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Chapter 17

Religion, the Bible, and Literature in the Victorian Age [draft]

Emma Mason

While religion has long been important for the study of Victorian culture, many literary critics argue that it has become the 'dominant issue' of the period.¹ Literary forms shape religious debate as literary texts resound with religious references and biblical quotations: prayers, liturgies, hymns, and choral music communicate Victorian faith in both aesthetic and devout terms. For those who study the relationship between religion and literature in the period, two approaches dominate: critics tend to either track the development of a religious doctrine, quotation, or set of religious principles in one or more literary texts; or else assess the way in which literary forms and categories shape and influence religious ideas and doctrines. Most critics would argue that their research works in both directions, as they seek to find reciprocity between religion and literature that informs a specific point they want to make. Such reciprocity is apparent even in the period: the Tractarians John Keble, John Henry Newman, and Isaac Williams, for example, formulated the doctrine of reserve through their engagement with contemporary poetry and poetics; while Christina Rossetti and Gerard Manley Hopkins, who explored reserve poetically and prosodically, also acquainted themselves with the doctrine as a theological idea and belief.² Similarly, just as the Victorian novel form served to shape the sermons and confessional writings of nineteenth-century ministers and theologians, so the fictional content of many novels drew on partisan representations of particular kinds of believers and creeds. From Charlotte Yonge's chivalric Anglo-Catholics to George Eliot's sympathetic Methodists, Charles Dickens's hysterical Evangelicals to

¹ T. Wright, 'The Victorians', in A. Hass, D. Jasper, and E. Jay (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 148–63, at 148.

² E. Mason, 'Christina Rossetti and the Doctrine of Reserve', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 7, no. 2 (2002), 196–219.

Charlotte Brontë's malevolent Catholics, the presentation of faith positions in the novel transformed the genre into what Margaret Mason calls 'the pulpit, the confessional and the battlefield' of theology.³ An education in religious terms and ideas enables us to make sense, for instance, of the attraction of reserve for Rossetti or the prejudicial presentation of Catholicism by Brontë, and in doing so nuances our interest in these writers and opens out precisely why religious debate was so urgent in the period. One might generically describe such readings as historical, and the often highly self-conscious nature of the representation of religion in literature and literature in religion suggests that the methodologies underpinning such interdisciplinary research have tended towards new

historicism and cultural formalism.

In the next section, 'Religion and Literature', I outline several examples of significant interventions in historical and cultural readings of both, and survey the way in which scholars have explored the resonance of doctrines, religious practices, and acts of worship as a way to read the content and form of literary texts. While I emphasize the centrality of such context for our reading of 'religious' writing of this period, I also consider the limits of this methodology for assessing the experiential or immaterial elements of religion. Words like 'love', 'spirit', 'faith', and 'grace', recurrent as they are in Victorian religious texts, either lose some of their meaning when addressed as historical building blocks of denominational affiliations, or dissolve into a glib gospel when reduced to the state of emotions. In 'Rhythmic Spirits', I appraise this issue by offering a reading of Keble's 1833 'National Apostasy' sermon to explore his own struggle to articulate what he means by the word 'spirit' in an address with clear political implications regarding the state of the Anglican Church. As I argue, Keble defers his explanation of what he means and feels by the 'spirit' into discussions of church doctrine, history, ethics, politics, nationhood, and sensibility: he is only able to incarnate his perception of spirit through the rhythm and form of his poetry. This example illuminates the importance of prosody, affect theory, and phenomenology for literary critics interested in religion, a group of methodologies that come together in the term 'theopoetics'. Like much of the work I review here, theopoetics is founded in Christian thought and while I follow suit, the act of establishing the importance of religion in this period enables research into all religions, Abrahamic, Dharmic and beyond.⁴

Here, however, I would like to ask what is distinctive about how religion and literature encourages us to read, not only interdisciplinarily, but also in a discerning and kindly manner derived from its expression of the lived meaning of faith. In my final section, 'Pastoralism', I suggest that we might think, first, about taking seriously those who believed, without explaining faith away as naivety or as a 'desperate measure that people resort to when the stakes are high and they have exhausted the usual techniques for the causation of success';⁵ and second, about engaging in a pastoral language of

³ M. Maison, *Search Your Soul, Eustace: Victorian Religious Novels* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 5.

⁴ See, for example, E. Mason (ed.), *Reading the Abrahamic Faiths: Re-thinking Religion and Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁵ S. Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 556.

kindness and care inherent to Christian expression that might guide our reading of religious texts. I make a case for a 'pastoral' way of reading religious writing that might complement historical and social perspectives while also granting us a way to think about the compassionate and affective aspects of faith that are not objectively measurable. In proposing a methodology that refuses to split the subjective from the objective,

I draw on the work of Martin Heidegger, whose nondualist approach to human 'being' and our dwelling in the world is based on his own training in both Catholicism and Taoism. For some readers, thinking through Heidegger to imagine a pastoral practice of reading will appear improbable and even repugnant, especially in light of the recently published *Schwarzen Hefte* and their complicating of his association with Nazism and anti-semitism.⁶ Heidegger's political commitment to National Socialism in the early 1930s is as undeniable as his 'spiritual resistance' and 'opposition to the principles of the National Socialist world-view' he proclaimed a few years later: the latter cannot redress the former.⁷ I do think, however, that Heidegger's notions of care and caring-for found one way of thinking a pastoral consciousness that seeks an attentive exchange with texts, a 'poetizing dialogue' in which we can explore both our experience and understanding of what we read.⁸ Such consciousness might then enable a reading practice that sidesteps the meretricious interpretations of a certain kind of virtuoso critic for a patient and communal thinking that lends itself as much to Victorian religion's profession of 'love', 'spirit', 'faith', and 'grace' as to the context in which these words signify.

