and that this over-estimation of self has been influenced by “all sorts of personal prides and cravings” (132). This uncovering of Catherine’s “personal prides and cravings” (132) yields a potentially serious blow to women’s orthodox religious consent. Orthodox religious consent is powerful because it allows women to assert themselves, not in the name of self, something that traditional femininity forbids, but in the name of God. In revealing the selfishness in Catherine’s apparent selflessness, the late courtship section offers the same critique of overly zealous women that, as I pointed out in chapter two, J.M. Ludlow and other Broad Churchmen had made some years earlier: that such women’s appeals to God may be little more than fronts for the fulfillment of their individual desires. This conviction of her own selfishness leaves Catherine with an immediate “slackness of nerve” (132), something that bodes ill for her capacity to assert herself against Robert.

Almost immediately, this conviction of her selfishness combined with the earlier critiques of her conscience leads to a tangible loss of individual power on Catherine’s part: an absolute squashing of her long-standing resistance to Robert. In the chapter immediately following her recognition of selfishness, Robert finally makes his long-anticipated formal marriage proposal. Returning to her old counter-argument, Catherine once again pleads her conscientious conviction that she “is bound to others” (145). Having fundamentally questioned Catherine’s conscience in the previous twenty pages, the novel is able this time, however, to immediately dismiss Catherine’s argument. As
the novel has Robert declare outright, he simply “do[es] not admit [Catherine’s] plea” (145). With her religious argument discredited, Catherine is left vulnerable to Robert’s gendered pressures to make her consent—his entreaty that she “Be kind to” him (145) and his threat that she holds the power to “bless me or undo” him (146). Exacerbating the problem, the novel depicts Catherine as still suffering from the “slackness of nerve” (132) that struck her when she first recognized her selfishness. One of the novel’s comments about Catherine’s feelings at this moment is particularly telling. At the moment of trying to make her final decision, she, Ward writes, feels a “softness...[an] emptiness of will, of all individual power” (145). The novel reiterates this same idea in its description of how Catherine, moments later, finally holds out her hands out to Robert in silent acquiescence. Catherine, Ward writes, “rose and helplessly, like some one compelled by a will not her own” (146). Catherine may be agreeing to marry the man that she loves, but, as Ward crafts the scene, Catherine’s ultimate yes reads more like a defeat rather than an assertion of her individual will.

Still, this is not the low-point for Catherine’s power of orthodox Protestant individualism. This nadir comes in the last, longest section of the novel, the portion that depicts Catherine and Robert’s married life. In this last section of the novel, Mary Augusta Ward takes her assault on orthodoxy much further. Moving beyond critiques of hard-line extremes, Ward begins attacking orthodoxy’s most fundamental doctrines. During this final section, Ward has her hero and religious spokesperson reject orthodox Christianity in favor of his own, unorthodox creed. This new creed, which I am calling Elsmerism, proclaims the existence of some higher power—a God. And, it recognizes
the moral value of Christian teaching. However, it denies the possibility of all miracles, including the inspiration of the Bible and the divinity and resurrection of Jesus.

This shift from orthodoxy to blatantly heterodoxy is notably accompanied by a shift in power away from Catherine and towards Robert. During this final half of the novel, Robert makes a series of daring, independent actions. He ignores warnings from Newcome, the local High-Church clergyman, that he avoid reading free-thinking texts. He declares his rejection of orthodox Christianity. He resigns his living from the Church of England. He founds his own religious sect. The language of the novel, in fact, strongly highlights the self-assertion in this move of Robert's. Speaking of his decision to form his new sect, Ward describes this point in time as "one of those critical moments of life, when circumstance seems once more to restore to use the power of choice, of distributing a Yes or a No among the great solicitations which meet the human spirit on its path from silence to silence" (397). As this passage highlights, Robert's assumption of his new extra-Anglican religious mission is an act of choice, one so monumental that Ward feels the need to describe in cosmic terms. Robert's big acts of self-assertion notably entail his asserting of his will over Catherine's. First, he disregards Catherine's request that he not devote his life to promoting free thought, and then, at the very end of the novel, he rebuffs her attempt to reconvert him on his deathbed.

