The Bearing of the Oxford Movement on the Religious Novels of Mrs. Humphrey Ward

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THE BEARING OF THE OXFORD MOVEMENT
ON THE RELIGIOUS NOVELS OF MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

By

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VITA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is an ordinary paradox in the literary world that popularity is one of the least authoritative indications of the greatness of a piece of literature. This is daily made evident by the spectacle of the phenomenal rise to prominence and the almost equally phenomenal drop into oblivion of so many "best sellers" on the literary counters, books which touch some chord of correspondence in the popular mind. Their popularity can be accounted for by timeliness, one of the qualities of good literature it is true. As T. S. Eliot has observed, when a writer is sincere he cannot help expressing the general state of mind, and the essential relation of his work to the society of which he is a part is just as important as its relation to the vast heritage of the past. However, timeliness alone, although it may be its excuse for being and the origin of its vogue, may also be the chief cause of a book's becoming "dated." For often that which makes a work the fashion of an era is inimical to its general acceptance later. Many timely novels, it is true, novels whose purpose was to point a moral or adorn a current controversy, survive and are read as literature, although their orbit was a limited one and their characters involved in the movements and events, political, social or religious, of a particular era. But they survive be-
cause their authors were moved primarily by a creative impulse, by the desire to see characters working out their destiny in mutual relations and only secondarily by the desire to popularize a certain range of ideas. The thesis novel often survives as an interest of the literary historian who finds in it an accurate, even if not inspired, record of social attitudes or an interpretation of the influences bearing upon the literature of a particular period.

Although it would perhaps be unfair to call them wholly uninspired, the novels of Mrs. Humphry Ward fall into the latter category. Among the greatest popular successes of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, they are seldom read today, in spite of the fact that they found favor not only with the ordinary fiction public but also with the intellectuals of the time - with such men as the statesman Gladstone, the Bishop Mandell Creighton, the critics, Walter Pater and Henry James, and many others.

Several reasons existed for this remarkable success. During the eighties and nineties the fiction public had developed an appetite for books of a more serious quality. "The stirrings of the aesthetic movement which was to revolt against mid-Victorian ugliness and materialism in art and philosophy started in the minds of novel readers a vogue yearning towards Higher Things, whether these be grave studies of spiritual struggle or sombre depictions of stark simplicities of nature." 1

The most popular, though not the first of Mrs. Ward's novels, Robert Elsmere, appeared at the height of this mood of solemn aspiration. Its seriousness catered to the transient taste.

The second cause of the success of Robert Elsmere and the novels following soon after from Mrs. Ward's pen was undoubtedly their relevance. They made articulate certain thoughts in the mind of the general public, certain ideas which it had been the prerogative of a special group to express in a less attractive form. Especially to thousands of "honest doubters" who wished to reconcile orthodoxy in religious belief with the "new criticism" these stories made an appeal. Robert Elsmere attempted a kind of compromise between rationalism and tradition and was therefore followed with interest by readers ranging from the highest of the "High" to the broadest of the "Broad," seeking expression for their opinions, vindication of them, or condemnation of that with which they did not agree.

Another element contributing to Mrs. Ward's repute was her position in the public eye and her connections with well known personages. As the granddaughter of Thomas Arnold of Rugby and the niece of Matthew Arnold, she had a tradition of literature and authority to introduce her. Her husband, Humphry Ward, was a leader-writer and art-critic for the London Times, and several other relatives were centers of political activity. The sudden success with Robert Elsmere made her a personage and proved an advertisement for future productions.
from her pen. Besides her literary activity, frequently the inspiration of it, were her efforts for social reforms which were ceaseless and untiring. The founding of a settlement house, the encouragement of vacation schools and play centers for the children of the poor, her years of energetic and resourceful campaigning against Women's Suffrage, her parliamentary electioneering - these and numberless other activities throughout a long life kept England aware of her.

Nor was there any doubt of her intellectual competence. Of this, the historian, J. R. Green's proposal suggesting her, before she was twenty, to the historian Freeman as the "best person" to contribute to a volume on Spain for an historical dictionary he was editing was evidence, as were her contacts on a plane of equality with the most prominent intellectual personages of the time. "Her contact with politics," wrote Stephen Gwynn, "has been that of a minister or ex-minister; her contact with art that of a Royal Academician, her contact with literature that of an Oxford don." 2 True, learning does not make the novelist and it may be said in agreement with Mr. Gwynn that she perhaps had too many "advantages," that there was not enough of the artistic child in her.

These things [contacts] do not make a writer, but at least they ensured that if she wrote a novel about politics, or about art, or about theology, she was fully competent, say, to give University Extension lectures on the subject with which she dealt.

2 Mrs Humphry Ward, p. 15.
She had not been a person in trouble about his faith, nor an active politician, nor an artist with his bread to earn; but she knew as much as books could tell her about the distinctive problem of each, and in each case she was personally well acquainted with distinguished living examples of the type she studied. Thus her work, produced at a period when people were strongly disposed to derive part of their culture from the more serious class of fiction, had a high educational value; she was both qualified and predisposed to instruct. Also, and this was essential to her success, she had as much of the true store-teller's gift as sufficed to win and hold her audience.

Mrs. Ward's first important publication, a translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime*, was, characteristically, a study of the self-revelation of a religious soul in difficulties. Her first novel, *Miss Bretherton*, had little to recommend it. "In truth, the interesting thing about it is its lack of quality." It displayed some of the essential characteristics which were to mark all the later novels. Its characters could be associated with actual personages and it was possible to state its theme as an abstract intellectual formula. With *Robert Elsmere*, her second novel she embarked upon her career, and in the wake of its success she launched *David Grieve*, *Marcella*, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, *Eleanor*, and *The Case of Richard Meynell*, to mention those novels most characteristic of her talent and method. All of these dramatized more or less prominently, the conflict bequeathed to the English religious mind by the

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3 Ibid., pp. 15-16.
4 Ibid., p. 19.
great controversy between rationalism and tradition which had 
granged since the opening of the century and found expression 
in the Oxford Movement and its resultant reactions. David 
Grieve carries the theme of Robert Elsmere out of the rectory 
into the business world; Helbeck of Bannisdale, considered 
by many Mrs. Ward’s best novel, deals with the conflict be-
tween the Catholic and the unbeliever; Eleanor hovers about 
the theme of the Modernist controversy in the Catholic Church. 
The Case of Richard Meynell picked up after a lapse of twenty 
years, the threads of Robert Elsmere for a reweaving. Mrs. 
Ward’s first political novel, Marcella, was only incidentally 
concerned with religion.

Well under way and gaining momentum, Mrs. Ward was 
to continue to produce novels at regular intervals almost to 
her death which took place in 1920. When she turned away 
from the theological theme she took a chance against the fact 
that her talent needed a special condition to vivify it. "The 
novels of the last fifteen years are respectable, were never 
inspired, and are already forgotten," wrote Edmund Gosse in 
1925. However, she retained an amount of popularity well 
up into the years of the World War, an oracle to some readers 
but inspiring in others at times, as in Arnold Bennett, "an 
ecstasy of homicidal fury."

Eleanor had been followed by three novels which had 
their basis in social history, bearing out Mrs. Ward’s theory

5 Silhouettes, p. 208.
that fact was a starting point for fiction. Lady Rose's Daughter is quite recognizably based on Sainte-Beuve's study of Mademoiselle L'Espinasse; The Marriage of Williams Ashe on an incident in Lord Byron's career, and Fenwick's Career on the life of the artist Romney. The remaining novels deal in general with the governing classes in some of the phases which particularly interested their author and not much more can be said about them.

Mrs. Ward once criticized Oakfield, a novel of Indian life, written by her uncle, William Delafield Arnold, as suffering too much from the Rugby "earnestness." She inherited her share of the famous Rugby quality, the didactic impulse fairly conquering the creative. Her training at Oxford made her critical, her later enthusiasms made her a publicist and characters and plot of her novels never escape from bondage to her main intention which she pursued with the "terrible earnestness" which to Edmund Gosse was her weak point as an imaginative writer. This quality was once caricatured by Max Beerbohm in a drawing which pictured Mary Arnold, aged eight, looking up at her celebrated uncle and asking, "Why, O why, Uncle Matthew, will you not be wholly serious?" 6

The criticism of Miss Bretherton by her friend Mandell Creighton (then Emmanuel Professor at Oxford) remarked the domination by the critical, of the imaginative faculty. "Your book is

6 Reproduced in Hugh Kingsmill's Matthew Arnold.
"dainty," he wrote, "but it does not touch the great springs of life. . . . You wrote as a critic not as a creator. . . . If you are going on with novels you must throw criticism to the winds and let yourself go as a partner of common joys, common sorrows and common perplexities." 7

She went on with novels and the improvement over Miss Bretherton was marked but her talent remained an essentially critical one. Her range and her limitations have been effectively described in Sir Edmund Gosse's analysis.

Whatever could be attained by severity of self-discipline, applied to a mind of firm intelligence was within the range of Mrs. Ward. Her writing though without charm was solid and correct. Her memory had been stringently trained and stood her often in place of imagination. Her lack of humor betrayed her as the years went on to a sort of pontifical self assurance, or, it may be more simply said, to a lack of sympathy with forms of thought and fancy which had not yet received academic authority. 8

Even Robert Elsmere suggested to Henry James the image of a "slightly old-fashioned ship." Today, the latest of Mrs. Ward's novels seem circumscribed by an atmosphere of remoteness which is a quality not felt in those of her contemporaries, Meredith and George Eliot. Mr. Middleton Murry defined the quality as false simplification, and he ascribes it not only to Mrs. Ward but to all her contemporaries.

7 Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward*, p. 44.
Matthew Arnold is infected by it and ... Samuel Butler is by no means immune .... We have the sense that everything in the Victorian intellect was falsely simplified. We know that there were great battles heroically fought, but they seem to us unreal because, to our present vision, what united the disputants was much more important than what divided them. Therefore the story of their struggles reads much more like an elaborate comedy, than the tragedy 9 which we must believe, it really was.