Religion and Literature

Research into religion and Victorian literature has followed the methodological trends that have shaped literary studies over the last thirty years. Seminal studies written by George Landow and Hilary Fraser in the 1980s sharpened critical interest in an area considered exhausted and conservative by a newly politicized and theorized field.⁹ Their work engendered a series of studies that viewed religion through the fashionable

6 On the current controversy surrounding Heidegger, see P. Trawny's publication of Heidegger's *Schwarzen Hefte* ('black notebooks'), in M. Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe, IV: Abteilung: Hinweise und Aufzeichnungen, Band 94: Überlegungen II–VI, Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014); and E. Faye, *The Introduction of Nazism Into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933–1935*, trans. M. B. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

7 M. Heidegger, 'Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, November 4, 1945', in R. Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998), 61–66 (pp. 64–65); and see R. Polt, 'Beyond Struggle and Power: Heidegger's Secret Resistance', *Interpretation*, 35.1 (2007), 11–40.

8 See M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and Poetizing*, trans. Phillip Jacques Braunstein (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011).

9 G. P. Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art and Thought* (Boston: Routledge, 1980); H. Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

lens of sexuality, allowing scholarship on masculinity and spirituality, or Christian manliness, to flourish.¹⁰ Just as literary critics started to express interest in religion as a cultural phenomenon of the Victorian period, the study of 'religion and literature' was revitalized by a group of scholars who were both committed to theology and also worked on nineteenth-century literature. One cannot underestimate the influence of Michael Wheeler, Elizabeth Jay, David Jasper, and Terry Wright (the last three all

involved in the establishment of the journal *Literature and Theology*) on the development of what is now a burgeoning research area.¹¹ While general works on religion and literature by Susan Zemka, Julie Melnyk, Carolyn Oulton, and Jude Nixon pushed the emergent interdisciplinary subject forwards, scholarship quickly adapted to incoming methodologies (like new historicism and cultural formalism), while also reflecting on how religion itself had come to establish the very field of literary studies.¹² In *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers 1774–1880*, for example, William McKelvy argues for the theological heritage of print culture and reading by relocating authorship in a vocation at once sacred and 'literary', immersed in cultural dialogue between religion and literature. In refusing to collapse political secularization and the 'decline' of religion, McKelvy shows that the faltering status of the church was not commensurate with agnosticism and that the 'cult' of literature 'developed in intimate collusion with religious culture and religious politics'.¹³ Critics also began to recognize that far from being an ideological smokescreen for various repressed issues, religion in its many forms was considered by the Victorians as both an intellectually challenging and emotionally profound arena. For example, in her discussion of 'spiritualism' Christine Ferguson argues that the 'presence' Victorians 'encountered in the séance room' was not the 'metaphorical place-holder' for modernity, technology, and gender indeterminacy critics often want it to be: 'For converts', she writes, 'the spirit world was absolutely

10 J. Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); D. Alderson, *Mansex Fine: Religion, Manliness and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); A. Bradstock (ed.), *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); N. Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); see also M. W. Carpenter, *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market* (Athens, O.: Ohio University Press, 2003).

11 M. Wheeler, *St John and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Ruskin's God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and *Heaven, Hell and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); E. Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth Century Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); and see, for example, D. Jasper and T. Wright, *The Critical Spirit and the Will to Believe: Essays in Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

12 S. Zemka, *Victorian Testaments: The Bible, Christology and Literary Authority in Early-Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997); J. Melnyk, *Women's Theology in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Transfiguring the Faith of Their Fathers* (New York: Garland, 1998); C. Oulton, *Literature and Religion in Mid-Victorian England: From Dickens to Eliot* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); J. V. Nixon, *Victorian Religious Discourse: New Directions in Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).

13 W. R. McKelvy, *The English Cult of Literature: Devoted Readers 1774–1880* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 35.

real, an ontologically stable state whose existence gave meaning to the structures and processes of earth life and whose disincarnate inhabitants could, according to some, be weighed and measured.'¹⁴

Such critical willingness to take the immaterial on board has enabled the study of ethics, morality, and sentimentality, as well as religion. Terry Eagleton, a 'convert' to the religion and literature nexus, recalls how 'for a long time cultural theorists avoided the

question of morality as something of an embarrassment. It seemed preachy, unhistorical, priggish and heavy-handed. For the harder-nosed kind of theorist, it was also soppy and unscientific.¹⁵ Commenting on this passage, Jasper notes that Eagleton's summary of the field draws attention to the way critics dismissed religious studies because it purported to be 'about belief, not about thinking'.¹⁶ Yet the divide between 'thinking' and 'believing' has been considerably dismantled by both the revival of phenomenology in the study of philosophy and literature; and also by research into individual writers whose letters, diaries, memoirs, and notes, as well as their 'literary' output, reveal deep and profound commitments to faith positions that can no longer be dismissed as fallacy. Christina Rossetti, Charlotte Yonge, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Oscar Wilde, and G. K. Chesterton were among the first to be taken seriously as Christian thinkers; while others, like the Brontës, became a site to understand both faith (in the form of their Methodism) and hostility (in the form of their anti-Catholicism).¹⁷ Attending to religious writing also allowed the inclusion of many previously ignored writers— Frederick William Faber, Dora Greenwell, Adelaide Anne Procter, William Barnes, Charles Tennyson Turner— as well as illuminating the works of familiar writers like Anne Brontë, Robert Browning, and Amy Levy through their religious concerns.¹⁸ Assessment of these concerns has been founded on mainly literary-historical research into the denominations to which these writers were affiliated or later converted. Literary historians have unearthed a wealth of source material in reading diaries, sermons, hymns, liturgies, prayers, and

14 C. Ferguson, 'Recent Studies in Nineteenth-Century Spiritualism', *Literature Compass*, 9 (2012), 431–40, at 435.

15 T. Eagleton, *After Theory* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 140.

16 D. Jasper, 'Interdisciplinarity in Impossible Times: Studying Religion through Literature and the Arts', in H. Walton (ed.), *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 5–18, at 8.

17 D. D'Amico, *Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender and Time* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999); D. Roe, *Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination: The Devotional Poetry and Prose* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); B. Dennis, *Charlotte Yonge, a Novelist of the Oxford Movement: A Literature of Victorian Culture and Society* (Lampeter: Mellen, 1992); G. Budge, *Charlotte M. Yonge: Religion, Feminism and Realism in the Victorian Novel* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2007); M. Johnson, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997); J. Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism: A Heart in Hiding* (London: Routledge, 2003); J. Killeen, *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde: Catholicism, Folklore and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005); M. Knight, *Chesterton and Evil* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); M. Thormählen, *The Brontës and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); D. Peschier, *Nineteenth-Century Anti-Catholic Discourses: The Case of Charlotte Brontë* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).