Meanwhile, Robert Elsemere has Catherine question and ultimately relinquish her right to assert her will against Robert's. For one hundred and fifty pages after Robert tells her of his loss of faith, Catherine wavers regarding how she should respond. Her response, the novel remarks, fluctuates as her heart goes from being "one moment in rebellion" to the "next a suppliant" (403). In moments of rebellion Catherine refuses to
attend Robert's free-thinking meetings and voices her dissenting theology to her
husband's free-thinking friends. Ultimately, though, Catherine relinquishes her power to
dissent from Robert's will. Even though she still remains a fairly orthodox Christian, she
stops openly disputing her husband's theology and begins attending his meetings. Near
the very end of the novel, Catherine makes one final attempt at religious self-assertion: an
attempted deathbed reconversion of Robert, but a little admonishment from Robert
prompts her to give this up as well.

Robert is able to assert himself towards the end of the novel whereas Catherine is
not because the novel, in pursuit of its free-thinking agenda, delivers almost all of its
Protestant individualist language over to Robert. The novel, for example, allows Robert
to lay hold of the favorite Protestant vocabulary of conscience. Through appeals to
conscience, Robert silences any objection that Catherine might have to his decision to
resign his living. "Help me," Robert pleads, "to be an honest man—to follow
conscience" (350). Conscience additionally enables Robert to legitimize his whole
founding of his free-thinking dissenting sect. In the early days, few support Robert's new
ministry, yet he persists on the grounds that he is "approved by conscience and the
inward voice" (453).

The novel does more, though, than just have Robert employ a language of
conscience; it has him lay preeminent claim to it. The novel has already laid the
groundwork for this during the courtship section where it has depicted Robert's
conscience as more reliable than Catherine's. Now, the novel reserves conscience even
more clearly for Robert and his free thought by defining it as having an intellectual as
well as a moral component. This distinction between "intellectual" and "moral"
conscience notably comes right out of Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, where Arnold accuses the Puritanical middle-classes of showing a “want of sensitiveness of intellectual conscience” (6). By following Matthew Arnold’s lead and intellectualizing conscience, the novel reshapes it in a way that assures that most orthodox Christians, whom the novel presents as, like Catherine, having “intellectual limitations,” will be able to lay a very imperfect claim to it. According to Robert’s model (which significantly is also Matthew Arnold’s model), orthodox Christians’ consciences are only partial, whereas the more intellectual free-thinkers’ are all-encompassing. Not surprisingly, the novel never allows Catherine to appeal to conscience after having intellectualized this ideal.

*Robert Elsemere* also bolsters Robert’s individual religious authority by giving him the novel’s supreme claim to judgment. The novel, in fact, uses the ideal of judgment to defend the very same actions of Roberts that it supports on the basis of conscience. Of Robert’s decision to resign his living as an Anglican clergyman, the novel remarks, “He must, of course, give up his living and his orders. His standards and judgments had always been simple and plain in these respects” (333). *Robert Elsemere* similarly uses judgment to defend Robert’s founding of a dissenting sect—only this time the novel uses the verb form “judge.” As *Robert Elsemere* presents its hero, he “brace[s] himself to act and judge, if need be alone and for himself” (453). “Judgment,” as Ward uses it to refer to Robert, suggests the Protestant ideal of private judgment, the individual’s God-given duty to think for himself. By using the words “judgment” and “judge” as she does, Ward thus makes it a Christian duty that Robert dissent from orthodox Christianity.
Robert Elsemere does not, however, extend this right of judgment to Catherine. The novel applies the term "judgment" to Catherine, but in doing so it gives it a pejorative meaning. Catherine first uses the word "judge" soon after Robert tells her about his loss of faith and decision to resign his living. Having had a night to think over these matters, Catherine denounces her initially hostile reaction, criticizing herself for how she was "judging" Robert (362). The novel similarly has Catherine decry her judgment of the people at Madame de Netteville's salon. Catherine remarks, "I am always judging and condemning,--always protesting. What am I that I should judge? But how—how—can I help it?" (410). As the novel has Catherine use the word "judgment" in these two cases, "judgment" takes on a new, negative meaning. Rather than the individual's right to think for himself or herself, it comes to suggest his or her being judgmental—the kind of behavior that Jesus condemned when he remarked during the Sermon on the Mount, "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1).