It is not their theme, it is not their peculiar appropriation to a period that have made Mrs. Ward's novels, not unpopular but rather forgotten today. Had she made the religious, political and social theories the background of living plots and characters instead of the major interest to which plot and character were subordinated, her books would survive as historical novels. As it is, their interest is rather that of historical documents. To the literary historian her voluminous pages will have their value. "She can describe the society in which most of her working life has presumably been spent; she cannot make it live." 10 But, an intelligent observer, she can describe it well. She was hardly an influence but she was a faithful reflector, a spokesman for influences. Her early religious novels, mostly because of her "earnest" method in their compiling, keep a record of the restlessness of mind, the struggles of conscience, the hesitations and the arrogance of a large number of influential intellects, especially at Oxford, during the last part of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER II
THE BACKGROUND

The mental atmosphere of the world in which Mary Arnold grew up was stirring with the currents of two opposing tendencies which influenced all the thought of the nineteenth century - the Catholic reaction and the growth of the spirit of Liberalism. Their conflict profoundly affected the Church of England and is still doing so, but it was not confined to the Church. "The opposition of these two schools," wrote Professor Hugh Walker, "gives its supreme interest to the literature of the nineteenth century; all else will be found in the long run to be subordinate." 1 The English phase of the Catholic reaction had its most significant expression when it came to grips with the "anti-dogmatic spirit," as Newman defined Liberalism, in the Oxford Movement. This Movement was not as isolated phenomenon; it had its relations to other religious movements both in England and on the Continent. "It is traceable in the last resort," says Wilfrid Ward, "to the reaction on behalf of traditional Christianity which followed the French Revolution in so many countries - a reaction signalized by the publication of Chateaubriand's Genie du Christianisme, and embodied in what is known as the Romantic school in Germany." 2

2 The Oxford Movement, pp. 7-8.
The new religiousness was evident in England in many forms prior to the Oxford Movement itself. George Borrow in the appendix to The Romany Rye would trace it back to the Waverly Novels, denouncing Scott as the man who had brought back to life Jacobitism, Laudism and Popery. Carlyle traces "spectral Puseyisms" to Coleridge. Newman in the Apologia noted the effect of Scott's novels in promoting a Catholic frame of mind, and in his Chronological Notes he recorded: During the spring (1835) I for the first time read parts of Coleridge's works; and I am surprised how much I thought mine is to be found there." 3 Professor Walker also remarked the relationships between this movement and others:

All romanticism is, often unconsciously, cognate to it. The revival of Gothic architecture, the change in the spirit of poetry-the consciousness of the supernatural in Coleridge, the sensuousness of Keats, the feeling in Shelley of a spiritual element in all things . . . these are kindred manifestations.

It would not do to carry such comparisons too far, of course. The Romantic movement did not touch ecclesiasticism and dogma. But the romanticists

Recalled their disciples to the contemplation of self. A romantic might see the truth in moments of solitary enlightenment, but not feel its influence among the pursuits which made him one with his fellow creatures . . . . The younger generation

3 Quoted in H. V. Routh's Towards the Twentieth Century, p. 53.
wanted to make this idealism effective among the mazes of the world. That is why they cultivated Goethe, that is also why some of them looked to those practices and observances in which God and man have a right to meet - to the religion of their forefathers.

When a few of these banded together to bring their religion into line with their ideals, the Oxford Movement began.

Newman dates the Oxford Movement from Keble's sermon on National Apostasy, in 1833, but it had been prepared for by several years of his own spiritual influence at Oxford and also, we may believe, by the religiousness of such an opponent of Newman as Dr. Arnold of Rugby.

Arnold flattered himself that he was a principle opponent of Mr. Newman; but he was rather a principal fellow-laborer. There was but one quality in a common English boy which would have enabled him to resist such a reasoner as Mr. Newman. We have a heavy apathy on exciting topics which enables us to leave dilemmas unsolved, to forget difficulties . . . to leave the reasoner to pursue his logic . . . But it was exactly this happy apathy, this commonplace indifference, that Arnold prided himself on removing. He objected strenuously to Mr. Newman's creed, but he prepared anxiously the very soil to which it was to grow.

The history of the Oxford Movement proper is soon told: the gathering of a party around Newman, Keble and Pusey, their object "to withstand the Liberalism of the day;" the issuing of the Tracts for the Times advocating a "Via Media" between Protestantism and Romanism in a return to the "religion of

6 Walter Bagehot, Literary Studies, II, 276-7.
Andrewes, Laud, Hammond, Butler and Wilson;" the cries of "Romanism" when the Remains of Hurrell Froude appeared; and finally, Tract No. 90.

The famous Tract had as its thesis: The Articles of Religion do not oppose Catholic teaching, but when they appear to do so they merely reject Roman errors. Few theological pamphlets have had such consequences: "Four tutors protested, six doctors suspended, Hebdomadal boards censured, deans of colleges changed the dinner hour, so as to make a hearing of Newman's sermon and a dinner in Hall incompatible transactions." Newman retired to Littlemore but the current set in motion against the party grew. Dr. Arnold was brought in as Professor of Modern History; William G. Ward, a prominent Tractarian was deprived of his degrees upon publication of his Ideal of a Christian Church. For his sermon, "The Holy Eucharist a Comfort to the Penitent," Dr. Pusey was suspended from preaching at the University for two years. Ward submitted to Rome in 1845; Keble and Pusey stood firm in Anglicanism while keeping to the Tractarian principles. In October, 1845, one month after Ward, Newman was received into the Catholic Church.

For the moment the Tractarian ideals seemed defeated at Oxford. A Liberal reaction immediately began and there

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7 Cf. Newman's Apologia, Chapter II.
8 Lord Coleridge, "In Memoriam" to Principal Shairp, quoted in W. Ward's Oxford Movement, p. 47.
followed a period in which, to quote Mark Pattison, "in the first rush of intellectual freedom, we were carried beyond all bounds, sought to change everything, questioned everything, and were impatient to throw the whole cargo of tradition overboard." 9 Soon however, the adherents of the Tractarian principles rallied again around Pusey and Keble and the counter-movement against Liberalism continued a powerful force affecting life and literature and in the University giving rise to other movements.

Every subsequent movement was begotten in Newman's wake. Oxford youth was stamped with the image of Newman, if not on the obverse, on the reverse of the medal. Even after his departure he powerfully affected Oxford while in the throes of Reform by writing his Idea of a University . . . As soon as the Tractarian Movement ceased to trouble the University, others took its place . . . Newman begat Matthew Arnold, and Arnold begat Ruskin, and Ruskin begat the Pre-Raphaelites, Morris, Rossetti and Burne-Jones who were all the children or adopted children of Oxford. 10

The poets too were marked either by a positive or negative reaction to the Oxford Movement. Rossetti translated its medievalism into poetry. Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough belonged to the skeptical revolt but they had a peculiar sympathy with Tractarianism which affected their utterance.

9 Memoirs, p. 239.
... the deepest tones in the poetry
[of both] are struck by just this emotional
sympathy which their intellect compels them
to reject... But for the colors re-
lected from the Tractarian mysticism,
but for the wistfulness due to a faith
longed for but not attained, Matthew Arnold's
classicism might have been far more like that
of the Queen Anne writers.

And of Matthew Arnold's criticism, the words of Lionel Trilling
and true - that it is "a reconciliation of the two traditions
whose warfare had disturbed his youth - rationalism and
faith." 12

If her uncle was an example of the negative reaction
to the Oxford Movement, Mrs. Ward's father, Thomas Arnold the
younger, was an example, late perhaps, and wavering at times,
of its positive influence. Neither Matthew nor Thomas, who
were undergraduates at Oxford during the most agitated years
of Tractarianism, displayed much attraction toward the force
which their father had combatted with all his powers until
his death. Matthew eventually would carry further his
father's Liberalism. Of Matthew's interest in Newman while
at Oxford his brother Thomas writes, "The perfect handling
of words, joined to a delicate presentation of ideas, at-
tracted him powerfully to John Henry Newman, whose afternoon
Sunday sermons at St. Mary's he for a long time regularly
attended. But so far as I know Newman's teaching never made
an impression on him." 13 Of his own experience he remarks:

12 Matthew Arnold, p. 194.
13 Passages In a Wandering Life, p. 57.
Of Newman in my undergraduate time, I had scarcely seen anything. I went certainly once—perhaps twice—to hear one of his afternoon sermons at St. Mary's, but the delicacy and refinement of his style was less cognizable by me than by my brother, and the multiplied quotations from Scripture . . . confused and bewildered me. 14

In 1847, Thomas Arnold, rejecting a scholarship at the University, which would have led to a fellowship, went out to New Zealand. It was characteristic of his idealistic nature to think that "in [such] a perfect locale . . . it might be destined that the true fraternity of the future—could founders and constitution-builders of the necessary genius and virtue be discovered—might be securely built up." 15 Disappointed in his quest for the ideal life and meeting with little success in colonial farming, in 1849 he accepted a post as Inspector of Schools for Tasmania. There he met and married Julia Sorell, the grand-daughter of a former governor of the colony, in 1850. In 1851 their eldest daughter, Mary Augusta Arnold (Mrs. Humphry Ward) was born.

After a period of religious uncertainty which had lasted over ten years—from the taking of his degree—Arnold sent to England for the Tracts for the Times. While studying them, he writes, "the unity of the Christian system from the first, and the care with which that unity was preserved, seemed to me undeniable." 16

14 Ibid., p. 150
15 Ibid., p. 65
16 Ibid., p. 154
The final result of his studies was that he was received into the Catholic Church, at Hobart Town, in 1856. Since feeling ran high against Catholicism in the colony, he determined to return to England. After applying to Newman he was given a post as Professor of English Literature at the new Catholic University of Dublin where he remained until 1862 when he removed to Birmingham to work under Newman as head classical master at the Oratory School. The ensuing two years were years of increasing unrest in regard to religious matters. In 1865 he left the Catholic communion, going to Oxford where he was now able to obtain a lectureship. In 1876 he returned - for good this time - to the Catholic Church.

During Thomas Arnold's years with Newman, his daughter, Mary, remained much of the time at the Arnold family seat at Fox How in Westmoreland with her grandmother, the widow of Dr. Arnold, to whom the religion practiced by her son was a great trial, as it was to his Huguenot-bred wife. Mary received her early education in the nearby schools for girls. But it was in Oxford to which she came in 1865 - permanently in 1867 - that she was to spend what she considered the most significant years of her life. "I was sixteen," she says, "beginning to be conscious of all sorts of rising needs and ambitions, keenly alive to the spell of Oxford and to the good fortune which had brought me to live in her streets." 17

17 A Writer's Recollections, I, 136.
Her intellectual training was to be very informal in this city of scholars. "I had no definite teaching, and everything I learned came to me from persons - and books - sporadically, without any general guidance or plan." 18 In 1868 she read Essays in Criticism.

... it is not too much to say that the book set for me the current of life; its effect heightened no doubt by the sense of kinship. Above all it determined in me, as in many others, an enduring love of France and of French literature which played the part of schoolmaster to a crude youth. 19

Her comment on her uncle's famous Preface is interesting, showing at an early date her "earnestness." "The Preface is rich and has the fault which the author professes to avoid, that of being amusing." 20

The Oxford in which Thomas Arnold settled with his family in 1865 was still laboring under the repercussions, the thrills and counter-thrills of the famous Movement set on foot in 1832 by Keble's sermon on National Apostasy. Keble indeed was withdrawn from the scene, but Newman's conversion to Rome had made so prodigious a stir that even twenty years later, the religious world of England still took its color from that event. 21

Newman was but a figure in the background to Mary Arnold - "the great and mysterious figure . . . haunting the streets of Egbaston,

18 Ibid., p. 137
19 Ibid., p. 77
20 Trevelyan, Op. Cit., p. 15
21 Ibid., p. 19
from whom I had shrunk with dumb, childish resentment as from someone whom I understood to be the author of our family misfortune." 22

Oxford was still shaking from its latest battle between Liberals and Conservatives which had taken place in 1860 over the publication of *Essays and Reviews* by the Liberal theologians, among them Mark Pattison and Benjamin Jowett. The great issue at the time between the two parties was the interpretation of Scripture. Jowett's contribution to *Essays and Reviews* supplied the Liberals with their motto: "Interpret the Scriptures like any other book." The hubbub aroused lashed during three years of proceedings before the Court of Arches, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and finally Convocation. The proceedings, however, did not prevent the advancement of one of the Reviewers, Mark Pattison, who became Rector of Lincoln College in 1861.