18 Levy's Judaism has driven the enthusiastic return to her work in the last ten years; see C. Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England: Jewish Identity and Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

homilies that have helped the modern reader to understand what constituted, and separated, low church from high, Methodists from evangelicals, Presbyterians from Quakers, and Tractarians from Roman Catholics. Such debates necessarily point back to a Reformation moment with which many Victorian writers are concerned, a factor that at once requests critics to historicize religion outside the confines of the nineteenth century even as it also reveals the shared beliefs of Christians across periods.¹⁹ Rossetti's

debt to George Herbert, for example, is as significant as Hopkins's debt to Rossetti, while Oxford Movement poets such as Keble and Isaac Williams show themselves to be as dependent on pre-Reformation English Catholicism as they are on Romanticism. What is striking about religious practice in the Victorian period is the way in which it is shaped and understood through literature. All of the main Christian denominations, for example, can make a claim for being the most 'literary' of religions, although the Oxford Movement's sense of poetry as synonymous with religious truth renders it the most likely contender for the crown. Its leading figures—Keble, John Henry Newman, Edward Bouverie Pusey, and Isaac Williams—were all poets, as well as preachers and Oxford academics, and outlined their collective theology in scholarly and literary pamphlets called *Tracts for the Times* (1833–41). While the *Tracts* reached a fairly limited audience, the poetry that emerged from this movement was, as Stephen Prickett states, 'the most successful ever written in English' after Shakespeare: Keble's *The Christian Year* alone annually sold over ten thousand volumes for at least fifty years after its publication in 1827.²⁰

Keble's *Lectures on Poetry* too evolved William Wordsworth's lyric theory into a religious poetics adopted by Rossetti, Greenwell, Faber, and Hopkins, and at the same time laid an aesthetic foundation for the reintroduction of ceremony and ritual into the Anglican Communion. This was founded on a rejection of Roman aesthetics, and the Oxford Movement was initiated by Keble's dismissal of the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829) in his 'Assize' sermon on 'National Apostasy' (1833). Here Keble celebrated 'The One Catholic and Apostolic Church', and declared that its authority was inherited through sacramental transfer from Jesus to the apostles to bishops, without the mediation of the Pope. While Keble and Newman alike were dependent on doctrinal argument to elevate the modern Anglican Church as the inheritor of early Christianity, the strength of their position was fortified by an appeal to a liturgical and spiritual affect borrowed from the poetics of Wordsworth and Coleridge. For Newman, Tractarianism was a feeling within or "'spirit afloat'" that 'rolls through all things' like a silent 'motion and a spirit': God reveals himself through 'real things unseen' that are expressed through poetry and doctrinally understood through 'reserve'.²¹ Reserve ruled that God's scriptural laws should remain hidden to all but the faithful, indicating that devotional writing and biblical exegesis should

¹⁹ See D. Janes, *Victorian Reformation: The Fight over Idolatry in the Church of England 1840–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁰ S. Prickett, 'Tractarian Poetry', in R. Cronin, A. Chapman, and A. H. Harrison (eds.), *A Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 279–90, at 279; J. Keble, *The Christian Year: Thoughts in Verse for the Sundays and Holydays Throughout the Christian Year*, 2 vols. (Oxford: J. Parker, 1827).

²¹ J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1865–6; London: Penguin, 1994), 100.

protect religious truth through metaphor, figure, and allegory. For Keble, poetry fulfilled this purpose: it is 'the indirect expression in words, most appropriately in metrical words, of some overpowering emotion' and so able to obliquely conjure faith rather than spilling

it like so many undemanding evangelical novels and pamphlets.²² One cannot dismiss this as straightforward elitism: Tractarianism's dependence on prosody to encode biblical phrase and liturgy demanded that the believer read and listen with care and learning, and so promoted education to enable this; and reserved expression also enabled many women writers— Yonge, Rossetti, Procter, and Greenwell— to think and write about theology seriously under the guise of a restrained and gentle mode.²³

As Tractarianism evolved into 'Anglo- Catholicism' in the mid- nineteenth century, it began to engage a wider community through visible devotion, the articulation of faith through images and decoration, and flower missions to the poorest areas of Britain.²⁴ Alongside it was the development of evangelicalism, a revivalist movement that emerged in the eighteenth century and, like Tractarianism, understood its mission to disseminate the 'evangel' or gospel as originating in the early church. Comprising a number of denominations unable to fully subscribe to the Thirty- Nine Articles (such as Calvinists, Arminians, some Methodists), evangelicalism notoriously defies neat definition. Most evangelical groups, however, shared a commitment to conversionism (lives are changed through engagement with the gospel), biblicism (the Bible as God's revealed word), crucicentrism (a belief in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross), and activism (the enactment of the gospel in society and politics).²⁵ It is this last sense of political responsibility to social issues like slavery, poverty, child exploitation, and rights for women that captured the imaginations of writers like Dickens, Hannah More, George Eliot, Wilkie Collins, Margaret Oliphant, Mrs Henry Wood, and Anthony Trollope. While Dickens parodied the extremities of evangelicalism's social fervour (in *Bleak House's* (1852– 3) Mrs Jellyby, for example), and Ruskin and Eliot critiqued its anti- intellectualism, writers like Thomas Reid praised it for engendering a basic and simple set of beliefs accessible to all.²⁶ Certain aspects of evangelicalism troubled commentators more than others: the belief in human sinfulness, for example, was critiqued by Dickens in *David Copperfield* (1850) and Brontë in *Jane Eyre* (1847); while the elevation of the Bible as truth sparked debate with a German higher criticism invested in reception, interpretation, and hermeneutics.

At the same time, questions of reading practice were energized by an evangelical commitment to scriptural dissemination and missionary imperialism that extended to reflection on how the 'word' was experienced. The evangelical testimony, for example,

²² J. Keble, 'Life of Sir Walter Scott', *British Critic* (1838), in Keble, *Occasional Papers and Reviews* (Oxford and London: James Parker and Co., 1877), 1– 80, at 6.