Robert Elsemere offers an explanation of sorts for this differing treatment of Catherine's and Robert's judgments: Catherine and Robert's judgments differ in the degree to which they apply them to others. Robert uses "judgment" to refer to his estimation of right and wrong as it applies to himself. The text indicates the personal nature of Robert's judgment, for example, when he appeals to his "judgments" in defense of his resignation of his living. Right after remarking that Robert's "judgments had always been plain and simple" (333) about a non-believing clergyman's duty to resign, the novel goes on to clarify that these judgments do not extend to others. As the novel remarks,
In other men, it might be right and possible that they should live on in the ministry of the Church, doing the humane and charitable work of the church, while refusing assent to the intellectual and dogmatic framework on which the Church system rests; but for himself [Robert] it would be neither right nor wrong but impossible. (333-334).

Robert may hold unflinchingly to his standard of judgment, but he recognizes that it might be “right and possible” for others to think and do otherwise. In contrast, Robert Elsemere presents Catherine’s judgment as a standard that she expects of others—not just of herself. Lest the reader should overlook how Catherine “judges” others, the novel has Robert explicitly critique his wife’s judgmental behavior. Robert replies to Catherine’s admission of “judging” the people at Madame de Nettville’s salon, “Darling, the world is full of difference. Men and women take life in different ways. Don’t be sure that yours is the only right one” (410). This critique of Robert’s explicitly reveals the novel’s rationale for distinguishing between Catherine’s and Robert’s judgment: the world is “full of difference” (410), and in such a world no one can be certain that his or her way is the single correct path.

As the novel goes on to suggest, this promotion of a personal, purely self-directed judgment questions the rightness of more than just Catherine’s judgment; it questions the absolute judgments of truth and falsity that are central to orthodox Christianity. Robert Elsemere suggests this more expansive critique through the way it has Catherine respond to Robert’s assertion that the “world is full of difference” (410). Catherine quotes one of the Bible’s most famous absolute standards: “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isaiah 30:21). As this Biblical allusion makes clear, the novel’s relativizing of judgment poses a
fundamental threat to orthodox Christianity and its inherent potential for resistance. Having refuted Catherine’s capacity to assert a single “way,” the novel leaves Catherine in a state where she can only bring up her absolute judgment to condemn it. The novel suggests the consequences of this foreclosure on Catherine’s claim to judgment through the way it shapes her statement of resignation: “I am always judging, condemning, -- always protesting” (410). In modulating from “judging” to “condemning” and then finally to “protesting,” the novel implies that Catherine is having to relinquish more than just her capacity to condemn people. She is also giving up something that has a much more positive connotation: the right to “protest” (410) that is the very root of Protestantism.

Most critically, the novel allows Robert to lay claim to truth. In fact, Robert Elsemere uses the ideal of truth to defend all of its hero’s major actions during the second half of the novel. On the grounds of truth, the novel defends Robert’s exposure of himself to free-thinking texts and people. Robert, the novel insists, is one of “a minority of. . .mobile, impressionable, defenceless natures, who are ultimately at the mercy of experience, at the mercy of thought, at the mercy (shall we say?) of truth” (315). Through this appeal to truth, Robert Elsemere takes what it imagines that many of its readers considered “an unexpected weakness of fibre” (315) and redefines this as a sensitivity and devotion to truth. Lest the reader might underestimate the importance of this devotion to truth, the novel immediately goes on to proclaim its social value: “It is from the minority” (of truth seekers), Ward writes that all of human advance comes (315). Thus, truth, as the novel presents it, makes Robert’s religious inquiry not just imperative for his individual morality but also to the future of all mankind.
Robert Elsemere similarly uses truth to defend the rest of its hero's remaining acts of self-assertion. The novel calls upon truth, for example, to support Robert's case that his must resign his living in the Church of England. Imploring Catherine "to help him say and do the truth" (350), Robert puts both Catherine and the reader in rhetorical positions where resistance would make them enemies of truth. Truth also allows the novel to ward off possible criticism of Robert's founding of this own dissenting free-thinking sect, the Brotherhood of Christ. As if defending itself against possible questions regarding the rightness and disinterestedness of Robert's founding of the Brotherhood of Christ, the novel has Robert tell himself, "Do not imagine... that it is in you to play any great commanding part" (in the new sect) (398). Instead, Robert goes on to tell himself (and maybe God), "Let me try and hand on to some other human soul, or souls, before I die, the truth which has freed, and which is now sustaining my heart" (398). As this statement presents Robert's case, he is founding his dissenting group from the pure and noble motive of sharing the truth with others. Appeals to truth also aid Robert in his final act of will: his refusal to reconvert to Christianity on his deathbed. As Robert Elsemere presents it, Robert is finally able to silence Catherine's repeated efforts to reconvert him when he tells her, "Oh, my darling, be content. Your misery, your prayers hold me back from God—from that truth and that trust which can alone be honestly mine" (572). Through this appeal to truth, Robert puts Catherine in a position where any continued resistance on her part will come between him and his continuing search for truth.