During these years, writes Robert Morss Lovett, "historical scholarship was the great game at Oxford; history touched by the modern scientific method was its newest phase. People were going about saying that if Newman had only known German the course of the world would have been different." 23 Mary Arnold soon became absorbed by the controversies about her, throwing herself with youthful eagerness into the struggle, giving her allegiance to the Liberal side, that of her two

friends Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, and Mark Pattison.

The latter was perhaps the greatest single influence upon her at this time. "From 1868 to 1872," she writes, "the Rector, learned, critical, bitter, fastidious, and 'Mrs. Pat' with her gaiety, her picturesqueness, her impatience of the Oxford solemnities and decorums . . . mattered more to me perhaps than anybody else." 24 Through him she was first made acquainted with her lifelong interest, German criticism. She listened with a disciple's awe to his conversation as he "poured scorn on Oxford scholarship or the lack of it, and on the ideals of Balliol, which aimed at turning out public officials, as compared with the researching ideals of the German universities." 25 She drank in his "gibes at Christ Church whence Pusey and Liddon still dictated the powerful Church party of the University." In brief, to listen to him, "was to watch the doors of new worlds gradually opening before a girl's questioning intelligence." 26

Pattison had, in his twenties, been one of Newman's followers, staying for a time with him at Littlemore, and writing two Lives of the Saints for his series. He recorded his experience in his Memoirs. "From 1838 to 1842 I moved entirely with the party, was loudly prominent at all their demonstrations, and judged of good or bad according as any

24 Recollections, I, 138.
25 Ibid., p. 140.
26 Ibid., p. 141.
person was docile or otherwise in Newman's tactics." 27 Of all those near Newman, Pattison probably drifted farthest into the waters of Rationalism. He left the Tractarians "not by any argument or controversy against Puseyism but by the slow process of innutrition of the religious brain and development of the rational faculties." 28 His "devotion to study" had kept him from following Newman in 1845. He had just been offered a tutorship. "This cost me very hard, steady work, and gave me an object in life beyond holding one of the banners of the Puseyite party. I think it was chiefly owing to this that when the crash came, I did not follow Newman." 29 Pattison gradually came to look upon the Tractarian Movement as a check in the forward progress of Intellectual freedom, and, writing forty years later was able to say of Newman's departure, that "it was a deliverance from the nightmare which had oppressed Oxford for fifteen years." 30 Naturally he looked with dismay upon the anti-Liberal elements in Oxford led by Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon; he lamented that "the feeble fabric of opinion in young Oxford . . . must give way before the steady pressure of the vast ecclesiastical organization which, after having spread itself over the face of England, is now laying siege to our University as the stronghold of freedom of thought and disengagement

27 Ibid., p. 184.
28 Memoirs, p. 208.
29 Ibid., p. 187.
30 Ibid., p. 236.
from the fetters of traditional dogma." 31 This then, was the intellect under whose influence Mary Arnold developed her critical distrust and by whose advice to "get to the bottom of something; choose a subject and know everything about it," she plunged into the study of early Spanish history and literature.

Not much less powerful than Pattison's in the long run, was the influence upon the formation of her mind of T. H. Green, the Hegelian Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford. By appealing to that part of her nature which she had inherited from her father he drew out the instinctive conservatism and idealism of her temperament by giving them a philosophic foothold. She was never to advance as far in her Liberalism as Stanley, Pattison and Jowett, as much as she admired them. Like her uncle, Matthew Arnold, like so many of her contemporaries, she attempted a compromise between the old and the new. Thus "while she accepted quite uncritically the intellectual fashion of the moment, she is at the same time the victim of the Christian associations of her youth." 32

31 Ibid., p. 242.
32 Wilfrid Ward, Men and Matters, p. 410.
CHAPTER III

ROBERT ELSMERE

The fact that Mrs. Ward's earliest literary ambitions, as a result of her training while at Oxford, were historical, "weaving themselves in dreams and plans for the writing of that big book on the origins of modern Spain," 1 throws light on her literary methods. In 1877 she had been invited by Dean Wace to share in the work of a historical series which he was editing. This work for the Dictionary of Christian Biography to which she contributed the articles on the early Spanish kings and ecclesiastics had an important effect upon her thought and habits. "It was the only thorough 'discipline' I ever had;" she relates, "it lasted about two years, and it led directly to the writing of Robert Elsmere." 2 The "big book" on Spain was never to become a reality, but it is interesting to note that it was his studies into the origins of France that were to make Elsmere skeptical of "evidence." After her work for the Dictionary was finished, Mrs. Ward continued her interest in the problems of "Christian Origins." It was indeed a subject which had attracted many nineteenth century thinkers, to which Newman had introduced the Tractarians, to which scientific habits of thought were ever giving fresh impetus. Mrs. Ward's interest in the problems of Christianity had only grown with the years. It was now

2 Writer's Recollections, I, 185.
greatly stimulated by these researches into the early history of the Spanish Church. She began to feel the enormous importance to the believer of the historical testimony on which the whole fabric rested.

She was fascinated by the intricacy of the whole subject but more especially by such branches of it as the Synoptic Problem on the relation of the Fourth Gospel to the rest; while the question raised by the realization that the books of the New Testament were the products of an age steeped in miracle and wholly uncritical of it, struck her as vital to the whole orthodox position.

She saw Oxford divided over "sources and testimony." "To what did it all go back," she asked herself, "this great story of early civilization, of early religion, which modern men could write and interpret so differently. On the question," she adds, "the writers and historians of four early centuries, from the fifth to the ninth, seemed to throw a partial, yet a searching light. I have expressed it in Robert Elsmere." 5

It was a sermon that finally reoused Mrs. Ward from the state of recollection to action; a sermon delivered from the University pulpit of St. Mary's by the Reverend John Wordsworth, grandnephew of the poet and later Bishop of Salisbury. The sermon was entitled, "The Present Unsettlement in Religion." In it Wordsworth expounded the thesis, "Christ connects unbelief and sin," specifying among the sins to which unbelief was attributable "intellectual faults, especially

3 Trevelyan, p. 32.
4 Ibid., p. 49.
5 Writer's Recollections, I, 221
recklessness, pride and avarice." 6 Listening, Mrs. Ward's mind leaped to the defense of the "patient scholars and thinkers of the Liberal host, Stanley, Jowett, Green of Balliol, Lewis Nettleship, Henry Sedgwick, my uncle." She became excited. "How could I show England what was really going on in her midst." Surely the only way was through imagination, through a picture of actual life and conduct." 7 The immediate expression of her indignation was a pamphlet which sketched two types of character, "the character that either has no doubts or has suppressed them, and the character that fights its stormy way to truth." 8 This was in 1881. 

Robert Elsmere was begun in 1885, avowedly as a novel with a purpose:

I wanted to show how a man of sensitive and noble character, born for religion, comes to throw off the orthodoxies of his day and moment, and to go into the wilderness where all is experiment, and spiritual life begins again. And with him I wished to contrast a type no less fine, of the traditional and guided soul, and to imagine the clash of two such tendencies of thought as it might affect all practical life and especially the life of two people who loved each other. 9

In 1888, after three years of arduous labor and study the book was published. There was hardly an idea floating in the charged air of Oxford which did not find a place in its

6 Ibid., p. 224.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 226.
9 Ibid., II, 167.
volumes. To Henry James it suggested

... the image of a large, slow-moving, slightly old fashioned ship, buoyant enough and well out of water, but with a close-packed cargo in every inch of the stowage room. One feels that the author has set afloat in it a complete treasure of intellectual and moral experience, the memory of all her contacts and phases, all her speculations and studies.

Briefly put, the story of Robert Elsmere is that of an Anglican clergyman who doubts about "historic" Christianity, who finally gives up his orders and devotes himself to a career of service in an industrial district in London, where, founding a "new brotherhood," he wears himself out with overwork, contracts tuberculosis and dies. The "ardent and impulsive boy, "son of a clergyman, comes up to Oxford during the period of that religious reaction bewailed by Pattison. Like other of Mrs. Ward's heroes, he is deeply influenced by others, teachers and friends. Two especially, win his affection and allegiance, Edward Langham, his tutor, and Henry Grey, the "Greats" tutor at the College of St. Anselm. Langham, but a few years Elsmere's senior, was a man of extensive learning in whom early ambitions for a scholarly career had been succeeded by a cold disillusion which forced upon him the realization of the "uselessness of utterance, the futility of enthusiasm, the inaccessibility of the ideal, the practical absurdity of trying to realize any of the mind's inward dreams".10

11 Robert Elsmere, I, 53.
Langham's intellectual fastidiousness, his dread of practical life and fear of incurring responsibilities he could not bear, all had their counterparts in the character of the Genevan student Amiel, whose "pensees" were still lingering in Mrs. Ward's memory as she began *Robert Elsmere*.

Grey was an eminent Oxford philosopher, a follower of Hegel who had turned from the intention of taking orders because of doubts in regard to miracle. Why the "susceptible, poetical" Elsmere was not turned aside from the path of orthodoxy by the influence of his two friends might be a cause of wonder. But his temper was too ardent and sanguine for Langham's pessimism to affect it very deeply; he pitied while still admiring him. And as for Grey,

The negative and critical side of him was what in reality told least upon his pupils . . . his respect for the immaturity of the young lives near him was complete. Elsmere drank in all the ideal fervor and spiritual enthusiasm of the great tutor, and then, as Grey himself would have done some twenty years earlier, carried his religious passion into the service of the great positive tradition around him.

12 Such action was also to be expected in view of the religious atmosphere already mentioned.

... it was the most natural thing in the world that a young man of Elsmere's temperament should rally to the Church. The place was passing through one of those periodical crises of reaction against an overdriven rationalism, which show themselves with tolerable regularity in any great center of intellectual activity. ... A fresh wave of religious romanticism was now gathering strength; the spirit of Newman had reappeared.

After his ordination Elsmere spends three years in Oxford in parish work, social service, and teaching, until, because of a breakdown in health, he is compelled of necessity to accept a country living offered him by his uncle. He marries Catharine Leyburn, a strict Evangelical with an instinctive hatred of unorthodoxy. Shortly after their retirement to the country parsonage among the lovely Westmoreland hills another influence begins to work upon Elsmere in the person of Squire Wendover, who represents in his life the sapping force of criticism. Although when he comes into Elsmere's life he is the embodiment of rationalism, in his youth the Squire had been an ardent disciple of Newman. One could read the chart of his intellectual history in the library to which he gave Elsmere complete access.

"This is how I interpret this room," said Robert, looking round it. "Here are the books he collected at Oxford in the Tractarian Movement and afterwards. Look here," and he pulled down a faded volume of St. Basil.

Langham looked and saw on the title page a note in faded characters: "Given to me by Newman at Oxford in 1845." . . .

"But look at them! Here are all the Tracts, all the Fathers, and masses, as you see, of Anglican theology. How look at the next case, nothing but eighteenth century."

"I see - from the Fathers to the Philosophers, from Hooker to Hume. How history repeats itself!"