²³ See, for example, R. Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

²⁴ B. Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

²⁵ D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2– 3.

²⁶ E. Jay (ed.), *The Evangelical and Oxford Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

is charged by an emotional intensity many readers would recognize from sensation fiction and so distrust as theatrical display.²⁷ While evangelicalism sought to distinguish its affective impact from that of the novel, it inadvertently forced debate on how the believer should read, feel, and make sense of the Bible's various formal experiments. However they were translated in the period, the parables, miracles, poems, and prayers that comprised scripture demanded imaginative work from even the most literal reader, as both Isaac Watts and Robert Lowth established in their eighteenth-century commentaries on hymnal and sacred writing.²⁸ Recent criticism has been sharply aware of the formal innovations of religious writing. In *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*, for example, Kirstie Blair explores the impact of poetic (as well as musical and architectural) form on contemporary structures of worship, and argues that ecclesiastical practice was frequently shaped by poetic debate just as church liturgy and architecture was influenced by Victorian poetry. In *Victorian Parables*, Susan Colon considers novelists like Dickens and Yonge to think about their experimentation with the stories and complexities of the parable as a cultural and ethical currency able to challenge conventional morality. And Charles LaPorte's *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* examines the impact of higher criticism on the poetic experiments of writers including Barrett Browning, Tennyson, and Clough.²⁹ F. Elizabeth Gray even interrogates how we decipher the religious texts that 'count' as worthy of critical attention in the first place: 'Why do we need to examine Victorian women's religious poetry? There's a lot of it; a lot of it is very much the same; a lot of it is quite frankly doggerel; and even when "good" poets write it, their secular verse holds much more appeal for the modern taste.'³⁰ Evangelicalism, of course, worked hard to guard against the aestheticizing and spiritualizing away of their faith, a danger to which they saw their adversary, Roman Catholicism, fall prey. The glut of anti-Catholic clichés circulated by evangelicals, Anglicans, and Tractarians twisted Catholicism into a kind of Decadence that was associated with and reaffirmed by writers like Joris-Karl Huysmans and Oscar Wilde.³¹

27 See A. N. Porter, *Religion versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); J. Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002); M. Knight, 'Sensation Fiction and Religion', in P. Gilbert (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 455–65.

28 See, for example, R. Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1787), trans. G. Gregory (Boston: Joseph T. Buckingham, 1815); and I. Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs in Three Books* (London: Strahan and Rivington, 1773).

29 K. Blair, *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012); S. Colon, *Victorian Parables* (London: Continuum, 2012); C. LaPorte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

30 F. E. Gray, *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women's Poetry* (London: Routledge, 2010), 3.

31 See S. M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); P. O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); M. LaMonaca, *Masked Atheism: Catholicism and the*

Secular Victorian Home (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008); and D. Fisher, *Roman Catholic Saints and Early Victorian Literature: Conservatism, Liberalism, and the Emergence of Secular Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

There is no question that Catholicism's impact on Victorian culture is aesthetic as well as theological, but a focus on the former tends to obscure how central notions of sacramentalism and Trinitarianism were to Catholics such as Aubrey De Vere, Kenelm Digby, Coventry Patmore, Michael Field, Alice Meynell, and G. K. Chesterton, as well as Huysmans and Wilde. For many Catholics, cradle and convert, their faith system protected them against an increasingly materialistic, technological, and scientized politics of progress: Vatican I (1869–70), for example, explicitly granted new import to 'mysteries' like the Annunciation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Eucharist, drawing attention to the immaterial. Catholics were also keen to distinguish themselves from esoteric mysticisms like Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's theosophical movement, which, for Blavatsky's heir, Annie Besant, as well as writers like Marie Corelli and Rider Haggard, blurred into Tibetan Buddhism and occult philosophy. This blurring also obscured the specificity of Buddhism and Hindu tradition, and many Western writers, philosophers, and theologians misread Dharmic religion as pantheism, nihilism, and later, existentialism.³² As Tennyson argued, a familiarity with the 'great religions of the world' would sustain, not threaten, Christianity, a point revealed by his own engagement with Confucius, the Qur'an, Hinduism, and Buddhism.³³ The implications of Heidegger's bringing together of West and East in his writing echoes this position. Before turning to Heidegger, however, I address the question of whether modern criticism can think its way through the subjective and objective presentation of religion in the Victorian period. Specifically, I link Keble's decision to convey 'spirit' through poetry to Heidegger's model of rhythm as a form of 'rest' from which his meditative and receptive model of thinking the environment is based.

Rhythmic Spirits

The expression of religion in Victorian texts is, I think, acutely aware of its potential to enact a unique kind of thinking not easily slotted into wire-drawn categories of history or aesthetics. Religious texts sometimes slip away from critical conceptualization because they often embody a subjective experience, the meaning of which is defeated by an attempt to step back and describe it: any number of descriptions might apply but the unity of the experience is lost in attempted objectivity. Keble addresses this problem head-on in his 'National Apostasy' sermon, already referred to in the context of Tractarianism, and which I explore here to think through the challenge of nineteenth-century religious faith to literary analysis. Keble trusts that faith is a way into thinking the unity of subject and object (feeling and thought, faith and reason), and argues that the 'whole mind' of the believer should be committed to thoughts 'of a devotional kind': consciousness becomes