Although less significant in terms of the plot, one particular appeal to truth is particularly telling concerning the degree to which Robert's claim to truth inherently undermines Catherine's. Robert makes this appeal to truth when he has finally realized
that his heart is no longer with orthodox Christianity and is trying to comfort himself. In his search to find solace, Robert recalls a famous line from St. Augustine’s *Confessions*: “Commend to the keeping of the Truth whatever the Truth hath given thee and thou shalt lose nothing” (332). As Robert reinterprets St. Augustine, his *Confessions* read as a justification of his embracing of unorthodox religious truth. Interestingly, Robert takes the quote out of context so that it reads as one of Broad Church theology’s favorite maxims, that truth, no matter how unorthodox, will inherently protect the truth seeker. It is significant that Robert constructs this new paean to free-thinking truth out of the words of one of the most famous Christian texts. His appropriation of such core Christian words of St. Augustine’s point to his larger practice of claiming traditionally Christian ideals of conscience, judgment, and truth for himself.

The passage where Robert uses St. Augustine’s words for his own purposes also demonstrates quite powerfully the degree to which such rhetorical appropriations directly strip Catherine of her power. As the novel has told us some one-hundred and fifty-pages earlier, St. Augustine’s *Confessions* is Catherine’s “favourite book” (260). More specifically, in this earlier scene, Robert finds Catherine’s copy of the *Confessions* open to the specific page that contains the statement about the preservative power of truth, suggesting that this particular passage is likely one of Catherine’s favorite. Thus, in taking St. Augustine’s statements about truth and reworking them so that they endorse his own unorthodox view of truth, Elsemere is, quite literally, wrestling these classic Christian statements about truth right out of Catherine’s hands.

Robert does not entirely deny Catherine’s claim to truth, however. Robert establishes his and Catherine’s relative claims to truth in the conversation where he first
tells Catherine about his loss of faith. As Robert insists, “It is not that Christianity is false, but that it is only an imperfect reflection of a part of truth. Truth has never been, can never be, contained in any one creed or system” (355). Adopting the favorite Broad Church strategy of hierarchalizing truth, Robert here still acknowledges that Catherine holds a certain claim to truth, but he makes it clear that her truth is only partial and pales in comparison to his more expansive and enlightened truth.

Unsurprisingly, Catherine only makes one appeal to truth after Robert has declared her truth partial, and Robert easily rebuffs this last effort of Catherine’s to call upon truth. At the very end of the novel, when she is trying to reconvert Robert on his deathbed, the novel has Catherine refer to a physically resurrected Jesus as “the truth” (572). In Catherine’s words, Robert should “stretch out [his] hand to . . . the true comfort——the true help. . . . the Lamb of God sacrificed for us” (572). As Ward soon shows, such attempts by orthodoxy to take back its language offer religious liberalism the perfect opportunity to demonstrate its supremacy. Free thought can simply trump orthodoxy’s truth by appealing to its more expansive, enlightened truth. This is exactly what the novel has Robert immediately do. Redefining truth as God, as he, Robert, envisions Him, Robert tells Catherine, “Your misery——your prayers hold me back from God——from that truth. . . . which can alone be honestly mine” (572) (italics mine). This direct trumping of Catherine’s truth puts an end not only to her attempt to reconvert Robert. It also shatters her power to resist him in any way at all. For the rest of the novel, Catherine devotes her life to working for Robert’s Brotherhood of Christ—to advancing a faith that fundamentally contradicts her own.
Catherine’s loss of religious power stems from more, though, than merely her loss of a claim to the individualistic ideals of conscience, judgment, and truth. Equally significant in her fall from power and authority is the novel’s increasing application of a key anti-individualistic ideal to her. This anti-idealistic ideal is love. As I already argued earlier in this chapter, love, the courtship section of Robert Elsemere suggests, is potentially coercive. The second half of the novel reveals a new side to this coercive power of love. Love, Ward implies, is, at bottom, antithetical to truth. Ward suggests this most clearly through her description of Robert’s temptation to stop pursuing unorthodoxy after he has had a particularly heated discussion. Robert, Ward remarks, has already “jeopardized love for truth” (354). If he were to give in to Catherine now, he, she insists, “he would have murdered or tried to murder truth for love” (354). As this passage highlights, the novel tends to set up love and truth as being in tension with each other. Truth demands that a person be willing to displease, even hurt, another person in the name of what is real and right. Love demands giving up such dissension for the sake of others’ feelings, and, in Robert’s specific case, marital harmony. As Ward’s language about the potential “murder” of truth suggests here, she does not seem to think it proper that Robert should go ahead and sacrifice truth for love. This is not to say that Ward presents Robert as experiencing no call in the name of love. He is described, for example, as doing “whatever remorseful love could do to soften” (392) Catherine’s suffering after his resignation of his living and as “set[ting] the task of all tasks. . .[of] keep[ing] his wife’s love” (509). Still, nowhere does the novel suggest that Robert should compromise that favorite Broad Church ideal of truth for love.
In Catherine’s case, Ward’s novel, though, shows an almost exactly opposite attitude. At the same time that the novel allows Catherine fewer, less effective appeals to individualistic ideals, such as conscience, judgment, and truth, it applies the anti-individualistic ideal of love more and more frequently to her. Describing the conversation where Robert first tries to explain and justify his loss of faith to Catherine, the novel remarks that “he was not so much narrating as pleading a cause, and that was not his own, but Love’s” (352). In the name of love, the novel thus has Robert not only ask Catherine to stifle her objections to his departure from orthodoxy; it also presents such silencing of Catherine as serving a greater cause than Robert’s own desires—the cause of love.