"And there again," said Robert, pointing to the other side of the room, are the results of his life as a German student."
Under Wendover's logical and continuous hammering at the bases of his belief, and the pressure of the questions aroused by his investigation of origins for his projected book on early France, Elsmere finally convinces himself that he can no longer remain an Anglican minister and be sincere. On the advice of his old friend Grey, to whom he goes in his agony of mind, he gives up his order. After passing through a variety of stages he formulates a new gospel, a kind of religion of humanity which he administers to skilled artisans of London until his death.

"All Oxford and half London," we have been told, "spent their time spotting the originals of [Robert Elsmere's] characters, something of an injustice to the originality of their creator." 15 Those who had known him did not have to look very far for the original of the philosopher Grey. Mrs. Ward tells us in her Recollections that the model for the very literal portrait was Thomas Hill Green. It was her purpose to reproduce his traits - "traits of a great thinker and teacher, who was also the simplest, sincerest and most practical of men." 16 The fact that Elsmere misinterpreted Grey's teachings and was able to use them to support his orthodox position is not surprising when we know the position Green took at Oxford. Professor Hugh Walker describes it:

16 Ibid., I, p. 76.
Green's philosophy lent itself to purposes which were not his, all the more readily because of his dislike of polemics and his studied avoidance of unnecessary controversy with his contemporaries. In particular he carefully abstained from attacking religious dogma, and was remarkably conservative in his attitude toward the Christian faith.

Green's own published words are used by Grey in a sermon on the Resurrection which is misinterpreted by Elsmere. Grey's words to Elsmere. "The parting with the Christian mythology is the rending asunder of bone and marrow," were Green's words to Mrs. Ward. 18 Like Mrs. Ward herself, Green "practically to his last hour clung to all the forms and associations of the old belief with a wonderful affection." 19

The relation between the skeptical Squire and Mark Pattison was immediately assumed by readers of Robert Elsmere, and Mrs. Ward admitted the model, adding that it was "confined . . . to a likeness in outward aspect - a few personal traits, and the two main facts of great learning and a general impatience of fools." 20

The author's views of "High" Anglicanism were incorporated in Elsmere's friend, the Reverend Newcome who represented those who were "ready to die for an alb." Newcome is the foil to Wendover, the spokesman for those who, it would

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19 Ibid.
20 Writer's Recollections, I, 148.
seem put not their trust in reason. He is a reactionary. "Scholarship, learning!" Eyes and lips flashed into a vehement scorn. "You allow them a value in themselves, apart from the Christian's test. It is the modern canker, the modern curse!" Thank God my years in London [in the slums] burnt it out of me! O my friend, what have you and I to do with all these curious triflings which lead men oftener to rebellion than to worship? Is this the time for wholesale trust, for a maudlin universal sympathy? May, rather a day of suspicion, a day of repression! - a time for trampling on the lusts of the mind no less than the lusts of the body, a time when it is better to believe than to know, to pray than to understand." 21

Lord Acton, writing indignantly to Gladstone, remarked that "the role played by the orthodox, anti-rational and wholly fanatical Newcome . . . 'belonged to the infancy of art' as little could he be taken as representing the orthodox side." 22

The debt of Robert Elsmere to Matthew Arnold must not be overlooked. The argument is that of Literature and Dogma which had presented a picture of men waiting for the lifting of "Aberglaube" and dogmatism. Oscar Wilde is said to have called the novel "Literature and Dogma without the Literature." 23

No one who reads Robert Elsmere can mistake the source from which some of its most arresting features are drawn. The strange re-interpreting of St. Paul on the Resurrection, the spiritualizing of the words "risen with Christ," the breaking away from the "envelope of miracle," the dissolving of supernatural

21 Robert Elsmere, II, p. 166.
22 Quoted in Writer's Recollections, II, 106.
23 See W. L. Phelps, Essays on Modern Novels, p. 196.
occurrences into mere clothing for moral ideas - for all these, if a chief inspiration was found in the Lay Sermons of Thomas Hill Green, it is no less the thought and often the very words of Arnold which persistently occur.

The effect of Robert Elsmere upon the reading public was electrifying.

No agitation, on the platform or in the newspapers [wrote Henry James] no demand for a political revolution, ever achieved anything like the publicity, or roused anything like the emotion of the earnest attempt of this quiet English lady to tell an interesting story, to present an imaginary case. The book was not merely an extraordinarily successful novel; it was, as reflected in contemporary conversation, a momentous public event.

The success of Robert Elsmere was instant and startling. In the press, the critics cried it up or down with equal vehemence; the pulpits fulminated against it, or gave it qualified approval; courses of lectures were delivered about it; pamphlets were published to prove that its doctrines were noble or elevating or utterly pernicious.

Although the Edinburgh Review disregarded it because, as the reviewer wrote four years later, "as a work of art the book seemed to be so clumsy, as a source of entertainment, so wearisome, as a theological treatise so unsatisfactory and inconclusive," it was received with favor by many critics.

Walter Pater, reviewing it in the Guardian, called it a "chef d'oeuvre of that kind of quiet evolution of character through circumstance, introduced into English literature by Jane Austen and carried to perfection in France by George Sand." 27  Henry James discovered in it "the general quality of charm," and congratulated Mrs. Ward for "carrying out her purpose without spoiling her novel." He admitted that "there may have been works in this line, of greater genius, of a spirit more instinctive and inevitable," but added that he was "at a loss to name one of an intenser intellectual energy." 28  He praised the "knowledge, curiosity, acuteness, a critical faculty remarkable in itself and very highly trained, the direct observation of life and the study of history . . . a fine moral ripeness, a genial, much-seeing wisdom." 29

In May, 1888, an article appeared which was to give the book its greatest advertisement, William E. Gladstone's "Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief." 30  Gladstone read the novel, as Shane Leslie said, "as if he were reading a gospel according to the doubting Thomas," and leaped to the defense of orthodoxy. While praising Mrs. Ward's "sense of mission," her "earnestness and sincerity of purpose," he summed up the novel as a "battle between intellect and emotion." 31  The portrait

27 Essays from the Guardian, p. 255
29 Ibid., p. 257.
30 Nineteenth Century, XXIII (1888) pp. 766-88.
31 Ibid., p. 768.
of Newcome he regarded as "one of a series of indications, by which the gifted authoress conveys to us what appears to be her thoroughly genuine belief that historic Christianity has indeed broad grounds and deep roots in emotion but in reason none whatever." 32

The Pall Mall Gazette sardonically congratulated Mrs. Ward for having at last wrenched the Grand Old Man from the wrongs of Ireland. In letters and interviews with Mrs. Ward and in his Later Gleanings Gladstone returned to the fray, accusing her of presenting no arguments for the orthodox side; "A great creed, with the testimony of eighteen centuries at its back, could not find an articulate word to say in its defense. . . . What weapons [Elsmere] wielded for it, what strokes he struck, has not even in a single line been recorded." 32

Gladstone's review gave a new impulse to the circulation of the book. It could not now be kept out of the pulpits and debating societies. "Its sale soon reached the million mark, its readers must have numbered twice or three times this. When, two or three decades after its first appearance it was reissued in a cheap edition, it sold 50,000 copies in two weeks and 100,000 copies in a year." 33 It has been translated into most of the foreign tongues. 34 How M. Taine, the French critic, was impressed by it was described by M. André Michel

32 Quoted in G. W. E. Russell's Matthew Arnold, p. 237
34 Writer's Recollections, II, 97.
of the Louvre in a letter to Mrs. Ward. "... J'aurais voulu que vous eussiez pu entendre - incognito - avec quelle vivacité de sympathie et d'admiration il parlais de votre livre. Pendant plusiers jours, il n'a pas été question d'autre chose chez lui." 35 From America Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote to the author: "Robert Elsmere, I suppose we should all agree is a 'medicated novel' - but it is, I think, beyond question the most effective and popular novel since Uncle Tom's Cabin." 36

Another American, Edward Everett Hale, called the story "the echo of an echo. In its central anti-supernaturalistic contentions," he wrote further:

it is largely a rehash of the anonymous work, "Supernatural Religion" which some years ago made considerable noise in England. That work was substantially an echo of the now decadent Continental school of rational criticism, led chiefly by Strauss and Renan. Matthew Arnold's own positions in relation to historic Christianity were largely such an echo. 37

An examination of the articles in the influential literary periodicals of the time, periodicals like the Spectator is evidence enough of the reception that would be given to a theological discussion by the intelligent reading public and it is not surprising that the major portion of the interest in Robert Elsmere was a theological one.

35 Quoted in Trevelyan, Op. Cit., p. 69
36 Quoted in Writer's Recollections, II, 92.
In fact, in the opinion of the Quarterly Review the book was popular only because of its theological interest: "Few persons would be at the trouble to read through so long a novel for the sake of its romantic episodes, who were not chiefly interested in the religious struggle it depicts." 38 This same periodical even saw fit to warn parents against the influences which were described in the novel as prevalent in English seats of higher learning, thus seeming to take Mrs. Ward's picture as authentic.

We only say that it is time English parents should thoroughly understand that this is the condition to which the Universities have been brought, and that if they send their sons to a college like St. Anselm's . . . they expose them . . . to have their faith deliberately undermined. 39

The main body of the article was concerned with a refutation of the religious conclusions which Robert Elsmere reached and criticised the author for refurbishing a historical criticism which had already lost its authority.

Blackwood's likewise devoted twenty pages to a discussion of the novel's theological implications, ending with the statement with no "human being can be seriously helped in his religious development by the ineffective reasoning and the bewildering conclusions which are presented." 40

The reaction to the book as well as the book itself was

39 Ibid. p. 279
a genuine product of the time. Charles Sempers, writing in the Harvard Monthly, remarked that the novel "could not have appeared in the last generation. It describes . . . both the religious doubt and the religious earnestness which characterize the present." 41 The last thirty years of the century certainly witnessed a change in the character of religious discussion. It had formerly been a rare thing for newspapers and magazines to embark upon the waters of theological controversy. But from the time of Essays and Reviews the general public had been invited to join the current debates and many popular magazines ran what might almost be called a regular bureau of argument and rebuttal. The generation which had grown up was familiar with scientific discussion; it had a sense of man's increasing power over nature and a tendency to reject the supernatural and to seek scientific definition for divine manifestations. But the religious revival initially inspired by the Oxford Movement, fostering a return of sacrament and ritual and making claims for historic Christianity, inspired a desire to cling to the old forms and truths. It was in this kind of soil that Robert Elsmere fell and sprang up for a time.

In this rather limited sense, then, the book might be called a "period piece." Its hero was a type of all those who had lost their faith but who could not be content to be without it. "Robert Elsmere was far more than the hero of an enormously successful novel;" wrote Lionel Trilling, "he was

the protagonist in a great social and intellectual crisis that in one way or another involved all thinking people." 42

Critics are in agreement as to the conditions Robert found at Oxford in the seventies; these were typical of all England.