32 See T. Masuzama, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

33 See Blair, *Form and Faith*, 189–96.

a hallowed entity, one that dwells within a synthesis of letter and spirit.³⁴ Yet to sustain this faithful consciousness, Keble argues, the believer must neglect thoughts of 'public concerns, ecclesiastical or civil', thereby splitting civic from holy life, and reimposing a model of the believer who thinks about society discretely (and outside his or her faith). The opening couple of lines of Keble's sermon, for example, attempt to voice a religious commitment to 'things supernatural and miraculous', but instead invoke history, intertextuality, politics, reading practices, and ethics: Keble tells us that his sermon is preached from the pulpit of St Mary's in Oxford on 14 July 1833; is biblically based (it begins with a quotation from 1 Samuel, ends with a short passage from Acts 4, and includes numerous lines from Ezekiel, Deuteronomy, Hosea, Luke, and the Psalms); is against the current state of the Anglican Church; and defines 'the minds of Christians' as 'devoted' listeners and readers who habitually read the Bible as an ethical act. Daily bible reading in particular is described as that which teaches 'the good' (1 Samuel 12:23) by requiring the believer to stand against the intrusion of the State into spiritual concerns. Keble seems able only to gesture towards 'things supernatural and miraculous'. By contrast, he is distinctively 'material' in his defence of the moral command of the Church as it is documented in the 'records of the elder Church'—its Reformation, the disbanding of the monasteries, and the erosion of the supernatural within Anglicanism. Rather than outlining in detailed terms what a commitment to the supernatural looks like, then, Keble turns to history (the Reformation), theology (a brief discussion of Judaic revelation), and ethics (the importance of 'civil wisdom and duty' in the practice of Christianity).

Keble leaves the supernatural on the periphery in his sermon, then, and even more so when he begins to address the 'spirit'. In the context of Keble's work, the 'spirit' is connected to the 'Creator' God and is invoked through the idea of the Holy Spirit, 'truth', and the divine essence of the Triune God. But when we examine how Keble describes the spirit, we see its definition morphed into either the moral and ethical questions already discussed; or into issues of sensibility, that is, the 'sweetness with firmness' that Keble thinks ideally constitute the 'energy' and 'temper of a perfect public man'. Keble's dualistic approach to the believer is not dissimilar to the predominant way of thinking through religious questions in modern criticism: the immaterial or experiential dimension of religion is more accessible when materialized as another discourse. Thus Keble turns to emotion as a way into the supernatural and spiritual, arguing that the believer who feels God as 'sweetness' can access his 'supernatural aid' and find protection against 'malevolent feeling, of disgust', which is 'apt to lay hold on sensitive minds'. As a Wordsworthian, Keble suggests that good feeling is developed through habit, the 'daily and hourly duties' of 'piety, purity, charity, justice'. Only an emotionalized 'remonstrance'—'calm' and 'distinct'—can help 'when the Church landmarks are being broken down', indicating an

affective command to do 'all as a Christian, to credit and advance the cause he has most at heart'. This rhetoric of the heart is an example of a particular kind of religious mode that relies on feeling, and so triggers modern readers to understand religion as feeling or sentiment, a connection that has spurred some of the most interesting recent work on

³⁴ J. Keble, 'National Apostasy' (1833); all references are to the online copy at <http://anglicanhistory.org/keble/keble1.html>, accessed 10 March 2012.

religion in this period. Methodism is read through enthusiastic feeling, the Quakers associated with quietude, the Tractarians understood through religious and poetic reserve, and evangelicalism aligned with sentimentalism. The history of religious music too, so rich in the nineteenth century, is opened up by theories of affect as developments in the hymn, choir, church organ, and religious ensembles communicate the experience of God through praise, harmony, and rhythm. But does reconfiguring religion, or religious faith, as music, emotion, or affect reify its concerns yet again into another set of ideas? While accessing religion through other discourses is undoubtedly interesting, it evades what is different about the question of religion from other interdisciplinary concerns in the period. Both religion and literature share a capacity to go 'beyond the materiality of facts' into a 'new metaphysics', but other disciplines also create routes into (re)imagining the world, both those we are familiar with (like science, history, politics, economics, geography, gender, sexuality) and also those we are coming to know (like ecocriticism, eudaemonics, affect theory, cartography, and medicine).³⁵ Specificity of language in and between discourses, practices, and belief systems always provides a unique way of thinking; so what does the relationship between religion and literature offer that is distinct from other modes of inter- and multi- disciplinary Victorian studies?

Keble might answer that religion is inherently poetic, and that while he cannot describe the spirit in prose sermons, he can conjure or incarnate it in poetic form. In this sense Keble is theopoetic, as is Tractarianism: both anticipate the modern meaning of this term as it describes a methodology reliant on the poem to sound out and think through religious ideas and beliefs.³⁶ Theopoetics is especially concerned to find in poetic language the embodiment of religious experience and then assess how such experience signifies to different believers and readers. Keble, for example, is invested in discussing the spirit as a Christian intent on defending what he understands to be the true Church: in this context, the spirit is that which will guide him and those who are dutiful enough to join him in committing to God through Christian practice. Keble and others describe the details of this commitment in sermons and the Tracts for the Times in so far as this prose prescribes the believer with a set of laws and religious practices to follow. The question of how to communicate the experience of the spirit, however, remains obscure and abstract when rendered in prose. Keble turns to poetry to conjure the spirit in metre, repetition, and biblical paraphrase and does so specifically through poems written for daily reading, his collection *The Christian Year* (1827) allowing the believer to feel present in both

material and spiritual time at once. This experience is regulated, however, into an order of sound and rhythm, as the 'dedication' poem that opens *The Christian Year* illustrates:

Fountain of Harmony! Thou Spirit blest,
By whom the troubled waves of earthly sound
Are gathered into order, such as best
Some high-souled bard in his enchanted round

³⁵ A. Hass, 'Discipline Beyond Disciplines', in Walton (ed.), *Literature and Theology*, 19–36, at 35.

³⁶ See L. B. C. Keefe-Perry, 'Theopoetics: Process and Perspective', *Christianity and Literature*, 58, no. 4 (2009), 579–601.

May compass, Power divine! Oh, spread Thy wing,
Thy dovelike wing that makes confusion fly,
Over my dark, void spirit, summoning
New worlds of music, strains that may not die.
(ll. 9–16)

Like the neat, orderly lines of Keble's poems with their 'waves' of 'earthly sound', the spirit is 'gathered into order' here, and conveys an aesthetic religious experience open to all believers willing to engage with God through a reserved, wondrous, and poetic belief. Unlike modern theo-poeticians, however, Keble could assume a faithful readership. Current theo-poetics often tends towards abstraction, distorting Heidegger's religious phenomenology into a metaphysical language that purports to describe the 'spirit' but substitutes the practice of description with metaphors of unknowability and emptiness. Thus the theologian Thomas J. J. Altizer invokes the 'void' as a way to explore a post-theological modernity in which God is dead but not forgotten: he argues that poets like Dante, Milton, and Blake allow believers 'to say Yes to absolute nothingness' and so 'discover plenitude in the void'.³⁷ Where Altizer threatens to erase religion with ontology, Keble sustains the experience of faith by presenting his personal 'spirit' as a 'void' (l. 15) that is filled by God's 'Spirit' (l. 9) and blessed by sound and order.