Throughout the remainder of the novel, Ward continues advancing this idea that love is calling Catherine to make religious peace with Robert. Catherine’s bowing before the call of love continues a few scenes later when she repents of her initially hostile response to Robert’s announcement of his loss of orthodox faith. The scene opens by having Catherine admit that she has been “kill[ing] love” (362). She has been doing so, she says, because she has been constantly asking herself the question, “Is there no one now strong enough to suffer torment, to kill even love itself, rather than deny Him—rather than crucify Him afresh?” (362). In other words, Catherine has been subscribing to the Biblical principle: “He who loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me?” (Matthew 10:37). As I pointed out in chapter two, this was a tenet that many Broad Church members felt very uncomfortable with, especially when considering the possibility that women might put such a policy into action. Broad Church members, as I argued, often,
in fact, make statements to the exact opposite effect: that religion that comes between a person and family is not true religion.

Catherine’s repentance significantly entails her coming around to the Broad Church view of this issue. Telling Robert how she has been wrong, Catherine laments that I should think that it could be God’s will that I should leave you, or torture you, my poor husband! I had not only been wicked towards you—I had offended Christ. I could think of nothing as I lay there—again and again—but ‘Little children, love one another; little children love one another’. . . I will never give up hope, I will pray for you night and day. . . But I will not preach to you—I will not persecute you—I will only live beside you—in your heart—and love you always.

(362)

Love, as this passage presents it, does not necessarily demand that Catherine give up her own beliefs concerning what is truth. It does, however, require that she stop sharing them with her husband and trying to win him back to her side. Having Catherine denounce her earlier putting of doctrinal correctness ahead of family and then having her announce marital love as her primary duty, Ward’s writing at this point sounds almost like it could come out of the Broad Church writings of F.D. Maurice or Charles Kingsley.

In the pages that follow, Robert Elsemere continues to require that its heroine bow to the demands of love. When Catherine is properly submissive, she is rewarded with assertions that her love is helping keep Robert’s faith intact. In response to Catherine’s repentance from her initial opposition to Robert, the novel remarks, “If he had ever lost that vision of God, his wife’s love would have that moment have given it back to him” (363). Conversely, when Catherine eventually violates her resolution not to “preach” to
Robert and starts advancing her dissenting truth, the novel lambasts her with deleterious effect such resistance is having on her husband. Describing how Robert feels when he comes back home to Catherine, the novel writes, "inwardly all the [religious] ardour of his mood collapsed at the touch of her. For the protests of the world in arms can be withstood with joy, but the protest that steals into your heart, that takes love's garb and uses love's ways, there is the difficulty" (399). In both of these cases, Ward posits an idea that circulated in much of liberal Victorian theology, and, as I pointed out in chapter two, specifically in Broad Church theology: the sense that men were dependent on women for the preservation of their faith. The latter of the two passages also highlights the degree to which Ward's novel advances a gendered division of individualism much like what I identified in chapter two. Whereas Robert's Protestant individualist claims to truth authorize him to leave the Church of England, both in defiance of his wife and society, Catherine's "protests," what might be the very core of her Protestantism, are presented as misguided and even pernicious because they violate her higher duty to love.