"The seventies in England witnessed a recoil from the rationalism which had so much dominated the two decades before. What may be called a religious romanticism had become increasingly appealing." 43 Mrs. Ward had been criticized for allowing her hero to go through his undergraduate days without apparently feeling any of the influences to which he was to become subject after his ordination. But here also he was perhaps not un-
typical:

There is not the least doubt that many men brought up to holy orders in the Oxford of forty years ago were similarly immune from the Zeitgeist. No one who is in the least familiar with the mood of the theological student of our day has the least difficulty in recognizing Elsmere's distress and most of us could quote parallels from men whom we have personally known. The verisimilitude of Mrs. Ward's characters ... is well-night perfect. 44

At all events, its author was satisfied with the reception her book received. Its success "seemed to show that with all its many faults [it] had yet possessed a certain representative and pioneering force; and that ... the generation in which it appeared had spoken through it." 45

42 Op. Cit., p. 30
43 Ibid., p. 305.
45 Writer's Recollections II, 99.
CHAPTER IV

DAVID GRIEVE AND HELBECK OF BANNISDALE

Henry James, concluding his remarks about Robert Elsmere had expressed the desire of the public for Mrs. Ward's "next study of acute contemporary states" which, he said, was "as impatiently awaited as the birth of an heir to great possessions." It was four years before Mrs. Ward presented what she considered "the other side of the Greenian or Modernist message - i.e., that life itself, the ordinary human life and experience of every day as it has been slowly evolved through history, is the true source of religion, if man will but listen to the message in his own soul." 1 The genesis of David Grieve, like that of Robert Elsmere was in a piece of controversial writing, a Dialogue entitled "The New Reformation," written in answer to Gladstone's indictment of Robert Elsmere and published in the Nineteenth Century. 2 Into it Mrs. Ward threw all the reading and argument which of necessity she had to leave out of the novel. The projected Dialogue caused some trepidation among her friends:

Mr. Jowett was nervous about it, and came up on purpose from Oxford to persuade me, if he could, not to write it. His view - and that of Mr. Stopford Brooke - was that a work of art moves on one plane, and historical or critical

1 Writer's Recollections, II, 109.
2 March, 1899.
controversy on another, and that a novel cannot be justified by an essay. But my defense was not an essay: I put it in the form of a conversation, and made it as living and varied as I could. By using this particular form, I was able to give the traditional as well as the critical case with some fullness, and I took great pains with both.

Out of this "analysis of what may be called the intellectual presuppositions of Robert Elsmere" arose the conception of David Grieve which carried the same problems, the same kind of characters not this time into the intellectual world of Oxford and the English parishes but into the industrial and secularist world of Manchester.

The History of David Grieve, in the three volumes fashion demanded, appeared in 1892 and was greeted with a "chorus of praise, criticism and general talk." Jowett wrote that it was "the best novel since George Eliot - extraordinarily pathetic and interesting;" an article in the British Weekly called it "an almost absolute failure;" Walter Pater said that it seemed "to have all the forces of its predecessor at work in it, with perhaps a mellower kind of art - a more mature power of blending disparate literary gifts in one." 4

David, who is almost the only one of Mrs. Ward's heroes who does not belong to the aristocracy either of birth or talent, is the son of a Derbyshire farm-boy and a Parisian Milliner's

3 Writer's Recollections, II, 106.
The story describes the growth of his character under the vicissitudes of life, and the deterioration of the character of his sister, Louie. David is "taught of God, through natural affection, through repentance, through sorrow, through the constant energies of the intellect." Orphaned in early childhood the brother and sister are taken in by their Uncle Reuben Grieve and his hard wife, Hannah. Part One, the best from a literary point of view, describes their life on their uncle's farm; in its rustic characters, its picture of thwarted childhood, and its natural scenery it is somewhat reminiscent of *Mill on the Floss*. In Part Two, David, to escape the boredom of the farm, runs away to Manchester where his self-confidence and ability soon win him a measure of success as a bookseller's assistant. Here he enters upon the first stage of his spiritual history. His childhood had been untouched by any religious interest except for a brief awakening under the onslaughts of a revivalist preacher. Now, through his reading of Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot, he passes into a state of hostility towards Christianity, going to Secularist meetings at the Hall of Science and taking part in debates in local secularist "parlors."

In Part Three, the most unreal and incredible section of the book, David and Louie go to Paris where they pass through a series of parallel adventures of a disreputable kind. After the young French artiste with whom David is infatuated leaves

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5 *David Grieve*, Epilogue.
him, he is saved from suicide by the very timely arrival of the teacher and friend of his boyhood the minister, Ancrum, and for a while under Ancrum's influence and that of another friend, Dora Lomax, he is attracted toward belief in revealed religion.

Part Four reveals him as a Manchester bookseller once more, rising in course of time to be a great employer of labor, a philanthropist, and a man full of benevolent social schemes. He is led, through grief over his wife's death and over the tragic end of his sister, to a final, rather vague, Elsmerean type of religion, the two main points of which are God's fatherhood and man's immortality.

As in Robert Elsmere the method of presentation was expository, but as a whole the novel had less unity, the theology and the story failing to coalesce as well. In Robert Elsmere the plot arose out of the attitude of the characters towards Christian theology; in David Grieve the religious concerns of the author often seem extraneous and unnecessary, especially when put, as in Part Four, into the form of lengthy extractions from David's diary.

The old problems of Mrs. Ward's youth occupy David's thoughts: "Two subjects held his deepest mind all through, whatever might be added to them, the study of ethics in their bearing upon religious conceptions and the study of Christian origins." 6 David inherits Elsmere's admiration for the

6 Ibid., IV, 552.
Biblical criticism of the nineteenth century:

When I look back over the mass of patient labor which has accumulated during the present century around the Founder of Christianity and the origins of his society—when I compare the textbooks of today with the textbooks of sixty years ago—I no longer wonder at the arrogance with which the French eighteenth century treated the whole subject.

One of Mrs. Ward's contentions in "The New Reformation" was that the Christian Apologists approached the critical study of Christianity under the influence of "affection" and with a preconceived bias. David Grieve echoes this opinion; of his friend, Canon Aylwin he writes in his diary:

... When this intellect of his, so keen, so richly stored, approaches the special ground of Christian thought, it changes in quality. It becomes wholly subordinated to the affections, to the influence of education and habitual surroundings... discuss with him the critical habits and capacity of those earliest Christian writers, on whose testimony so much of the Christian canon depends - ask him to separate the strata or material in the New Testament, according to their relative historical and ethical value, under the laws which he would himself apply to any other literature in the world... you will feel what a complete change has come over his mind.

After his rescue by Ancrum when traditional Christianity "with all its varied and beautiful flowering in human life," begins to attract David, as that he felt himself "day by day becoming more of an orthodox Christian," it is German criticism that helps to check the tendency. "It was the converging in-

7 Ibid., p. 555.
8 Ibid., pp. 481-2.
fluence of books and life - no doubt largely helped with regard to the details of Christian belief by the pressure of the Ger-
man historical movement." 9

In David Grieve, the counterpart of Newcome is the "Puseyite" curate, a "long, gaunt figure of a familiar monkish type," who receives Dora Lomax into the Anglican communion. Dora's is, characteristically, an emotional attraction toward the little ritualistic church. She is drawn by "something in the ordering of the place, in its colors, its scents, in the voice of the priest . . . Never had religion spoken so touch-
ingly to her before as through these hymns, these flowers, this incense, this Eucharistic ceremonial." 10

One of the impelling considerations of the hour, during Mrs. Ward's youthful days in Oxford, was the question of social reform. The minds of all, "The Master, [of Balliol, Jowett] Green, Toynbee . . . were full . . . of the 'condi-
tion of the people' question, of temperance, housing, wages, electoral reforms; within the university, and by the help of the weapons of thought and teaching, they regarded themselves as the natural allies of the Liberal party which was striving for these things through politics and parliament." 11 It was always lamented by Mrs. Ward that the High Church party did not give more attention to the question of social betterment. Thus she regretted that to Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon, social

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9 Ibid., p. 483.
10 Ibid., II, pp. 165-6.
11 Writer's Recollections, I, 177.
reform mattered less than the "date of the book of Daniel or the retention of the Athanasian Creed," and she pitied Newman who had once admitted "with pathetic frankness," that he had never considered "whether there were too many public houses in England or no." 12

Marcella, in the novel of that name, was going to reflect all the stir aroused by these questions in Mrs. Ward's thoughts, but the theme also appears in David Grieve, as it had in Elsmere. It is always associated with the "new" religion. Dora Lomax is an embodiment of the "older High Church type."

The care of the poor and the needy was of course, indispensable to the Christian life; but she thought first and most of bringing them to Church . . . The modern fuss about overcrowded houses and unsanitary conditions . . . the preaching of temperance, education, thrift - these things type and day . . . to be tinged with atheism and communism. 13

The stage for the nineteenth century struggle between faith and skepticism is set in the soul of David's melancholy friend, the minister, Ancrum. His "brooding intellect was forever raising the same problem, the same spectre of universal doubt, in which God, consciousness, faith were words without a meaning." 14 He is tossed between the two great forces that clashed in the Arnold household. "Beside Huxley and Clifford

12 Ibid., p. 178
13 David Grieve, IV, p. 461.
14 Ibid., II, 155.
[on his desk] lay Newman's "Sermons" and "Apologia" and a little High Church manual of self-examination." 15 With Ancrum, too, the attraction toward Christianity is an emotional one, against his better, rational judgment:

You may hear any day [he tells David] that I have been received into the Catholic Church... I have struggled alone for peace and certainty. I cannot get them for myself. There is an august, an inconceivable possibility which makes my heart stand still when I think of it, that the Catholic Church may verily have them to give, as she says she has. I am weak - I shall submit - I shall throw myself upon her breast at last. 16

As the Edinburgh reviewer pointed out, Ancrum is a study of an extreme; so is Dora and most of the other characters on the crowded stage of the novel. David is a better drawn character than Elsmere and Louie better still, yet the feeling persists that they are drawn ready made with little room for the play of motive or passion.

Either, as in the case of David Grieve himself, the lines are so deeply cut from the first that neither play no deviation is possible; or, as in the case of Louie, a single point is emphasized with exaggerated force. David is a carefully constructed machine, Louie a personified passion. 17

On the whole, David Grieve was not as well received by the reviewers as its predecessor. Its inordinate length and loose construction, its lack of proportion and its long passages of

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., IV, 495.
sermonizing in labored style were deficiencies not atoned for by the story. The lack of artistry was more apparent. "In construction, in evolution, in all the art and devices necessary to produce a literary composition, it is distinctly and surprisingly inferior." 18

In Marcella and its sequel, Sir George Tressady, Mrs. Ward abandoned for the moment her favorite preoccupation of religion and advanced into the field of the social and political novel. Marcella is a militant defender of the downtrodden poor against the landed aristocrats; she scatters labor pamphlets, inveighs against the game laws, denounces property and prophecies a future when all inequalities will be levelled down. This theme, however, as we have seen, was connected with Mrs. Ward's conception of the new Christianity which she was concerned in spreading. In a letter to Gladstone she described the part social action would eventually take:

For the masses, in the future, it seems to me that charitable and social organization will be all-important. If the simpler Christian ideas can clothe themselves in such organization - and I believe they can and are even now beginning to do it - their effect on the democracy may be incalculable. 19

Mrs. Ward returned to the religious field in her next novel, Helbeck of Bannisdale, with more success. In fact, she succeeded so well that it seemed to Edmund Gosse she was "by dint of determination slipping into the ranks of the creators." 20

She had been pronounced "too much of an Anglican not to be imbued with the spirit of compromise," but the theme of Helbeck was the impossibility of compromise between the irreconcilables Catholicism and unbelief. The story was conceived, Mrs. Ward relates, in the course of a conversation which turned "on the fortunes of that interesting old place, Sizergh Castle, near Kendal, and of the Catholic family [the Stricklands] to whom it then still belonged, though mortgages and lack of pence were threatening imminently to submerge an ancient stock that had held it unbrokenly from father to son through many generations." 21 Her mind immediately saw the possibilities of a story built around the relations between such a family with its "proud record of unbroken loyalty to a once persecuted faith" and the modern world.