The spirit he struggled to articulate in prose becomes rhythm itself, and is rooted back into time (rather than transcending it) as a daily reading experience the believer can always rely upon as a way of comprehending being with God as at once proximate and ascendant.³⁸

Heidegger develops Keble's rhythmic spirit as a way of being in time through his understanding of a meditative thinking that is non-objectivizing, peregrinating, and open to religious ideas. For him, rhythm 'does not mean flux and flowing, but rather structure. Rhythm is what is at rest', and, echoing Keble, 'gathers' us into a state wherein we can think.³⁹ Heidegger's once held political views violate the terms of this meditative thinking; and yet his philosophy has the potential to bring together

a theological language of care with a focus on human 'being' to address the question of how we might speak about words like 'spirit'. While the consequence of action pursued in the name of 'spirit' can be good or bad, its signification in nineteenth-century Christian texts is synonymous with care, love, hospitality, goodness, benevolence, thankfulness, belonging, and truth, as well as the idea of God. In this sense, the poetic is conceived of as a pastoral praxis, rather than the grounds for what the likes of John Middleton Murry and T. S. Eliot would later twist into a series of lofty

37 T. J. J. Altizer, *Living the Death of God: A Theological Memoir* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), pp. xvi, xviii.

38 I engage here with Isobel Armstrong's reading of rhyme and the 'advent of Christianity' in 'Meter and Meaning', in J. D. Hall (ed.), *Meter Matters: Verse Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century* (Athens, O.: Ohio University Press, 2011), 26–52, at 34.

39 M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperOne, 1971), 149–50.

scuffles over the relationship of poetry to revelation.⁴⁰ Here is where Heidegger's meditative, 'poetized' thinking is so suggestive, privileging as it does a felt receptivity and invitational mode of interpretation over one that mines the text for facts or affirmation.

In other words, religious metaphors encourage the reader to refrain from calculating the use-value of a thing or a text for a particular argument, and instead engender an amicable reading practice. In 'The Question Concerning Technology' (1954), for example, Heidegger exposes those modes of thinking that refuse feeling and meditation to calculatively rationalize the world as an endless parade of expendable resources. His example is the River Rhine, whose 'industrial' meaning as power source is compared to its 'literary' meaning as hymn in Friedrich Hölderlin's poem 'The Ister' (1803/5).⁴¹ Developed into a hydroelectric power plant, the river stands polluted and misused; praised and loved as part of one world by Hölderlin, the river is protected and sheltered, its hymn form a 'path for the spirit to follow' (l. 35).⁴² After this reading, we might assess any given reference to the spirit in nineteenth-century religious writing as more open to sensation, care and experience than translation and analysis. Instrumental, analytic thinking computes the word 'spirit' and attempts to fix that signifier into interpretation; meditative thinking hears the word 'spirit' and becomes attuned to it, encouraging the reader to discern and listen to its meaning. The first is quantifiable and allows critics to measure it in a written, published form; the second is experiential and allows critics to develop an attention and awareness that sustains relationships with others, both in the classroom and outside. Both are imperative in reading nineteenth-century religious writing: discerning, hearing, and attending forge a way into unfamiliar religious phenomena; while interpreting, scrutinizing, and fact-gathering allow the dissemination of this discernment in communicable form.

The field of religion and literature is sustained by both measurable analyses, studies that help us to understand the framework in which Victorians practised faith, and experiential attention, in which we think compassionately about their phenomenological belief in God. Critics are not as open to the second methodology, however, in part because pressures to produce override the desire to experience; but there also remains a reluctance to study faith positions in earnest without a degree of scepticism. Christina Rossetti's relationship to spirit is a case in point, presented in her poetry as love and grace, but often read otherwise. She makes frequent references to

40 For the Eliot- Murry debate on poetry and religion, see D. Goldie, *A Critical Difference: T. S. Eliot and John Middleton Murry in English Literary Criticism, 1919– 1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

41 The editor of the primary translation of Hölderlin's poems, Richard Sieburth, gives the date as either summer 1803 or 1805, *Hymns and Fragments by Friedrich Hölderlin*, trans. R. Sieburth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 267.

42 M. Heidegger, *The Question of Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper, 1977), 16; for an accessible English translation of Hölderlin's poem, see <http://jacketmagazine.com/27/hold-trans-2.html>, accessed 6 April 2012.

the spirit in her poetry, drawing on material metaphors of energy and magnetism, immaterial metaphors of illumination and sound, and doctrinal allusions to reserve. In 'Martyrs' Song' (1863), for example, she invokes 'God the Spirit' as a being 'Whom words cannot utter' and who 'hold[s] us up | That we may drink of Jesus's cup' (ll. 28, 41– 2): the spirit is like an electromagnetic field, one that defies gravity by holding the believer in place during a Eucharistic moment of bodily communion with God. In 'From House to Home' (1858), however, she suggests that spirit signifies sound, 'spirit- discerning eyes like flames of fire' belonging to the angel with whom she sings and communes in the poem, their song reciprocally echoing between them 'Calls and recalls and echoes of delight' (ll. 46, 54). In other examples, the spirit becomes a silent shield to protect her from the world, as in 'Shut Out' (1856, ll. 17– 20), or a marker of humility, as in 'Three Stages' (1848– 54, l. 23), both protecting her faith in accordance with the doctrine of reserve. And yet her perhaps most complex reference to spirit— in 'The Convent Threshold' (1858)— abandons metaphor for meditative affection, persisting in reading the spirit through love even as it appears in the form of a nightmarish 'Fire- footed' ghoul. It appears in her dream 'drunk with knowledge' and writhes under cloven- snaked hair as it is forced to 'grovel down | And lick the dust of Seraphs' feet' (ll. 100– 4). This image, paired with the narrator's self- depiction as a sinner 'soiled with mud' (l. 7) but committed to repentance (l. 51), has sparked numerous readings of the poem as a scene of child abuse, illness, Gothic romance, martyrdom, the horrors of conventual life and of the struggle between earthly and spiritual desires. Yet Rossetti repeats the word 'love' throughout the poem to elevate the spirit's religious meaning, invoking it as that part of the human, which, in falling before the angels, learns that love enables relationalism as

well as interpretation:

For what is knowledge duly weighed?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea all the progress he had made
Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.
(ll. 105–9)

Denouncing calculative thinking for loving thinking, Rossetti educes the spirit as that which marks the point in the poem from which the narrator turns to 'old familiar love' (l. 148). Her progress towards love, like the spirit's, is not easy and the poem's countless hermeneutic traps indicate that turning to interpretative thinking is quite a bit more interesting than ending up in an everyday, ordinary, and much-repeated address to care and affection. Rossetti suggests, however, that her petition to the spirit, that part of her which seems to call beyond the threshold, is about understanding religion through love, and perceiving criticism as a narration of kindness as much as cleverness.

Pastoralism

There are, of course, several critics who already address religion through a hermeneutics of kindness by using pastoral models of care or grace as a template for interpretation. Francis X. McAloon, for example, offers a pastoral reading of Hopkins as a source of care in his *The Language of Poetry as a Form of Prayer: The Theo-Poetic Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins*.⁴³ Beginning with an analysis of prayer as a spiritually transformative experience, McAloon argues that its repeated practice allows for a meditative thinking that for him enables and sustains a mode of 'being' delineated by 'tenderness'.⁴⁴ This being engages with God through the 'paschal imagination', one that learns how to willingly enter into a mysterious participation with Christ by reading, or praying, poetry. For McAloon, this reading experience and actively-engaging imagination grants, not simply a sharing of an aesthetic moment, either between poet and reader or those with whom we read, but also the possibility of encountering God's grace. This encounter is not solely a philosophical one, as he turns from theory to practice by writing up the details of a case study of a troubled young man referred to only as 'Philip'. In a series of interchapters, Philip is presented as a figure who is transformed from a state of 'personal estrangement' to one of comfort and love by engaging with Hopkins's strangeness: McAloon suggests that Hopkins's poems minister to Philip and disclose a different way of being than the unsettled and alienated one in which he is stuck.⁴⁵ Hopkins's poetry is presented as a perplexing, sometimes disturbing, form of relief that can only be discerned through a reading that sees the poem as an incarnation of hope and renewal: it is sensorily immediate, charitable, and thus able to

speak to individuals under- represented in faith communities. Many secular readers will find such a way into Hopkins uncomfortable: McAloon has a clear Christian agenda and expresses a love of poetry based on what he perceives as its capacity to foster (Catholic) conscience and compassion in students. Dennis Sobolev echoes McAloon, though, in his willingness to think through the 'authenticity' of Hopkins's faith; as does Adrian Grafe in his promotion

of 'religious awareness' as a way of experiencing poetry.⁴⁶ Is a reading practice that engages the solicitude of spirit as well as the imagination useful in our assessment of religion in Victorian culture? I would like to conclude by answering 'yes' to this question, and suggest that a pastoral or altruistic politics has an equal place with cultural and social politics in literary studies and its reception of nineteenth- century texts.

⁴³ F. X. McAloon, *The Language of Poetry as a Form of Prayer: The Theo- Poetic Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2008).

⁴⁴ McAloon, *Language of Poetry*, 2.

⁴⁵ McAloon, *Language of Poetry*, 93.

⁴⁶ D. Sobolev, *The Split World of Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Essay in Semiotic Phenomenology* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011); A. Grafe (ed.), *Ecstasy and Understanding: Religious Awareness in English Poetry from the late Victorian to the Modern Period* (London: Continuum, 2008): Hopkins is one of three poets (with T. S. Eliot and Geoffrey Hill) that Grafe believes shape the expression and experience of religious awareness in twentieth- century poetry.

Pastoralism describes a way of reading based on receptivity to the text that refrains from prejudging it within preconceived formulae that the critic wishes to prove. This receptivity thus necessitates a process of unlearning, that describes one way in which the reader can feel immersed in a specific network of practices with which he or she might be unfamiliar, or even uncomfortable, before a particular problem or idea can be addressed. Rather than elucidating what already feels familiar in a text, the reader unlearns old habits to engage in new material, while also suspending the desire to interrogate and unravel the text by thinking with it. Heidegger uses the analogy of teaching to clarify this process, suggesting that the teacher should not 'have a larger store of information' than the student, to whom he or she hands down 'useful information', but instead 'lets nothing else be learned than— learning', that is, a shared experience of reading together. This phenomenological pedagogy concerns a close listening to the text that allows a 'joyful' relation to it, not in the sense that the text's content must always be cheery, but in that the reader takes his or her bearings from a benign relationalism.⁴⁷ For Heidegger, the approach connotes at once 'meditating and caring'; but also *Gelassenheit*, a word he borrows from Meister Eckhart (who uses it to mean a leaving of all things to God) to think beyond wilful and deferential interpretation to an indwelling- with the text, other beings and the world.⁴⁸ In such indwelling, the reader is liberated to through the ideas that emerge from his or her encounter with the text in friendly or loving terms, an approach elucidated by Amos Wilder's suggestion that we model our reading practice and experience on that of the disciples (who are, despite their closeness to Jesus, often chastised by him for

not listening properly).⁴⁹ Or we might turn to Marilynne Robinson, who philosophizes religion and literature through an openness to all perspectives founded in her understanding of Christianity as community. In her essay 'Wondrous Love' (2012), for example, she offers a reading of C. Austin Miles's late Victorian hymn 'In the Garden' (1912), that shines with an understanding of relationalism as both the subject matter of religious verse and the critical practice most likely to fathom religious content:

The old ballad in the voice of Mary Magdalene, who 'walked in the garden alone', imagines her 'tarrying' there with the newly risen Jesus, in the light of a dawn which was certainly the most remarkable daybreak since God said, 'Let there be light'. The song acknowledges this with fine understatement: 'The joy we share as we tarry there / None other has ever known'. Who can imagine the joy she would have felt? And how lovely it is that the song tells us the joy of this encounter was Jesus's as well as Mary's. Epochal as the moment is, and inconceivable as Jesus's passage from death to life must be, they meet as friends and rejoice together as friends.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (London: Perennial, 2004), 15, 31.