For the most part, Ward's novel seems to endorse the gendered division of Protestant individualism which makes truth men's paramount concern and love women's. Ward's holding of women up to a supreme ideal of love climax in Catherine's second and final repentance from her resistance to Robert. Capitulating to Robert's beliefs that "God has not one language, but many" (510), Catherine vows, "I will learn my lesson; I will learn to hear the two voices, the voice that speaks to you and the voice that speaks to me—I must" (511). Although the novel does not have Catherine specifically use the language of love in her words of repentance, her speech launches the novel into its
longest and most exalted encomium of love. Writing of the spiritual experience that
Robert has in response to Catherine’s loving capitulation, Ward writes,

As she towered above him in the dimness, white and pure and drooping,
her force of nature all dissolved, lost in this new heavenly weakness of
love, he thought of the man who passed through the place of sin, and the
place of expiation, and saw at last the rosy light creeping along the East,
caught the white moving figures, and that sweet distant melody rising
through the luminous air, which announced to him the approach of
Beatrice and the nearness of those ‘shining tablelands whereof our God
Himself is moon and sun.’ For eternal life, the ideal state, is not
something future and distant...Paradise is here, visible and tangible by
mortal eyes and hands, whenever self is lost in loving, whenever the
narrow limits of personality are beaten down by the inrush of the Divine
Spirit. (511)

Ward’s language of love reaches a height in this passage where, through an extended
allusion to Dante, Ward presents Catherine’s loving capitulation as leading Robert into a
modern-day paradise of marital love.

As well as because of the sheer intensity of the language, this passage is also
notable because it a moment where the novel’s gendered division of Protestant
individualism becomes particularly clear. At first glance, this passionate discussion of
love sounds like a unilateral countering of individualism. After all, the text remarks, that
“Paradise is here...when the self is lost in loving” (511). A close reading of the passage,
especially of the passage in context, suggests, however, that it is almost exclusively
Catherine's "self" that is "lost in loving" (511). The first line of the quote suggests such a reading. It is notably Catherine and not Robert who is described in this first line as having "her force of nature all dissolved" and as being "lost in this new heavenly weakness of love" (511). The context of this paean to marital love suggests something similar. In the speech immediately prior to the novel's long Dantesque encomium to love, Catherine has agreed to "learn to hear the two voices" of both her truth and Robert's truth. Since the orthodox Christianity that Catherine subscribes to demands one central truth, recognizing the value of two truths is inherently a significant compromise. The degree to which Catherine surrenders her claim to truth becomes all the more apparent when considering what Jonathan Loesberg has pointed out--that Robert, unlike some Broad Churchmen, does not stop at leaving the supernatural status of Christianity ambiguous. Instead, he is very open and adamant in his rejection of the doctrines of the literal divinity and resurrection of Jesus and, thus, puts himself in a position that is completely incompatible with orthodoxy (444-445, 451). Despite the ambiguous wording of the closing line to her passage, Robert Elsemere clearly suggests Catherine, not Robert, is the primary person engaging in self-sacrifice.

As well as a climax in terms of the novel's celebration of marital love, this passage is also a turning point. With its visionary language and references to paradise, this passage sounds may sound like the happily-ever-after ending to Ward's novel. Robert Elsemere, however, continues for another sixty-five pages and, in these remaining pages, begins to show some discomfort with the gendered division of individualism that it has been advocating. Robert Elsemere evinces anxiety about Catherine's exclusion from truth in at least three ways. First, Ward imagines Catherine as continually hoping for a
deathbed reconversion of Robert. As the novel tells us in the final pages, right before Catherine attempts this deathbed reconversion, "ever since that passionate submission of the wife which had thrown her morally at her husband's feet, there had lingered at the bottom of her heart one last supreme hope... It was for this moment, either in herself or him, that Catherine's unconquerable faith had been patiently and dumbly waiting" (571).