Helbeck, however, she wrote to a friend,

... was purely human and not controversial in its origin. It is in these conflicts between old and new, as it has always seemed to me, that we moderns find our best example of compelling fate, - and the weakness of the personal life in the grip of great forces that regard it not, or seem to regard it not, is just as attractive as ever it was to the imagination. 22

After consulting her father and Lord Acton, the Catholic historian, she began to plan the story in her characteristic way:

21 Writer's Recollections, II, 179.
Suppose the contending forces represented, at the present time, by two human beings—a man and a woman? . . . To make the woman priestess of the past while the man stood for modernity and the victorious today, would be easy—and conventional. But if the woman were the modern representative of the scientific, critical mind? Evidently she could not be so argumentatively, intellectually . . . Suppose to her were assigned the same instinctive loyalty to something greater than herself, which she cannot expound or analyze, but which she feels for, for which she can die,—as that which made the tragedy and glory of the Catholic story? 23

"All through the winter of 1896-97 Mrs. Ward was steeping herself in Catholic literature" in order to secure "that grip of detail in matters of belief or ritual." 24 She discussed her book frequently with her father and wrote to him in Dublin of the impressions roused by her reading.

One of the main impressions of this Catholic literature upon me is to make me perceive the enormous intellectual pre-eminence of Newman. Another impression . . . has been to fill me with a perfect horror . . . of the austerities . . . which are indispensable to the Catholic ideal of a saint . . . the simple and rigid living which I have seen, for various ideal purposes, in friends of my own—like T. H. Green—seems to me both religious and reasonable, while I cannot for the life of me, see anything in the austerities say, of the Blessed Mary Alacoque. 25

Alan Helbeck, the Squire of Bannisdale, was to represent "Catholicism at its best." He exemplified "the old Catholic crossed with that more mystical and enthusiastic spirit,

25 Ibid., p. 146.
brought in by such converts as Ward and Faber, under Roman and Italian influence." 26 On the other side, Laura Fountain represented the "forces of intelligence, of analysis, of criticism of which in themselves she knew little or nothing." 27 Her unbelief has its only foundation in an instinctive loyalty to the memory of her father who had been a radical professor of history at Cambridge. When she "tried to lay hold upon the rational life, to help herself by it and from it, it failed her everywhere." 28 Her father took her "out of her generation and gave her nothing in return." He had but "stamped himself and his cause deep into her affection." 29

Helbeck's rigid Catholicism has a slightly more rational foundation.

He had been trained by Jesuit teachers; he had lived and thought; his mind had a framework. Had he ever felt a difficulty, he would have been ready, no doubt, with the answer of the schools. But he was governed by heart and imagination no less than Laura. A serviceable intelligence had been used simply to strengthen the claims of feeling and faith. 30

The "child of Knowledge, child of Freedom, child of Revolution" comes with her stepmother to live at the ruined mansion of Bannisdale and she and the Squire fall in love. The main portion of the story details the heart searchings of both, until Laura, feeling that disbelief will always be a barrier

26 Letter to Mr. Addis, Ibid., p. 147.
28 Ibid., p. 132.
29 Ibid., p. 203.
30 Ibid., p. 131.
between them, puts an end to her life, whereupon Helbeck, as he had intended before he met her, enters a Jesuit novitiate.

Religion, orthodox and otherwise, is variously represented by the characters. Helbeck, despite his fervor and goodness is a bigot, almost a fanatic, "showing most animation . . . whenever it was a question of Protestant rebuffs." 31 He is priest-ridden. "The priests suck him dry and he has nothing to give." 32 Father Bowles, resident priest in the district is "of an old fashioned type with no pretensions to knowledge or to manners . . . of a gentle and yielding temper though rather sly." 33 He is one of the most ignorant of men . . . one of the chief gossips of the neighborhood." 34 Father Leadham, Helbeck's spiritual adviser, is a scholar and a gentleman, but he is a recent convert, a former fellow of Trinity, Cambridge.

Anglicanism is represented by a fanatical curate in charge of a mountain chapel and his equally fanatical disciple, Mrs. Mason, Laura's "Cousin Elizabeth." The author's favorite "Greenian" philosophy is expressed by Dr. Friedland, a "thinker and historian" of Cambridge, who delivers a lengthy monologue on "the Greater, the Diviner Church." Friedland is "in truth one of the most religious of men and optimists," and possesses "a faith convinced of God, and a meaning of human life, trusting the 'larger hope' that springs out of the daily struggle of conscience, and the garnered experience of feeling." 35

31 Ibid., p. 110
32 Ibid., I, 27
33 Ibid., p. 58
34 Ibid., II, 72.
Reminiscences of Oxford controversies appear in the description of Stephen Fountain's career which, like Jowett's, is represented as hampered and annoyed by prejudice:

Laura felt to her heart's core that he was unsuccessful; there were appointments he should have had but had failed to get, and it was the religious part, the "clerical crew" of Convocation that stood in the way... It was they who stood between her father and his deserts. 36

It was natural that the response to Helbeck would be of a controversial nature since it concerned itself, as the Church Quarterly phrased it, "almost exclusively with questions which are of the most direct and vital interest to the Christian, questions on the answer to which his very existence as a Christian depends." 37 Indeed, that journal considered the story "as much concerned in its way with religion as The Pilgrim's Progress, or Callista, or Loss and Gain," noting this difference, that whereas "it is impossible to mistake the position of John Bunyan or Cardinal Newman, it is not always easy to know that of Mrs. Ward." 38

George Tyrrell who reviewed the book for The Month took the author to task for her picture of Roman Catholicism. Her "careful observation and studious endeavor to be fair-minded," he remarked, "fails to save her altogether from that unreality and a priori extravagance which experience alone can correct." Thus the result is "narrow, extravagant, out of date, albeit well-meaning." 39

36 Ibid., I, 33
37 Ibid., Vol. XLVII (1898), p. 135.
38 Ibid., p. 136.
Joseph Rickaby, S.J., on the other hand, congratulated her on the way she "used her opportunities to make a careful study of Catholic society. She occasionally surprises by her knowledge, accurate insight and correct judgment." Not in vain had she "steeped herself in Catholic literature," as her answer to the strictures of a certain Father Clarke who had criticized her views of Catholicism, showed. It also throws light on her methods of composition.

The story that the orphan tells to Laura, which Father Clarke calls "detestable, extravagant and objectionable," that no instructed Catholic would dream of telling to his juniors, is told by Father Law, S.J., to his younger brothers and sisters, and is given in the very interesting Life of Father Law by Ellis Schreiber. I have only shortened it.

She likewise revealed in answer to another of Father Clarke's objections that some of the unprepossessing mannerisms of Father Bowles were taken from Husenbeth's Life of Bishop Milner.

Apart from the reception given it from a religious viewpoint it was also welcomed by "George Meredith, J.M. Barrie, Paul Bourget, and Henry James - the men who at that time stood at the head of my own art." George Meredith wrote to her:

Your Helbeck of Bannisdale held me firmly in the reading and remains with me . . . If I felt a monotony during the struggle, it came of your being faithful to your theme - rapt - or you would not have had such power

40 Month, XCII (1898) p. 6.
41 Letter to St. George Mivart, quoted in Trevelyan, p. 150.
42 Writer's Recollections, II, 183.
Mrs. Ward's sense for landscape was probably readier than her instinct for human nature and the description of natural scenery forms not a small portion of her work. It shows up to best advantage in Helbeck. Bannisdale, situated on the lower slopes of Westmoreland, the land of Mrs. Ward's predilection, is a country of dripping moss and swelling streams, in its bleak beauty a natural setting for the severe figure of Helbeck who is almost a part of the landscape. Laura too, comes back to it as to her natural home, feeling "something in her own lot akin to the wilder and more tragic aspects of this mountain land, to which she had turned from the beginning with a daughter's yearning." 44

Though it is often pathetic, though sympathy is aroused for both Helbeck and Laura, though the plot is more simply directed toward its end, and the action rises out of character more than in Mrs. Ward's other novels, Helbeck of Bannisdale falls short of the ideal of tragedy. One must agree with the critic in the Saturday Review that it is the "work of a pen answering always to the demands of an interested intelligence but not under the control of a fine instinct. The things the characters do and say are all that reason can demand of a poignant situation, yet they do not strike the true note of tragedy." 45

43 Ibid.
44 Helbeck of Bannisdale, II, 128-9
45 October 15, 1898, p. 512.
CHAPTER V

ELEANOR AND THE CASE OF RICHARD MAYNELL

Helbeck of Bannisdale represented Mrs. Ward's talent in its most favorable form and at its highest summit. It "was her culminating book . . . but from that point on her powers declined. In Eleanor and William Ashe the click of the machine became audible, and after that there was practically an end." 1

Eleanor, written after a sojourn in Italy in 1899, is weighted by an atmosphere of controversy between Italian Liberals and Clericals. Italy, in 1899, was "passing through a period of humiliation and unrest," and Mrs. Ward was conscious of a "deep and passionate sympathy" which made her indignant with the critics of the "new Italy," with the "extreme Catholic party at home, the sentimental Catholic tourist from abroad [who] were equally contemptuous and critical." 2 The conflict between the old and the new is represented in Eleanor by Edward Manisty, the "scornful dilettante, the impatient accuser of an Italy he does not understand," 3 and Lucy Foster who "draws from her New England tradition a glowing sympathy for the Risorgimento and its fruits." 4 The real thread of the story is woven about the jealousy of Eleanor Burgoyne, Manisty's widowed cousin, who was collaborating with him in the writing of a book and winning her way to his affection until the "ideally"

1 Gosse, Op. Cit., p. 208
2 Writer's Recollections, II, 228.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 229.
American Lucy Foster intruded. Perhaps because of the American character, *Eleanor*, which was serialized in *Harper's* during the year 1900, was the most popular of Mrs. Ward's books in the United States since *Robert Elsmere*. Its setting was rural Italy where inhabitants and scenery had captivated Mrs. Ward, and rich descriptions of landscape and sky color the pages although they are not as integral a part of the story as are her descriptions of the Westmoreland scene.