⁴⁸ M. Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism' (1949), in D. F. Krell (ed.), *Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: HarperCollins, 1977), 213–265 (p. 224); and 'Ἀρχιβασιή: A Triadic Conversation on a Country Path between a Scientist, a Scholar, and a Guide', in *Country Path Conversations*, trans., B. W. Davis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–104, at 94ff).

⁴⁹ A. Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

⁵⁰ M. Robinson, 'Wondrous Love', in *When I Was a Child I Read Books* (London: Virago, 2012), 125–41, at 125.

Robinson, like Wilder, engenders a sense of pastoral vocation and understanding through fellow feeling that chimes more with the Victorians than, for example, obscure theories of unachievable hospitality that show little charity to the reader.⁵¹ Like the agricultural term 'pastoralism', a pastoral criticism must express care for what it immediately tends, as well as supporting writing emergent from territories not always associated with production and use-value. At the same time pastoral criticism must acknowledge its more negative potential to be manipulated as a mode of instruction and pedagogy to which not everyone is open. In doing so it might figure religion as a way of thinking attention, care, and friendship, as well as a mode of power and missionary inculcation. As W. H. Fremantle wrote in 1886: 'When we can rise above the mere money relation or the thought of getting on in the world, and can look at our work according to its proper effects, we find in every calling the exercise of care for men in God's name.'⁵² For our own impatient, time-anxious generation, we might read Bruno Latour as rephrasing Fremantle in his suggestion that religion is a way of directing attention back towards care 'by systematically breaking the will to go away, to ignore, to be indifferent, blasé, bored'.⁵³

Pastoralism finds an affinity, not only with specific critics like Heidegger, Robinson, and Latour, but also with work associated with the affective turn: affect theory's

endeavour to theorize 'authentic' feeling, for example, parallels the problem I address here of exploring 'authentic' faith or 'real' feelings of love, care, and spirit. Affect theory has helped to shift the hermeneutics of suspicion that surrounded authenticity by working with phenomenology, psychology, ethnography, and 'emotionology' to address how emotions circulate and adapt to material spaces and places, as well as how they are transmitted, expressed, constructed, and felt.⁵⁴ In a manner instructive for work on nineteenth-century religion, it asks that the modern reader refuse to collapse his or her own acquaintance with emotions onto their expression in the past, even as he or she respects that expression occurred and reverently engages with it. An astute example of pastoral thinking in affect theory is Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects*.⁵⁵ Stewart moves away from the sometimes excessively scientific models of affect theory to evolve it into a mode of critical storytelling able to sympathetically perceive and attend to the minutiae of the affective dimensions of everyday life. An anthropologist, Stewart enacts Heidegger's meditative thinking by patiently detailing moments of

⁵¹ See, for example, J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000) and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁵² W. H. Fremantle, 'The Pastoral Function of Christians', *Good Words*, 27 (1886), 714–20, at 714.

⁵³ B. Latour, "'Thou Shall Not Freeze- Frame' or How Not to Misunderstand the Science and Religion Debate", in J. D. Proctor (ed.), *Science, Religion and the Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27–48, at 36.

⁵⁴ See P. N. Stearns with C. Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), 813–36.

⁵⁵ K. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

everyday life through a 'nomadic tracing' and poetic 'attunement' to present moment experience.⁵⁶ This focus on attunement to the experience of a text finds resonance in other affective theories (such as Teresa Brennan's transmission of affect or Lauren Berlant's materialism of compassion), as well as theology (Stanley Hauerwas's politics of gentleness) and literary studies (Isobel Armstrong's radical aesthetic as well as her recognition of the 'somatic pressure' of poetic sound).⁵⁷ Brennan, Berlant, Hauerwas, and Armstrong all require the reader to approach the text with care and attention, and, like the religion and literature scholars with which this chapter began (Wheeler, Jay, Jasper), they are either associated with the field of Victorian studies, or owe a particular debt to the study of the nineteenth century. Even Hauerwas, who does not write directly about literature, confesses that his search for a Christian identity was partly shaped by his excited reading of Trollope's novels.⁵⁸ Yet while scholars seem happy enough to engage with positive theories of affect, like compassion or attention, they are not as willing to think through their practice and origin in the nineteenth century as acts of faith, even though the majority of Victorians attributed benevolence to God. As Berlant argues in her introduction to a collection of essays on compassion: 'No doubt many readers of this volume will not feel comfortable in the faith-based society that is now being offered as the ground of the good. But this does not mean that they

are somehow superior to or untouched by the contemporary culture of true feeling that places suffering at the centre of being and organizes images of ethical or honourable sociality in response.⁵⁹

I am not suggesting that the Victorian expression of religious faith should convince modern readers one way or another about the boundaries of the relationship between religion and goodness or moral law. I do think, however, that to study religion and literature is to consider that it teaches us something more than the doctrinal and ecclesiological bases of specific branches of faith and the related political consequences of its practice in worship or social action. The Victorians themselves consistently negotiate the relationship between religion and 'true feeling' through literature and as such highlight a practice of reading and interpretation based on compassion, care, and attention. It is with the same respect that we are free to engage with their literary output, reading its content, context, and form in the spirit of the experience of faith it bestows.

56 Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 6.

57 T. Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); L. Berlant (ed.), *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004); S. Hauerwas, with J. Vanier, *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008); I. Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); and Armstrong, 'Meter and Meaning', 26–52.

58 S. Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmann, 2010), 134.

59 L. Berlant, 'Compassion (and Withholding)', in Berlant (ed.), *Compassion*, 1–13, at 7.

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