In presenting Catherine as silently hoping all along that Robert will return to orthodoxy on his or her deathbed, Ward questions the degree to which Catherine is really at peace with her submission and agreement to "hear two voices" of truth. Some pages earlier, Ward has described Catherine's beliefs as having fundamentally changed:

   Love, and her husband, and the thousand subtle forces of a changing world had conquered... She was not conscious of the change but change there was. She had, in fact, undergone the dissociation of the moral judgment from a special series of religious formulae which is the crucial, the epoch-making fact of our day. (534).

Despite such sweeping statements about both Catherine and the trajectory of world thought, Ward, notably, still envisions Catherine as trying to push her "special series of religious formulae" on Robert on his deathbed.

   Ward additionally shows discomfort with Catherine's marginalization from truth through her repeated descriptions towards the end of the novel of how Catherine is worn down and diminished. In the same paragraph where she talks about Catherine's freeing of "moral judgment from a special series of religious formulae" (534), the novel talks about Catherine's life in very bleak terms. "Something, indeed," Ward writes, "had gone for ever out of that early joy. Her life had been caught and nipped in the great inexorable
wheel of things. It would go on, in some sense maimed to the end” (534). Describing her as “maimed,” “caught,” and “nipped,” the novel imagines Catherine not just unhappy but in terms that present her as less of than a complete self. Continuing to recognize the destruction of Catherine’s full self-hood, the final page of the novel remarks of her, “She looked the shadow of herself. Spiritually, too she was the shadow of herself” (575-576). Having wrest almost all spiritual power from the once spiritually powerful Catherine and no imagining the condition that this would leave its heroine in, the novel becomes almost elegiac.

Most unsettling of all—undermining the novel’s premature celebration of wedded bliss more than anything else—is the final scene of the novel. In this scene, Catherine has a “hallucination” in which she literally chooses her husband over Christ. Explaining Catherine is “spiritually the shadow of herself” (575), the novel remarks of her, “Her life was no longer her own: she lived in him—in every look of those eyes—in every movement of that wasted frame” (575). By itself, these words are chilling and already suggest the rejection of Christ that is about to follow. In remarking that Catherine’s life “was no longer her own” (575), Ward is echoing I Corinthians 6:19: “ye are not your own. . .For ye are bought with a price.” Following this up with, “she lived in him. . .in every movement of that wasted frame” (575), Ward is also coming very close to the very famous Acts 7:28: “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” In each of these scriptural echoes, Ward is, of course, making a key change. When Catherine proclaims that she is “not [her] own,” she is asserting that she is her husband’s as opposed to God’s. Similarly, rather than “liv[ing] and mov[ing] in God,” she is “liv[ing]” through her husband and his movements. These statements are thus, by orthodox standards,
blasphemous. Considering that Broad Churchmen, as I pointed out in chapter one, were quite fond of wielding accusations of idolatry, such a clear insinuation of placing one husband in the place of God would probably not have sat well with most of them either.

The description of the “hallucination” that follows only strengthens the ideal that Catherine has been putting her husband in the place of Christ. Describing what Catherine sees, Ward writes,

> It seemed to her that she saw the form of the Son of man passing over the misty slope in front of her, that the dim majestic figure turned and beckoned. In her half-dream she fell on her knees. ‘Master!’ she cried in agony, ‘I cannot leave him! Call me not! My life is here. I have no heart—it beats in his. (574)

At this point, Catherine’s rejection of Christ in favor of her husband is not merely implied through Biblical allusions but is overtly dramatized. In itself, such an overt dramatization of a person, especially a devoutly Christian person’s, rejecting of Christ would probably have been rather chilling to Victorian Christians, orthodox and unorthodox alike. This is the position, though, where Ward presents Catherine’s elevation of love over truth as leaving her in. Not a believer in an actual superhuman Jesus, Ward probably would not have regarded such placing of a human being in the place of Christ such a horrible act in itself, but she would have understood that from her Evangelical heroine’s perspective, to turn away from Christ, even in a hallucination, would have been the ultimate spiritual defeat. Zealous about advancing the liberal theological agenda of her roman à thèse, Ward may deliver Protestant individualism over to her hero and leave her heroine with the anti-individualistic ideal of love, but in the process of putting such common liberal
theological rhetoric practices into action, Ward seems to become increasingly anxious that the very theology that she celebrates might, in the end, prove more harmful than helpful to women.
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