*Eleanor* manifests the beginnings of Mrs. Ward's interest in the movement called "Modernism" in the Catholic Church. It was during these years that Tyrrell, and other Modernists were disturbing ecclesiastical circles with their ideas on the relation between Biblical criticism and dogma. The influence of this movement and of a similar movement in the Anglican Church was to be more manifest in Mrs. Ward's last religious novel, *The Case of Richard Maynell*. The Modernist position is represented in *Eleanor* by Father Benecke, Manisty's friend, who is suspended and deprived from writing "what every educated man in Europe knows to be true." He has accepted the findings of the "new science" and the "new criticism," but he is fearful of the ban of the Church. "The vast accumulation of biological fact on the one hand, and of historical criticism on the other, that has become the common property of the scientific mind, how was it to be recapitulated within Catholic limits? He wrote in fear, like one walking on the burning ploughshares of the ordeal." Mrs. Ward took her model for

5 *Eleanor*, p. 424.
6 Ibid., p. 435.
Benecke from Dr. Schell, the Rector of the Catholic University of Wurzburg, and the author of a book which had just been condemned by the Congregation of the Index. "The Jesuit influence in Rome," she wrote, "had procured the condemnation of the book. Dr. Schell had first submitted; then . . . withdrew his submission . . . I seemed to see the man who could not shut his ear to knowledge and history struggling in the grip of men like the Cardinal, who knew no history. It was the case of Dr. Schell which suggested Father Benecke." 7

Edward Manisty is an example of compromise. He is "one of the most thorough skeptics of his day," yet the book he is writing is an "impassioned defense of tradition, of Catholicism and the Papacy, as the imperishable, indestructible things." 8 He sides with the Church because he is a "Romantic and an artist," and the new anti-clerical Italy seems "an ugly jerry-built affair, compared with the Papacy and all that it stood for." 9 His argument for religion is the Arnoldian one - "Somehow or other you must get conduct out of the masses - or society goes to pieces. But you can do this only through religion." 10

The receipt of Eleanor brought congratulatory letters from several of Mrs. Ward's critics. Henry James wrote that it gave him -

[...] the chance to overflow into my favorite occupation of rewriting as I read, such fiction as - I can read. I

7 Writer's Recollections, II, 218.
8 Eleanor, p. 44
9 Ibid., p. 516
10 Ibid., p. 355.
took this liberty in an inordinate degree with Eleanor - and I always feel it the highest tribute I can pay . . . I should say you had done nothing more homogeneous, nor more hanging or moving together. It has Beauty - the book, the theme and treatment alike, is magnificently mature . . . I won't grossly pretend to you that I think the book hasn't a weakness and rather a grave one . . . Lucy has no true, no adequate, no logical antithetic force . . . But . . . when a book's beautiful, nothing does matter. 11

Frederick Harrison also wrote saying he thought it the "most finished and artistic" of all her books, and "one of the most subtle and graceful things in modern fiction." 12 From America, Charles Eliot Norton added, "You have added to the treasures of English imagination literature and no higher reward than this can any writer hope to gain." 13

For eleven years Mrs. Ward abandoned the religious theme as a major interest although in the five novels that came between Eleanor and The Case of Richard Meynell there are echoes of current religious problems. Jacob Delafield in Lady Rose's Daughter is a student of Biblical criticism and the New Testament speaks to him "imperatively, though in no orthodox or accustomed way," and Ashe, in The Marriage of William Ashe, in spite of his declared skepticism is enormously interested in religion.

In 1911, Mrs. Ward set her hand to her last definitely religious novel, a sequel to Robert Elsmere. The Case of

11 Quoted in Writer's Recollections, II, 223. However, Mrs. Trevelyan writes that Henry James "never wholly approved of Mrs. Ward's art as a novelist." (Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward, p. 148.)
12 Writer's Recollections, II, 225.
13 Ibid.
Richard Meynell was her final attempt to convert the people of England to her view of what the Church of England should be. Again her theme was the clash of old and new:

Whether the old bottles can be adjusted to the new wine, whether further division or a new Christian unity is to emerge from the strife of tongues, whether the ideas of modernism, rife in all forms of Christianity, can be accommodated to the ancient practices and given a share in the material possessions of the State Church. 14

Since Eleanor she had become more and more interested in Modernism, seeing it in a force which she hoped would revivify the Churches. In 1907 she had written, after a close reading of George Tyrell's works:

What interests and touches me most in religion at the present moment is Liberal Catholicism. It has a bolder freedom than anything in the Anglican Church, and a more philosophic and poetiC outlook. It seems to me at any rate to combine the mystical and scientific powers in a wonderful degree. If I only could believe that it would last and had a future! 15

Richard Meynell is an Anglican clergyman; like Robert Elsmere, he is an Oxford man, "an old Balliol scholar," bearing "the marks of Jowett and Caird still deep upon him." 16 Like Elsmere he is influenced "by the uprising of the typical modern problems, historical, critical, scientific." He also had been beset by doubts until they were resolved by the literature of Continental Modernism;

... at last a couple of small French

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14 The Case of Richard Meynell, Preface.
16 Richard Meynell, p. 16.
books by a French priest and the sudden uprush of new life in the Roman Church had brought to the remote English Clergyman at once the crystallization of doubt and the passion of a freed faith. 'Modernism' - the attempt of the modern spirit, acting religiously, to refashion Christianity not outside, but inside, the warm limits of the ancient churches - was born; and Richard Meynell became one of the first converts in England.

Unlike Elsmere, Meynell does not give up his orders in the Established Church; his is a rebellion from within. He maintains that the Church of England should allow the people of England to enjoy the advantages of her worship and her sacraments without belief in dogma. He contends that the retention of his living, although he had obtained it on a promise of orthodoxy is compatible with his views as a revolutionary modernist. This was not a new idea in England. As far back as 1833 Dr. Arnold had advocated the comprehension of Dissenters within the Established Church. He proposed to identify Church with State and to admit all denominations into it, excluding only Unitarians. His pamphlet, The Principles of Church Reform was rejected by both Church and Dissent alike and it was partly to refute its ideas that Keble's sermon on National Apostacy was preached. It was against such conceptions of the Church that the Oxford Movement was directed:

The real religious issue before the age was not whether High Church or Low Church views should prevail in the Church of England, but whether the Christian religion should preserve its spiritual identity, or whether it should be transformed by the Spirit of the age

17 Ibid., p. 81.
and absorbed into the secularized culture of the modern world . . . With the development of the new Biblical Criticism in the nineteenth century, the objective and infallible character of Christian revelation gradually disappeared and a way was opened to the complete de-supernaturalization of Protestant Christianity.

For years Mrs. Ward's ideal had been that of Thomas Arnold, only carried further. She would admit all to membership as Anglicans who kept the "two great commandments." In 1898 she had written to Bishop Creighton, "Every year I live I more and more resent the injustice which excludes those who hold certain historical and critical opinions from full membership in the National Church. Why are we all always to be bound by the formularies of a past age, which avowedly represent a certain state of past opinion, a certain balance of parties?" 19 The Master of Balliol had the same view and so had her uncle, Matthew Arnold:

My uncle was a modernist long before his time . . . but to the end of his life he was a contented member of the Anglican Church so far as attendance at her services was concerned, and belief in her mission of "edification" to the English people. He had little sympathy with people who "went out." Like Mr. Jowett he would have liked to see the Church slowly reformed from within. 20

So Richard Meynell in his "moving appeal for religious freedom" re-echoes opinions long before expressed. He asks for

20 Writer's Recollections, II, 14.
freedom of development and "variation" within organized Christianity itself . . . a reformed Church, co-extensive with the nation, resting on a democratic government, yet tenderly jealous of its ancient ceremonies, so long as each might interpret them "as he was able," and they were no longer made a force of tyranny and exclusion. 21

It was easy to trace the idea of a comprehension of all believers back to Thomas Arnold, and it was natural that such a comprehension should advance far beyond the limits set to it by Arnold. But Mrs. Ward also attributed to Newman the genesis of some of Richard Meynell's theories, especially those of the Modernists inside both Catholicism and Anglicanism. Commenting on Meynell's speech at the climax of his trial before the Court of Arches, the Bishop of Dunchester, one of his adherents, says:

... a Church of free men, coextensive with the nation, gathering into one fold every English man, woman and child, that was Arnold's dream just as it is Meynell's. And yet . . . some of the governing ideas were Newman's. As I listened I seemed . . . to see the two great leaders, standing side by side, twin brethren in a new battle, growing out of the old, with a great mingled host behind them. 22

This misconception of Newman's theories, held by a number of "Modernists," was based on their interpretation of his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine in which he attempted to account for changes in the form of doctrine and worship throughout the ages. He expressed the "theory of development" as follows:

22 Ibid., p. 552.
that the increase and expansion of
the Christian creed and Ritual, and the
variations which attended the process in
the case of individual writers and churches,
are the necessary attendants on any philosophy
or polity which takes possession of the intel­
lect and heart and has had any wide or extended
dominion; that from the nature of the human
mind, time is necessary for the comprehension
and perfection of great ideas, that the highest
and most wonderful truths, though communicated
to the world once for all by inspired teachers,
could not be comprehended all at once by the
recipients, but as received and transmitted by
minds not inspired and through media which were
human, have required only the longer time and
deeper thought for their full elucidation. 23

Some foundation for the theories of change held by
Meynell and the modernists could be found in such statements in
the Essay, as "here below to live is to change, and to be per­
fect is to have changed often. One cause of corruption in
religion is the refusal to follow the course of doctrine as it
moves on, and an obstinacy in the motions of the past." 24

Although there were points of resemblance, the theories
of Modernists like George Tyrrell whose works Mrs. Ward had
been reading enthusiastically, differed essentially from New­
man's. The latter's theory of development was built around
the idea of the Apostolic "deposition fidei," of revelation
as a body of truths given to the world "once for all."

For Newman the development of doctrine
consisted simply in deducing the conse­
quences and implications of the original
closed revelation - . . . The modernists
by their acceptance of biblical criticism

ment in the Roman Church, p. 56.
were driven, and by their sympathy with an evolutionary philosophy were encouraged, to reinterpret in one way or another, the conception of a final and infallible "depositum fidei." Newman's theory of deductive development which began where the New Testament left off gave way to a theory of the evolution of dogma which was based on a reading of the New Testament.

Thus Tyrell taught that "Revelation is not a fixed body of doctrine, but the spirit or idea of Christianity which has been and is still being realized in the experience of Christians." 26 And Richard Meynell preaches that "just as science and history and philosophy change with this ever living and growing advance, so religion - man's ideas of God and his own soul." 27 History, for Meynell, as for Elsmere, is the great revealer of God to man, and it is history that "has transformed or is transforming Christianity." 28 Richard Meynell is connected with Robert Elsmere by the introduction of Elsmere's wife, Catharine, and his daughter; Catharine's struggle to reconcile herself to Mary Elsmere's marriage to Meynell forms a subordinate theme in the story. Since Robert Elsmere Mrs. Ward felt that great advances had been made towards her ideals. Meynell boasts that

... the fight is beginning to be equal. Twenty years ago - in Elsmere's time - a man who held his views and mine could only go ... Jowett, I am inclined to think ought to have gone. But the distribution of the forces, the lie of the field is now altogether changed. 29

25 Vidler, Ibid., p. 59.
26 Ibid., p. 85.
27 Richard Meynell, p. 620.
28 Ibid., p. 621.
Mrs. Ward planned, depending on the success of this novel, to follow it up with a volume of imaginary "Sermons and Journals of Richard Meynell," going into more detail with regard to some of the problems of the book. But Richard Meynell did not succeed in arousing the English public - to many the Elsmerian ideals were now somewhat antiquated and as one reviewer expressed it; "New oil cannot prevent the old machine from jamming." Such criticism as it received was based on its polemical character. "Meynell's attempt to reform and liberate the Church," wrote the Athenaeum reviewer, "seems as destructive as would be the attempt to enlarge a building by shoving its walls outward from within." 30 The Spectator reduced Meynell's reforms to two categories, "in part they are such changes in Church government as are advocated by the Church Reform Union or such modification in the Church services as have been debated for the last few years in Convocation; in part they are a restatement ... of the Arian view of Christianity." 31 Wilfrid Ward devoted a chapter in Men and Matters to Meynell's theology, castigating "the credulity of Mrs. Ward - her wholesale and uncritical reaction to credulity in old legends, to credulity in brand new theories." 32 As a novel the book suffered from the characteristic fault; it was more sermon than story. The dramatic element was lacking as there was no essential struggle in the hero's mind.

31 "The Case of Richard Meynell," Nov. 11, 1911, p. 985
32 "Reduced Christianity," p. 395.
The sensational sub-plot built around a village scandal involves Meynell only by chance.

By 1917 Mrs. Ward had become somewhat discouraged by the religious situation. "On the religious development of the last thirty years," she wrote in her Recollections, "I can find but little that is gladdening." 33 Her last position was that of Richard Meynell: "If only, instead of deserting the Churches, the Modernists of today would have the courage to claim them! - there again would be a stirring of the waters."34 She perhaps would have been less discouraged could she have read the opinions of other critics in regard to the changes taking place in Anglicanism; Christopher Dawson, imagining Pusey and Keble returning to see the results of their work, says of them:

They would not pay great attention to the increase in the use of vestments and incense and Gregorian Chant. They would ask whether there was more supernatural faith in the Church of England than there was a century ago - whether there was a stronger hold on dogma and a more objective view of spiritual truth. And it would not be easy to answer in the affirmative since the success of the Anglo-Catholic movement . . . has been accompanied by a no less remarkable advance of Liberalism and Modernism in matters of faith. But what would most alarm . . . the spirits of Keble and Pusey is that the tendencies are no longer sharply defined . . . They coexist in each other in the very bosom of the Anglo-Catholic party itself.

33 II, p. 249
34 Ibid, p. 252
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

That Mrs. Ward was a successful novelist there is little doubt, measuring success in terms of popularity. In making a careful distinction between success and influence André Morize once defined the former as:

a sociological fact, to which the artistic, literary or philosophical value of a work often contributes nothing. Success means simply that, from a number of causes, - fashion, advertising, an accord with the aspirations of a certain social group, - a work has momentarily become the "rage." 1

Whether her novels wielded any influence is less certain, if by influence we mean "the presence of an element that shifts the existing equilibrium and orients anew the activity of writer, genre, or literature." 2 Their influence was perhaps felt in another than the literary field. All the novels we have discussed, and *Robert Elsmere* preeminently, embodied in a popular and easily intelligible form the problem facing a large group of serious minded persons of the period. The problem was that of an immensely quickened spiritual life - the result of the Oxford Movement - trying to find support for Christianity in the face of scientific denial of the authority on which that faith rests. *Robert Elsmere* was most successful because it was the best material Mrs. Ward ever had - the

1 Problems and Methods of Literary Study, pp. 226-7.
2 Ibid., p. 229.
background, thought and characters of the Oxford which she knew, and because it appeared at the time it did. It would have attracted less attention a few years later when the conclusions of the "new science" and the "new criticism" were more widespread.

The Victorian period is well known to have been one of religious unrest. Throughout it the discussion of the permanent and transient elements in Christianity was taking a foremost place in all strata of society, not only in form of the contest around the Tractarian principles but in the direction of Essays and Reviews, The Colenso Trial, the Simeon Evangelists, and the teachings of Maurice. The result of the controversies which took place in the bosom of the Establishment was ever toward more and more compromise with the spirit of the age, and it was not surprising that many serious minded people were tremendously concerned with religion lest it vanish. Often those most interested in and affected by the rationalistic philosophy of the time were disinclined because of early association to carry its conclusions as far as they would go. Hence we have many examples of divided spirits, of whom it could be said as it was said of Matthew Arnold, that he was an "anima naturaliter Christiana but it wouldn't function . . . because it was hamstrung by the Rationalism of the world he was born into." 3 Arnold was so far affected by the Tractarians as to

believe that a "Historic Church" with traditional ceremonies should be perpetually preserved, not as an authoritative voice of God but as a sort container for the religious ideas of the age, which changed according to the age. He too was affected by the "shadow not the light falling from Newman," in his ideas of the development of religion. That he considered himself indebted to Newman for other dispositions is made evident in a letter written to him during an exchange of correspondence in the years 1871-72.

We are all of us [he wrote] carried in ways not of our own making or choosing, but nothing can ever do away the effect you have produced upon me, for it consists in a general disposition of mind rather than in a particular set of ideas. In all the conflicts I have had with modern Liberalism and Dissent, and with their pretensions and shortcomings, I recognize your work; and I can truly say that no praise gives me so much pleasure as to be told (which sometimes happens) that a thing I have said reminds people, either in manner or matter of you.

The rationalism in Oxford after Newman's departure was a direct challenge to the Tractarians, and those most active in its propagation had been more or less closely connected with the movement as Pattison and Jowett. The Movement as yet had not revealed its full potentialities. Out of Oxford it spread into the parishes of the country where gradually the "Puseyites" put more and more insistence on the doctrine of Apostolical succession, on the importance of the sacraments and on the Mass as the central act of worship. Even though these "romanizing"

practices met with violent opposition the movement was effective in many ways of an awakening of interest in religion and spiritual life. The later Tractarians were infected by a humanitarian enthusiasm which carried willing workers into the slum districts of the large cities to wear themselves out much as Newcome, Elsmere's High Church friend. It is this aspect of his character that Mrs. Ward is most sympathetic with in her portrait of him. His other qualities, especially his lack of interest in questions of Biblical scholarship, were attitudes ascribed to the conservatives in Oxford, the followers of Dr. Pusey and Canon Liddon. It was against this conservatism that Jowett and Pattison constantly directed their shafts. Robert Elsmere was an attack upon it, but though the voice was Mrs. Ward's the ideas were Jowett's, Pattison's, Matthew Arnold's and the Higher Critics'. Mrs. Ward's public took the Higher Critics seriously. Later Ronald Knox in _The Absolute and a Bit O' Hell_ could succinctly summarize the steps in the Higher Criticism as follows:

First Adam fell, then Noah's Ark was drowned
And Samson, under close inspection bound.
For Daniel's blood the Critic-lions roared
And trembling hands threw Jonah overboard.

He disposed as summarily in "Reunion All Round," of extreme Modernists who, like Richard Meynell, would bring together "Heresies and Schisms Very Desirable" in their "Proposal for a Symphorodox Church."
The favorite Victorian means of presenting serious psychological or social problems was the novel and throughout the period it was an instrument of propaganda. From the eighteen forties onward the religious questions of the moment received excited treatment in a host of minor novels. One of the earliest on the Anglo-Catholic theme was Clement Walton published in 1840 by William Grisley. In 1841 Francis Edward Paget presented a plea for church restoration in St. Antholin's; or Old Church and New. The early Disraeli, the enemy of Liberalism, devoted himself to church problems in Tancred which appeared in 1847. A year later Newman's autobiographical Loss and Gain appeared. Little by little in spite of hostility, the new Anglo-Catholic school was winning a place in the Established Church. In 1856 William Conybeare's Perversion appeared, attacking positivism, skepticism, pantheism, and other alarming tendencies of the era including dilettantism. Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke was a Liberal attack upon Tractarianism. Charlotte Yonge's series of novels kept the Anglo-Catholic position before the public for many years, while Barchester Towers presented a Mr. Slope whose "soul trembles in agony at the iniquities of the Puseyites."

Thus Mrs. Ward wrote in a tradition. The eighties and the nineties, the period of the conception of the novels we have discussed was a period of ethical unrest and Victorian doubt and soul questioning was not yet over. This was evidenced

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by the abnormal success of Robert Elsmere which is significant not so much because of what it said as because of the way in which it was received. Because it was in harmony with certain trends in the general public, critics such as Walter Pater could read its three volumes "with zeal and unflagging readiness," 6 and artists such as Burne-Jones could be "softened and subdued with memories . . . wakened up so piercingly." 7

Dr. Johnson remarks somewhere that it is the fate of controversial novelists to be soon forgotten, regardless of how great a reputation they may have achieved. The reason is that either the questions they argue become at length solved, or men despair of their solving and content themselves with ignorance. David Grieve, Helbeck and Richard Meynell, though popular, did not succeed in agitating Cabinet ministers or in setting bishops at variance with each other. The warring elements in the Oxford of the Sixties and Seventies became reconciled in compromise or indifference and Robert Elsmere would arouse no excitement today.

The fashion in fiction also has changed since Robert Elsmere. The long biographies which introduced characters, the pages describing a setting, have given place to the portrait suggested by a few deft words and the picture in a line. For this Mrs. Ward did not have the gift. But she did possess the ability to incorporate intractible material into the novel.

6 Pater, Op. Cit., p. 56
7 Quoted in Writer's Recollections II, 88.
It is not surprising that the resulting impression is intellectual rather than emotional or imaginative. Stephen Gwynn said that Mrs. Ward was "intermittently an artist;" in the novels there are many vivid and real touches, it is true, but they soon merge into the author's "purpose," into polemics and elaborated argument. Mrs. Ward knew what should go into a work of fiction: she could describe picturesque backgrounds, especially those of her own Westmoreland country in such a way that, as Pater remarked, "[it] is more than a mere background; its spiritual and, as it were, personal hold on persons, as understood by the great poet of the Lakes, is seen actually at work, in the formation, in the refining of character." She carefully planned her plots and supplied local color of village and University town and country house; she mastered the theme which was to rule plot and characters. What was lacking was the sacred fire, the touch of genius which could endow them with life.

It would be perhaps too much to say with one of her French critics that "it will be difficult henceforward to picture England at the end of the nineteenth century without recourse to the multiple and monumental image of it left by Mrs. Ward," but her works deserve a place among the novels of controversy of the Victorian period. They are essentially of that period although written when, in point of time, it was

10 Abel Chavelly, The Modern English Novel, p. 56
really over.

When Mrs. Ward abandoned history for fiction there was disappointment in Oxford. The historian, Freeman, after he had followed the struggles of Robert Elsmere to the end, is said to have remarked, "What a fool he was; and for this kind of thing the West Gothic kings are left untouched." Mrs. Ward approached her earlier novels with a historian's seriousness and study, and her typical portraits, her analysis of the intellectual and religious atmosphere are the result of this close observation. Because of this fact and because of the various categories of admirers of her books - men of letters and men of the world, of high rank and of middle class, of scholars and of the comparatively uneducated, of skeptics and of the religious minded - her novels will have their value for the literary historian wishing a commentary on one phase of the thought of the nineteenth century.

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PERIODICALS


Approval Sheet

The thesis submitted by Sister Marian Raphael, S.H.N. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Dec. 11, 1943
Date

Signature of Adviser